

# THE ATLAS INITIATIVE: VOLUNTARY PRETRIAL SUPPORTS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

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# The Atlas Initiative:

## Voluntary Pretrial Supports for Individuals and Communities

- **Overview:** Building a System of Precision & Prevention
- **Atlas:**
  - **Precision Prioritization** Common Sense Data Driven Criteria
  - **Systematic Outreach** to Every Person at Elevated Risk
  - Achieving High Rates of **Voluntary Engagement**

# OVERVIEW: BUILDING A CITYWIDE SYSTEM OF PRECISION & PREVENTION

# Building a City System on Precision & Prevention:



# ATLAS

**A voluntary initiative not tied to court reporting, using persistent engagement + evidence-based therapeutic violence reduction**

- “Blueprints” Model Program **highest standard of evidence**
  - Quality implementation: CBOs + EBP fidelity
- Focused on the **highest echelon of violence risk** in the court system
- Outreach **regardless of case status**
- Using techniques for **high rates of voluntary engagement**

# Persistent Engagement Models:

## Voluntary Engagement Among High Risk

C2C (Chicago):

**62% engaged**

**↓ 48% violent  
crime**

READI (Chicago):

**54% engaged**

**↓ 63%  
shootings and  
homicides**

FFT (Philadelphia):

**80% engaged**

**↓ 50%+ violent  
re-arrests  
among gang-  
involved people**

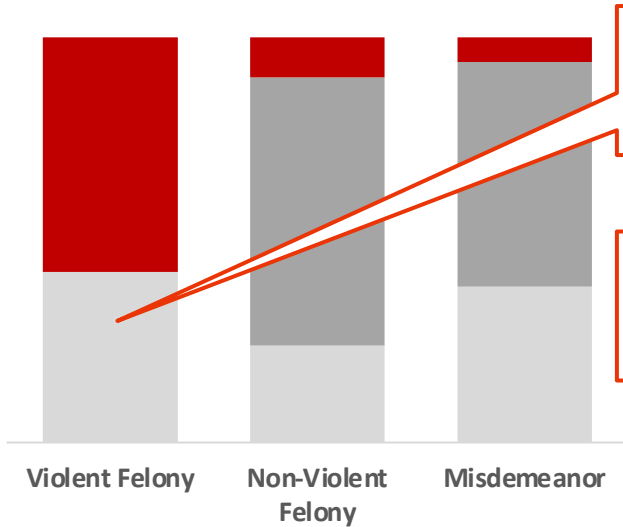
ROCA (Boston):

**78% engaged**

# PRECISION: IDENTIFYING PRIORITY POPULATION WITHOUT A VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT

# Preventing Violent Re-Arrest Among Highest Risk

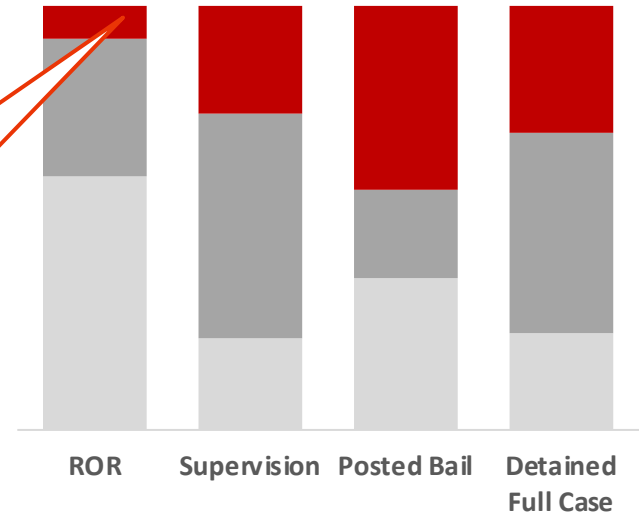
Pretrial Population by Risk & Charge



Charge severity alone is not a sufficient factor in assessing risk for violence

About 10,000 people a year in the community at elevated risk

Pretrial Population by Risk & Status





# Precision Criteria: Common Sense Driven Data

- **Strategy 1 Remove low risk**
  - Perfect release assessment score or first arrest
- **Strategy 2 Review common sense indicators of recent intensity/persistence** – focus on the ones supported by data
  - Any open violent felony (VFO) charge
  - Any 1 recent indicator of persistence
    - More than 1 recent warrant
    - Felony rearrest on an open felony
    - Several pending cases
    - Recent convictions
- **Highest risk criteria updated regularly** by tracking changes in pretrial population
  - E.g. 17-22 year olds + more than 1 VFO case in past year + an imperfect CJA RA score → 26% VFO Rearrest

# SYSTEMATIC OUTREACH

# The Model: Systematic Outreach

**Systematic** outreach to every arraigned person at elevated risk

- Typical voluntary services rely on sporadic referrals – low overall rate
- **Persistent outreach to engage hardest to engage cases** rather than moving on the next responsive person

Employ people with lived experience to engage clients

# Outreach Phases

## Phase 1: Pandemic: Phone Only

- Reached out to **5,000 people at highest risk**
- 24% reached
- 76% of high risk reached agreed to be referred to Atlas

## Phase 2: Ongoing: In-person

- **Meet people in court** (potentially reaching more people, however it's a resource intensive approach)
  - Use A/B testing to measure outcomes—only enough staffing for 4 days per week, strategically select days in court for outreach
- **Meet people in Supervised Release sessions/at home/in community**

