



RESEARCH REPORT

Oakland Stakeholder Perspectives of Homicide and Shooting Scene Response

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ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is a leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. For 50 years, Urban has been the trusted source for rigorous analysis of complex social and economic issues; strategic advice to policymakers, philanthropists, and practitioners; and new, promising ideas that expand opportunities for all. Our work inspires effective decisions that advance fairness and enhance the well-being of people and places.



ABOUT THE URBAN PEACE INSTITUTE

Urban Peace Institute (UPI), a project of Community Partners, develops and implements policy, practice and systems solutions to reduce violence, achieve safety, and improve community health so that families can thrive. UPI's goal is that all members of all communities have the safety, opportunity and health they need to thrive. UPI uses innovative tools and strategies to strengthen social movements and achieve high impact policy change.

Building on 15 years of successful track record in Los Angeles, UPI works with partners across the country to address community violence through the implementation of a comprehensive violence reduction strategy. Through advocacy for smart justice policies, systemic reform, provision of technical assistance, and training for law enforcement, gang intervention workers, and community and public sector leaders, UPI seeks to sustain community-specific strategies to increase safety.

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Oakland Stakeholder Perspectives of Homicide and Shooting Scene Response

This document presents findings from interviews conducted in Oakland by the Urban Institute (Urban) and the Urban Peace Institute (UPI) under the “Oakland Procedural Justice Principles for Police Officers” cooperative agreement with the City of Oakland. The work under this cooperative agreement is intended to inform Oakland’s efforts to improve policies and practices related to the police department’s management, response, and activities at shooting and homicide scenes, and to develop and implement procedural justice and related trainings for proactive and investigative police units. This document complements the literature and practice reviews conducted by our team, with a focus on the perspectives of survivors of shootings and family members of homicide victims, supplemented by the views of Oakland Police Department (OPD) officers whose work involves homicides and shootings, and individuals working on street outreach to prevent further violence and/or provide services and support to shooting victims or families of those lost to violence.

Methodology

The Urban/UPI team conducted a total of 31 semi-structured, in-person interviews from 24–28, 2017, with stakeholders from the Oakland community and police department. Interview participants included family members of homicide victims, survivors of shootings, OPD officers who respond to shooting and homicide scenes, and community service providers/partners who provide support to survivors and families of homicides and shootings (see box 1 for details on the total number of interviews conducted across participant groups).

Family members and survivors were recruited to participate in the interviews in partnership with Youth ALIVE!, an Oakland-based nonprofit focused on youth violence prevention and service delivery to at-risk youth and families. Youth ALIVE! used relationships established through its work in violence interruption and support services to families of violence to identify potential adult interview participants who were survivors of shootings or family members of homicide victims.

BOX 1

Number of Interviews Conducted by Group

The Urban/UIP team conducted a total of 31 semi-structured, in-person interviews from April 24–28, 2017, with stakeholders from the Oakland community and police department. Interview participants included family members of homicide victims, survivors of shootings, OPD officers who respond to shooting and homicide scenes, and community service providers/partners who provide support to survivors and families of homicides and shootings.

- 10 family members of homicide victims
- 9 survivors of shootings
- 4 OPD officers who respond to shooting/homicide; and
- 8 community service provider/partner staff who provide support to survivors and families of homicides and shootings.

Note: Several of the survivor and community partner interview participants had also lost family members to violence and spoke to that experience in their interviews.

Interviews with family members and survivors were conducted at the YouthALIVE! office and each interview lasted approximately one hour. YouthALIVE! provided on-site counselors in case interviewees requested counseling services at any time before, after, or during the interviews. Each family member and survivor interviewed was over 18 years of age and had experienced a shooting incident between 2011 and 2017. To limit the re-traumatization of survivors, we did not interview survivors or family members who had experienced a shooting or homicide event within the last three months. Potential OPD and community partner respondents were identified by OPD, City of Oakland staff, and Youth ALIVE! Urban contacted these potential participants via email and phone— independent of OPD—to request interviews. All OPD interview participants worked in units that respond to homicide and shooting scenes.

Interview protocols for family members and survivors included questions about their interactions with OPD officers at shooting scenes, hospitals, and during follow-up investigations. Protocols also addressed interactions with community service providers/partners that were not a part of OPD. OPD interview protocols sought to understand the roles, practices, training, and support procedures for OPD personnel in response to shooting/homicide scenes. Community service provider/partner (non-OPD) interviews inquired about relationships with OPD, support services, and ways that OPD and non-OPD stakeholders collaborate to support families and survivors. Across all stakeholder protocols, the

research team asked for recommendations to improve interactions between OPD and family members/survivors during responses to shooting and homicide scenes and the following investigation. While many themes and questions were consistent across protocols, separate protocols were tailored to fit the different relationships that each of the four groups of interview participants had to shooting incidents and OPD's responses to them.

