Exposure to family, neighborhood, and school violence has been repeatedly associated with aggressive/violent behaviors in youths. Conversely, early access to mental health screening and services has been demonstrated to mitigate the effects of violence exposure. Police Assisted Referral (PAR) provides a conduit for Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority police officers to connect violence-exposed youths and families to violence-prevention services, education, and mental health screening and treatment.

CMHA is home to approximately 17,000 low-income residents, including 6,500 children primarily living in single-parent households. Despite living in subsidized housing, low-income families have limited access to mental health and/or social supports.

Two separate studies surveyed all 1,762 adults referred January 2010 – January 2013. A total of 273 individuals completed the survey (~24% response rate of viable addresses). The surveys explored multiple domains including neighborhood attachment, and attitudes toward the program and police (police as focus of these findings).

Over half of the respondents do not classify their neighborhoods as being safe. Interestingly the studies found that 90% of respondents indicated the police were respectful and nearly 40% indicated that the program improved their opinion of police. Respondents found the program to be helpful, even when they did not elect to participate in longer-term interventions.