

# **Cultivating Peace in Salinas**

## **A Framework for Violence Prevention**

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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 (VIPC) 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>

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# Introduction

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## *Project Description*

In an effort to improve health outcomes for children, youth, and families, the City of Salinas joined together with the Violent Injury Prevention Coalition (VIPC) and their foundation, Partners for Peace, to launch a community collaborative planning process. At the outset, the City acknowledged that, “There have been a variety of prevention strategies in place and some successful program outcomes. The City still faces a continual pattern of incidents of youth and family violence and crime, overcrowded and costly housing, lack of jobs for youth, and a lack of comprehensive integrated human services.” In recognition of the opportunity to address these problems and devise solutions to them, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation dedicated funding to the partnership to develop a framework for preventing violence in Salinas. *Cultivating Peace in Salinas* focuses primarily on reducing youth violence but also addresses overall community well being. The City hired Prevention Institute, a national non-profit dedicated to forging effective local strategy, to facilitate the planning process and to develop a written framework.

The intent of the framework is to provide a snapshot of community assets and needs and chart out the kinds of long-term efforts needed to prevent and reduce violence. It builds upon previous Salinas reports, the expertise of the local community, and state-of-the-art prevention practices nationally. Thus, the framework provides a guide to the “next steps” in Salinas. While the primary focus of the report is on youth, and issues related to violence, it is clear that related health and human service issues as well as overall community functioning must be addressed.

Improving the health and well being of a community requires a comprehensive solution, and is constructed around the principles of effective primary prevention. Specific strategies are developed based on an environmental review and analysis — that is, gathering and understanding the data, risk and resiliency factors, community norms, and climate so that recommendations are well informed by the current situation in Salinas. Finally, the conclusions of any framework must be developed and owned by the local community in order to maximize the framework’s accuracy and the likelihood that recommendations will be implemented. *Cultivating Peace in Salinas* is grounded in local understanding while drawing upon the state-of-the-art knowledge in the field.

## **Methodology**

*Cultivating Peace in Salinas* is the result of a four-month process during the period from February through May 1999. The process was comprised of eight main components:

- ◆ ***Workplan Creation*** – Prevention Institute worked with the City to determine the appropriate structure for the planning process.
- ◆ ***Literature and Data Review*** – Prevention Institute researched existing information captured by Salinas-based projects. The goal of this review was to identify local trends, and to compare these trends to state and national data.
- ◆ ***Core Group Meetings*** – The Core Group, comprised of 20 representatives from business, community, education, justice, funders, City of Salinas, County of Monterey, faith, and non-profit agencies, met six times for four to five hours to guide the overall direction of the framework.
- ◆ ***Extended Network Meetings*** – Approximately 100 community leaders including local business owners, superintendents of schools, teachers, school counselors, school board members, media representatives, funders, city council members, county supervisors, non-profit agencies, judges, probation officers, and other community representatives came to three meetings to provide input on the development of the framework. This group was also instrumental in sharing the planning process with others in the community.
- ◆ ***Questionnaires, Individual and Group Interviews*** – Over 50 people were interviewed and 75 questionnaires were analyzed. These questionnaires and interviews sought to determine “what is and isn’t working in Salinas” and were used to identify underlying risk factors in the community. Most importantly, the process ensured the inclusion of a broader community voice.
- ◆ ***Synthesis and Review*** – Proceedings from meetings and findings from interviews and questionnaires were reviewed and synthesized to inform the final framework.
- ◆ ***Feedback on Draft Framework*** – Through working sessions, feedback from both the Core Group and Extended Network was solicited and incorporated into the final iteration of the framework.
- ◆ ***Final Framework*** – The final product represents the synthesis of data, community input, and the concerns of committed stakeholders. The document seeks to reflect the issues that have been identified by a broad cross-section of Salinas, delineates the elements of a strategic approach, and outlines specific key recommendations for Salinas.

Developing the framework required a committed Core Group, representing diverse sectors of Salinas, which worked intensively throughout the framework development process. These Core Group members possessed the knowledge and wisdom to identify and analyze the underlying issues, and prioritize the solutions that have the best chance for success in the community. It is also important to note the leadership and participation of the Mayor and the Assistant City Manager, both formally and on a hands-on basis. The Extended Network also provided critical information and insight, which has contributed significantly to the development of this report.

