

Civic Coalition to Save Lives

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Temple University Hospital Intervention Program: Healing the Physical and Emotional Wounds of Gun Violence

In Philadelphia's relentless battle against gun violence, the doors to Temple University Hospital are always open, and far too often, revolving as gunshot victims who survive are at very high risk of being shot again.

The Level-1 trauma center treats the most gunshot wounds in Philadelphia and in the Commonwealth and is also the epicenter of groundbreaking efforts to reduce gun violence and repeat victimization.

Temple's Hospital Violence Intervention Program (HVIP) launched in 2019 with Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) funding. Informed by evidence-based intervention strategies, the HVIP helps to address the complex needs of gunshot wound patients and the catastrophic, less visible injuries each bullet inflicts on victims, their families and communities.

Scott Charles runs the program as Trauma Outreach Manager and served as a panelist at the Civic Coalition To Save Lives Year of Progress forum in December.

Scott discussed the genesis of Temple's HVIP and the role the Civic Coalition to Save Lives has played in expanding its capacity through resources and collaboration.

Last year the Coalition awarded \$335,000 in grants to the city's HVIP's and Trauma Intervention Programs (TIP) at Temple University Hospital; Einstein Hospital; Penn Presbyterian Medical Center; Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; Drexel's Healing Hurt People; and Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

The grants can be used for temporary/short-term housing; self-care/wellness for staff, conferences, retreats and discretionary funds for client support that are crucial yet typically ineligible expenses under state and federal grants.



Panelists at the Civic Coalition to Save Lives Year of Progress forum (l-r) Deion Sumpter, Director of the City of Philadelphia's Group Violence Intervention Strategy (GVI), Chantay Love, Co-founder and President of EMIR Healing Center, and Scott Charles, Trauma Outreach Manager for Temple University Hospital.

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Crucial to the HVIP's work is identifying ways to better serve Temple's gunshot patients - predominantly young men of color - once they leave the hospital. As Charles explained, "We had, up until that point, simply returned them to the neighborhoods and the circumstances that brought them to us in the first place."

Temple's HVIP includes a team of Trauma Victim Support Advocates (TVSA) embedded in the hospital, ensuring 24/7 support for shooting victims and their families, often holding the hands of patients and providing anxious family members with status updates. He described the HVIP's patient advocacy approach as a monumental shift in acknowledging that addressing the social-emotional needs of victims is as vital as medical care. Charles also emphasized how victim advocacy is critical in mitigating the potential for retaliation driven by frustration and anger.

Temple's Trauma Victim Support Advocates (TVSA)

Program places crisis responders in the emergency department 24/7 to help patients and their family members immediately following a violent injury. These advocates perform a variety of functions that include: offering comfort to patients in the trauma bay, giving families regular updates about their loved ones' conditions, providing grief support to families of homicide victims, linking survivors to crime victim services, and offering emotional support to patients after they have been discharged from the hospital.

Scott praised the Coalition for breaking down barriers and fostering cooperation among organizations working to deliver intervention-based solutions to reduce gun violence. He said greater coordination over the past year has

enabled Temple to assemble a diverse team of therapists, case managers, victim advocates, and workforce development specialists.

Scott acknowledged the challenges in securing funding and the importance of collaboration with state, federal, and city partners. The increasing demand for services, coupled with stagnant funding, limits the HVIP's effectiveness and underscores the need for the Coalition's continued support of resources and coordination.

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"No HVIP, no single program alone can serve all of the various needs of intervention," said Charles. "The Coalition has gotten us to the table to talk with one another, and now we can do these warm handoffs to other organizations that do intensive case management that go well beyond the walls of the trauma center. We're incredibly grateful for the funding from PCCD and the work this Coalition has done in just the last 12 months."

As Temple University Hospital continues its mission to bend the curve of gun violence, Charles called for ongoing collaboration and support from the community, state partners, and the Coalition. The transformative work undertaken at Temple serves as a testament to the power of collective action in addressing the deeply rooted challenges of gun violence in Philadelphia.

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Scott Charles - The VIP Behind Temple's HVIP

As the Trauma Outreach Manager for Temple University Hospital, Scott Charles stands at either the gateway for healing or death's door for the hundreds of gunshot wound victims seen each year. He is part of the dynamic driving force behind groundbreaking initiatives to prevent, address, and heal the devastating impact of gun violence.

With Dr. Amy Goldberg, a distinguished trauma surgeon for more than three decades and current dean of the medical school, Charles is on a mission to not only save lives in the immediate aftermath of a gunshot wound but also to provide continuous support once medical treatment concludes. The power duo's collaboration has given rise to several acclaimed initiatives directed by Charles, each helping apply pressure to addressing the physical and social-emotional wounds inflicted by gun violence in Philadelphia.



- **The HVIP's Trauma Victim Support Advocates Program** places crisis responders in the emergency department 24/7 to help patients and their family members immediately following a violent injury. These advocates perform a variety of functions that include offering comfort to patients in the trauma bay; giving families regular updates about their loved ones' conditions; providing grief support to families of homicide victims; linking survivors to crime victim services and offering emotional support to patients after they have been discharged from the hospital.
- **Cradle to Grave** is a groundbreaking prevention program that educates public school students and adjudicated youth about the medical realities of firearm injury as they tour the hospital's trauma area, offering a vivid understanding of the devastating physical impact of bullets on the human body.
- **Fighting Chance** empowers communities by providing first-aid training to address gunshot injuries.
- **Safe Bet** distributes thousands of free gun locks to prevent unintentional firearm injuries.