Interview notes were coded for general themes related to the 1) needs of survivors and family members; 2) police communication and behavior at the scene; 3) investigation and evidence collection; 4) communication throughout the investigation; 5) case resolutions; 6) homicide and shooting scene priorities/responsibilities; 7) inter- and intra-agency collaboration; and 8) strengths and limitations of OPD responses; and 9) recommendations for OPD when responding to shooting and homicide scenes moving forward. Interviews were synthesized for the key themes in the context of OPD's involvement at shooting/homicide scenes, hospital follow-ups, and in the aftermath of the investigation.

Interview Findings

This section presents what survivors and family members, and those stakeholders who have interacted with them, described experiencing at homicide and shooting scenes, as well as what survivors and family members reported needing and wanting from OPD officers at shooting scenes, hospitals, and in over the course of the investigation. We organize this section around interview respondent perspectives on what happened at the shooting scene, at the hospital, and over the longer term through investigation and/or case resolution. We include recommendations from the interview participants regarding how their needs and expectations could be better met, and how OPD practice around shooting and homicide scenes could be better generally. Throughout, we foreground the experiences of victims and family members, and deploy the information from the OPD and outreach and victim support stakeholders to support and elaborate upon their perspectives.

While the interview participants discussed a variety of issues, practices, and recommendations for improvement in their experiences interacting with OPD and its partners around shooting scenes and subsequent investigations, two broad themes predominated:

- Respondents wanted OPD and its partners to demonstrate compassion and empathy in all interactions with victims and their family members resulting from a shooting.

- Survivors and family members want open, proactive communication from OPD and its partners, including sharing of information when possible, or when that was not possible, an explanation of why information was not available or could not be shared.

“In Oakland, police and people are at a struggle. Sometimes, the police department is not there for people.”

Interactions at the Shooting Scene

As mentioned above, a consistent theme across all the interviews was the importance of OPD officers (and anyone else victims and their loved ones interacted with at the scene) demonstrating empathy and compassion for survivors and family members. Without exception, the survivors and family member interviewed said this was important to their well-being. An important component of this from the perspective of survivors and family members was the need to communicate the equal standing of all victims, and avoiding suggesting that homicide victims in any way deserved what happened to them, or that survivors were people who were likely to be dishonest with the police. Specific examples cited by interview participants of OPD officers showing empathy and compassion at the scene included

- prioritizing getting medical care for shooting victims;
- reassuring victims;
- acknowledging the trauma experienced by both survivors and family members; and
- listening to and validating survivors and family members’ experiences.

By contrast, survivors and family members described several examples indicating officers’ lack of empathy and compassion:

- rudeness, brusqueness, or seeming preoccupied when asked questions;
- seemingly uncaring behavior such as joking or laughing;
- leaving a homicide victim’s body laying out at the scene for a long time;
- officer questions that felt like they were “interrogating” survivors and family members at the scene or in the hospital at the expense of the person’s traumatic experience; and

- being unwilling to provide information about what happened, or confirm the identity of the victim.

Survivors reported mixed experiences with how OPD treated them at the scene. Three survivors described OPD officers focusing on their health and getting them necessary medical attention. However, five survivors described an immediate focus on interrogating them about the homicide/shooting incident, which they all found uncomfortable or off-putting. As one survivor described their experience: “I kind of felt uncomfortable. It wasn’t about, ‘Are you ok?’ or ‘Are you going to make it?’ or ‘Just breathe.’ It was just like ‘Who did it?’” Two survivors felt that officers asked them questions suggesting that they were under suspicion. For example, one survivor said: “When police come, OPD has a lot of crime, lot of unsolved murders, and so I understand they are being defensive. But they immediately go and say ‘Are you in a gang?’ ‘Show me your tattoo’... they are trying to look at my tattoo to match it with some gang.” As one family member stated, “I think OPD could have been more reasonable and understanding instead of saying that person [survivor] could have been lying.”

While three family members expressed dissatisfaction with their treatment by OPD at the scene of their loved ones’ shooting, some family members reported positive experiences with OPD at the scene; for example: “I think they did a great job. There is nothing in particular that I think they should do better. They were considerate. They were sensitive to my needs...They handled us with a lot of care. I would hope someone else would get just that.” This respondent also appreciated OPD’s work to keep crowds away from the home where the homicide occurred, preserving the dignity and privacy of the family.

But other family members of victims had a number of criticisms of OPD’s interactions with them at shooting scenes. They had issues with care for the shooting victims. Two felt it took far too long to get an ambulance on the scene. For family members of homicide victim, the amount of time bodies could remain laying where they fell was a particular source of anguish, as exemplified by one mother’s experience: “My son was laying on that cold ground. For two hours. Longer than that. It was hours he was laying there. Man, can they pick him up. It was kinda mean and rude. It’s the way they do stuff now. They had no compassion.” A concrete policy change suggested to communicate compassion was more dignified treatment of the bodies of homicide victims. One of the OPD respondents suggested “Instead of using yellow tape over the body, we need to try and find canopies, or some kind of shields, so the body is not in the public view.”