## ***A Vision of the Community: Strategizing for Success***

This framework is not simply a document of logic and reason, but represents a vision of creating a community culture of caring in Salinas. As Mayor Caballero stated at one planning meeting, “even if it is difficult to get there, we have to have a vision.” 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. Core Group member Reverend Ken Feske envisioned a community “where everyone has the opportunity to find a meaningful expression of their gifts and talents.” During small group discussions at the community meeting, expressions such as “valuing diversity,” “kindness of knowing your neighbor,” “future oriented,” “economic self-sufficiency,” “honesty,” and “respect for self and others” were used to describe the community vision.

This overall vision can be achieved by designing a strategy that utilizes the energy of committed individuals and organizations. The strategy for achieving such a vision must address changes in the social norms through sustained, well designed efforts. This requires a multifaceted approach that focuses on fostering resiliency, as well as minimizing risks in the community. Collaboration across governmental, non-profit, business and community sectors will maximize community-wide efforts and resources. Finally, an effective strategy recognizes and builds upon the unique capacities of Salinas, the commitment and concern of the residents, and the drive of government and community agencies to make a difference for the residents of the community.

## ***The City of Salinas: Background***

Salinas is often described as an urban village. It has the friendly feel of a small town and enjoys a unique racial and cultural diversity. The racial/ethnic make-up of Salinas is 51% Hispanic, 39% White (non-Hispanic), 7% Asian, 2% Black, and 1% Native American.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, with a population of just over 130,000, Salinas is the largest city in Monterey County, and faces many of the same challenges that larger urban cities face, such as population growth, unemployment, poverty and crime. The City has a large youth population. According to the State Finance Department, 28% of the total Salinas population is 18 and under, and 45% is 24 and under.

The City’s economy is based on agriculture. The 200,000 acres of the Salinas Valley produce a fresh vegetable harvest worth \$2 billion annually.<sup>2</sup> Salinas residents comprise 60% of the labor force needed to sustain this level of production. The City attracts a large migrant worker population due to seasonally available jobs in agriculture. However, agricultural economies are vulnerable to changes in markets and unfavorable weather. So despite the agricultural base for the economy, some Salinas neighborhoods have a per capita income as low as \$5,519, far below the poverty line and comparatively lower than the per capita income of Monterey County which is \$14,758.<sup>3</sup> The City of Salinas had a structural unemployment rate of 7.2% in June 1997. Seasonally, unemployment peaked to 18.7% in January 1998.<sup>4</sup>

The increase in the City’s population is fueled by the intensification of agriculture and the economic boom of the Silicon Valley 60 miles north. The people moving from Silicon Valley have an income base far exceeding that of many of Salinas’s current residents. The movement has driven housing costs up. Insufficient affordable housing combined with high unemployment and low-paying jobs has led to high population density in some areas of Salinas, forcing families to share inadequately small homes or apartments.

Undoubtedly, the youth of Salinas are affected by these conditions, which have resulted in overcrowded

schools, lack of jobs for youth, and high levels of youth violence. Violence is a primary concern for many Salinas residents, who are committed to reducing its effect on their community. There are many youth services and community groups that, along with strong parent involvement, respond to this issue. They have made significant strides in making Salinas a place where youth and families can feel safe. By identifying youth as the highest priority, the current City Council in Salinas is committed to enhancing these services and establishing Salinas as a community that values its children and youth and recognizes them as invaluable resources for the future of Salinas.

## ***Defining Violence & A Public Health Approach***

It is important to clearly define violence. The Core Group selected the following widely accepted definition from the National Committee for Injury Prevention and Control:

Violence is “the use of force with the intent to inflict injury or death upon oneself or another individual or group(s) and includes the threat of force to control another individual or group,” and “aggressive human behavior involving the use of physical, psychological or emotional force with the intent to cause harm to oneself or others.”<sup>5</sup>

This definition spans multiple fields and encompasses many types of violence including child abuse, battering, youth violence, homicide, assault, hate violence, dating violence, and family violence.

