

**COMMUNITY FORUMS ON YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION
MINNEAPOLIS, JULY 2007**

Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee Charge

**To create and oversee the implementation
of a multi-faceted, multi-sector, multi-year Blue Print for Action,
utilizing a public health approach,
to significantly reduce and prevent youth violence in Minneapolis.**

The plan should address public policy, underlying issues, outreach, education, communication and infrastructure. It should include strategies to engage and support both youth and families as well as opportunities for youth to connect with their cultures and trusted adults in the community.

What Is Youth Violence?

- A public health problem in which violent injury and death disproportionately affects adolescents and young adults in the United States.

- The intentional use of physical force against another person which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury or death as well as behaviors that are intended to inflict psychological harm.

- Examples include bullying, verbal violence, dating abuse, family abuse, wounding, robbery, murder, shooting, gang activity, self-afflicted wounds.

- Structural violence in the form of economic, political or social discrimination

Public Health Approach

A public health approach treats violence like we treat a disease, like we treat an epidemic. We look at the multivariate roots. We embrace this approach by asking four questions:

- What is the problem? (Surveillance)
- What are the causes? (Research)
- What works to help prevent the problem? (Intervention evaluation)
- How do you do it? (Program implementation)

When we look at violence as a public health problem, we see it as preventable. We use a full spectrum approach to try to break negative cycles. We act with intention and utilize cross-generational involvement. We apply bold ideas. We realize there is no one right solution so we use a multi-pronged approach

A public health approach focuses on risk factors and protective factors. It does not focus on a reactive response of criminal justice which makes the threat of punishment a primary deterrent.

The problem of youth violence is complex and our response needs to draw on the best that all sectors and disciplines have to offer.

Primary Prevention or “Up Front”

Actions and activities that lay the groundwork early for the problem not to emerge. Actions and activities are infused into the fabric of society and into the beginning of children’s lives to fortify them from being drawn into violent thinking and violent behavior.

These mechanisms give youth interesting and relevant alternatives in how they spend their time and can be available to all who are interested when resources are available. These actions directly prevent violence before it occurs.

*A primary violence prevention example:
“Youth Are Here Activities” open to all youth.*

Secondary Prevention or “In the Thick”

Early intervention actions and activities. These tactics are aimed at youth most at risk. Violence is addressed in its early stages, at the first signs, before the symptoms become apparent.

*A secondary violence prevention example:
Youth development activities targeted to youth identified as repeat clients of the Curfew Truancy Center.*

Tertiary Prevention or “After the Fact”

Late intervention actions and activities. These are tactics for preventing those who have *already* exhibited violent behaviors from committing repeat offenses. These tactics seek to restore individuals to their optimal level of functioning after damage has been done.

*A tertiary violence prevention example:
Pre and post adjudication services and activities for juveniles who have already been arrested.*

Some Principles of Success Learned from Reducing Youth Violence in Boston

Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Howard Spivak share the following principles from their success in reducing youth violence in Boston, Massachusetts. They found that emphasizing *primary prevention strategies* (“Up Front Strategies”) that synthesized knowledge from multiple disciplines was the key to their accomplishments.

1. Violence *is* preventable.
2. Survivors and youth themselves are central to the violence prevention movement and to the solutions.
3. In an avalanche no one snowflake feels responsible. In fact, all of them are.
4. The “system” is part of the problem, but it can be and needs to be part of the solution.
5. “Bad kids” can sometimes be the most responsive.
6. Hurt children become hurtful children.
7. Kids aren’t the problem; adults are. Recognizing this is an essential first step.
8. The process is as important as the product.
9. Work from the bottom up; that’s the way change happens.
10. There is no one person, solution, or program that will fix violence. Everyone has a role.
11. Forgiveness for our children and ourselves is crucial.
12. Small steps add up to big change.

“We can exhaust ourselves pulling people out of the river or we can go upstream and find out why people are falling in.” - African Proverb