

Remarks by Michael C. Green, Executive Deputy Commissioner

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

Recipient, 2019 Distinguished Achievement Award

Given by the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, George Mason University

Thursday, June 27, 2019

I started my career in criminal justice in 1987 as a prosecutor in Rochester, New York. Two years later, I was assigned my first murder case, and for the next 22 years I prosecuted homicides. I went to the scenes of hundreds.

That experience has had a profound effect on the way I approach my work. Early in my career, no one talked about evidence-based policing or crime policy. We researched case law, but we never researched solutions to the larger problems we were trying to solve, we simply tried cases, over and over again.

I recall one murder case I tried where the courtroom was packed and emotionally charged. As I walked out of the courtroom after the verdict the first question I was asked by the press was if I was happy. It seemed like such a ridiculous question; there was nothing to be happy about. Yes, justice was done, but one young man was dead and the other was heading to prison for at least 25 years. I recall thinking there had to be more we could do.

While at the DA's office, I had the good fortune of meeting John Klofas, a criminologist from Rochester Institute of Technology, and he introduced me to the idea of evidence-based work through SACSI and his in-depth study of homicides in Rochester. When I was elected District Attorney, John worked with me to do an independent analysis of policy changes I made to measure the impacts those changes had over time. The idea of evidence-based work had a strong appeal to me. I knew things would not change if we continued to do the same thing we had been doing for years.

Seven years ago, I accepted the position working for Governor Cuomo as the head of the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. This appointment provided a tremendous opportunity to encourage the use of evidence-based practices across the criminal justice system in New York. At DCJS, we administer a large portfolio of grant funds, which provided the opportunity to incentivize the implementation of this work.

For example, we transformed a \$13.5 million funding stream that was not tied to evidence based practice, and created the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative, which requires communities to use evidence-based strategies to address the problem of gun violence. Not only did we provide funding, but we engaged leading people in the field of evidence based crime policy to provide training and technical assistance to our local partners.

Another example is our Street Outreach initiative, known as SNUG. Embracing evidence of what works, we took a small, unorganized program and created a comprehensive street outreach program that operates in 11 cities supported by a \$7.5 million state investment. We used feedback from an evaluation to establish a solid support structure around the program: a state coordinator, state training director and our own SNUG Street Outreach training program. In partnership with the state Office of Victim Services, we recently added a state social work director who will oversee certified social workers and case managers embedded at each site, in recognition of the importance of trauma-informed services for SNUG participants and employees.

We also administer a \$25 million alternatives-to-incarceration funding stream. We support programs that embrace evidence-based practice, making sure the right people are connected with the right evidence-based programs and services, and that the organizations and programs are structured to support positive outcomes.

Working with George Mason and the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, we sponsored a college-level course for police executives from across the state. We are transforming the curriculum for the basic training course for police officers and including exposure to evidence-based practice.

In connection with New York's work to raise the age of criminal responsibility, we have provided extensive training and support to the 58 probation departments across the state on evidence-based practices to better serve justice-involved youth.

We administer a research consortium and online knowledge bank to support evidence-based work across the state. We support a network of crime analysis centers to assist with the work.

The transition from where we were when I started in this field to where we are today has not been easy. But at DCJS, we are committed to driving and supporting that change. While we still have a long way to go, we have made great progress.

New York is the safest large state in the country by index crime rate. We also have the lowest incarceration rate of any large state. The number of people under probation supervision has declined dramatically. In 2017 and 2018, there were 549 and 560 homicides each year in a state of 19.4 million people. These are the lowest numbers New York has recorded since we started keeping track in 1975. Index crime and violent crime are also at all-time lows.

While there are many factors that influence these numbers, there is no doubt that the exposure to evidence-based crime policy has played a part in the success. A good example is the City of Newburgh. Five years ago, Newburgh had more than 50 shooting victims in a single year. As part of our GIVE initiative, Newburgh engaged in a focused deterrence or GVI strategy. The number of shooting victims has plummeted in the wake of that implementation: 17 in 2017 and last year, fewer than 10.

I am truly honored by this award. Laurie, Cynthia and Chris, thank you so much. While I question whether I personally deserve this recognition, I do believe that the collective work of dedicated professionals at DCJS and our partners throughout the criminal justice system in New York is worthy of this recognition.

I have been very fortunate to have the support of many people. We couldn't do this work without the support of Governor Cuomo and my partners in state government. Many in the field of evidence-based crime policy have unselfishly helped with our work. Our success would not be possible without our local partners across the state. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, none of this work would be possible without the great staff I have at DCJS. I would like to thank Ray Neves and Leigh Bates, who are here on behalf of the entire DCJS team. I have some amazingly talented and dedicated people on our team who share my passion for this work and are as good at what they do as anyone in the country.

At DCJS we believe we have an obligation to only implement and support work that has been proven to be, or is highly likely to be, impactful based on evidence. The stakes are too high not

to. For some, it is a matter of life and death. For families and communities, it is a matter of despair or hope. And we can and do make a difference! Thank you.