The notion of a public health, or comprehensive, approach to violence arose from the awareness that criminal justice alone could not, and has not, solved the problem. The violence prevention movement is actually broader, both in concept and in participation than public health, but is based on some fundamental public health tenets including:

- ◆ ***primary prevention orientation*** – efforts designed to prevent violence before it occurs
- ◆ ***data-driven*** – approaches based on data that describes the nature of problem as well as contributing risk and resiliency factors
- ◆ ***collaborative*** – multiple partners working together to produce change
- ◆ ***general population-based*** – seeking community-wide or “environmental” solutions

Utilizing public health principles promotes broader, more lasting solutions to the violence problem. Such an orientation is essential because “no mass disorder afflicting mankind is ever brought under control or eliminated by attempts at treating the individual.”<sup>6</sup> Individual actions, criminal justice deterrents, and punishments are inadequate to intervene in a problem that has all of the markings of an epidemic.

# Violence in Salinas

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## *Data on Violence in Salinas*

Violence is a major concern for the Salinas community, and the fear that it is becoming a norm threatens the vision of a community of compassion. Cynicism and fear about violence must also be addressed. Surveys conducted as part of the Tellus Project, a county-wide community assessment, reveal the concern about crime and violence. When one survey administered to 2,600 adults across the county asked: “How concerned are you with crime in Monterey County?” 75.6% answered very concerned, and 21.0% were somewhat concerned.<sup>7</sup> The recognition that more services and resources are necessary to impact violence prevention is illustrated by the results of another survey, which asked community groups in Monterey County to name the most serious gaps in services. The most frequent response was the lack of “violence reduction” services, identified by 62% of the respondents.<sup>8</sup>

Similar to national trends in violence, Salinas has gradually witnessed a decline. However, homicide, forcible rape, and other forms of violent crime remain ongoing issues in Salinas. Salinas experienced a peak of 24 homicides reported during 1994. According to police statistics, in 1998 there was a decrease in most major violent crimes from the previous year, except robbery with a weapon, which increased by 59%.

### ***Salinas Police Department: Offense History***

<b>Offenses</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>
Murder	15	24	15	9	18	17
Forcible Rape	31	53	40	46	55	51
Armed Robbery	354	258	301	238	181	289
Aggravated Assault	844	846	950	884	895	661

In developing this framework, it was important to understand not only the facts, but also community perceptions about violence in Salinas. The questionnaire utilized for this report asked respondents about their impressions of the prevalence of six types of violence. (See chart below.) It should be noted that different strands of violence are frequently intertwined and it is difficult to separate them. For example, respondents identified the high prevalence of gang violence and domestic violence, and many indicated that gun violence and gang violence often occur in the same incidents. Similarly, bullying is often seen as a pre-cursor to gang violence, and as a correlate to domestic violence and sexual assault.

***Type of Violence Respondents Considered Most Prevalent in Salinas***

Type	Core Group	Extended Network	Composite of Both
Gang Violence	100%	85%	89%
Domestic Violence	78%	66%	69%
Gun Violence	85%	50%	58%
Child Abuse	71%	50%	55%
Sexual Violence	50%	35%	39%
Bullying	42%	38%	39%

As noted in the table above, gang violence emerged as the primary concern and was perceived as the most prevalent form of violence in Salinas. A county-wide Tellus telephone survey in 1996 also revealed the concern about gang violence. Seventy-three percent of respondents were very concerned about gang activity in Monterey County.

In 1996, Monterey County Sheriff’s Department reported that there were at least 47 different gangs in the county involving approximately 1,340 people.<sup>9</sup> Brian Contreras, Director of Second Chance, a gang intervention and prevention program in Salinas, reports that gang-related activity has steadily risen since 1996. He estimates that currently there are 52 street gangs in Monterey County with approximately 3,000 members, while in Salinas there are 16 street gangs with an estimated membership of 1,500 to 2,000 youth. Of all violent crimes in Salinas in 1998, 15% were classified as gang-related. In 1998, police classified 71% of the 17 homicides committed in Salinas as gang-related. Thirty-one percent of drive-by shootings and 44% of all aggravated assaults involving a firearm were gang-related.<sup>10</sup>

Street and gang violence are usually more visible than violence in the home. Domestic violence is recognized as an important issue in Salinas and it emerged in the questionnaires as the second most prevalent type of violence according to respondents. When county residents in a telephone survey were asked how concerned they were about domestic violence, 48% were very concerned, 35.3% were somewhat concerned, while 7.2% were not concerned at all.<sup>11</sup>

