

# Cure Violence

## Treating violence as a contagious disease, trying to eradicate it at the source



Project author or developer:  
**Gary Slutkin**

Where:

Website:  
**[cureviolence.org/](http://cureviolence.org/)**

While the tragic school shooting in Connecticut in December added further fuel to the gun control debate in the United States and beyond, it has also diverted attention from an even greater tragedy – the enduring cost of “everyday” interpersonal violence globally. Aligned with fellow peacebuilding NGOs in spirit, if not in practice, groundbreaking Chicago-based organization Cure Violence (formerly CeaseFire) is focused on addressing this challenge through an innovative model developed by its founder, epidemiologist Gary Slutkin.

Key to Cure Violence’s success – and scalability – is the notion that the trajectory of both violence and infectious diseases share similar patterns of contagion. By this logic, it becomes possible to apply a common public health strategy: stopping transmission at the source and altering norms and behavior so fewer people become “infected” in the first place. In practical terms, Cure Violence achieves this goal by identifying those most at risk and treating this core group via a staff of highly-trained “violence interrupters” – former perpetrators employed to disrupt conflicts before they erupt and educate the community about the consequences of violent behavior.

By reframing the fundamental problem – and applying traditional mediation strategies with an evidence-based method – Cure Violence has achieved proven results, with 16-34 percent reductions in shootings and killings directly attributed to its programs, and 41-73 percent overall. Already implemented in over a dozen American cities, the model has also been exported successfully to deal with election violence in Kenya, community violence in South Africa and inter-tribal violence in Iraq. Drawing upon cutting edge research in social psychology and neuroscience to refine “interruption” techniques, Cure Violence’s ultimate aim is no less ambitious than the end of violence as a learned behavior.

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