

# Blueprint for Action: A Public Health Approach to Youth Violence Prevention

*Summer 2008*



# Seeing with a Public Health Lens

- The Minneapolis approach views youth violence as a preventable disease.
- Seeing youth violence as a public health epidemic calls for a multi-faceted long term solution, focusing on prevention.
- Enforcement alone will not solve this problem. We cannot arrest youth violence away.

# We can solve this problem

- Most perpetrators and victims of youth violence are concentrated in specific areas of our community.
- Research and examples of proven efforts show best practices we can follow.
- Efforts underway in Minneapolis are already showing results.
  - Juvenile Center, Youth Bus, STEP-UP

# Minneapolis' Holistic Approach

- We created a broad, diverse Executive and several Community Advisory Committees.
  - We engaged youth and residents.
  - We drew on lessons and best practices.
  - We listened to the experts.
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# Public Health Approach: Six Parts

- Community-based methods to identify causes
  - Identifying risk factors and protective factors
  - Tracking trends that influence the prevalence and incidence of risk factors
  - Research-based Interventions (environment/behavioral)
  - Evaluation of interventions
  - Public Education to share information
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# Prevention Strategies: 3 levels

- Primary or universal prevention
- Secondary or selective prevention
- Tertiary or targeted prevention

# Result: 4 Goals Action & 34 Steps

- Connect youth to trusted adults
- Intervene at the first sign of risk
- Restore youth going down the wrong path
- Unlearn the culture of violence

# Goal #1: Connect

- Increase the number of quality mentoring opportunities for young people, along with proper training for mentors of all ages and backgrounds.
- Increase the number of private businesses providing jobs through the City of Minneapolis STEP-UP.
- Strengthen the coordination of public and private youth programs, services and opportunities.
- Increase the number of high-quality community-based youth programs, services and opportunities, including leadership training.
- Reestablish Minneapolis Police liaisons in Public Schools to give young people opportunities to build positive relationships with the Minneapolis Police and to strengthen coordination between schools, parks and police.
- Provide year-round youth buses.
- Give young people safe spaces for activities during out-of-school times by increasing the hours when Library, Park and School buildings are open.
- Provide young people with consistent, effective and meaningful violence prevention training by developing a shared curriculum and coordinated training program for the Minneapolis Libraries, Parks, and Schools.
- Increase the number of training and support programs for parents of teens.
- Increase teenage pregnancy prevention programs in Minneapolis.
- Reduce the number of second children to teen parents by connecting every teen parent with health, education and parenting resources.

# Goal #2: Intervene

- Expand summer employment programs for at-risk youth and youth already in the justice system.
- Establish the juvenile supervision and service center and maintain the Minneapolis Police Department's juvenile unit.
- Develop a standard protocol for parks, schools and health care facilities in the aftermath of critical violent incidents.
- Establish and promote a youth help line to give young people a safe, confidential way to report trouble or seek help.
- Support alternatives to suspension and expulsion in Minneapolis schools.
- Increase the capacity of Hennepin County's truancy intervention program for students with mental health and chemical dependency issues.
- Create specific mentor programs for young people with an incarcerated parent.
- Expand street level outreach, including bold door-to-door outreach that engages families and re-connects youth exhibiting risky behavior with quality education and employment opportunities.

# Goal #3: Restore

- Better coordinate different parts of the juvenile justice system to support young offenders.
- Expand the scope and increase the funding of juvenile probation to better integrate young offenders back into the community.
- Implement a comprehensive assessment tool that identifies a juvenile's mental health and related needs and connects them to available services without risking self-incrimination.
- Expand restorative justice programs for youth offenders.
- Ensure that each youth returning from out of home placement has a comprehensive plan to re-enter their community.
- Develop relevant and culturally appropriate rites of passage to support a more comprehensive process for youth offenders to re-enter the community.

# Goal #4: Unlearn Violence

- Work with local experts and youth to develop a local public education campaign to ensure that young people and our entire community see their roles and responsibilities in stopping violence, while providing the knowledge and tools to reduce violence and safely intervene when violence occurs.
  - Recognize that youth violence is a national problem and Minneapolis should lead the discussion by partnering with other mayors and leaders in other cities to form a national coalition against youth violence.
  - Support sensible illegal gun laws and work to change community values around the acceptance of guns. This includes seeking stronger penalties for people who sell and distribute illegal guns, and profit from the sale and distribution of illegal guns to young people.
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# Measuring Progress

As we implement this *Blueprint for Action*:

- We will track violence involving young people
  - Homicides, assaults, school suspensions
  
- We will track risk factors associated with youth violence
  - Curfew, truancy, gun possession, teen pregnancy
  
- We will track factors associated with reduced likelihood of youth violence
  - High school graduation, funding for youth activities

# Implementation:

- A city coordinator was hired to oversee implementation of the *Blueprint*.
- Action items were prioritized and refined with specific implementation steps.
- Public and private resources identified to support implementation.
- Community partners called upon to take responsibility for specific action items.

# For more information:

[www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/yvp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/yvp)

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