Violence in the home places youth at increased risk for witnessing violence as well as for their own victimization. Statistics from the Women’s Crisis Center, which serves Salinas and South Monterey County, show that it served 3,841 unduplicated domestic violence clients from June 1997 to July 1998. In 1998, there were a total of 6,674 children referred to the Monterey County Family and Children Services unit for neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, absence/incapacity of parent, among other reasons. Of the children referred, nearly half (3,272) were residents of the City of Salinas.<sup>12</sup>

The Women’s Crisis Center has seen an increase in reported sexual assaults. From July 1996 to June 1997, 216 sexual assaults were reported to the center. In the period from July 1997 to June 1998, there were 347 sexual assaults reported to the Crisis Center.<sup>13</sup> Sexual assault is thought to be one of the most

under-reported crimes, and this may be evident in Salinas when comparing reports from the Crisis Center and the Police Department. In Salinas, police statistics show that in 1997 there were 55 forcible rapes and 10 attempted rapes; in 1998 the Police Department reports 51 forcible rapes and 6 attempted rapes.

## Youth & Violence

National self-report studies indicate that the age of highest risk for the initiation of serious violent behavior is between 15 and 16 years of age. Adolescents between the ages of 16 and 17 have the highest rates of participation in serious violent acts. After age 17, participation rates drop significantly and it is unlikely that persons will become serious violent offenders if they have not initiated serious violent behavior by age 20.<sup>14</sup> Early involvement in violence represents a particularly challenging area for intervention as 45% of those initiating serious violent offenses before age 11 continue this path into their twenties.<sup>15</sup> These statistics illustrate that early intervention is necessary in preventing violent crime.

Clearly, there is cause for concern about juveniles as perpetrators of crime, but young people also are at high risk as victims of crime. In 1980, homicide accounted for 3.9% of deaths among children 5 to 14 years old. By 1995, the homicide rate for this age group had jumped to 6.5%. Nationally, homicide ranks as the third leading cause of death for children 10 to 14 years of age and fourth for children ages 1 to 9. While other causes of death for school-aged children decreased between 1980 and 1995, violent deaths increased by more than 61%.<sup>16</sup>

Salinas statistics reflect the national trends of risk in adolescence. Data collected by the Monterey County Health Department from September 1991 to December 1993 from emergency rooms at Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital and Natividad Medical Center indicated that numbers of gun shots, stabbings, and physical assaults all began to peak at age 15.<sup>17</sup>

Also reflecting national trends, there has been a recent decrease in juvenile arrests in Salinas. There was a dramatic drop in total juvenile arrests between 1997 and 1998. They dropped 45% to 1,492, the lowest number of juvenile arrest in that decade. Gang related juvenile arrests also dropped 32% between 1997 and 1998, reaching an all-time low since gang-related data began to be collected in 1993.

### ***Salinas Police Department: Juvenile Arrest History***

Arrests	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Total	1637	1534	1631	1908	1737	2256	2604	2732	1492
Gang-Related	N/A	N/A	N/A	195	216	255	254	254	172

The 1997-98 California Safe Schools Assessment reports an overall decrease in crime committed by students enrolled statewide from 1996-97. Salinas Union High School District is no exception. The district has shown a marked improvement in 1997-98 from previous years. In every category (drug/alcohol offenses, battery, assault with a deadly weapon, robbery/extortion, sex offense, possession of a weapon, and property crimes), declines have occurred. Salinas now reports lower than statewide high school district rates in every category. This is an impressive improvement from earlier years. In

1995-96, Salinas Union High School District was above the statewide average in six of the seven categories.<sup>18</sup> During the 1997-98 school year, drug and alcohol offenses were the most common type of offense at 10.73 offenses per 1,000 students.

# Risk & Resiliency Factors

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While data and statistics profile the trends of violence, they do not explain the factors that influence its occurrence. Risk factors are traits or characteristics that increase the relative risk of an individual or community being affected by or perpetrating violence. Resiliency factors are traits or characteristics that protect an individual or community from violence. Effective violence prevention strategy must take these factors into account. In Salinas, participants identified the most critical risk factors, as well as conditions that foster resiliency, through questionnaires, interviews, and community meetings. Participants' viewpoints, in conjunction with national data, were instrumental for devising the recommendations that appear in the final section of this report.