# ACHIEVING HIGH VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT

# Engagement Conversation

Different voluntary relentless engagement models have different specific strategies, but typically they all:

- Are strength based
- Non-judgmental
- Expect barriers—logistical, trust, cognitive, etc.—and see it as the job of outreach to work through those
- Connect to people's own values, preferred sense of self

# FFT Engagement Strategy

- **Matching**—Relentless effort to understand, respect people on their own terms
- **Become more you**—The goal of FFT is not to create “healthy” or “normal” families according to someone’s theory or ideal, but ...to achieve changes that will help each unique family function and live into their own values in more adaptive productive ways in their own context
- **Noble intent**—Everyone does what makes sense to them given the world as they see it

***Does not mean people are not accountable for the impacts their actions have, but their actions always make sense from their perspective, and there may be other ways to get those needs and intent met***

# FFT Engagement: Finding the Noble Intent

- **Resistance / lack of interest / push-back reframe = a good sign**
  - **“Resistance” as a strength**—a good sign of the **protectiveness of families**.  
Understandable and justifiable given what people have been through
- **Crime/harm = effort to achieve understandable goals**
  - Does not mean not accountable, but this is their reality
- **Harmful communication among families = effort to achieve understandable goals**
- What are more positive and effective ways to achieve those goals?



# TRY IT: RESPONDING TO NOBLE INTENT USING THE FFT MODEL

Split into pairs!

# People may have many good reasons for not wanting help.

- **I did not even do what I was arrested for**
- This is another thing a system of oppression is trying to get me to do.
- Nothing is wrong with me/us – I/we don't need to be fixed
- **We're not crazy and don't need therapy**
- I/we got this, we can handle this on our own, I/w don't need any help
- **This is just going to cause more stress**
- I'm not pushing him/her into anything they don't want to do
- **He/She wouldn't like this and it's not worth rocking the boat**
- Just don't know enough about this program to be willing to say yes
- **It's too much of a risk – we tried other programs in the past, just made things worse, not going down that road again.**
- I've been burned too many times by my mom/dad/son/daughter to want to do this.

# 1) Listen in order to validate

Really try to understand and acknowledge the stated AND underlying reasons.

- **Try to bring the underlying or unstated reasons to the surface – this makes it possible to address them.** Sometimes requires a respectful ‘best guess’
- **Convey that understanding back** to the family
- **Take as much time as you need/** as person will give you—Not be quick to sell the program

## 2) Why FFT?

Then after validating clearly, offer a perspective as to why this could be helpful. If you were the person you are talking to – what would be helpful for you to hear or know

- It is different from other services you've been in
- **They really listen, they don't judge**
- They really believe in you and your family, never give up on you
- They **help you see things in different ways that you never saw before**
- Their job is to keep young people out of the system/from being locked up
- They do this by helping families be as strong as possible
- With a strong family behind you it is **easier to do all this court stuff that is coming up**
- This is a program that **really wants you to have a big life – the life that you want**

## *Thanks but no*

- **Makes sense.** Thanks for considering it. **I know with my own family I'm really careful about who I let into our lives.** But I'm also wondering if you talked with a FFT person directly if they wouldn't give you a much better understanding of what they do....

***We're fine. We don't need any help.***

- I'm really glad to hear that. **Sounds like you all are handling things well.** A lot of times FFT helps the most with families that are getting things right. **They're really good at helping to keep what's working to continue to work well with all the stresses and surprises that come at us** these days.
- If you're okay with it, I'd like to give them permission to call and talk with you.

## ***“Is this therapy? We have already tried therapy, nothing works...”***

- Sounds like you’ve been at this for a long time, and that it’s been really challenging. And when you put so much into a program and it doesn’t really work, there’s not a lot of motivation to go down that road again... why would it work?
- You’ve tried everything for [youth’s name] and you need to protect your to put yourself through again what you’ve already been through...
- From what I’ve heard about FFT it is pretty different than other therapies. They are way more respectful and focused on making sure this works for every family rather than the other way around.
- **But it’s your family, and I’m sure there’s nothing that matters more.** Tell you what. I’d like to suggest you talk to a FFT staff person directly. Let them tell you why they’re different, and if you still feel the same way, then you’ll know for sure you’ve made the right decision.

***“I want my kid to be responsible for their own actions; I am tired of cleaning up their mess.”***

- **That’s make a lot of sense.** It’s hard to get our kids to be responsible, and it’s hard to teach them, especially when it seems like we have to do it over and over again. It’s tiring.
- **Despite how hard this is I don’t get the sense you’ve given up. I also think it’s right that they should “clean up their own mess.”**
- I think if you talk with the FFT person they might be able to help support you so it doesn’t seem so tiring.



# Try reframing “Noble Intent”

- **Partner 1: Person being outreached to**
  - Think about someone you know who would say no to therapeutic support
  - What might the reasons be—said or unsaid—that they say no?
  - Role play as the person declining the offer of help
- **Partner 2: Outreach staff**
  - Role play as the outreach specialist offering therapeutic support
  - Listen for the reason your partner says no—both the spoken AND unspoken reasons
  - Reply validating the noble intent
  - Offer a perspective as to why this could be helpful
- **Switch back and forth**

# Thank you



[SafetyAndJusticeChallenge.org](https://SafetyAndJusticeChallenge.org)