Problems with being treated like suspects because of the interrogation process were less prevalent among family members than among survivors, but one mother did describe the following happening after providing contact information to OPD at the scene:

[A] second officer called me an hour later and then asked if he could pick me up. I said why do you need to pick me up? He said to make sure I was ok and then he lured me into getting into the car; then drove me around the neighborhood and asked if I knew what had happened. It was more he was interrogating me. Probably because I have other sons and he probably thought they would know. His questions were not about the son who was killed but it was about the other son. He wanted to know where was the other son, asking me about the son who could do something.

OPD respondents described the immediate police priorities at the scene as securing the scene, attending to the person who is injured, preserving evidence, and identifying leads and any other things that could support the investigation. These priorities address some of the needs and wants of survivors and family members (both at the scene and over the long term, as described later), but do not focus on the empathy and information provision that are most desired immediately.

All four OPD stakeholders agreed on the importance being compassionate and empathetic, and two of them further emphasized that it was important to be compassionate and empathetic regardless of whether the victim was known or believed to be criminally involved. All community partner respondents echoed the importance of empathy and communication, but added an emphasis on the need of family members to be heard, and the need to focus on healing for survivors of shootings. One person described how to put empathy into practice: “I listen. Without judgment. I just listen. A lot of times [survivors/family members] just want somebody to hear them. I’m not trying to fix anything. I’m not trying to solve anything. I’m just allowing them the space for them to talk, cry, and laugh.” Seven interview respondents, representing all interview groups except survivors, suggested that a greater focus on compassion and empathy could and should be delivered through training to all levels of OPD.

Two OPD respondents also noted the difficulty of managing tensions at shooting scenes, where crowds can get confrontational. Consequently, to control crowds at some shooting scenes outside of family members’ homes, OPD officers forced/compelled family members to prove their identities before they could return home. Three family member respondents indicated they understood the police as doing what they needed to do in terms of securing the scene and collecting evidence, but did want those needs communicated to them clearly and respectfully.

A substantial area of agreement was the importance of communication and information provision from OPD officers at the scene. Provision of information was also important to survivors, but not at the scene. In the immediate aftermath of a shooting, family members particularly want to be informed whether their loved one was hurt or killed, including confirmation of the identity of a victim at the scene; several family members indicated that they were notified of the shooting of a loved one by friends, family, or neighbors. The way officers responded to requests for information could be the source of complaints about officer indifference. As one family member described their experience: “I

approached the officer, but he gave me an 'I'm busy' attitude. They just told me they have not identified the body and took my info. I'm not doing anything wrong, but just trying to get some information." At the scene, this meant an openness to questions from family members, even if the answer was that further information couldn't be provided at the time. Acknowledging the validity of wanting information is itself a form of compassion. Three of the family members readily acknowledged the need for OPD to focus on other priorities at the scene and limitations in their ability to provide information immediately. Nevertheless, they wanted officers to respond to their question in the best way they can and acknowledge their need to find out what is going on. As one OPD respondent characterized the message they deliver to officers on this point, "I'm not telling the officers to hug 'em, but I'm saying communicate with them."

A recurring theme in the interviews was that it would be helpful to have more officers from Oakland, and more specifically from the neighborhoods where violence is most prevalent. Such officers would be more familiar with community norms, experiences, and styles of communication. Respondents who suggested this felt that officers from the community would be better able to hear the community, and to take in what people who are grieving and traumatized are saying, sometimes in a confrontational or angry manner, without becoming defensive and while maintaining calm. It was hoped that officers from Oakland might be better able in turn to communicate in these situations in ways that convey understanding and empathy.

I think there needs to be more police in this area who understand what's going on where we live at. The police should be from here if they interact with people from here. Sometimes they think our emotions are like aggression. But, we're just going through different things than you. We will react differently than you do because we've gone through different things than you have. We also don't want to be killed and shot around here. They think that everyone on the streets are glad. We're not happy with this situation around us, we just learn how to live with it and deal with it. They need to be trained on how to look at things like that.

Many of the issues around OPD interactions with survivors, their families and community members at shooting scenes might be summarized as a lack of reciprocity. Survivors, family members, and community partners framed OPD's communication as often being solely focused on what OPD needed, to the exclusion of attention to what survivors and community members might need to hear or say. They understood, for example, that OPD officers need to gather information about the incident (although doing so in a way that seemed accusatory of the victim was not appreciated), but they wanted that balanced with willingness to take time to express concern for the victims or listen to what community members had to say. Three family members tied this to OPD needing more officers, reasoning that too few officers made it more difficult for those responding to shootings scenes to find the time for this kind of interaction.

