

An Introduction to the Violence Issue

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Even though violence affects persons across every demographic, its effects are hardly homogenous or well understood. From the violence that occurs within a household to the broad terror created by incidents highlighted in the media, the use of force to harm is as present in Delaware as anywhere else in the United States. It is a grisly fact that Delaware has been an outlier in elevated firearm homicide rates compared to the rest of the United States, which itself is already an outlier compared to the rest of the world.

Yet though violence has long held recognition as a public health issue, the ways in which it propagates harm between persons and across communities remain vague. Violence – and especially gun violence – is closely intertwined with the deep systemic and structural factors of poverty and racism. This entanglement at the intersection of interpersonal violence with policing, justice, health, social, and political systems makes all forms of observation and intervention highly complex and challenging to interpret. But the past decade has seen a burst in energy and growth in policy, prevention, and interventions within the state.

We are pleased to present this issue of the *Delaware Journal of Public Health* with a focus on violence as a window into emerging landscape shifts and new capacity within academic, healthcare, and policy spaces in the state. Oberheim, Barlow, and Nescott illustrate the nuances in measurement of the childhood exposure to intimate partner violence in Delaware and how the incorporation of economic justice into policy has led to pragmatic local interventions. A large multi-center qualitative study on gun possession by Dillard, Henderson, Rice, Goldstein, and Mangum gives voice to the lived experiences of young men living in Wilmington, Delaware, and the complementary article by Dillard, Hall-Hipkins, and Angalet widens the scope surrounding this work to describe its place in the evolution of collective action among local community-based organizations. Chen (guest editor), Rodriguez, Pendleton, and Johnson describe their frontline experiences in operationalizing a new Hospital Violence Intervention Program (HVIP) to serve victims of violence after hospitalization. Murphy and Stowens make the case for new legislation in the state to require a permit to purchase handguns (which has since authorship been signed into law, making Delaware the 12th state/district in the USA to do so), while Schmittinger summarizes the fifty year history of implementation of the state's Victims' Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP) to help victims begin rebuilding lives after trauma.

This is not a comprehensive description of novel research and programs, but points to areas of future learning and innovation: preventing injury and treating injury, proposals for new policy changes, measures and changes to existing policy, and the path forward in our state to better health.

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