## *Risk Factors*

National public health practitioners and researchers have identified nine major risk factors for violence.<sup>19</sup> They are: economics, oppression, family dynamics, guns, media, alcohol and other drugs, incarceration, witnessing acts of violence, and community deterioration. Beyond these nationally recognized risk factors, some locally identified issues include low literacy rates, high rates of truancy, high population density (which leads to overcrowding in schools and neighborhoods), and lack of affordable housing.

### **Alcohol & Other Drugs**

Nationwide, alcohol is the drug most closely associated with violent incidents. Some researchers estimate that it is implicated in 50-66% of all homicides,<sup>20</sup> 20-36% of suicides,<sup>21</sup> and more than half of all cases of domestic violence.<sup>22</sup> The scientific literature strongly suggests that alcohol, like other drugs, acts as a “multiplier” of crime. The use of alcohol and drugs results in higher levels of aggression and crime. And where you find a concentration of liquor stores, you often find the neighborhood to be suffering from alcohol-related social problems.<sup>23</sup>

Seventy-eight percent of the Extended Network identified alcohol and other drugs as a major risk factor for violence. The entire Core Group (100%) ranked this as the number one risk factor. Youth who were interviewed said that they have seen drugs being sold in classrooms of middle and high schools. A middle school student in a focus group shared that dealers can “get a lot of money from selling drugs and that is better than being in school.” In a survey distributed at the Teen Summit in February 1999, when 124 high school students were asked, “Is there a problem with drugs on your campus?” 60 responded “yes.”<sup>24</sup>

Youth are at risk for substance abuse. The statistics for admittance to outpatient or residential recovery services in Monterey County show that youth 15 years of age and under comprise the largest group admitted for alcohol abuse treatment services. On the other hand, the 15-17 age group is most often admitted for heroin abuse. In 1994-1995, there were 297 youth age 15 and under admitted for alcohol

and 89 for heroin. Among the 15-17 year olds, 157 were admitted for alcohol recovery and 175 for heroin abuse treatment.<sup>25</sup> More than any other group, young adults are likely to have been drinking prior to being either a perpetrator or victim of fatal or non-fatal violence.<sup>26</sup>

## **Family Dynamics**

An unsupportive home life including psychological or physical abuse can begin or maintain a cycle of violence — in and outside the home. Family dynamics refers to family relationships, interactions, structure, parenting skills, family communication, and methods of discipline. These are key determinants of family health and healthy child development. For the Extended Network, family dynamics ranked as the number one risk factor. The Core Group also rated this very highly (92%), second only to alcohol and other drugs.

The lack of positive role models for youth emerged as a related concern. In communities where fathers generally do not reside in the home, individuals may struggle with the lack of positive male role models. Though role models are not limited to family members, there is a link between the absence of supportive and caring relationships and youth involvement in violence.

A shortage of programs that support parents and families results in an additional strain on families that may already be contending with issues such as unemployment, overcrowding, and an unsupportive economic structure.

## **Witnessing & Experiencing Violence**

Witnessing and/or experiencing violence is a traumatizing incident that can leave one feeling scared and helpless. It can create and build upon norms of violence as an acceptable form of behavior and place youth at greater risk for perpetrating or being victimized by further violence. For example, a significant risk factor for becoming a batterer is having witnessed the battery of one's mother as a boy.<sup>27</sup> It should be noted, however, that witnessing/experiencing violence is not a guarantee that further violence is inevitable; what happens in response to these events is critical.

Forty-one percent of survey respondents identified witnessing violence as a risk factor. As noted in the data section, the prevalence of domestic violence in Salinas is a significant area for concern. In recognition of the negative effects that witnessing violence can have on youth, The Child & Teen Counseling Center (part of Women's Crisis Center) provides counseling to youth who are witnessing domestic violence in their own homes. The Counseling Center also provides group services in many schools, but reports that there is always a long waiting list. More resources are needed to give these children and teens the support that they need.

