CHATHAM COUNTY SMART PROSECUTION STRATEGIC PLAN

April 2017

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<u>**Smart Prosecution Strategic Plan**</u>

I.   Targeted Problem

Chatham County, population 286,959 (2015), is the fifth largest county in Georgia. Established in 1777, Savannah is the county seat. The Eastern Judicial Circuit for the state of Georgia is comprised exclusively of Chatham County. The Savannah Chatham Metropolitan Police Department (SCMPD) is a combined city/county force which serves residents within the city limits of Savannah, as well as those who live in unincorporated areas.

Violent crime in Savannah has risen drastically over the past several years. Between 2014 and 2015, according to SCMPD crime statistics, the homicide rate rose from 32 individuals to 54 individuals per year. In 2015, an additional 525 aggravated assaults were logged by SCMPD; of those, 298 involved guns. By contrast, in 2014, there were a total of 366 aggravated assaults; of those, 195 involved guns. While SCMPD serves both the incorporated and unincorporated areas, much of the violent crime is concentrated in the incorporated portion of the county in areas with consistent, long-term poverty. As part of the city's End Gun Violence initiative, SCMPD has identified that much of the violent crime is conducted by about .5 percent of the overall population. Additionally, that population tends to consist of young adult males.

The extreme increase in gun violence during 2015 sent the community looking for solutions and strategies to control the violence that shattered the peace of Savannah's streets. In August 2015, SCMPD and the City of Savannah contracted with the National Network of Safe Communities to implement a strategy to reduce gun violence by focusing on group and gang violence. The Chatham County District Attorney's Office is a partner in this initiative. As part of this initiative, the District Attorney's Office has promised to pay special attention to the gun charges that originate through this program.

The 2015, the federal conviction of former Police Chief Willie Lovett brought the community's trust and support of the police department to an all-time low. As with many other areas nationally, the law enforcement community struggles with reluctant and recanting witnesses for a myriad of reasons including: lack of trust, social pressures against snitching, and fear of retaliation.

In 2015, then Attorney General Loretta Lynch identified Savannah as one of six cities with fast-growing violent crime. These cities experienced sharp increases after years of declining rates. She tasked the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Georgia with creating a task force of federal and local law enforcement agencies along with the Chatham County District Attorney's Office to target repeat, violent offenders. This task force shifted focus from the day-to-day, non-violent and less serious crimes, to the high-profile group and gang violence cases that brought guns to the streets of Savannah.

The appointment of new Police Chief Joseph Lumpkin in fall 2014 helped stem the force's vacancy rate. Thus, the SCMPD force currently has many young and inexperienced officers with a fairly new command staff.

Fortunately, Chief Lumpkin has experience working with other communities under his command. Both the Chatham County District Attorney, Meg Heap, and her Chief Assistant are convinced the strategy will work in the Savannah area. Additionally, community leaders have come together to support the initiative's implementation; this marks the first time all leaders have come to the table in agreement in many years, united to develop and implement innovative, research-based antiviolence strategies to address recent events. Our proposed strategy addresses current efforts and will leverage resources from the existing programs. The proposed Smart Prosecution Initiative will add value to current efforts to reduce violence and increase public trust.

II.   Approach

The Chatham County District Attorney's Office, Georgia Southern University and the SCMPD's Savannah Area Regional Intelligence Center (SARIC) collaborated by taking SCMPD's crime statistics to map the regions where the most violent crime occurred over the past year. At the start, the group focused on the most violent crimes (i.e. homicides, armed robberies, and shootings, both fatal and non-fatal). After these crimes were mapped, the team identified five different regions. The regions were identified using several factors including: large or obvious clusters of crimes; omitting areas that included large numbers of crimes of opportunity (involving cash-laden tourists in the city's otherwise low-crime historic district); and, active neighborhood associations with strong leadership. Additionally, regions were chosen for obvious geographic isolation. For example, while there is a large amount of violent crime in the numbered streets of the central precinct, there are five interconnected neighborhoods that have warring gang factions. Identifying where crime from one neighborhood bleeds into crime from another neighborhood could affect the research outcomes. For this initiative, we examine two neighborhoods, West Savannah and Hudson Hills. These areas are relatively isolated from other neighborhoods either by highly traveled roads or physical barriers such as a bridge, river or railroad crossing.

