

TRIGGER

**A Gun Violence Intervention
Centering Storytelling in the
Fight to Disrupt Violence**

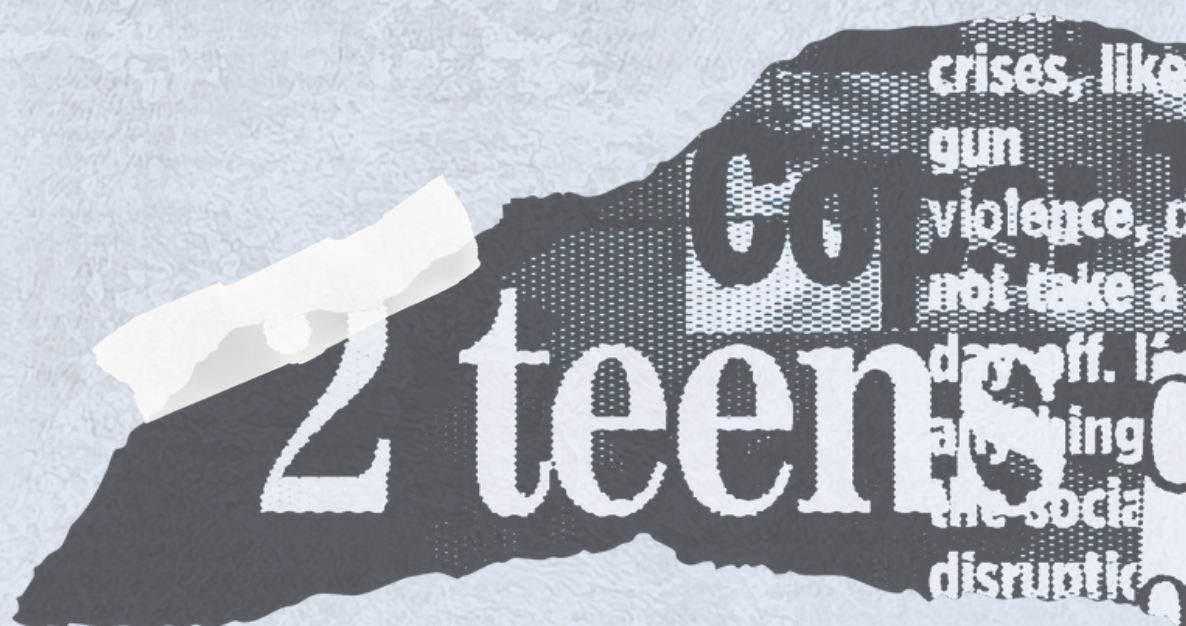
Screening Facilitator's Guide

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ABOUT DBHIDS

The City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) is part of the City's Office of Health and Human Services. Our Department is proud to offer behavioral health care, intellectual disAbility supports, and early intervention services in one comprehensive integrated system.

The mission of the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services is to educate, strengthen, and serve individuals and communities so that all Philadelphians can thrive.

We envision a Philadelphia where every individual can achieve health, well-being, and self-determination.

DBHIDS is made up of six distinct divisions, and our services are offered through a network of provider agencies. We also collaborate with the Philadelphia School District, the child welfare and judicial systems, and other stakeholders throughout the city. It is through our many partnerships that we are able to serve Philadelphians who need our help and support.

Right: Dr. Marquita Williams - Former Interim Commissioner
photograph by Jaleel King



ABOUT FPA

First Person Arts (FPA), founded in 2000, is Philadelphia's leading nonprofit storytelling organization and a celebrated voice among global peers. Our mission has always been to transform the drama of real life into memoir and documentary art, fostering appreciation for both our unique and shared experiences. Twenty-five years later, this remains our core purpose.

At FPA, we believe everyone has a story worth telling, and the voices of everyday people, whether artists or not, must be heard now. We focus on stories that are raw, urgent, and relevant, knowing they connect us to the world and inspire change. Through digital media, film, theater, and live or livestreamed performances, we present stories in ways that spark civic dialogue, generate narrative data, provide resources, and amplify solutions.

Our programming is shaped by three guiding questions: *What stories need to be told now? Who needs to hear them? What change can they inspire?* Master story coaches work with individuals to transform lived experiences into curated works of memoir and documentary art.

Over a decade-long partnership with Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health, FPA has pioneered Applied Storytelling, using narrative and art to address population health, trauma, and community healing.