## **Media**

Media portrayals of violence enforce the message that violence is a common and appropriate way to solve problems. In addition to the barrage of violent images that children are exposed to on a daily basis through magazines, newspapers, films, and computers, it is estimated that children in the United States view 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television before completing elementary school.<sup>28</sup> Such exposure models violent behavior, increases fearfulness (which can impel one to become involved in violence as a means of protection), leads to desensitization to violent images and acceptance of violence as normal, and increases desire for involvement in violent activities.<sup>29</sup>

Sixty percent of survey respondents identified negative media as a risk factor. Programming often glorifies violence and depicts negative images of youth, minorities, and gender stereotypes. At the Coffee Klatch meeting at Alisal Community School, the group discussed the absence of positive role models for Latino youth as well as the lack of “models” for constructive family communication in the media. Members of the Life & Pain Committee also expressed concern that the Spanish media (radio, newspaper, TV) didn’t list community events and public service announcements. When media does not support the community and promotes negative images that reflect violence, a significant resource is being wasted and communities are placed at increased risk.

## **Economics**

Poverty, high unemployment, and community deterioration contribute to violence in a community. Lack of employment opportunities creates a sense of hopelessness among youth and adults and is a risk factor for violence. Youth who feel they cannot earn a living wage as part of the mainstream economy may turn towards drug dealing or other illegal activities to make a living. Furthermore, if the local economy is in decline, there tend to be fewer support services available to residents and deterioration of the local infrastructure. Dilapidated schools and housing contribute to the feeling among youth that society does not care about them, with violence an understandable expression of anger and alienation.

Sixty-five percent of survey respondents noted poor economics as a significant risk factor contributing to violence in Salinas. Although the current median income in Salinas is \$48,200, 50% of families earn less than 80% of area median income and 12.4% live below poverty level.<sup>30</sup> There has been a greater concentration of wealth over the last 20 years, and although overall resources have increased, access to them has diminished. Community members identified the inability to pay for children to enroll in extracurricular activities, excessively long work hours that prevent parents from engaging in meaningful activities such as English or parenting classes, the lack of affordable housing, and high population density as significant barriers imposed by the current economic structure.

## **Guns**

Even if a reduction in the number of hostilities could not be accomplished, a mere reduction in the availability of guns and ammunition would decrease the lethality and injury associated with violence. The rate for unintentional firearm-related deaths of children under 15 in the United States is nine times higher than in the 25 other industrialized countries *combined*.<sup>31</sup> Firearms are the leading cause of death for 1- to 19-year-olds in California.<sup>32</sup>

Although the rates are still alarmingly high, youth gun violence is on the decline nationally and many attribute this decrease to local gun control ordinances that are spreading across the country. California has been a leader in local gun control policy development. As of August 1998, there were 67 cities and 6 counties that had enacted 183 local firearm regulations, a significant increase from 1996 when there were 25 cities that had enacted only 45 firearm regulations. A recent 1998 statewide survey revealed that Salinas does have some local ordinances to regulate firearm dealers including explicitly prohibiting firearm dealers in residential neighborhoods, prohibiting firearms dealers from operating near sensitive areas, and requiring gun stores to carry liability insurance. However, regulations prohibiting the sale of “Saturday Night Specials” — easily concealed handguns that lack safety features and are

disproportionately used in crimes — or requiring that trigger lock devices are sold with all handguns, have not yet been enacted in Salinas.<sup>33</sup>

Seventy percent of questionnaire respondents named guns as a risk factor in Salinas. Many individuals and groups interviewed named “getting guns off the streets” as a priority for prevention of further violence in Salinas. A survey conducted by Monterey County in 1991 found that of all 10th graders (1,304) in Salinas, 52.3% of the students said they knew people who carried a weapon to school, and 64% stated they could access a gun if they needed it. Of the 43% of students who said there was a gun stored in their house, only 26.8% of these said that it was locked and inaccessible.<sup>34</sup> Although many families keep guns in their home for protection, research shows that keeping a gun in the home is strongly associated with an increased risk of homicide by a family member or acquaintance.<sup>35</sup>

## **Incarceration**

United States has the highest incarceration rate per capita in the Western world.<sup>36</sup> The huge expenditures for prison building are a major determinant of available resources for schools, health, and other government necessities. California’s rate of incarceration and expenditure make it one of the highest in the U.S. both for adults and for youth. Despite substantial growth in the prison population due to the war on drugs, the vast majority of those arrested for drug-related offenses are released without substantial treatment. The goal of rehabilitation has been largely abandoned, and it appears that prisons have become a training ground and communication center for criminals. Men and women are socialized within a violent subculture in prison and this is often spread to communities upon release.<sup>37</sup>