Once the five regions were identified, another map was created using all gun crimes from the past year. This map was superimposed over the previous crime mapping done in each region. These maps have been created by analyst Brian Renner of SARIC. The additional crime information was used to refine the regions to more manageable areas. One concern is to draw a map that is concentrated enough to affect change while providing enough data to determine the effectiveness of the project. Through collaboration between law enforcement and Georgia Southern University, we have been able to identify one intervention area (encompassing a police beat) and two comparison areas (two police beats which are qualitatively similar to the experimental area).

   The District Attorney's Office will utilize a modified vertical prosecution approach to these cases. Two prosecutors will handle these cases from the time of formal criminal charges (i.e. indictment) until disposition. One prosecutor will handle non-fatal shootings, another will handle homicides. If additional charges occur that are found to be violations of current probation for the offender, those same prosecutors will handle the probation cases. Vertical prosecution allows the prosecutor to be involved in the case from nearly the outset. This is important because it helps the prosecutor prevent the loss of institutional knowledge regarding a case, which can

happen when multiple attorneys review the case over time. Additionally, when the same attorneys work the same types of cases, they are afforded the opportunity to build relationships with the officers working the cases.

The goals of the project are to identify local hotspots for gun violence in the Savannah area, identify the most violent offenders within those local hotspots, and to track and prioritize prosecution within the hotspots. Those cases that do not fit the screening for Smart Prosecution will be diverted to alternative programs – particularly juveniles identified as minor offenders or at-risk of violent offending or victimization. These cases will be deferred to alternative projects including Youth Intercept, an intervention program in Savannah. If a case includes the possession and/or use of a gun, it will be screened into the program. Only those cases that occurred outside the intervention area or are transferred to a different jurisdiction will be screened out, including juvenile cases.

To ensure community support, our research team will engage with community groups by attending regular community meetings to receive input and direction on the project.
The team will be attending meetings with the Hudson Hill Neighborhood Association (experimental area) as well as the East Savannah Association (comparison areas). A major goal of the project is to ensure that we are meeting the needs and concerns of the community and to evaluate their attitudes and perceptions regarding their neighborhood and the SMART community prevention strategy. To accomplish this, we will also develop community surveys to gauge community attitudes and perception of violence in their neighborhoods.

The expected results of the project are a reduction in violent crime as well as swift prosecution of violent offenders. We will measure crime rates before-and-after the SMART prosecution strategy in the target and comparison areas, as well as evaluate community attitudes and perceptions of their neighborhood and law enforcement. The intent is that there will also be a statistically significant increase in community engagement as well as an improved relationship with law enforcement which we will measure with self-report surveys. To meet these goals, we will maintain continual contact with all members of the project team including prosecutors, crime analysts, researchers, local police, and community leaders. We will also track arrest-to-prosecution time to evaluate whether a noticeable (statistically significant) decrease in prosecution time is achieved by the project.

A depiction of our overall project approach is detailed in Table 2 at the end of the strategic plan.

We are also developing a sustainability plan that will involve all project partners and stakeholders. We will continue our action research model by involving both researchers and partners to provide empirical support for the data-driven Smart Prosecution initiative. Once the final analyses have been concluded, along with a cost-benefit analysis, we will ask local government and private foundations for buy-in to the Smart Prosecution strategy. Depending on available resources, we plan on expanding the efforts to other geographic locations. The team plans to continue work with the Violence Intervention Program (VIP) and Youth Intercept program for case diversions and with End Gun Violence for intervention with serious violent offenders. Our current efforts with local judges and community organizations from the beginning of the initiative is intended to create ownership and build sustainability of the overall project.

III. Impact Evaluation Plan

The Research Team, led by Dr. Chad Posick of Georgia Southern University, will evaluate the program via a mixed-methods approach. This will consist of a quantitative analysis of before-and-after crime rates as well as an analysis of the intervention hotspot in comparison to the comparison hotspots. At each of these points, the research team will work with the Chatham County prosecutors to develop tools and implement strategies. This ensures that a process evaluation will occur at each of the listed points and that decisions are evidence-based.

The research team has already completed a preliminary analysis including a geographic spatial analysis to identify the hotspot areas and comparable comparison areas. To identify chronic violent offenders in the screening process, one experimental and two comparison hotspots have been identified. This program will look at hotspot change over time, change in crime rate, the proportion of cases ending in a conviction, and "time to prosecution" as previously mentioned.