Right: Jamie J. Brunson - First Person Arts Executive Director
photograph by Johanna Austin

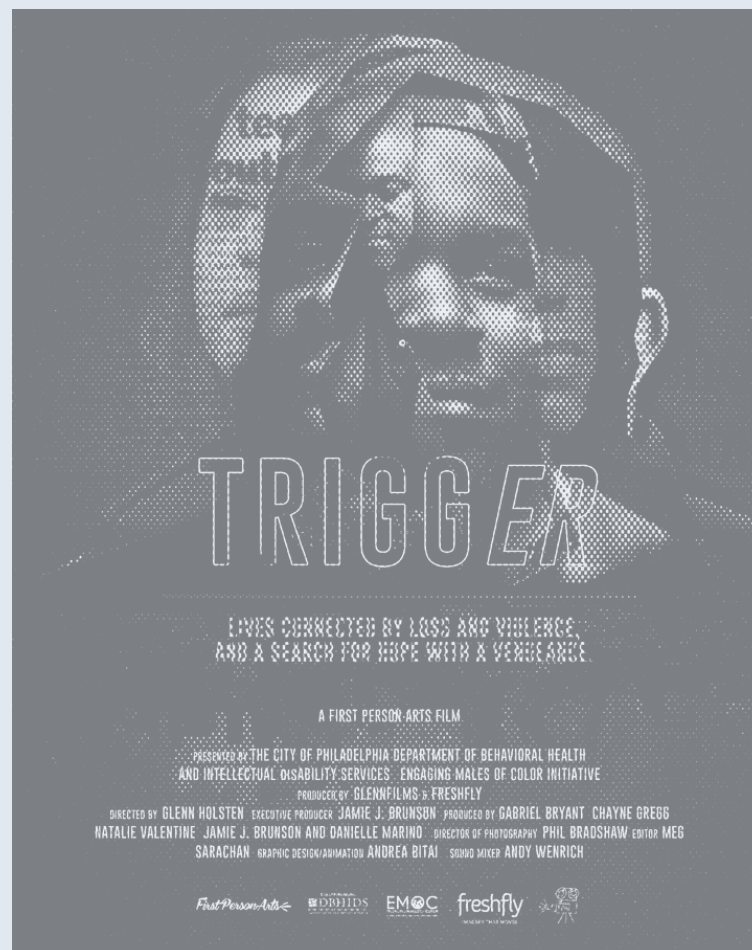


FILM SYNOPSIS

A father who lost his son, a trauma nurse at a city hospital, a high school principal, community activists, doctors, scholars, shooters, victims, and their families all share their stories, revealing layers of hurt that extend beyond the individual, family, and first responders to entire communities in need of healing.

And yet, they each search for hope with a vengeance. These storytellers are committed to using their horrific experiences to help others. For some, resilience and hope are key elements of survival.

TRIGGER is both a call to understanding and a call to action. Each of us has a role to play in combating this gun violence epidemic.



THE NEED FOR TRIGGER

In Philadelphia, the echoes of gunfire are more than sounds — they are symptoms of a deeper crisis. Gun violence has become a public health emergency, one that disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities, particularly young men of color. Behind each statistic is a story — of loss, of survival, of resilience — and Trigger gives voice to those stories. Trigger is a powerful documentary film that uses storytelling as a tool for gun violence prevention and trauma healing. Centered in Philadelphia, this film lifts the lived experiences of individuals, families, and communities who have been directly impacted by gun violence. It allows us to witness the real emotional, psychological, and behavioral toll that violence leaves behind. Just as importantly, it points us toward hope, healing, and action. Trigger is one of many engagement strategies put forth to create a stronger, healthier Philadelphia where all can thrive.

