

MY TIME AT CEASEFIRE HALIFAX

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During my time with Ceasefire Halifax I have been able to obtain knowledge regarding the hardships that are prevalent within the everyday lives of the African Nova Scotians. In my effort to draft a sustainability proposal for this organization to stay in operation past their funding cut-off date of January 1st 2018 I learned about the vast amounts of services which Ceasefire provides to African Nova Scotians, and the limitations which this organization faces whether that be due to funding or community backlash. This essay will give the reader a general overview of the work which Ceasefire has conducted since operations commenced in 2014, and then look deeper into issues which key stake holders within the Ceasefire organization felt were necessary to include in the sustainability proposal which include but are not limited to the three key epidemiological principles under which the Ceasefire Halifax model operates under, the organizations use of the social determinants of Health model to determine if a person is at risk for partaking in gun violence, and the obstacles and needs which Ceasefire Halifax has faced since their inception. In touching on these key points the organization hopes to obtain the necessary funding to maintain the organization into the future.

Before delving deeper into my exact role with Ceasefire Halifax it is important to highlight exactly what role this organization plays within the city of Halifax. Ceasefire Halifax was founded in 2014 after a spike in homicide incidents within primarily African Nova Scotian sparked leaders within the African Nova Scotian community to look into initiatives which could subdue the violence which was occurring within these communities which led to the implementation of the Ceasefire model in the city of Halifax. Under this model cease fire Halifax has focused there attention on four target areas which have been identified as being 1) at risk for high rates of gun violence, and 2) have a higher then average population of African Nova

Scotian's. the areas which best fit under these characteristics were Dartmouth North, North Preston, Mulgrave Park, and Uniacke Square. In these areas Ceasefire employs 15 violence interrupters whose job it is to be the boots on the ground employees of the organization whose job it is to network with members of the community who could have insight into violent acts which may occur within their target areas and in turn try to reason with both sides of the conflict to prevent these incidents from heightening and leading to injury or loss of life. As well as 9 outreach workers whose job it is to meet with clients who are determined to be a risk of being a victim of gun violence or being the perpetrator of gun violence. After determining these people to be at risk it is the job of the outreach workers to determine why exactly they are at risk and lead them towards the proper third party service provider to help them with the issues which may be leading them to act in this way including there lack of ability to acquire stable work, there lack of education, or any ongoing mental health issues which have gone untreated due to the socio economic issues which these at risk groups are faced with. In partnership with these third party organizations it is the goal of ceasefire Halifax to lower the rate of incidents of gun violence among African Nova Scotian males who have fallen between the cracks due to a lack of focus from mainstream service providers and assist there clients in bettering there lives before they end up committing acts of violence, ending up seriously injured or in the worst case in a Hurst.

Now that we have highlighted exactly what it is that the Ceasefire program does and who there target audience is the rest of this essay will look deeper into what my role with the organization was during the eighty hour period in which I worked for them and the knowledge which I obtained in doing so. well interning at Ceasefire the main project which I worked on was

that of a sustainability report. What is a sustainability report you ask? When the Ceasefire project began in Halifax in 2014 they received funding in the ballpark of \$500,000 under a contract which stated the organization would stay in operation until December of 2017, with the end of that funding coming three months after I began my placement in September it was my role within the organization to attempt to sell the Ceasefire model to potential funders which include but are not limited to the provincial government, privately owned business or corporations, the federal government, local initiatives, and just about any group organization who would be interested in providing the funding that would be needed to keep the Ceasefire program in operation. It was decided amongst myself and other key stakeholders such as the head of the Community justice Society Yvonne Atwell, Ceasefires Program manger Mel Lucas, and Ceasefires senior outreach worker Carlos Beals that the best way to do this would be to touch on factors which these key stakeholders felt made the Ceasefire program unique from any other organization in the providence, factors which will be explored throughout the remainder of this essay.

