RESEARCH BRIEF

No. 17: April 2026

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, AND NOW I'M GIVING BACK: PERSPECTIVES ON MENTORING INTERVENTIONS FROM MENTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Kristian Jones, Jarvis Duckworth, Chloe Fetters, Biruktawit Galoro, Ali Rowhani-Rahbar
Brief prepared by: Kristian Jones, Amelia Payne Garcia, Jarvis Duckworth & Erika Marts

INTRODUCTION

Firearm violence has disproportionately impacted Black young people throughout the United States due to structural inequalities, disadvantages in the communities they reside in, and constant exposure to trauma. **Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs** have been developed as a grassroots strategy to help reduce firearm violence by utilizing community-based prevention approaches to address the ongoing violent occurrences and trauma that Black youth and other marginalized young people encounter. **Mentoring interventions** are often utilized to prevent or intervene in firearm violence within CVI programs. These mentoring interventions often use individuals with **lived experiences** with firearm violence, often referred to as credible messengers or violence interrupters. Despite the importance of mentoring and CVI programs in disrupting firearm violence, there is limited research that has identified what exactly happens within mentoring interventions in CVI programs to prevent firearm violence and support young people. This study addresses this gap by exploring the **perspectives of mentors and administrators** in CVI programs and mentoring interventions striving to prevent firearm violence in Washington State to identify elements of mentorship interventions that **promote safety, provide support** and **long-term violence prevention** among young people exposed to firearm violence.

METHODS

This qualitative study **interviewed 20 mentors and administrators in CVI programs and mentoring interventions designed to prevent firearm violence** throughout Washington State. Participants were recruited through strong community relationships the first author established in his work with the Center for Firearm Injury Prevention (C-FIP). Participants were eligible for the study if they were actively working in a CVI organization or a mentoring intervention designed to support young people dealing with community firearm violence. The interviews were conducted via Zoom between July 2024 and March 2025, lasting 45-90 minutes. Interviews were recorded with the participant's consent and transcribed interviews were coded using a **Constructivist Grounded Theory** with the intent to construct a preliminary mentoring to prevent firearm violence framework (**see Figure 1**).

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Examples of Questions for Participants in Administration:

Prior to joining this organization, did you have any exposure to firearm violence yourself? How does your experience impact how you approach the work?

Can you tell me what you think are the most important elements in finding mentors for this work?

Examples of Questions for Participants who are Mentors:

Please tell me about your motivations to become a mentor to disrupt and prevent firearm violence in your community.

Which strategies did mentees learn to cope with the presence of firearm violence in their lives?

