

## The California Cities Gang Prevention Network

Welcome to the 16th bulletin of the California Cities Gang Prevention Network! In this bulletin we will look at summaries from a few of the presenters at our recent conference on the topic of gang violence prevention, and we will see how these tie in with the four goals of the Minneapolis *Blueprint for Action*. As you read, consider what your role in gang violence prevention is and how it fits into your larger picture. How can you and your agency improve relationships and communication with other agencies and organizations to reduce gang violence? We will begin with an overview of primary prevention.

### Primary Prevention & Violence

Summary of points presented on September 17, 2009, to the 13 City Point Meeting by Rachel Davis, Managing Director, Prevention Institute; Project Director, UNITY<sup>[1]</sup>; Chair of the Advisory Board for the 13 City Gang Prevention Network

Violence is preventable, not inevitable. It is a predictable behavior in the unsafe environments where people live. Rooted in a complex set of underlying issues, violence is a learned behavior that can be unlearned or not learned in the first place. Prevention is a systematic process that promotes safe, healthy environments and behaviors, reducing the likelihood or frequency of an incident, injury, or condition occurring. Ideally, prevention addresses problems before they occur, rather than waiting to intervene afterwards. This is called primary prevention. Over the last generations, we've seen dramatic improvements in health status from primary prevention efforts related to other injury and illness. These include traffic safety crash reduction (e.g. child restraints, DUI, and helmet laws), smoking prevention,

immunizations, and reducing blood-lead levels in children. There is a strong and growing evidence base, grounded in research and practitioner and community wisdom. Though it is a complex issue, most violence is preventable, not inevitable. For example,

- Cities with more coordination, communication, and attention to preventing violence have achieved lower violence rates.<sup>[2] [3] [4]</sup>
- Schools can reduce violence by 15% in as little as six months through universal school-based violence prevention efforts.<sup>[5]</sup>
- The City of Minneapolis has documented *significant* decreases in juvenile crime since implementing its four-point, public health-based [Violence Prevention Blueprint for Action](#). In the Minneapolis precinct that includes four neighborhoods targeted in the Blueprint, juvenile crime dropped 43% from 2006 to 2008.<sup>[6]</sup> This measured success is in part the byproduct of the totality of strategies, relationships, and efforts undertaken by city, community, and law enforcement entities.

*Preventing violence before it occurs* involves comprehensive and multifaceted efforts to address the risk factors associated with violence; it builds on assets in youth, families, communities, and changes norms. It is critical that a prevention strategy address norms because of their power to influence behavior. For the most part, as a society, we have treated violence as a criminal justice issue *after the fact*, without also prioritizing what can be done *before*. Increasingly, law enforcement professionals

are insisting that we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. Acknowledging the invaluable contribution of law enforcement, a public health approach recognizes that law enforcement efforts, by mandate, are largely aimed at containment and suppression and further, that law enforcement alone cannot prevent violence. This is because the underlying contributing factors—poverty, hopelessness, oppression, mental health problems, substance abuse, victimization history, etc.—are beyond the scope of law enforcement efforts. Rather, they span the mandate of multiple stakeholders. Law enforcement personnel have played an important prevention role as advocates for prevention resources, data collection, appropriate referrals, and building a perception of safety. An effective public health approach, focused on *preventing violence before it occurs*, can help free up law enforcement to focus on the most dangerous and persistent problems.

For more information: [Prevention Institute](#) and [UNITY \[Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth\]](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

### Everyone must work together

In the conclusion of the World Health Organization's [Preventing violence : a guide to implementing the recommendations of the World Report on Violence and Health](#) it states, "A central message of the guide is that both multi-sectoral involvement and clear leadership are essential to the success of national, municipal and community-based efforts to prevent violence," (<http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2004/9241592079.pdf>). The *Blueprint for Action: Preventing Youth Violence in Minneapolis* mentioned above states that "By seeing youth violence as the public health crisis that it is, we are better able to work across agencies, communities and jurisdictions with youth, parents, teachers, clergy, health providers, and others to protect youth, reduce injuries and deaths, and prevent more acts of violence from ever happening in the first place." The four goals of the Blueprint are as follows:

1. Connect every youth with a trusted adult.
2. Intervene at the first sign that youth are at risk for violence.

3. Restore youth who have gone down the wrong path.
4. Unlearn the culture of violence in our community.

### How is Oakland implementing these steps?

Summary of points presented on September 17, 2009, to the 13 City Point Meeting by Andrea Youngdahl, Director, Department of Human Services, Oakland

The City of Oakland, Department of Human Services (DHS) is home to Head Start, Senior Services, Community Housing Services, Community Action Partnership, OFCY and Measure Y. DHS is a voice for prevention during city planning and program implementation. There are several different projects in the Department of Human Services that are prevention based. They include the following:

1. Measure Y is a voter's initiative that funds police, fire, and violence prevention programs generated by an additional parcel and parking tax. The following Measure Y programs are prevention based for children under the age of 18:
  - Mental Health for children 0-5 who witness domestic violence
  - School violence prevention curriculum and peer conflict resolution
  - Case management of high-risk middle school youth
  - Case management for youth in the juvenile justice system
  - Restorative Justice Circles for middle school youth
  - After-school and summer jobs for high-risk youth

1. Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) is a 2.5% set aside of unrestricted city funds for children and youth grants. Strategic plan for OFCY for the next three years includes the following prevention components:

- Early Childhood Development (0-5 Years)
- Out of School Time Healthy Development and Academic Success (5-14 years)
- Wellness and Healthy Transitions (11- 20 Years)
- Older Youth Transitions to a Healthy Adulthood (15-20 Years)

1. The Oakland Gang Task Force officially adopted the Oakland Gang Prevention Plan in June, 2009. Prevention programs in the plan are funded by city funds and the US Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention:

- Parenting education with gang awareness
- Case management for gang-involved youth
- Trainings on working with gang-involved youth for providers, educators and community members
- Street outreach

For more information on the prevention work of DHS, please visit: <http://www.oaklandhumanservices.org>.

## The Youth Intervention Network

Summary of points presented on September 17, 2009, to the 13 City Point Meeting by Iris Archuleta, President, Emerald Consulting

In the fall of 2006, Antioch Police Chief James Hyde and then Police Crime Prevention Commissioner Iris Archuleta met to discuss their concerns about our city's youth. They agreed that more was needed than coming up with a short-term patch. Chief Hyde's philosophy around community policing is unique in that, although he understands and employs suppression as

a necessary and critical component of public safety, he also understands that the long-term health and safety of a community requires a strategy for intervention and prevention methodology, especially when dealing with youth.

The Youth Intervention Network, (YIN), has, from the beginning, worked to build and support a robust coalition of service providers, government agencies, community organizations, faith-based organizations, and community members to work together to serve the youth identified as likely to commit or become victims of violent crimes. Emerald Consulting has served as convener, facilitator, and coordinator of this effort. The development of strong interagency collaboration and communication is key to our initiative. The initiative aims to blend best-practices with effective collaboration to create a nurturing atmosphere—a community that functions like a “village,” to prevent young people from being marginalized or “falling through the cracks” in the service-delivery system. The YIN initiative is built on the understanding that the problem is not a lack of services, but a lack of connection among service-providing agencies and organizations, as well as a lack of connection among these agencies and community members and families. YIN's capacity-building efforts seek to connect these agencies, organizations, and community members to enable them to work collaboratively to address problems that no one organization can address alone. In other words, our goal is, and we are in the process of becoming, a High Performing Community.

Current partners include but are not limited to the Antioch Police Department, Police Athletic League (PAL), City of Antioch, Antioch Unified School District, Sutter Delta Memorial Hospital, John Muir Health, East County Business-Education Alliance, Opportunity Junction, John F. Kennedy University Counseling Center, East County Child and Family Services, Juvenile Probation, the REACH Project, One Day at A Time, The Williams Group, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, youth, parents, and community members.

For a complete comprehensive overview of this work, please visit us at [UrAtWork, Inc.](http://UrAtWork, Inc.), or use this link to go

directly to the document page <http://uratwork.com/images/9.1.09UrAtWorkforConf.pdf>.

## Using data to Intervene at the first sign that youth are at risk for violence

Summary of points presented on September 17, 2009, to the 13 City Point Meeting by Andy Wong, President, AJW Inc.

The Youth Intervention Network contacted Andy Wong to collect and analyze risk-factor data for individual youth. AJWI ([www.ajwi.com](http://www.ajwi.com)) has been working in the field of cross-agency data sharing, analysis, and management for 10 years. Recent advances have created the potential for real-time or near real-time support for cross-agency case management, program improvement, and research. Our latest work has been focused on violence prevention among youth working with cross-agency initiatives involving schools, mental health, human services and juvenile probation departments. We are beginning to determine critical indicators that may identify promising intervention points and service redesigns (Youth Intervention Network) that can aid in reducing youth violence. Adolescent truancy, early childhood chronic school absences and specific cross-agency overlapping services are key indicators of high need and will help in reconfiguring existing services for greater effectiveness or early intervention. To do this it has been critical to address HIPAA, FERPA, and California privacy law guidelines in the workflow, ensuring that clients are protected. The next stage will be to narrow the service re-designs to address specific cohorts and raise effectiveness of existing systems. Contact info: [ajw@ajwi.com](mailto:ajw@ajwi.com) or (415) 541-9008.