The research partner is working with SARIC to compile data on crimes committed with a weapon and cases of possessing a firearm. Data within the intervention area, comparison areas, and city-wide have been collected. Before-and-after statistical analysis will be conducted to identify the impact of the SMART strategy.

The research partner will also analyze time to prosecution, from arrest to prosecution, using time sensitive statistical analyses including survival/hazard models. Researchers will examine whether the SMART project reduced time to prosecution. Tests of proportions will examine whether there was a significant increase in the proportion of cases that lead to conviction before-and-after the program.

To gauge any changes in citizen perceptions and attitudes, repeated measures will be collected every six months on community leaders, youth, and local law enforcement, self-reports of trust in the police, feelings of safety, and perceptions of neighborhood disorder (as well as other features typical in self-report surveys). One community leader for each neighborhood has been identified. Longitudinal statistical methods will be used to investigate changes over time in among these three factors. Short-term changes will be monitored and discussed to consider alternative strategies where possible during the project period. The research team will provide a final evaluation report.

IV. Logic Model

The logic model is presented visually at the end of this strategic plan in Table 3.

Due to the nature of this initiative, buy-in is imperative from several organizations in the Savanah-Chatham area.

First and foremost, the team will make a list of community members, including stakeholders, for inclusion in the project. The addition of the police department to the project is imperative to its success. The gun prosecutor will work closely with the police in the target area (Beat 21 of Precinct 2) by attending roll call to make himself and the initiative known, and he will be available to provide legal assistance to the officers.

The research team at Georgia Southern University will establish the social media accounts for the project. These accounts, Facebook and Twitter, will be used to highlight positive activities in the area. The team intends to have a strong media presence as this is where many citizens receive information on local activities, including youth involved in the project.

There is the task of finding community members who are willing to help address local violence. First the End Gun Violence: Step Forward initiative targets the most violent groups and gang members. These gangs and groups are responsible for most the shootings and homicides in the Savannah-Chatham community. Built on the Ceasefire model, individuals in this program are invited to "call-in" meetings where a message is communicated that violence will not be tolerated and that those who continue will be harshly prosecuted. Social services will also be provided for those who want to leave the lifestyle. The Smart Prosecution and End Gun Violence initiatives are separate— and we will make efforts to keep the two initiatives separate—but together they will improve relationships and build community, as well as reduce victim/witness recantation. We see this as a symbiotic relationship that adds a holistic model to addressing local violence.

The team will develop a screening process for the offenders within the experimental area. The process will focus on both non-fatal and fatal gun crimes in the target area (e.g., aggravated assault, homicide, felony possession). The vast majority of crime involves violent crime drivers; however, misdemeanants will be considered if they fit into the screening process. This project will be aimed at adults; juveniles will be screened out. All cases that contain the possession or use of a gun in the intervention area (Beat 21), will be taken by the SMART prosecutor. Cases that fall outside this jurisdiction or are transferred to another court (*e.g*., federal) will be screened out.

To start working on community relations, social media accounts will be developed. These social media accounts will be used to highlight positive involvement in the community as well as including community events on the social media pages. There will also be a need to break down the project to the local neighborhood organizations.

Within the first three months to a year, the targeted area will be identified. Once the target area is identified, there were will be a screening process. With the target area identified and a screening process in places, there will be an increased attention to cases that happen in the target area. With the increased attention to cases in the targeted area, the team hopes to reduce the time between arrest and indictment.

At the start of the halfway point—twelve months—the screening process will be reevaluated to ensure that the process is catching cases relevant to the project. Between twelve and eighteen months, there is an expectation to see a decrease in violent crime in the target area. The level of community engagement will be measured by the research partners at Georgia Southern University, the team will be looking to see an increase in the engagement in the community. From the examination of the research team, attention can be focused on exactly what needs to be done to continue the growth of community engagement.

Long-term outcomes are defined as those that occur from the eighteen-month point onward. Once again, the team will look to find a reduction in the local violent crime rate. The research team is looking for a significant decrease in violent crime; however, there is no specific percentage reduction the team expects to see. By the end of the program, the team hopes that confidence in the criminal justice system will increase on the local level. The team knows that as written the implementation of the evidence-based practice in other areas is too broad; it will be reevaluated to so it can be applied to other areas.