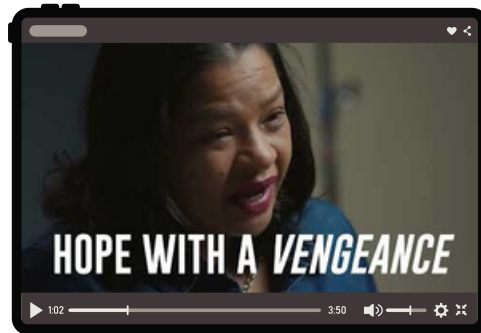
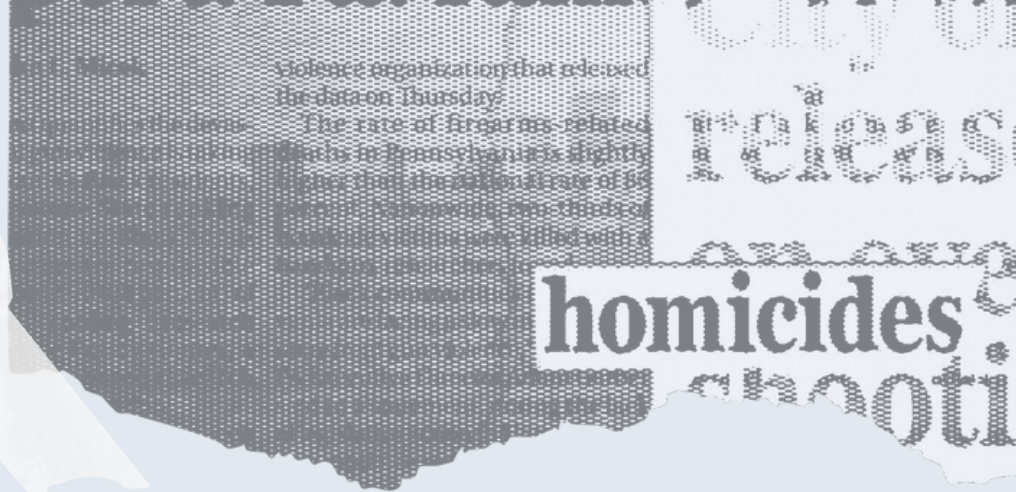
Trauma is the emotional and psychological response to an event or series of events that are deeply distressing or disturbing. When left unaddressed, trauma can manifest as depression, anxiety, substance use, difficulty trusting others, and even cycles of violence. Gun violence — whether experienced personally or witnessed in one's community — is a traumatic event. For too many Philadelphians, especially males of color, trauma is a daily reality.

Philadelphia continues to face an urgent crisis, with gun violence threatening the safety, mental health, and future of entire neighborhoods. The ripple effects of this violence are vast: schools disrupted, communities and families broken, futures stolen. And while the physical wounds may eventually heal, the psychological scars often remain untreated and unacknowledged. The Engaging Males of Color (EMOC) initiative of DBHIDS and First Person Arts, Philadelphia's premier storytelling organization, recognizes that responsive storytelling can be a bridge by connecting individuals to resources, reducing stigma around mental health, and promoting healing. By lifting up the voices of those who have endured trauma, Trigger helps foster empathy, understanding, and ultimately, collective action.

This facilitator's guide is designed to support community members and leaders, educators, service providers, and advocates in using the film to open meaningful dialogue, deepen understanding of trauma, and connect individuals to the behavioral health resources they deserve. As we seek to disrupt cycles of violence, we must also uplift pathways to healing — and Trigger is a vital step in that journey.

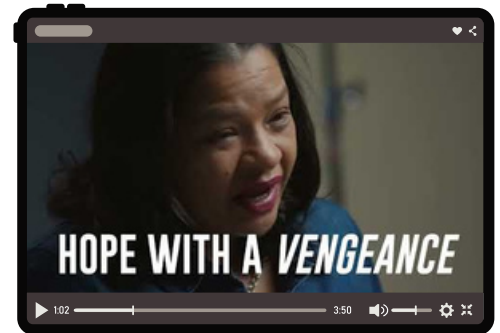
"So what I decided to do with all the grief and the pain and everything I was experiencing was this: I didn't want to sit in that mourning phase for the rest of my life, so I chose action as my path — just helping families."

PRE EVENT: FULL FILM & EXCERPT LISTING



English Subtitles

[LINK](#)



Spanish Subtitles

[LINK](#)

DBHIDS and First Person Arts are committed to making this film available to the public for free as a tool to disrupt gun violence. Please click the links above to watch the full film. The links below offer additional resources.