The first factor which was determined by key stakeholders to be necessary for inclusion in the sustainability report was the three key epidemiological principles under which the Ceasefire Halifax model operates under. To provide some context as to what is meant by epidemiological principles, the Ceasefire model was founded by Gray Slutkin in West Garfield Chicago in the year 2000. "CeaseFire's founder, Gary Slutkin, is an epidemiologist and a physician who for 10 years battled infectious disease in Africa. He says that violence directly mimics infections like tuberculosis and Aids, and so, he suggests, the treatment ought to mimic the regimen applied to these diseases: go after the most infected, and stop the infection at its

source. “For violence, we’re trying to interrupt the next event, the next transmission, the next violent activity,” Slutkin told me recently. “And the violent activity predicts the next violent activity like H.I.V. predicts the next H.I.V.” (New York Times, 2008) in treating acts of gun violence in the same manner we would treat a disease such as HIV we are looking at these acts not a singular case but deeper socioeconomic issues that are prevalent within the disadvantaged areas which we service. The three key principles which are used within this model to cure violence include:

1. **Identification & detection:** CeaseFire uses a scientific, public health approach to tracking the location and incidence of violence and directs its resources and activity accordingly.
2. **Interruption, intervention, & risk reduction:** the cornerstone of CeaseFire is the employment of Violence Interrupters who are individuals with significant credibility in the criminal subculture. These individuals intervene in crisis situations when violence occurs they speak with perpetrators and the victims and mediate conflicts in efforts to reduce retaliatory violence. This include police engagement and support, to provide evidence based guidance with respect to where violence is “heating up” and to provide supports whenever possible to the interruption team. They are in turn supported by Outreach Workers who build relationships, support individuals to access appropriate resources, thereby building connections between the criminal subculture and the legal economy through education, health, and human services networks.

- 3. Changing behaviors and norms:** Ceasefire works to change attitudes and behaviors related to the issues of violence. During their interactions with key individuals at the street level Violence Interrupters have an opportunity to plant the seed of change in the minds of the at-risk demographic. Our program's Outreach Workers, carry a caseload of 15 – 20 of the highest risk participants who are likely to be victimized themselves or to commit a violent act. The Outreach Workers engage with these individuals to change their thinking about violence, and change their level of risk for violence by directing them toward more positive paths.

the use of these three Principals were highlighted as a necessary part of the sustainability proposal as although there are other organizations which target violence within disadvantaged communities Ceasefire Halifax is the only organization in all of Canada which looks at violent acts in this manner which key stakeholder highlighted as a method of differentiating our organization from other similar organizations.

The second important aspect of the Ceasefire model which key stakeholder identified as paramount to be included in the sustainability proposal was Ceasefire Halifax use of the social determinants of Health model which can be explained visually in figure 1 below. During the process of taking on new clients Outreach Workers use the determinants of health model in an effort to identify the physical and socioeconomic hardships which Ceasefire Halifax clients are facing and guide them accordingly. The attributes of this model includes education, health services, social services, income, social status, personal health practices and coping skills. In using these key factors which were mentioned above to determine exactly how the clients which we service have slipped through the cracks of mainstream our outreach workers are able

to ascertain what exact issues caused our particular clients to turn down towards the path of gun violence and the best path to take to bring their clients towards a path of self-improvement. To say that ceasefire would be able to accomplish this goal of bringing their clients back to the metaphorical path most travelled on their own would be discredit to our partners who we direct our clients to which can be seen in figure 2 below.

