

New Bedford awarded \$824,879 Charles E. Shannon Jr. Community Safety Initiative grant to assist at-risk youth

New Bedford Shannon (NBS)—a partnership between the New Bedford Police Dept. and United Way of Greater New Bedford—has been awarded \$824,879 to continue its multi-pronged approach to address the community's gang and youth violence issues using five strategy areas: social, intervention, support, opportunity, and provision. The grant value is up slightly this year from \$797,438 in 2020.

In a virtual press conference on Monday, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito announced \$9 million to be awarded across the state through the 2021 Senator Charles E. Shannon Jr. Community Safety Initiative grant. Since 2006, the Massachusetts Legislature has appropriated funds to support the Shannon Community Safety Initiative in an effort to reduce gang violence across the Commonwealth. Senator Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford) helped create the initial round of program funding and has consistently advocated for additional resources for New Bedford. "We must encourage our youth to reject violence and provide the supports they need to be successful," said Montigny. "I want to thank the United Way and their team for the incredible work they are doing alongside Chief Cordeiro and his department to make this program a critical lifeline for New Bedford's youth."

NBPD Chief Joseph Cordeiro welcomed the funding and applauded the program model's success. We continue advancing our mission to reach every at-risk kid in this city," said Chief Joseph Cordeiro. "We are a city of one and nowhere is that more obvious than through our partnership with United Way of

Greater New Bedford on this effort.”

United Way of Greater New Bedford oversees NBS’s Outreach/Case Worker Services, which focus on identifying New Bedford youth ages 10 -24 at elevated risk for joining gangs, or those individuals at the early stages of gang involvement identified by local schools, the Courts, law enforcement and many others. This component provides risk assessment, goal setting, and wrap around supports for each youth enrolled in the program.

“We are pleased that state officials continue to recognize and value the great work being done in the City of New Bedford to prevent and reduce youth and gang violence through initiatives like Shannon,” said United Way’s VP of Special Initiatives, Pam Cruz.

In 2020 alone, NBS Outreach/Case Worker enrolled nearly 400 youth in the program and provided these youth with 2,400 referrals for behavioral health, family support, educational, vocational and employment services, as well as prosocial activities. The NBS Outreach/Case Worker team, under the leadership of Program Director Renee Ledbetter, spend countless hours working with many of our City’s youth to ensure they have the supports they need to stay on a positive path.

In addition to the work NBS workers are doing with enrolled participants, in FY 20 they performed more than 3,100 hours of street outreach and responded to 36 critical incidences in the City.