Roundtable Youth Discussion (2023)

<https://youtu.be/8-0PHSPRpUQ>

Educating Students In A Time Of Gun Violence (2023)

<https://youtu.be/PSEQqNtWOHE>

Finding Hope With A Vengeance (2023)

https://youtu.be/g7c7w4B_8bo

Losing Jarell (2023)

https://youtu.be/UYO_10BnYIE

From Being Part of the Problem to Becoming Part Of The Solution (2023)

<https://youtu.be/BFjBHbIDNCwXMmu8Xs>

FPA Trigger - They Shot Me (2023)

https://youtu.be/qa_RjEzQ-k

On The Front Line Of The Gun Violence Crisis (2023)

<https://youtu.be/BNS0XMmu8Xs>

[LINK](#) **Trigger Excerpt Descriptions**

IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE & IMPACT

The Trigger Gun Violence Intervention can be most impactful for, but is certainly not limited to:

- 1) Community members 14+,
- 2) Professionals working with individuals impacted by trauma, and
- 3) People who shape policies, procedures, and perceptions of the issue.

Our goal is to engage each group strategically. First, determine why you are interested in hosting a Trigger screening, who your target audience is for this intervention, and what impact you want to make with the work.

Audiences

The primary audience for this intervention was designed for community members, especially those living in areas of high gun violence and low behavioral health utilization. However, as gun violence escalated in Philadelphia and across the country, the intervention became impactful for any community struggling with the trauma associated with gun violence. For community members, the intervention should create a safe space to share stories about how gun violence has impacted the individual and their community.

The secondary audience for this intervention is professionals working with people impacted by gun violence, including but not limited to: first responders, educators, and medical professionals, because people working on the front lines of gun violence are traumatized as well and need safe spaces to share and access support.

The third audience is change makers, the people who shape policy, procedures, and perceptions of the issues, such as journalists, the legal community, law enforcement, and philanthropy. Changemakers benefit from hearing the lived experiences of people directly impacted by gun violence. Their stories can add meaningful truths and insights to the decision-making process and reporting of the issue.

Impact

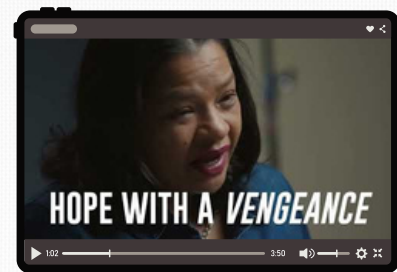
Trigger was designed to impact the community in the following ways:

- Empower individuals and communities to have courageous conversations about “not being okay” around the issue.
- Bring trauma supports to the community in a safe, embracing setting.
- Introduce the stories of people with lived experience of an issue to those empowered to shape policies, procedures, and perceptions so that they can understand the issue in a new light.

PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

This toolkit contains pre-designed promotional materials to make your event a success:

- Website sample copy:
 - The new film TRIGGER is both a call to understanding and a call to action about the roles each of us has to play in combating the gun violence epidemic in Philadelphia and beyond. Featuring storytellers from Philadelphia sharing their lived experiences with gun violence and their shared search for hope with a vengeance.
 - A father who lost his son, a trauma nurse at a city hospital, a school principal, community activists, doctors, scholars, shooters, victims, and their families all share their stories, revealing layers of hurt that extend beyond the individual, family, and first responders to entire communities in need of healing. And yet they each search for hope with a vengeance.
 - These storytellers are committed to using their horrific experiences to help others. For some, resilience and hope are key elements of survival. TRIGGER is both a call to understanding and a call to action. Each of us has a role to play in combating this gun violence epidemic.
 - Directed by: Glenn Holsten. Produced by: FreshFly Films
 - Presented by the City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), Engaging Males of Color (EMOC) Initiative, and First Person Arts.



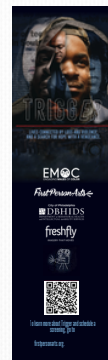
Trailer [LINK](#)



Website Graphic [LINK](#)



Flyer [LINK](#)



Bookmark
[LINK](#)

PREPARE YOUR AUDIENCES

What is the film about?

Following in the footsteps of Letter to My Father, Letter to My Son: Evolutions as well as We Breathe, We Live: Brotherly Love Protest Stories, TRIGGER is both a call to understanding and a call to action about the roles each of us has to play in combating the gun violence epidemic in Philadelphia and beyond. Storytellers from Philadelphia are featured, sharing their lived experiences with gun violence and their shared search for hope with vengeance.

What can they expect from the talkback/panel discussion?

The moderator will engage both panelists and the audience in a thought-provoking conversation. Audience members will be encouraged to share their reactions to the film, experiences with gun violence, and direct their own questions to the panelists. The goal is to empower audience members to become active participants in the event as a gun violence intervention.

What resources will be available?