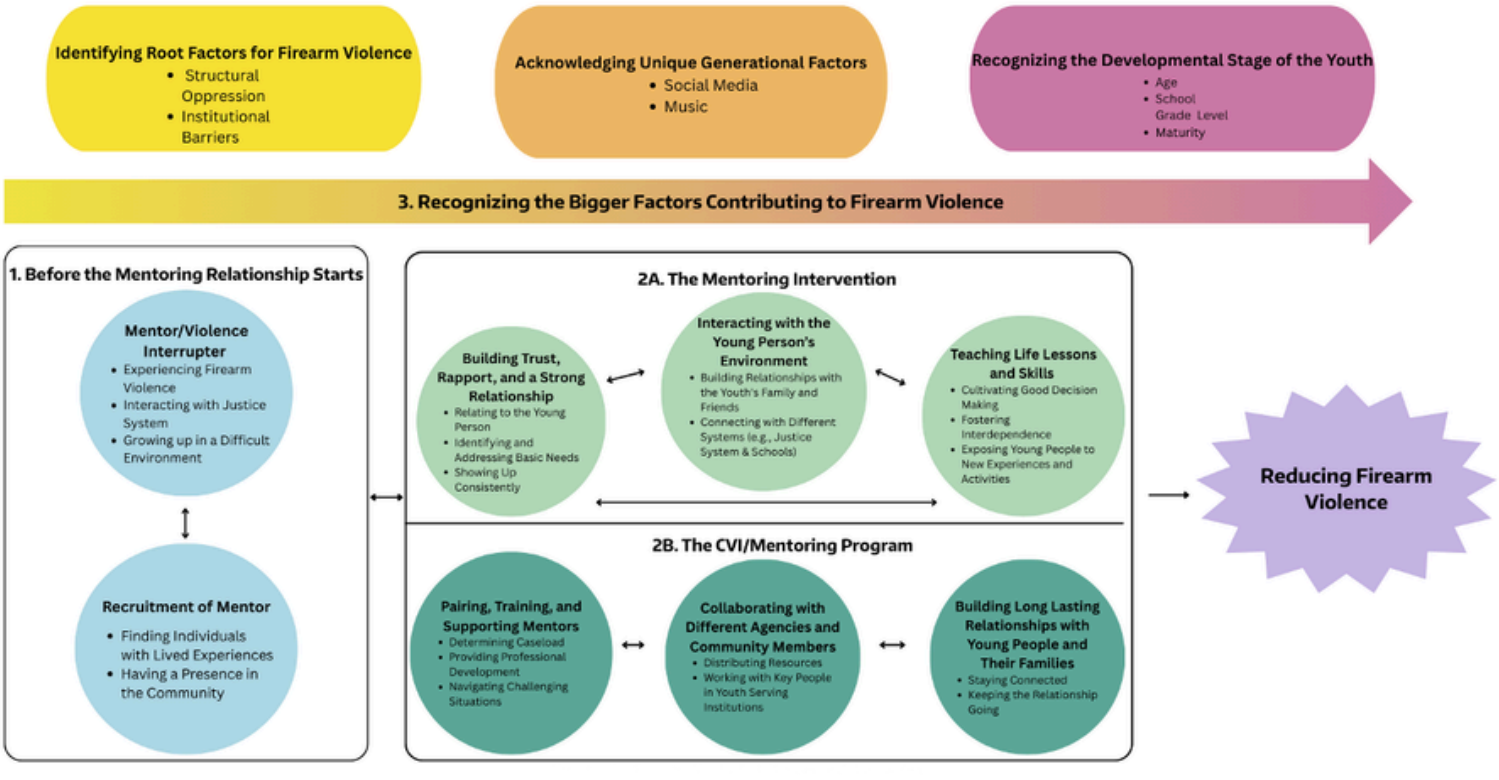
ETHICAL ISSUES

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Washington. Given the sensitive topic of firearm violence and participants' experiences with trauma, ethical safeguards were implemented, focusing on **confidentiality**, **informed consent**, and **respecting participants' autonomy**. For assurance, transcripts were safely protected and stored securely, and participants received a $50 virtual gift card for their time.

GOAL OF STUDY

Create a preliminary framework that illustrates how mentoring interventions in CVI programs can **cultivate protective factors** that prevent interpersonal firearm violence from the perspectives of mentors and administrators.

Figure 1. Mentoring interventions in CVI programs preliminary framework



RESULTS

The interviews resulted in a preliminary framework that highlight that mentors with lived experiences with firearm violence are essential for CVI programs to provide community rooted mentorship to young people. Further, participants underscored how essential it was for mentors and the broader program to provide resources and support (e.g., safe transportation, housing stability) to reduce the immediate risk and provide stability in the young person's life. The interviews also highlighted how mentors working with these young people have to coordinate with different people and systems in the young person's life, for example courts and schools, in a non-judgemental manner to provide holistic support. Finally, participants recognized the importance of recognizing the macro-conditions and contextual factors (e.g., social media) fueling community violence and understanding how these factors can impact how the young person engages in the mentoring relationship.

IMPLICATIONS

Findings emphasize the importance of CVI programs recruiting talented members of the community who meet the criteria (e.g., relatable lived experiences and identities, able to work across different systems, passion to serve community) to be a mentor disrupting firearm violence. This is not a simple task for CVI programs and just because someone is from a neighborhood that is plagued with firearm violence does not mean they are a good fit to be a mentor disrupting firearm violence. This study also underscores the importance of CVI programs and mentoring interventions serving marginalized communities to be well funded so they can address basic needs of young people (e.g., food, clothing) that are often drivers of firearm violence. Additionally, the findings emphasize the importance of cross-system collaboration between mentors and the juvenile legal system and schools to provide holistic support for young people impacted by firearm violence. Lastly, the macro drivers of firearm violence have to be addressed and all of the responsibility to address these inequities that contribute to firearm violence should not fall solely on CVI programs serving marginalized young people.

FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON THIS TOPIC PLEASE REFER TO:

Jones, K., Duckworth, J., Fetters, C. Galoro, B., Rowhani-Rahbar, A. Been There, Done That, and Now I'm Giving Back: Perspectives from Mentors and Administrators in Community Violence Intervention Programs. *Prev Sci* (2026). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-026-01877-4

FUNDING INFORMATION:

Research reported in this publication was supported by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under award number KL2TR002317. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.