V.   Training and Technical Assistance

Training and Technical Assistance will be done in partnership with the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA). Contact information for Smart Prosecution initiatives (Kansas City, San Francisco, Miami) and Philadelphia will be provided to the Savannah site by APA for Peer-to-Peer Exchanges on implementation and sustainability. APA will determine a good contact for the Manhattan and Philadelphia sites. APA will organize Peer-to-Peer Exchanges with Philadelphia District Attorney's Office targeted for the spring of 2017 and other potential cities, including Smart Prosecution initiatives who have developed or are developing innovative strategies centered on violent crime. APA will also set up Peer-to-Peer Exchanges with Kansas City and Manhattan, in which the team will look for similar demographics with tourist areas, targeting violent crime, as well as patchwork areas with no designated crime area. APA recommended that the site first target areas for exploration on violent crime to discuss during these Peer-to-Peer Exchanges.

There has been a request for Training and Tactical Assistance in Social Network Analysis with SME Dr. Andrew Fox of California State University, Fresno. The team plans to utilize this resource after the first six months of the project. This will allow the research team time to receive data from the target area and form questions on the data, and how to utilize the Social Network Analysis to its fullest potential for the project.

APA will facilitate a Peer-to-Peer Exchange between SARIC and Denver CGIC to discuss the processing of firearms, evidence, etc. at SARIC's request.

Four members of the team attended the Smart Suite Researcher Practitioner Academy in Denver, Colorado February 7–10, 2017. This conference stressed the importance of the research practitioner relationship and how to foster the best relationship between the two. Team members will also attend the Smart Policing/Smart Prosecution grantee meeting in Arlington, VA in May of 2017.

VI.   Other Materials

We currently have a signed agreement between SARIC, SCMPD, and Georgia Southern University. The SMART prosecutor has been officially hired by the City of Savannah and is currently accepting project cases. A formal memorandum of understanding is currently being channeled through these institutions.

VII.   Goals and Tasks

The research partners at Georgia Southern University are responsible for identifying the target areas as well as offenders within the hotspots. The research partners are also responsible for tracking offenders and looking at their criminal records. They will create a list of targeted offenders living within the areas to track using network analysis. The research partners at Georgia Southern University will also establish social media accounts for Facebook and Twitter.

Additionally, researchers have begun analyzing the intervention area using social network analysis to identify key relationships between offenders in the area. Members of the District Attorney's office and the research team will communicate with and identify the community leaders in the target areas. They will obtain contact information of these community leaders as well as the times and dates of their Neighborhood Association Meetings.