Wellness resources are available at all TRIGGER screenings. These may include information on national or local hotlines, community organizations, individual or group therapy, and more. Keep in mind your location and target audience when preparing resources.



Left: Gabriel Bryant - Community Engagement Manager, DBHIDS
photograph by Jaleel King



Right: Danielle T. Marino - First Person Arts Director of Programming/EMOC Project Lead
photograph by Ben Vuocolo

IDENTIFY EVENT PERSONNEL

A successful intervention requires a team of people, including:

Event Manager/Point of Contact - Responsible for conducting the venue walkthrough, outreach to panelists for participation, the setup and breakdown of the event, event stage management, and completing a post-event report.

Technicians - Responsible for ensuring all audio and visual needs are met.

Post-Screening Panelists - A group of individuals selected to engage audience members in a thought-provoking conversation. Meet with your moderator before the event to determine important questions and topics for the discussion.

Moderator - Person responsible for leading a dynamic talkback/panel discussion with audiences after the film is screened. The moderator will develop a list of engaging questions for both the panelists and audience members.

On-Site Clinicians - Responsible for maintaining the on-site “care space” and providing assistance to any audience members or participants during the event. On-site clinicians are mandatory for each screening. [More info on the following pages.]

Identify local behavioral health providers to partner with.

Resources Table Volunteers - Responsible for setting up and breaking down resource tables and engaging with audience members who request additional information.

TIPS: Share important contact information

IDENTIFY YOUR VENUE

A successful TRIGGER intervention can happen in any space. For best results, select a space with the following technical and logistical capabilities.

- Wi-Fi or hard-wired internet connection
- A screen for viewing the film
- An in-house AV system.
- A facility that is ADA accessible to all, including the stage.
- A nearby room or area designated as a “care space” for those who need to step away during the event to access on-the-spot trauma supports.
- A long table (optional) and chairs with microphones for the panel discussion.
- Appropriately climate-controlled
- Parking/Accessibility to public transportation

If your venue is not equipped with these elements, perhaps engaging an AV operator with rented equipment is best.

We have found that the following venues have not been conducive to a successful event:

- Outdoor venues, especially during the daytime, often are not equipped for a standard projector and screen.
- Gymnasium - These large spaces do not have the best acoustics, causing an echo throughout.

THE EVENT

Adults:

Option #1

Screening the full film followed by a panel discussion. The total runtime is 2 hours.

Option #2

Screening the first half of the film (approx. 30 minutes), followed by a panel discussion. Then screen the second half of the film (approx. 30 minutes), followed by a panel discussion. The total runtime is 2 hours.

Option #3

Screening up to 2 excerpts (ranging from 8 minutes to 13 minutes each), followed by a moderator and panel discussion. The full run time of this event is 1 hour.

Youth:

For grades 6-8, the recommendation is to show up to two of the excerpts from the film. We've found the full film can be difficult for this age group. This screening will still have a moderator and panel discussion. The full run time of this event is 1 hour.

For grades 9-12, any of the three options can be utilized for this age group. The total runtime is 1 - 2 hours, based on the option selected.

Below: David Acosta, Story Coach
First Person Arts
photograph by Jaleel King



SAMPLE EVENT LINEUP

[LINK](#)

Trigger Run of Show First Person Arts 245 S. 16th Street Philadelphia PA, 19102					
Segment Number	Elapsed Time in Minutes	Start Time	End Time	Event and Description	On Stage
pre show	0:30:00	5:00:00 PM	5:30:00 PM	Attendees arrive at venue	
1	0:02:00	5:30:00 PM	5:32:00 PM	Welcome	Venue host
2	0:02:00	5:32:00 PM	5:34:00 PM	Partner remarks (as needed)	Organizational messaging
3	0:02:00	5:34:00 PM	5:36:00 PM	DBHIDS remarks	Venue information, overview of resources, and program rundown- screening, survey, talkback
4	1:00:00	5:36:00 PM	6:36:00 PM	Film begins	FPA tech staff to run film
5	0:01:00	6:36:00 PM	6:37:00 PM	Film ends	
6	0:03:00	6:37:00 PM	6:40:00 PM	FPA remarks	Transition from film to talk back
7	0:01:00	6:40:00 PM	6:41:00 PM	Distributes survey (audience to fill out during intro portion)	DBHIDS staff
8	0:02:00	6:41:00 PM	6:43:00 PM	Moderator	Introduces each panelist
9	0:30:00	6:43:00 PM	7:13:00 PM	Moderates talkback with panelists audience q&a	Moderator plus up to 6 panelists
10	0:15:00	7:13:00 PM	7:28:00 PM	Closing remarks	DBHIDS
11	0:02:00	7:28:00 PM	7:30:00 PM	Closing remarks	Partner
12	0:02:00	7:30:00 PM	7:32:00 PM		
13	0:01:00	7:32:00 PM	7:33:00 PM		