Respondents also tied this to a perceived lack of OPD presence in the community outside of responding to calls and critical incidents. As one survivor said, “They’re trying to find a reason to take somebody to jail. Stop trying to incriminate everybody. They could just come around to see if we’re...I dunno, just to come. They could come to get to know people...They can’t only come when they want something.” There was a sense that OPD was only present when a crisis occurred, yet the presences of OPD officers at the shooting scene who have relationships with the community through long-term engagement could alleviate this perception and improve the likelihood that community members would be more willing to engage OPD around the facts of the shooting scene. Conversely, because community members saw OPD as being uninterested and uncaring, most of them did not want to help OPD in solving or reducing crime.

INTERACTIONS WITH NON-OPD ORGANIZATIONS AT THE SHOOTING SCENE

While our interviews focused on the experiences of survivors and family members with OPD, their overall experience with the shooting/homicide incident were shaped by connections to a variety of organizations in addition to OPD. For example, two family members expressed frustration with ambulances being slow to arrive. In some cases, ambulance response time was attributed to OPD and its actions at the scene. One family member said, “I feel like with my brother they waited too long when he got shot. They came and put road blocks and stuff. By the time you do all that he should have gone to the hospital.” Another said, “It took the police I swear like an hour for an ambulance to get there.” One service provider respondent noted that delays in the ambulance getting to the victim arose because OPD had not yet cleared the scene.

There are several categories of service providers who also often respond to shooting scenes, including victim services from Youth ALIVE!, street outreach workers, and violence interrupters. While there was a form of notification that each of these groups received about an incident and the Oakland Unite team coordinated their deployment to scenes, there was not an existing protocol on how these individuals interacted with the police at the scene. Some victim service providers noted at times having to explain their role to the officers at the scene who were unaware of who they were and others noted that they avoided interacting with OPD officers altogether.

Interview participants from these organizations described their roles at the scene as gathering information, building relationships with people at the scene, mediating conflicts, preventing retaliation, and connecting victims and families to resources to meet their needs. Some described a role at the scene advocating for victims and families to OPD, including a mother wanting to see the body of her child, but being rebuffed by the officers at the scene. Other providers, particularly interrupters, noted

avoiding contact with the police but serving as a resource to the victim and the family at the scene and the hospital. These groups of responders were identified as a resource to the community, victim, and family, but said they needed stay within their role to be effective and maintain their credibility with the community.

One OPD respondent saw the importance of maintaining some separation in roles as similarly important, saying of the violence interruption and victim support work being done by community partner organizations:

In my mind, I don't see them as establishing a relationship with the community for the police department. I think it should be separate. Everyone has their lane and credibility.... I think we have to be careful with the relationship there because of history because on what we are each tasked with doing. What you never want to do [is] tarnish their credibility and their ability to be effective."

Hospital Interactions

The mixed experiences of survivors with OPD at the shooting scene continued in the hospital, which was also the first conscious interaction many of the survivors had with OPD as a result of the shooting. Survivor perceptions of interactions with OPD in the hospital were strongly influenced by the demeanor of the detective, and whether the survivor was treated with suspicion or as a victim. This is very similar to the issues with OPD communication at the shooting scene. One survivor described being treated like suspect by an officer at the hospital: "The cop is saying I better not be lying about the situation and that they have witnesses saying that I was doing something else. He was saying that if things come back and it turns out not to be true and that I was going to go to jail." By contrast, another survivor's impression of the OPD officer who saw him at the hospital was much more positive: "What I remember the most is that he didn't treat me like a criminal. I was legitimately a victim and I felt that way even when he left. He let me use his phone. He was solid." The OPD interview participants noted the importance of using bedside interactions to establish rapport and letting them know that the investigation mattered to OPD. Clearly, approaching the victims as victims rather than as people under suspicion was important to accomplishing this.

Some service providers emphasized the need for OPD to understand the mindset of the victim at the hospital. They wanted OPD to think more compassionately about the state of the victim in the hospital, particularly as it related to the police report and victim's services application. They noted that often OPD will mark the victim as "uncooperative" on the police report without understanding that the victim might be in a great deal of pain or under the influence of medication and therefore, unable to

communicate with OPD. Understandably, the victim might be overcome by the extent of their injuries while at the hospital in the immediate aftermath of the shooting. Being marked “uncooperative” had negative consequences for some victims when applying for victim assistance. Several service providers noted the difficulty they have correcting or amending the report to improve the victim’s ability to receive financial support.

Longer-Term Post-Shooting Interactions

Survivors and family members reported mixed views on their longer-term interactions with OPD. Empathy, compassion, communication, and information-sharing continued to be critically important, although the successes and shortcomings in manifesting them were different after the early interactions at the scene or in the hospital. Interactions over the course of the investigation of shootings and homicides could strongly color overall perceptions of interactions with OPD, for better or worse.