Table 1. SMART Project Tasks

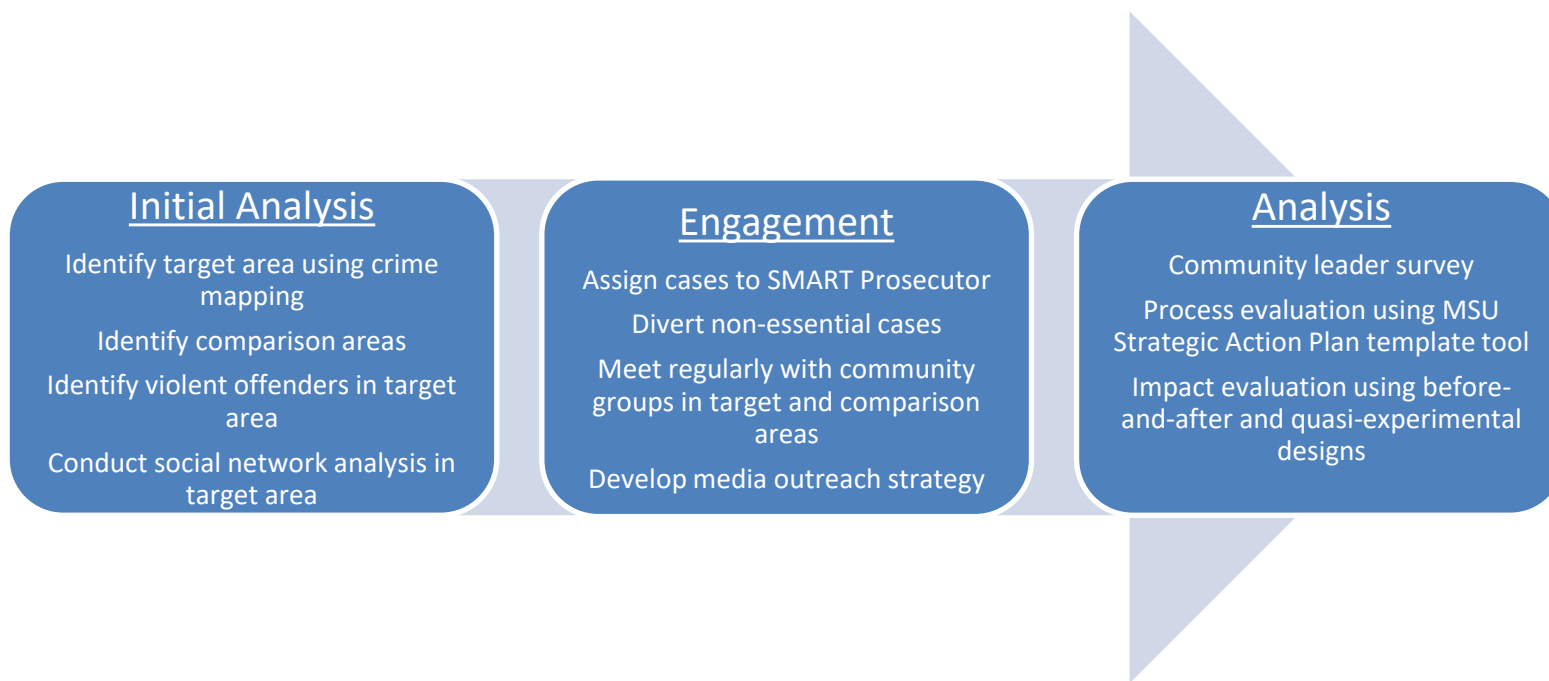| Task	Action Needed	Responsible Party	Date to be Completed
Create Screening Process	Creation and Implantation	Chad (GSU), Kristin (DAO), and Noah (DAO)	Completed
Track Violent Offenders within Experimental Hotspot	Search the offender's histories and make a list of offenders living in target area	Chad with GSU	Ongoing
Establish Social Media	Creation and Maintenance	GSU Research Team	April 1st, 2017
Contact with Community Leaders and Attend Meetings	Gather contact information from the community leaders in the target area – develop community assessment survey	Chad (GSU), Meg (DAO), Kristin (DAO), Ebony (GSU) and Noah (DAO)	Ongoing
Diversion with Youth Intercept Program	Regular contact with the program and data tracking	Chad (GSU), Ebony (GSU), Kristin (DAO)	Ongoing
Conduct social network analysis and risk terrain modeling	Data analysis and collaboration with SARIC	GSU: Chad, Ebony	Ongoing
Accept Cases for prosecution	Prosecution through the DA's Office	DAO: Noah, Matt	Ongoing

Table 2. SMART Project Flow Chart

Initial Analysis

Identify target area using crime mapping

Identify comparison areas

Identify violent offenders in target area

Conduct social network analysis in target area

Engagement

Assign cases to SMART Prosecutor

Divert non-essential cases

Meet regularly with community groups in target and comparison areas

Develop media outreach strategy

Analysis

Community leader survey

Process evaluation using MSU Strategic Action Plan template tool

Impact evaluation using before-and-after and quasi-experimental designs

Table 3. Program: Smart Prosecution Logic Model

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes -- Impact		
	Activities	*Participation*	*Short*	*Medium*	*Long*
Local prosecutor dedicated to gun crimes

Advocate in DA's office dedicated to gun crimes

SCMPD/SARIC/ Homicide Unit

Local neighborhood organizations

Communication plan

Georgia Southern University | Conduct 12 community meetings

Establish 3 social media accounts for outreach efforts

Produce 1 fully active webinar on Smart Prosecution Program

Collect project data

Prosecutor/SCMPD collaboration

Conduct 1 program process evaluation report

Conduct 1 program Impact Evaluation Report

Community outreach | Savannah-Chatham District Attorney's Office

Georgia Southern University

Savannah Area Regional Intelligence Center

Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department

Homicide Unit

Local non-profit organizations

Local churches/clergy

Neighborhood leaders | Awareness of local crime prevention efforts

Translation of research to practice and policy

Increased knowledge of best-practices in violence prevention and intervention

Identify target area

Reduced time from arrest to indictment

Screening of offenders

Community engagement | Evaluate local violent crime rate change

Building relationships between community and local law enforcement

Increase in community participation in violence prevention

Increased street level intelligence for crime drivers

Evaluate case outcomes to date

Evaluate case screening process | Targeted adoption of evidence-based practices

Targeted reduction in violent crime rates

Evaluate potential implementation of evidence-based practices

Potential partnership opportunities |