

# **Cultivating Peace in Salinas**

## **A Framework for Violence Prevention**

*Prepared by Prevention Institute  
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The Core Group members provided essential guidance, time, and resources and the report represents their knowledge, vision, and commitment.

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### **About Prevention Institute**

Prevention Institute is a national non-profit dedicated to strengthening the practice of primary prevention and the health and well being of communities across the nation. Prevention Institute works on a range of health issues and promotes comprehensive strategy, with an emphasis on changing organizational practices, local policy development, and collaboration.

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# Executive Summary

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In an effort to improve health outcomes for children, youth, and families, the City of Salinas joined together with the Violent Injury Prevention Coalition (VIPCC) and their foundation, Partners for Peace, to launch a community collaborative planning process. The resulting framework, *Cultivating Peace in Salinas*, focuses primarily on reducing youth violence but also addresses overall community well being. Violence is a primary concern for many Salinas residents and they are committed to reducing its effect on their community. The intent of the framework is to provide a snapshot of community assets and needs, and to chart out the kinds of long-term efforts needed to prevent and reduce violence.

Funded by a planning grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, this framework is grounded in local understanding while drawing upon the state-of-the-art knowledge in the field. The framework development process required a committed Core Group, 20 people representing diverse sectors of Salinas, who worked to identify and analyze the underlying issues, and prioritize the solutions that have the best chance for success in the community. An Extended Network of 100 people provided critical information and insight. Additionally, over 50 people were interviewed and 75 questionnaires analyzed, with extensive participation of youth and parents. Prevention Institute, a national non-profit dedicated to forging effective local strategy, facilitated the planning process and developed the written framework.

To design a strategy for violence prevention, it is critical to understand the underlying risk and resiliency factors for Salinas. Key risk factors examined include: alcohol and other drugs, family dynamics, witnessing/experiencing violence, media, economics, guns, incarceration, oppression, literacy, and truancy. It is also essential to look at the resiliency factors, or the strengths and successes, to build upon in Salinas. Utilizing assets such as parents, media, faith communities, local businesses, and schools, the Salinas community has a history of actively addressing violence in innovative ways.

Because violence is a complex issue its solution must be comprehensive. The *Spectrum of Prevention*, a six-level tool, was utilized to shape and conceptualize a multifaceted approach. The Core Group prioritized systemic change (Levels 4-6) rather than the creation of new programs. Fostering Coalitions and Networks (Level 4) is particularly important because continued and improved collaboration in Salinas is essential to maximize community-wide efforts and carry out all of the following recommendations.

This framework is not simply a document of logic and reason, but represents a vision of creating a community culture of caring in Salinas. The community described this vision as one of community compassion, of respect and responsibility. Such a culture recognizes the responsibility of the community to family, and the responsibilities of families and individuals to the community. It is critical to translate such a vision into action. Implementation of the recommendations below will be the foundation for success.

## *The Spectrum of Prevention & Recommendations for Salinas*

<p><b>6. Influencing Policy &amp; Legislation</b> Developing strategies to change laws and policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate report recommendations into an action plan for the ballot</li> <li>• Develop public policies to address alcohol as a risk factor for violent behavior</li> <li>• Develop public policies to address gun regulations in Salinas</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Changing Organizational Practices</b> Adopting regulations and shaping norms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase after-school and recreation opportunities</li> <li>• Prioritize economic development and job training for youth</li> <li>• Implement measures to reduce truancy</li> <li>• Promote family-friendly practices among employers</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Fostering Coalitions &amp; Networks</b> Convening groups and individuals for greater impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop collaboration between City, County, and School Districts to implement this plan</li> <li>• Continue VIPC as violence prevention coordinating group</li> <li>• Establish an intergovernmental youth services board</li> <li>• Collaborate to produce annual report card and share data</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Educating Providers</b> Informing providers who influence others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strategy to reduce gang violence</li> <li>• Support practitioners who work in violence prevention</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Promoting Community Education</b> Reaching groups with information and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop initiatives that promote positive community values</li> <li>• Enhance positive media messages and reduce the impact of negative messages</li> <li>• Encourage more positive role models and mentors for youth</li> <li>• Convene community-wide dialogue on discipline</li> </ul>
<p><b>1. Strengthening Individual Knowledge &amp; Skills</b> Enhancing individual capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in early childhood and parent support initiatives</li> <li>• Improve literacy rates for children and adults</li> </ul>