Two of the family members reported having positive experiences with OPD over the course of the investigation into their loved one’s killing, but most interviewees expressed frustration. As with interactions at the scene, a common complaint from family members was a lack of compassion and empathy from OPD. Community partner stakeholders attributed this to the fact that dealing with such situations was a regular occurrence for police personnel, who became desensitized to it as a result. In the words of one community partner, “The work that they [OPD] do often times it feels robotic. It’s like they don’t have an ounce of humanity.” Another community partner said, “OPD has so much going on, and they kind of just come in as routine; it doesn’t have any emotion behind it. It’s very just matter of fact.” For both family members and survivors, a perceived lack of commitment by OPD to solving the case was taken as indicating a lack of caring, a concern echoed by many of the community partners.

The sense from survivors regarding the quality of interactions with OPD was closely tied to whether there was perceived pressure to contribute to the investigation. One survivor described their positive experience with OPD investigators thusly: “They were really cool actually. [They were] really professional and nice. ...I didn’t feel pressured at all. When they asked me if I wanted to ride around in the area and my mom said no, they didn’t question it at all.” Another survivor noted the importance of how an investigator conducted himself at the hospital: “He sat down next to me. He didn’t stand over me. His tone. He wasn’t loud or hella aggressive with the way he communicated with me...Body language was great; tone of voice was great.”

Apprehension of perpetrators was an outcome that family members in particular valued. Conversely, general enforcement actions arising from the shooting but not involving apprehending the

perpetrators were a source of frustration. Specifically, two family members noted that police locked up other youth in the neighborhood, including the victim's brother in one case, which they saw as a reaction to the killing, but not related to identifying the perpetrators or bringing them to justice.

Three family members and one survivor reported having positive experiences with OPD during the investigation, although some of these were balanced by negative experiences. One family member seemed to describe what many of the family members and survivors were looking for:

I actually had a good interaction with this homicide officer. We were there at the house at the incident until maybe 11pm at night. There was this one officer who was in charge of keeping us updated. He did an excellent job. He asked if there was anyone in particular that you want to have access. This particular officer was great checking in with me. I had never been involved with this before, he was excellent. He explained how it worked. He followed through.

A family member familiar with victim services over the years noted that the homicide unit's receptivity to meeting with family members of victims, communicating with them, and not being accusatory in their communication, have all improved substantially over the years.

A clear request and recommendation from family members and survivors, strongly echoed by the community partners and OPD respondents, was to maintain ongoing contact with family members and survivors, and not to wait on having new information to share before providing updates. Family members and survivors said they wanted updates on the progress of the investigation into the shooting, and explanation of the investigative and (should the perpetrator be identified) adjudication processes. Nearly every survivor, family member, OPD officer and staff, and community partner interview underscored the importance of follow-up communication from OPD to victims and their family members even in the absence of new information to share, especially if OPD or other Oakland-based partners had said they would provide such follow-up. Part of what needed to be communicated by regular updates was not just the status of the case, but that OPD continued to have it in mind and remained committed to resolving it. One family member suggested sending a letter at the end of each year to the families of victims with unresolved cases, to reassure them that OPD is still working on it.

“Stay in contact with the person you were working on. I don't think anyone wants to feel like they're bugging the police about ... ‘Did you find this out?’ People really want to know what's going on, so I would just say stay in contact with them.”

Two survivors and one family member mentioned that OPD detectives said they would follow up with them, but didn't. The absence of follow-up communication was sometimes interpreted to mean that the police were not actively investigating the shooting, which, as discussed previously, was seen as an important form of police demonstrating that they care. For example, the same survivor who talked about the good body language and tone of the OPD investigator in the hospital described their subsequent interactions with OPD this way:

That was the last cool interaction. The rest of them were f***ing terrible. I got a detective's number. I called him every day. I wanted updates every day. I wanted to know because I legitimately blame myself. The detectives, they were terrible. If they weren't rude to me in the voicemail that they left on the phone...At the end of this message he said my case has already been passed out. I wanted to know what happened to the things in the car. I called the. I never got a follow-up call from them...It was obvious they didn't care. The detectives were terrible man. I see why unsolved crime is the way it is.

Five family members and one survivor described being the ones to reach out to OPD in the absence of getting updates from them, and not getting much information back. One family member described this dynamic, "When I contacted them they say 'Oh well we're still working on the case. We can't give you anything until the case is solved.' I don't think they are trying to find out who shot him or anything."

A specific source of information mentioned by both survivors and family members was the police report on the incident. Three family members noted no police report had been prepared or that they hadn't seen one, including one case in which the family member directly asked for it and was told it hadn't been prepared. Three survivors likewise noted lack of a police report, with one saying, "It would help me have closure [to know the case outcome], you know, if this traumatic event is opened or closed. I would also like to know what they put on the police report."