CLINICAL SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

The Trigger Intervention is designed to encourage vulnerability, reflection, and healing through the art of storytelling. It was developed using trauma-informed practices. Individuals providing wellness supports during interventions must be trained in these practices. This intervention is not intended for utilization without appropriate trauma-informed support present.

Should an individual or entity choose to use this material without trained specialists or modify it in any way, neither DBHIDS nor FPA shall be liable for any damages. It is strongly advised that no intervention be conducted without trained specialists.

If you or someone you are in touch with is experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis right now, please contact the crisis line 24/7 at [988](tel:988)

Click for more information about the [988 suicide and crisis hotline](#)

For non-emergency help accessing and navigating mental health services for yourself, a family member or a significant other:

If you are a Philadelphian that is uninsured or underinsured call [215-685-5400](tel:215-685-5400). If you are Medicaid eligible call [888-545-2600](tel:888-545-2600). Services are available regardless of your ability to pay.

Resources

- **[HealthyMindsPhilly.org](#):** Online tools and resources including a free, confidential self-screening.
- **[Community Behavioral Health](#):** Providing access to mental health care and substance use in services in Philadelphia.
- **[DBHIDS Behavioral Health Division](#):** Provides mental health services and supports for adults and children requiring medical, social, and educational services
- **[DBHIDS Behavioral Health and Justice Division](#):** Committed to working towards reducing justice involvement for Philadelphians with behavioral health challenges, including serious mental illness.

Through the programs listed above, sensitive and trained staff are available to assist with general information and referral resources for services such as:

- **[Case Management](#)**
- **[Mental Health Court](#)**
- **[Family Supports](#)**
- **[Housing Supports & Homeless Outreach](#)**
- **[Criminal Justice Supports](#)**
- **[General Contact Numbers](#)**

HOST YOUR EVENT

Set up screen/film.

Set up resource tables.

Resource tables should be located at the back of each venue, but easy for audience members to find. This guide provides a list of wellness resources that can be shared with your audience. It is important to include local resources whenever possible.

Provide refreshments. Food is community! Refreshments can help create a more open space. If refreshments are served before the screening begins, account for the time it may take audience members to grab food and get settled in your event schedule. Approximately 15 minutes in the beginning allows for food and also gives latecomers a chance to settle in as well.

Set up “care space.”

The “care space” should be located in a quiet room separate from the event. These conversations can trigger a lot of trauma and emotions. Those who need it are welcome to utilize the “care space” at any time. This space should be staffed at all times.

Set up Panel Discussion (podium/table/chairs).

The setup for each panel should account for the audience size, venue, and the organization’s goals. At a large conference, you will want panelists at a table onstage. But in small group settings, you may place panelists in chairs at the front of the room, so they can engage in more active dialogue with the audience.

Sample Panel Discussion Questions

Reflection

1. What emotions did this film bring up for you?
2. Was there a particular story or moment that stood out most?
3. Did the film shift or challenge any of your perspectives on gun violence?

Connection

4. How do the stories in TRIGGER relate to your own experiences or what you see in your community?
5. What similarities or differences did you notice between the storytellers’ lives and your own?
6. How does hearing lived experiences differ from reading statistics or news reports?

Community

7. What impacts of gun violence on families or neighborhoods do you think often go unseen?
8. What examples of resilience or strength did you notice in the storytellers?
9. How can communities create spaces for healing and dialogue around these issues?

Action

10. What role do you see yourself playing in addressing or preventing gun violence?
11. What resources or supports would help you or your community take meaningful action?
12. What role can art, film, or storytelling play in driving change?

Closing

13. If you could share one message about this film with someone who hasn’t seen it, what would it be?

QUICK REFERENCES

Your Impact Strategy

- Why do you want to bring this film to your community?
- What is the impact you want to make through this intervention?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- Which audiences are you seeking for this event?
- How many people are you expecting?
- What supports/resources are needed?

Venue

What are the characteristics of a good event venue?