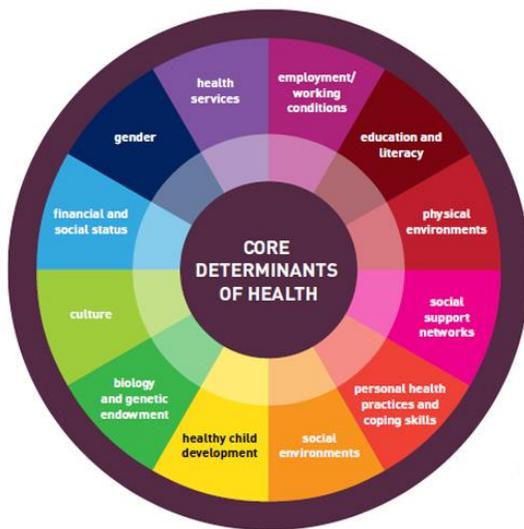


Figure 2

<i>211 Nova Scotia</i>	<i>African Nova Scotian Affairs</i>	<i>Association of Black Social Workers</i>	<i>Black Educators Association</i>	<i>Citadel High School</i>
<i>Cole Harbour High School</i>	<i>Community Health Teams</i>	<i>Cornwallis Street Baptist Church</i>	<i>Dartmouth Learning Network</i>	<i>Dartmouth North Community Centre</i>
<i>Dartmouth North Community Food Cent</i>	<i>East Dartmouth Boys and Girls Club</i>	<i>Halifax North Memorial Public Library</i>	<i>Mulgrave Park Caring and Learning Centre</i>	<i>New Beginnings Ministries</i>
<i>North End Parent Resource Centre</i>	<i>North Preston Recreation Centre</i>	<i>Phoenix Youth Programs and Services</i>	<i>Reachability</i>	<i>Robert Leek Counselling Services</i>
<i>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</i>	<i>Saint Mary's University</i>	<i>Take Action Society</i>	<i>The East Preston Empowerment Academy</i>	<i>YMCA Nova Scotia Works Employment Services Centre</i>

in meeting with the key service providers the social determinants of health model was determined to be significant for inclusion in the sustainability report as similar to the three key epidemiological principles which Ceasefire operates under the use of the determinants of health model highlights just how different the Ceasefire program is from other Afrocentric focused anti-gun violence initiatives such as soul strong in North Preston, as they do not focus on the singular case of gun violence but the deeper socioeconomic issues which are prevalent within the communities in which these incidents occur.

Although the Ceasefire model has been met with undeniable success in the three years since there have been boots on the ground within the four key target areas key stakeholders within the organization felt that it was important to highlight some of the obstacles and needs which Ceasefire Halifax has faced since their inception in order to sell to potential funders what exactly they will be investing in looking towards phase two. Some of more prominent barriers which key stakeholders identified include funding, staffing, and requests for our services outside of the designated target areas. In touching on the funding that the Ceasefire

organization received upon their inception it was noted within the sustainability report that organizations which are funded by public safety Canada are only granted funds for a limit of 60 months or five years. With the amount of money that was allocated to Ceasefire they were only able to higher one violence interrupter per target area. This amount of funding was not sufficient as the amounts off violent incidents which occur within these particular target areas far exceeds the amount of mediations which could be conducted by one singular person and thus funding for employees needs to be increased significantly looking towards phase two.

In shifting our attention to the issue of staffing one of the prominent issues which field staff identified within the first three years of operation was that although the communities which we are servicing have a higher than average African Nova Scotian population the Caucasian demographic (with the exception of North Preston) still out numbers that of the African Nova Scotian population. That being said although Ceasefires mandate states that they hold an Afrocentric focus many of the young men who they provide services to have Caucasian friends who are in similar situations thus the organization has received backlash for not assisting all members of the community which they service. Cease fires key stakeholders recognized that this was a prevalent issue within the target areas and thus if found to be sustainable has decided to allow their field staff to work with any and all people who are determined to be at risk of gun violence in an attempt stop the spread of violence not only in the African Nova Scotian community but the community as a whole.

In looking at the final obstacle that was identified by key stakeholders being that of receiving requests for services outside of Ceasefires designated target areas, the organization acknowledges that in a perfect world the Ceasefire program would be made available to all

members of society and cover the entirety of the city due to the funding that would be required to do so this is just not within the realm of possibility. However in looking towards phase two the organization is in the process of expanding to other parts of the city and highlighted there plan to do so in the following way:

1. Acquire the appropriate number of staff to accommodate the proposed expansion
2. Attain funding to not only maintain the status quo but to expand in to other areas which are deemed to be at risk
3. Obtain the necessary resources and budget to create and maintain a database with a business intelligent component that will showcase the success of the organization, allow us to track gun/other weapon related incidents and manage the provision of our services accordingly.

In looking back at the work which I conducted within the Ceasefire organization over the past eighty hours through the creation of the sustainability proposal I learned an incredible amount about the difference between the African Nova Scotian community and their Caucasian counter parts. If not for organizations such as Ceasefire many of the people whom they service would go untreated by mainstream service providers and thus rather than getting the help that they desperately need would fall through the cracks and thus return to a life that leads nowhere but the hospital, penitentiary, or the grave.

Works cited

Kotlowitz, A. (2008, May 03). Blocking the Transmission of Violence. Retrieved October 30, 2017, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/magazine/04health-t.html>