The OPD participants recognized that some of these dynamics were problematic, and acknowledged the lack of follow-up communication. One OPD respondent said this lack of follow-up is more acute for non-fatal shooting incidents, for which the ratio of cases to investigators is much higher than for homicides. Still, from the OPD respondent perspective, police commitment was not lacking. One OPD respondent said of the investigators: "I can't speak highly enough about how much they dedicate to these investigations. If people only knew their sacrifices. They wear it on them until they find the person responsible. As a unit we go through great lengths to try to demonstrate that we care."

It's worth noting that two survivors mentioned frustration due to OPD not returning their property that they had on them or in the car at the time of the shooting. One family member voiced similar frustration, describing being told their loved one's wallet couldn't be returned until the case was solved.

INTERACTIONS WITH NON-OPD ORGANIZATIONS

For family members who lost a loved one, interactions with the coroner were an important part of the process. Three found those interactions helpful, and said that the coroner provided information: “The coroner was the most helpful...The coroner told me what was going on and what the process was.” For two family members, the coroner was the source of confirmation of the identity of their loved one as the homicide victim. However, two family members reported having to push to get information from the coroner, much as they did with OPD.

Family members reported getting information on the progress of their cases from the district attorney’s office. But this experience varied depending on the prosecutor assigned, as one family member illustrated by contrasting the interactions with two different prosecutors assigned to the case: “The first lady DA was not as responsive, the second one was very responsive. He sat down and met me, checked on us. He came to the house and talked to us. ‘Right now,’ he said, ‘you’re my boss.’”

Survivors and family members indicated the need for additional services and assistance following a shooting incident. Specifically, survivors mentioned needing financial assistance to get them through a period of incapacitation, assistance addressing PTSD, depression, and/or trauma, assistance with getting back into school, and relocation assistance to support safety. Family members indicated needing financial assistance with funeral arrangements, and expressed a need for therapeutic services and peer support in dealing with their loss.

Both survivors and family members reported contact with the victim compensation agency (referred to consistently as “Victims of Crime”), but the experience of that contact appeared very different between the two groups. The three survivors who discussed their contact with Victims of Crime in detail did not report getting the tangible assistance they were seeking, and were highly dissatisfied. One said, “They didn’t do nothing. They told me to run around, get this document, get this document, get this document, and they still don’t do nothing. And, it happened two times, it happened twice.” Another survivor said:

Victim[s] of crime is bullshit. They should be able to give money for pain and suffering. I should be able to relocate. I got shot near my mom’s house. I can’t come up with \$1,700 to move. They should pay for the deposit for me to move. I am still living in the same place. I have kids and stuff and I don’t feel comfortable living there after what happened. VOC needs to improve their policy to help people like me out.

Family members reported much more positive experiences with victim compensation. Three family members mentioned concrete support they obtained through Victims of Crime, including financial assistance with funeral expenses, relocation support, and payment for therapy.

Youth ALIVE!, its Khadafy Washington Project, and Catholic Charities were the most commonly cited community organizations that provided help to survivors and family members, both of whom had consistently positive things to say about the support they received. Outreach workers were also frequently mentioned, although not necessarily their organizational affiliation. They provided support and therapy to deal with trauma and depression, financial assistance, and help navigating systems to address issues such as applying for relocation assistance or re-enrolling in school. As one survivor described what they received from the Khadafy Washington Project: “Everything they helped me get back on my feet. They hooked me up with a counselor. ...Helping me combat the depression. Helping me get on my feet financially. Helping me get to the appointments.” One family member who connected with Catholic Charities, the Khadafy Washington Project, and outreach workers characterized the experience with all three this way: “These organizations were like my family. I’m still in the healing process now, I still get therapy. They still help me with things I need in my personal life.”

In addition to the importance of support for survivors and family members from these organizations, churches and the community in general were a critical source of support for family members. As one family member summarized this role in their experience, “The people in my community, they were wonderful. They comforted me in so many ways. I didn’t know my son knew half the people on my block. I had a lot of help.”

Interview Perspectives and Procedural Justice

As summarized in table 1, both the positive and negative experiences described by Oakland shooting survivors and family members of homicide victims with OPD at the scene and thereafter relate to the procedural justice framework. In this section, we discuss in more detail how these experiences connect to the components of procedural justice, and the implications of those connections. We also discuss how communication and role definition among OPD and community organizations working with survivors and family members of victims might support more procedurally just and satisfying interactions with the community around shooting scenes. It is important to note that while many OPD stakeholders interviewed believed that officers were already conducting themselves in a procedurally just way at homicide and shooting scenes, it was clear from the interviews with survivors and family members that that was not the case. As with many law enforcement agencies, there is a gap between what the leadership believes is happening and what is happening actually on the ground. To close this gap, intentional efforts to support the procedural justice framework through on-going training and quality supervision will be necessary.