- Technical capacity
- ADA-accessible
- Accessible, private “care space”
- Options for panel discussion setup
- Appropriate HVAC

What places should be avoided?

- Outdoors
- Gymnasium
- Places with poor ventilation and a lack of HVAC
- Spaces that are known triggers due to prior history

Event Personnel

A successful intervention requires a team of people, including:

- Event Manager/Point of Contact
- Technicians for AV
- Host/Facilitator
- Post Screening Panel Moderator
- Panelists
- On-Site Clinicians
- Contact Information for those associated with the event

Promoting your event

This toolkit contains pre-designed promotional materials to make your event a success:

- 2-minute Film Trailer
- Sample Event Flyers
- Event registration- Eventbrite, Sign-up Genius, TicketLeap
- Website sample copy

QUICK REFERENCES

The Event

- Trigger film synopsis
- What does a screening look like from start to finish?
- Identify if you will screen the full film or excerpts
- Create a run of the show
- Send important event information out in advance.

Prepare your audiences

- Share event information
- Explain the unknown
- What is the film about?
- What can they expect from the talkback/panel discussion?
- What resources will be available?

Gather your resources

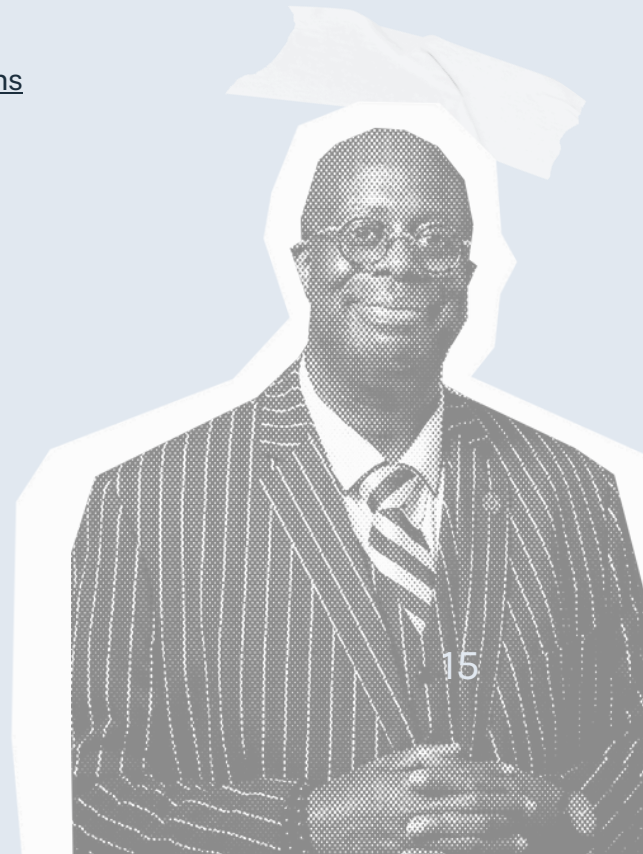
- What to expect from therapy?
- Anonymous Event Survey
- Talkback/Panel Discussion Questions
- "988" Bookmark

Host your event

- Set up resource tables
- Provide refreshments
- Identify "care space"



Below: Chad Dion Lassiter -
Executive Director, Pennsylvania
photograph by Commonwealth Media Services



TRIGGER THANK YOU

Thank you for your interest in bringing the
Trigger Gun Violence Intervention to your community.

Acknowledgments:

Anthony McLaughlin - DBHIDS MPA CPM, Chief of Innovation and Effectiveness:
Planning Innovation Division

Pamela McClenton - DBHIDS, LCSW, Senior Director of DEI

Gabriel Bryant - DBHIDS Community Engagement Manager

Octavius Blount - MSW - DBHIDS Community Engagement Specialist / EMOC Initiative

Kehinde Solanke - DBHIDS Commissioner

Dr. Marquita Williams - Former Interim Commissioner

Dr. Arthur C. Evans - Former Commissioner

David T. Jones - Former Commissioner

Dr. Jill Bowen - Former Commissioner

Roland Lamb - Former Deputy Commissioner

Elizabeth Guman - Strategy Arts

Jamie J Brunson - Former First Person Arts Executive Director

Danielle T. Marino - Former First Person Arts Director of Programming / EMOC Project
Lead

FreshFly Films - Film Production Company

Glenn Holsten - Film Director

Chad Dion Lassiter - Executive Director, Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission