Stop Handgun Violence

THE MASSACHUSETTS SUCCESSFUL
GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION AND
PREVENTION MODEL



Updated November 10, 2026

Background

WORKING FOR OVER 30 YEARS ON GUN SAFETY



Stop Handgun Violence (SHV) was founded in 1995 by businesspeople, gun violence prevention activists AND responsible gun owners. Since its founding SHV has been a lead advocate for gun violence prevention in Massachusetts, as well as a leader nationally.

Today, urban Massachusetts has some of the most comprehensive and effective gun safety laws in the country, the lowest gun death rate in the U.S. and has successfully reduced gun deaths by 40% over the past 30 years. We have raised public awareness, enacted effective gun laws and invested in focused public education and community violence intervention programs.

In 2024, the gun lobby funded a ballot referendum to repeal Massachusetts gun safety law. In the November 2026 election, MA Ballot Question 9 was defeated with a 67% majority. Voters clearly indicated their desire to protect the 2024 gun safety law that safeguards regulating ghost guns, expands Extreme Risk Protection Order laws and more.

In short, we changed the historically polarized debate of banning guns versus unlimited access to guns and then focused on specific behaviors, regulations and laws making it harder to access guns for children, people with a history of violence, and other potentially dangerous and legally prohibited people without undue burden for law abiding gun owners.

Comprehensive & Effective Gun Safety Laws

MASSACHUSETTS' LEGISLATIVE SUCCESSES INCLUDE:·

First in the nation consumer protection and safety standards regulating the gun industry.	Collection and maintenance of firearm sale records. Required reporting for lost and stolen firearms.
Renewable licensing and registration for all gun owners that includes police review of individuals deemed unsuitable to possess a firearm due to a risk to public safety.	Banning military style assault weapons, high capacity magazines, bump stocks, devices and modifications that turn semi-automatic weapons into fully-automatic machine guns.
Regulations requiring gun dealers operate out of bona-fide stores separate from residences and licensing of their employees. Regulations requiring serialization of gun parts, aka ghost guns.	Universal safe storage laws that require all firearms to be stored locked and unloaded except for when it is under the direct control of the owner.
Minimum age 18+ requirement to purchase a firearm or ammunition, and no one under 21 may purchase a handgun, a semiautomatic rifle or shotgun or a large capacity weapon.	Extreme risk protection orders to empower family members, law enforcement and health professionals to petition the court to have firearms removed from a person in crisis.

Public Awareness

BILLBOARDS, VIDEOS, MEDIA OUTLETS & SOCIAL MEDIA

The very first campaign Stop Handgun Violence developed as an organization was a 252'x 20' billboard on the Massachusetts Turnpike in Boston which hundreds of thousands of drivers passed every day. Using the large and highly visible billboard as an education and public awareness tool we created targeted messages addressing a variety of topics related to specific gun safety behaviors, laws and regulations. We then filed specific legislation to address them.

For example, we installed billboard messages about background checks, gun trafficking, assault weapons, and safe storage and then pushed for policies that would address these issues. These billboard messages not only created general awareness of the issues but also created the political pressure necessary to address the specific topic and enact legislation.



We partnered with the US Department of Justice "Project Safe Neighborhoods Program" to produce several educational videos, some of which are still being used by the Boston Police Department community outreach team and community violence prevention organizations.

We've cultivated strong relationships with our local media by giving them exclusives, recruiting op-ed writers, connecting them with potential stories and being available for quotes and consultation with reporters and editorial boards. By partnering with the media, rather than viewing it as an obstacle to our goals, we have been able to successfully leverage our collective voices to increase awareness and ultimately increase pressure on elected officials to pass meaningful and effective gun violence prevention legislation.

Examples of op-ed consultation:
https://bit.ly/7steps27klives
https://bit.ly/makeitstop2017

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Exhibit 1. Results of a cost-benefit analysis of SSYI on violent crime in SSYI-funded cities



Massachusetts continues to invest in community education and violence intervention programs (CVI) that are proven to reduce and prevent gun violence. Safe and Successful Youth Initiatives (SSYI) Grantee Programs in the state are a competitive grant program for cities with high rates of violence. Grantees provide a spectrum of social services to young men ages 17–24 who are at "proven risk" of involvement in gun violence.

In 2020, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) analyzed trends in violent crime in SSYI and non-SSYI cities in Massachusetts from 2007 to 2017 and the cost-effectiveness of SSYI in the context of these trends.

Using program costs from 2018, AIR results showed that each dollar invested in SSYI led to community savings of approximately $5.10 in cities with SSYI (Exhibit 1).

The Giffords Law Center conducted their reviews of CVI programs across the country and found Massachusetts' SSYI to be a national model for violence reduction work in their "Investing in Intervention" report. Their report further highlighted a $2 million violence reduction program from 2012 to 2013 in Boston and Springfield, generated close to $15 million in savings from decreases in crime. SSYI investments have clearly helped Massachusetts in becoming the nation's lowest gun death rate in 2023 and years past.

Conclusion



Gun violence is an intersectional issue that overlaps with mental health, public health, domestic violence, gang violence, police brutality, and racial justice. Therefore, taking a multifaceted approach to gun violence is the only way to truly tackle this problem that kills 45,000 people each year.

Massachusetts has proven that effective gun safety laws and reasonable regulations are not only supported by the general public, but save lives and has shown that gun violence can be reduced without banning most guns or undue burden on responsible gun owners.

This is a model that can and should be replicated.

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