TABLE 1

Survivor and Family Member Experiences, by Component of Procedural Justice

Procedural justice element	Positive experiences	Negative experiences
Treating people with dignity and respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating empathy and compassion Reassuring victims Preserving dignity and privacy of the family/keeping crowds away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seemingly uncaring behavior such as joking or laughing among the officers Leaving the victim’s body laying out at the scene for a long time Not returning property to survivors or their families Detectives are unresponsive to phone calls
Giving voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening to and validating survivor and family member experiences Acknowledging trauma experienced by victims and family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rudeness, brusqueness or seemingly preoccupied when asked questions Being interested only in instrumental communication (e.g., identifying suspects)
Being neutral and transparent in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treating people as “legitimate victims” Explaining how the investigative process will work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being unwilling to provide information about what happened, or confirm the identity of the victim Officer questions that felt like they were “interrogating” survivors and family members at the scene or in the hospital without due consideration for the trauma experienced by the person
Conveying trustworthy motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritizing medical care for victims Committing to solve shooting on behalf of the victim Providing regular updates to the survivor and/or family even if there is no new information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPD does not follow up on status of investigation Officers don’t engage with the community OPD engages in enforcement actions after shootings that appear unrelated to solving the crime

Treating People with Dignity and Respect

Treating people with dignity and respect connects directly to the main interview themes of showing compassion and empathy, and communicating and providing information. Being rude or discourteous is a clear form of disrespect, and while there were some complaints from respondents about that kind of treatment, more commonly the complaints were more about detachment or coldness from OPD.

Treating people as individuals is an important form of giving them dignity and respect, and a perceived lack of compassion was often related to the sense of being treated as though the shooting situation were routine, as opposed to something that had befallen specific people. Compassionate interactions affirm the humanity and value of a person. Many interview respondents simply said, “Can OPD just be human at the scene?”

Many of the things that might bridge this gap in perspective, such as expressing condolences, being open and responsive to requests for information (even if only to say that information can't be provided yet), and listening to what people have to say don't necessarily take much time. Many interview respondents understood that the police have particular responsibilities at a shooting scene, and recognized the need to balance the kind of communication they wanted with those responsibilities. They understand that OPD needs to collect information on the shooting in order to solve it, but they don't want to feel that OPD has no time or interest in talking to them unless it immediately benefits their securing the scene or conducting the investigation. Establishing a better balance in these areas may require training and on-going supervision to provide and support a framework for officers to foster consistency in considering these things at the scene, and support for them taking some time to do so.

There are a number of areas in which practice changes would support treating community members with more dignity around shootings scenes. Foremost among them was ways of dealing with how the bodies of homicide victims are treated, so that they are not on the ground and exposed for long periods of time.

Giving Voice

Giving people voice can mean being open to their questions and requests for information, even in the face of competing priorities or when you can't provide people the information they're seeking. People we interviewed wanted to say what they had to say without the sense that officers don't want to hear it or don't have time to hear it. This was related to the instrumental communication issue, in that some respondents felt that officers were only interested in hearing information that was useful to them for the investigation. As was the case with dignified and respectful treatment, this seemed to be an area in which a little bit can go a long way, if officers could find ways to slow down, be open, validate and acknowledge what people want to say to them.

A number of the community partner respondents emphasized that listening to survivors and their family members was an important part of what they do. Meeting the need to have voice may be an area in which OPD's community partners can assume a primary role, but officers are going to be the ones initially approached at many shooting scenes, and some kind of hand-off process would be needed if a team approach is to be taken to giving voice.

Being Neutral and Transparent in Decision-Making

Being neutral and transparent in decision making involves showing that all victims deserve compassion and that every case is considered important. The principle that every case and every victim should be equally important came up repeatedly in the interviews. People got very upset when they felt they or their loved ones were being judged, or seen as “undeserving” victims due to alleged or actual involvement in criminal activity. Interactions touching on such involvement might naturally arise given that gun violence often concentrated in active offender networks, but respondents felt the right principle was that nobody deserves to be hurt. Working to avoid the appearance of negative judgment of victims in interactions with survivors or loved ones of homicide victims is important in this light.

Transparency is naturally related to communication. Provision of information at the scene about issues like the identity of the victim were important to people, and even if that information couldn't be provided, responding to the request in a way that acknowledged it as valid was meaningful. In the time after the shooting, proactive follow up with victims or family members on the progress of the investigation and what was known about what happened was also a form of transparency. The absence of such information was sometimes interpreted as the absence of effort to solve the crime. This is turn connected back to neutrality at the community level, as several respondents had doubts regarding whether harms to victims in higher-crime communities of color were taken as seriously as those to higher status people in wealthier areas.

