

# PUBLIC SAFETY INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER



## PUBLIC SAFETY INSTITUTE ENGAGED WITH COMMUNITY THROUGH RESEARCH GRANTS

The PSI is serving as the applied research partner on several grants recently awarded relating to major public safety concerns in the community.

### OPIOID ADDICTION

Two grants will develop programming and strategies to address challenges in Memphis and Shelby County arising from opioid addiction. The Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded nearly \$900,000 to the Shelby County Division of Community Services to develop a Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP). The COAP will screen individuals, connect those at high-risk of overdose to the University of Tennessee's Center for Addiction Science (CAS) and develop diversion strategies for individuals who could have justice system involvement. The CAS will provide clinical treatment services, including cognitive behavioral therapy, medication-assisted treatment and connection to wraparound services. On-call "addiction peer recovery specialists" will accompany first responders to overdose scenes and encourage victims to seek assistance from the CAS. Partnering agencies within the criminal justice system (the Shelby County Jail, Shelby County Division of Corrections and Shelby County Probation) will screen and refer high-risk individuals to treatment and services. Additionally, prosecutors will have the discretion to consider diversion to treatment as an alternative to incarceration. The PSI is the designated entity responsible for evaluating the program.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance also awarded \$360,000 to the District Attorney's Office to develop, implement and evaluate an innovative opioid prosecution program. This program will mirror the COAP described above, but will test the impact of the intervention with a randomized controlled trial. In addition to programming, this grant provides funding for additional resources that will help collect information at scenes of overdoses to help investigators

and prosecutors find and prosecute drug dealers. The PSI will have the assistance of Dr. James McCutcheon and Dr. Shelley Keith in conducting an evaluation of this program.

### GUN CRIME

The Memphis Police Department has received an award from the Bureau of Justice Assistance for \$714,000 to establish and implement the Memphis Crime Gun Intelligence Center (MCGIC). The MCGIC will be a collaborative effort of local, state and federal law enforcement and prosecutors to improve the collection and processing of ballistic and forensic evidence related to firearms used in crimes. The goals are to improve the ability of law enforcement to identify individuals committing firearm crime and to build stronger cases against these individuals to make prosecutions at both the state and federal levels more successful.

### EX-OFFENDER RE-ENTRY

The PSI has been awarded a grant from the Tennessee Department of Correction to develop an interactive map of Shelby County resources for justice professionals who work with individuals re-entering the community after release from the correctional system. This map will allow case managers to enter an address, search for a specific type of resource or service (for example, employment) and see all the relevant service providers near that address. This will facilitate the process of connecting re-entrants with services closest to them and increase the likelihood that they will follow up with those services.

## MENTAL HEALTH COURT

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Tennessee Association of Recovery Court Professionals have awarded the PSI a grant to conduct a process evaluation of the Shelby County Mental Health Court. Although this young specialized court has anecdotal evidence of success, local and state stakeholders want a formal evaluation to assess its performance and to potentially support a proposal for increased funding in the future. A process evaluation will determine whether the policies and procedures outlined in the Shelby County Mental Health Court Procedure Manual are being implemented with fidelity. It also will identify any barriers to connecting program participants to the appropriate services and to assist them in successfully participating in and completing any requirements to manage their challenges and avoid re-arrest, re-conviction and re-incarceration.

## SERVICES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

The PSI has been awarded a multi-year grant to determine services available in the Memphis community for domestic violence victims, the location and availability of services and any gaps that may exist. Efforts are ongoing currently to identify all service providers and potential providers, and conduct focus group sessions with domestic violence victims to determine their perspectives on the availability of resources and remaining needs.



*UofM research associate professor  
Dr. Angela Madden*

## MOVING FORWARD

Since transitioning in October 2016 from a tenure-track faculty member in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice to research associate professor with the PSI, Dr. Angela Madden has worked with the Memphis Police Department, Shelby County District Attorney's Office, Shelby County Division of Community Services and Shelby County Mental Health Court to engage the PSI in applied research for the benefit of the Memphis community. In addition, Madden actively solicited the collaboration of several faculty members from the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice on the research components of these grants, which will bring nearly \$800,000 to the University.

As research partner on all these projects, the PSI and affiliated faculty from the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice will assist in problem identification, solution design and program evaluation. A representative from PSI will also sit on stakeholder teams, assist in identifying and reporting the required performance measures, advise on implementation and provide subject-matter expertise.

# ASSESSMENT INDICATES MPD DATA-DRIVEN POLICING HAS IMPACT ON CRIME LEVEL

An assessment by the University of Memphis Public Safety Institute (PSI) of data-driven police practices by the Memphis Police Department (MPD) in 2017 indicates an immediate positive impact on the level of crime within identified “hot spots.”

Through the data-driven process used by the MPD, geographic hot spots are selected in each precinct every week based on the number of crimes reported in specified categories (robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, auto thefts and thefts from autos). As part of the assessment, the PSI looked at whether reported crimes in the specified categories declined the week after a hot spot was identified.

The assessment revealed that, when looking at all nine MPD precincts together, crimes in the specified categories decreased within the designated hot spots 100 percent of the time in 2017 (all 52 weeks). On average, the number of reported crimes in the specified categories decreased in each precinct by more than 10 during the week after hot spots were designated. The Tillman MPD precinct had the highest average decrease — an average decline of 14.85 reported crimes.

One MPD precinct — Old Allen — had a decrease within designated hot spots 100 percent of the time (all 52 weeks). Three other MPD precincts — Crump, Tillman and Airways — had decreases 90 percent of the time.

The decline in reported crimes in the designated hot spots does not account for factors such as crime

displacement (crime decreasing in one area but moving to another area). In addition, the assessment did not analyze the data to determine the degree to which crime reductions in hot spots were sustainable over time given the MPD’s current resources.

In 2019, the PSI plans to conduct an additional assessment that includes an examination of whether crime reductions in hot spots are sustained over time.

“Based on this assessment of the MPD’s data-driven deployment of resources in 2017, the approach appears to have an immediate positive impact on the level of crime within identified precinct hot spots,” said Bill Gibbons, executive director of the PSI.

Madden serves as research associate professor for the PSI, with James ‘Max’ Helms serving as research assistant.

The full report on the assessment may be viewed on the PSI’s website at [memphis.edu/psi/research/](http://memphis.edu/psi/research/).

Data-driven deployment of law enforcement resources is a major part of the local Operation: Safe Community plan to reduce crime, the implementation of which is being led by the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission. Under an agreement between the Crime Commission and the University of Memphis, the PSI is conducting independent assessments and evaluations of various parts of the plan as they are implemented.



[\*memphis.edu/psi\*](http://memphis.edu/psi)

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