## The thoughts behind the four goals

Above are just three example of how cities and organizations are employing prevention. Following is an excerpt from Minneapolis' "Blueprint for Action" that expands on the four goals:

There is strong agreement that research-based youth violence prevention and intervention can reduce youth violence. This is not to say it is easy. Positive pressure must be exerted everywhere children are, regardless of whether they've

never engaged in violence or have had multiple experiences with violence. Together, we must:

**Connect youth to trusted adults.** At the core of any prevention effort is the role of caring, trusted adults in the life of every young person. Relationships are how children and youth learn about the world. The goal is to make sure those relationships are positive and nurturing. Whether through family, employment, a mentor, joining a community-based or faith-based group, quality after-school programs, participating on a team, or doing community service – all young people need a caring adult in their life. Students who spend no time in extracurricular activities, such as those offered in after-school programs, are 49 percent more likely to have used drugs and 37 percent more likely to become teen parents than are students who spend one or more hours per week in extracurricular activities. Beyond simply offering a safe haven, after-school programs offer children and youth opportunities to learn new skills such as conflict resolution, prepare for a successful career, improve grades and develop relationships with caring adults. These skills can be critical in helping youth develop in positive ways. Support and education for families on effective parenting skills is also an effective prevention strategy. This is especially true for teen parents, and why we must work to reduce unwanted teen pregnancy and provide support to teen parents. Teen parents often have little energy left to provide the stimulation critical to a child's early development. Children who begin their first critical years with unhealthy starts are likely to begin school not ready to learn. Children who struggle in school are at increased risk for engaging in violence during childhood and adolescence.

**Intervene at the first sign that youth are at risk for violence.** Action is at the heart of this plan: intervene early when a young person or family first exhibits signs that they are at risk for or involved in violence. All the places where young people go (parks, schools, health care facilities, and social service organizations) need to know how to support and provide assistance to young

people who witness or are a victim of violence. We must help young people who engage in risky behavior (e.g. skip school/are suspended from school, substance use) find a different path. In our families, communities and schools, we must create alternative opportunities to gain skills, while still holding youth accountable for their behavior. We must take steps to ensure our schools and our communities are safe and welcoming, and have policies supporting the academic success and healthy development of all children and youth. And we need to shore up the community resources to meet young people's emotional and mental health problems that increase their risk for violence. Lastly, parents of young people who are at-risk of using violence or re-offending need education and support so they have the tools and resources they need to help their children move in a positive direction.

**Restore youth who have gone down the wrong path.** Youth can change the trajectory of their life if given the support, opportunities and services they need within the juvenile justice system and when they return home to their community. As young people re-enter a community they and their families need support that includes education, employment, physical and mental health, positive social relationships outside mandatory ones (probation), and perhaps repairing the damage to themselves and their community created by their actions. Upholding this belief requires changing our mindset from focusing solely on punishment to holding young people accountable while also providing opportunities for healthy youth development. This requires all systems working with youth offenders and their families to strengthen or re-invent how they coordinate and collaborate to support better outcomes.

**Unlearn the culture of violence in our community.** Researchers have proven that long-term public education campaigns on violence prevention, family education, alcohol and drug prevention, and gun safety are effective strategies

to help prevent delinquency. Researchers also agree that involving youth and developing community consensus around these values are essential to an effective public education process. A well-designed public education campaign can make a positive impact on public opinion and be a cost-effective way of providing critical information to a large number of people. For example, it can enhance community understanding about the nature and value of the juvenile justice system. It can educate all members of the community about effective prevention and intervention strategies. It can help communities identify and access local resources. And it can inform policymakers of proven options for effective juvenile justice at all levels.

We encourage you to read all 34 recommended action items in the full text of the Blueprint at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/blueprint.pdf> or watch the 30-minute video with the mayor at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/yv.asp>. We hope you are challenged and inspired by this information.

[1] Determined to improve health and safety for all, especially those most in need, Prevention Institute builds health, safety, and equity into key policies and actions to transform the places where people live, work, play, and learn. The Institute's strong commitment to quality prevention is characterized by community participation and promotion of equitable health outcomes among all social and economic groups. Since its founding in 1997, [Prevention Institute](http://www.preventioninstitute.org) has focused on injury and violence prevention, traffic safety, nutrition and physical activity promotion, youth development, community health, and health equity. This Institute runs a national initiative to prevent violence, [UNITY \[Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth\]](http://www.unityinstitute.org), funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The California Wellness Foundation. Through tools, training, and consultation about the problem and solutions, UNITY supports US cities in advancing more effective, sustainable efforts to prevent violence that affects young people. This FAQ has not been endorsed by UNITY representatives and does not imply an endorsement by our partners or funders.

[2] National Crime Prevention Council. (1999). *Six Safe Cities: On the Crest of the Crime Prevention Wave*. USA.

[3] Prothow-Stith, Deborah, and Howard R. Spivak. (2004). *Murder Is No Accident*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[4] Weiss, Billie. (June 2008) *An Assessment of Youth Violence Prevention Activities in USA Cities*. Southern California Injury Prevention Research Center, UCLA School of Public Health.

[5] Hahn R. (2007). Effectiveness of Universal School-Based Programs to Prevent Violent and Aggressive Behavior. *Am J Prev Med*;33(2S):S114-S129

[6] Minneapolis Police Department. (2008). *2008 Fourth Precinct Juvenile Crime Suspect & Arrest Statistics*

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The California Endowment is a private, statewide health foundation created in 1996 with a mission to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians.

Created in 1992 as an independent, private foundation, TCWF's mission is to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education, and disease prevention.

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