



Department of Justice

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U.S. Attorney Robert Duncan Jr. Announces Progress in Making our Communities Safer through Project Safe Neighborhoods

FBI Uniform Crime Report Shows 3.9 Drop in Violent Crime in 2018

LEXINGTON, Ky.—Two years ago, the Department of Justice announced the revitalization and enhancement of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), the centerpiece of the department’s violent crime reduction strategy. PSN is an evidence-based program proven to be effective at reducing violent crime.

Through PSN, a broad spectrum of stakeholders work together to identify the most pressing violent crime problems in the community and develop comprehensive solutions to address them. As part of this strategy, PSN focuses enforcement efforts on the most violent offenders and partners with locally based prevention and reentry programs for lasting reductions in crime.

Throughout the past two years, we have partnered with all levels of law enforcement, local organizations, and members of the community to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. According to [FBI’s Uniform Crime Report](#) released this week, the violent crime rate decreased for the second consecutive year, down 3.9 percent from the 2017 numbers.

“The revitalized Project Safe Neighborhoods program is a major success,” said Attorney General William P. Barr. “It packs a powerful punch by combining advanced data with local leadership, further reducing violence in communities across the country and improving overall public safety. U.S. Attorneys continue to focus their enforcement efforts against the most violent criminals and work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal police. The Justice Department’s relationships across the board have never been stronger.”

“The Project Safe Neighborhoods program is a cornerstone of our violent crime reduction efforts. Drawing on the strong partnerships among our federal, state, and local law enforcement, we are protecting the public and holding the most violent offenders accountable for their criminal actions,” said United States Attorney Robert M. Duncan, Jr. “We recognize there is still work to be done, and we remain committed to this important public safety initiative.”

As we celebrate the two-year anniversary of the [revitalized PSN program](#), here are some of the highlights of our PSN actions across the Eastern District of Kentucky over the past year:

Enforcement Actions

In January 2018, federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies created the Fayette County Violent Crime Task Force. The Task Force focuses investigative and prosecutorial resources on those individuals responsible for violent crime and significant drug trafficking in this area, particularly those who commit acts of violence while armed with a firearm and those who commit armed drug trafficking.

“Working in a collaborative way with stakeholders across our community as part of the Project Safe Neighborhoods program is producing positive results in Lexington,” Chief Lawrence Weathers said. “Patrol officers are building relationships with residents, detectives are coordinating investigations with other law enforcement agencies, and we are developing solid cases with prosecutors. The effectiveness of the Project Safe Neighborhoods model cannot be overstated.”

The Agencies participating in this effort include the ATF, DEA, FBI, Lexington Police Department, the Fayette County Sheriff’s Office, Lexington Community Corrections, the Fayette County Public Schools Law Enforcement Division, the Fayette County Attorney’s Office, the Fayette Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office, and the United States Attorney’s Office.

“ATF strives to be ‘no better partner’ to other law enforcement agencies,” stated ATF Acting Special Agent in Charge Tommy Estevan of the Louisville Field Division. “During the past year, ATF and these agencies investigated illegal sources of crime guns and persons who illegally possessed or used guns to commit violent crimes in the Lexington area. Together, we pursued ‘traffickers and trigger pullers’ with every resource, including new ballistic technology and other crime gun intelligence to disrupt the shooting cycle. ATF remains committed to the continued success of Project Safe Neighborhoods and this comprehensive approach to public safety.”

In response to recent shootings and related criminal activity, law enforcement in Fayette County have worked proactively to identify and apprehend those responsible. Illegally possessing or using a firearm in criminal activity will likely result in a lengthy sentence of imprisonment.

In the past year, our established partnerships have been an integral factor in our PSN prosecutions. Some examples of these prosecutions include:

- Keith A. Jefferson, 26, of Lexington, who was sentenced to 100 months in federal prison for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. [Read more.](#)
- Gregory Thomopolous, 39, of Lexington, who was an Armed Career Criminal and sentenced to 262 months in federal prison for armed drug trafficking. [Read more.](#)

- D’Vonta Middlebrooks, 24, of Lexington, who was sentenced to 115 months in federal prison for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. [Read more.](#)

Community Partnerships

In addition to enforcement efforts aimed at removing the most violent offenders from our streets, law enforcement personnel have engaged in community outreach and education. Working with the City of Lexington’s [ONE LEX initiative](#), PSN participants have attended community safety days, provided information about community resources available, and served as mentors to school children in Fayette County. [Read more](#) about the coordinated efforts to reduce violent crime in Lexington.

“PSN is not only about vigorous prosecution of violent crime, it also about a commitment to crime prevention, problem solving and community partnerships. We recognize the need for more complex solutions that not only seek positive outcomes for victims, but also strive for long-term solutions for defendants, potential defendants, and the community at large,” said Fayette Commonwealth’s Attorney Lou Anna Red Corn. “It is my hope, that as our community partnerships grow, we will earn and keep the trust of the communities where crime has the greatest impact.”

Improvements to Community Safety

- For the second consecutive year, the estimated number of national violent crimes decreased when compared with the previous year’s statistics, according to FBI figures released today. In 2018, the number of violent crimes was down 3.3 percent from the 2017 number.
- [The 2018 statistics](#) also show the estimated rate of violent crime was 368.9 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants. The violent crime rate fell 3.9 percent when compared with the 2017 rate.
- According to [statistics](#) released earlier this year by the Lexington Police Department, violent crime in Lexington decreased by 13 percent in 2018, compared to 2017. This decrease included declines in homicides (down 21 percent), robberies (down 21 percent), aggravated assaults (down 11 percent), and shootings (down 23 percent). Additionally, shots fired calls decreased by 9 percent. Preliminary data through July 2019 shows a 9.1 percent decrease in Part I crime as compared to year to date in 2018.

These enforcement actions and partnerships are part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. The Department of Justice reinvigorated PSN in 2017 as part of the Department’s renewed focus on targeting violent criminals, directing all U.S. Attorney’s Offices to work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and the local community to develop effective, locally based strategies to reduce violent crime. To learn more about Project Safe Neighborhoods, go to www.justice.gov/psn.