Conveying Trustworthy Motives

In the interviews, the motivation that respondents considered most trustworthy from OPD was that they cared. At the shooting scene, expressions of compassion and empathy were critically important for this reason, as was prioritizing the wellbeing of shooting victims and getting them to the hospital quickly. Over the longer term, communication on the progress of the investigation or resolution of the case was key, because respondents saw a serious effort being made to solve the crimes as the proof that OPD cared. When OPD didn't return their phone calls, made no proactive outreach, and didn't follow up despite promising to do so, this was often interpreted as a lack of caring.

The interviews also examined the OPD's general presence in the community for trustworthy motives. Some felt that OPD was only in their neighborhoods in response to violence, which wasn't seen as trustworthy. Or put another way, the baseline assumption of trustworthiness of OPD officers was seen as greater if officers, and OPD generally, were seen as being more consistently positively present

in a neighborhood prior to a shooting. There were also concerns about enforcement actions seen as responses to a shooting, but not perceived as related to solving the case.

Interviewees suggested that building strong relationships in the community will better situate OPD for times of crisis in the community, when trust is most needed. Five family members expressed a desire for more and different police presence in neighborhoods, including officers dedicated to specific neighborhoods and who get out of their cars and interact with the public more frequently. (Only one survivor mentioned this as desirable.) A community partner respondent summarized what several said was needed:

I think they need to get out of their patrol cars. They need to walk in communities more. They need to come to community events. Just really changing that perception. Changing their image. From people riding up and arresting you to we really care about your community and we're coming to your events we care about the kids we are engaging ... We are part of the community.

“They could just come around to see if we’re...I dunno, just to come. They could come to get to know people...They can’t only come when they want something.”

Communication and Role Clarification with Partners

While this document focuses on OPD’s interactions with the community around shooting scenes, it was clear from the interviews that a variety of stakeholders interact with victims and their families at the scene, at the hospital, and over the longer term. In this sense, homicide and shooting scenes represent one aspect of how the broader violence reduction strategy may or may not be working. There are multiple actors in the violence reduction strategy including OPD, Oakland Unite, community based service providers and others. This provides the potential to employ a coordinated approach to meeting the many needs of victims and their families.

However, the interviews highlighted some serious barriers to doing so. Different notifications are sent to the various stakeholders who show up to homicide and shooting scenes. For example, hospital folks get a trauma alert from OPD whereas Oakland Unite sends out a different set of alerts to their street workers after receiving notification from OPD. It is unclear whether the different stakeholders involved in this work receive the alerts all of the time or some of the time. Nor is it clear whether different stakeholders understand other stakeholder’s purpose, roles, and responsibilities. All stakeholders involved in responses to homicide/shooting scenes should receive the same notification,

Further, their specific response to the notification and their specific role in violence reduction should be understood by all parties.

There is no third party that communicates between OPD and the community. While Oakland Unite wants to and does play that role at times, it's not clear that OPD stakeholders clearly understood the role of Oakland Unite as a coordinator of street outreach and violence interruption resources. Some OPD stakeholders, for example, expressed frustration that violence interrupters did not share information with OPD, even though doing so could jeopardize the legitimacy of violence interrupters in the community. In fact, OPD at times sees Oakland Unite representatives as anti-police, which makes OPD hesitant to work with Oakland Unite. Increasing understanding about the respective roles, and improving coordination and trust between OPD and Oakland Unite has the potential to lead to better, more consistent, and more satisfying communication to the community and meeting their needs around shooting scenes and their aftermath.

While all the right ingredients for violence reduction are in place, they are in need of some framework that will help them start thinking about how to use those ingredients effectively. They have the resources, the right stakeholders, and the right people, but the organizations are un-coordinated and the city lacks a broader framework for understanding violence reduction. OPD relationships with the community, and more specifically those relationships cultivated or broken at homicide and shooting scenes, are part of that larger context.

Conclusion

As OPD works to engage the Oakland community around homicides and shootings with the principles of procedural justice, the interviews summarized in this report reinforce the need to move in that direction. Procedural justice requires treating people with dignity and respect, giving them voice, being neutral and transparent in decision-making, and conveying trustworthy motives for the actions being taken.

The components of procedural justice speak to the needs and concerns expressed by the stakeholders we interviewed. Treating people with *dignity and respect* can mean treating victims with compassion rather than suspicion, preserving the dignity of a victim's body, and making good on commitments to follow up with people about the course on an investigation. Giving people *voice* can mean being open to their questions and requests for information, even in the face of competing priorities or when you can't provide the information they're seeking. Being *neutral and transparent* in decision making involves showing that all victims deserve compassion and that every case is considered

important. Conveying *trustworthy* motives requires open communication, sharing information whenever possible, and working to solve cases.

Based on our interviews, survivors, family members, OPD and community partners all want these things, but do not believe they are occurring nearly as often as everyone feels they should. The themes identified in the report provide OPD with an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and needs of survivors of shootings and family members of homicide victims; prioritizing compassion, empathy, open communication, and police resources to individuals dealing with extremely traumatic experiences.

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