Salinas’s close proximity to Soledad Correctional Training Facility and the Salinas Valley State Prison may contribute to the area becoming a major hub for gang activity. Many associates of gang members move close to the prison to be near confined gang members. A study that sought to understand the impact of expanding the prison only looked at the City of Soledad, and did not recognize the scope of influence that the nearby prison might have on the City of Salinas. While some community members are very concerned with the impact of the prisons, others don’t believe it directly increases violence and that it offers needed jobs in the area.

## **Oppression**

Oppression, which includes sexism, racism, and discrimination on the basis of age, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, or culture, results in inequality and feelings of powerlessness that underlie many types of violence. Youth may experience oppression based on their age, or the perception that they can not actively contribute to society in meaningful ways.

In the Salinas survey only 21% of respondents selected oppression as a risk factor. However, this may be due to the fact that, as some respondents noted, the category seemed too broad or needed to be better defined. In some cases, “racism” was noted in the “other” category.

The interviews revealed examples of oppression. Ruth Esteban, who directs the Safe Teens Empowerment Project (STEPS), described that “there is a mistrust of teens — often people use teens, and want them to show up to an event but not really have input or be in charge.” Members of the Life & Pain Committee discussed the difficulties of working with police and school personnel as non-English

speaking parents. As one member said, “We are ignored and treated differently if we don’t speak English.”

## **Literacy**

While illiteracy, the inability to read and write, and poor academic performance are not direct causes of criminal behavior, young people who have received inadequate education or who have low levels of literacy are disproportionately found within the criminal justice system.<sup>38</sup>

Because Salinas can be characterized as a bilingual community, it faces unique challenges related to students’ ability to attain skills in reading and writing. Forty-five percent of the residents of East Salinas do not speak English and the Salinas Union High School District has the highest percentage of limited English proficient (LEP) students in Monterey County.<sup>39</sup> Limited proficiency in English may hamper the success of students in several ways, including creating a lack of continuity between the home, the community, and the school environment, as well as hampering the opportunity to succeed in school settings where English is the dominant language.

Literacy rates and overcrowding are two of the many factors that have put pressure on the Salinas school system. At the first community meeting in March, Principal Lampkin of Los Padres Elementary School told meeting attendees that “there is a sense of urgency, a sense of crisis, a sense of need” in many schools. He described that 90% of the students in his school are below grade level in 1st through 6th grades. One-third of the 6th graders are four or more grades below, and 65% of students are limited English proficient. The school, which was built for 250 students, is now over capacity with 750 students, translating into a lack of adequate space and resources for students.

## **Truancy**

Truancy can be both a symptom and a cause of learning problems among students. Students who are feeling a sense of failure in their academic work may skip school to avoid the shame they feel in the classroom. Difficulties interacting with other students (e.g., experiences of bullying, teasing, or ostracism) can also keep youth from attending school. These are warning signs of youth who may be headed for difficulties in the future and who need support in the present. In some cases, demands at home may keep students from attending school. Parents may need their children to help take care of siblings, run errands, or translate during important appointments. At the root of these needs is the struggle of households to survive with very limited resources. Finally, troubled family relationships, including domestic violence, incest, and conflict with parents can keep children away from school. There also are many children and youth who may not be classified as truant because they are not enrolled in school due to unfamiliarity with the school system or past expulsions.

Whatever the reason, students who regularly miss school, in most cases, will not be able to keep up with learning at their grade level. This can compound existing learning problems. Truancy is often a first step on the road to dropping out of school. Statistics show that dropouts are three and a half times as likely as high school graduates to be arrested and six times more likely to be unmarried parents.<sup>40</sup>

## ***Resiliency Factors***

Resiliency or protective factors are traits or characteristics that protect an individual or community from violence. They are indicative of the health of a community. Attention to resiliency fits particularly well with Salinas's vision that it be a city where everyone is respected and has an opportunity to find a meaningful expression of their gifts. Many experts believe that the presence or absence of resiliency factors in an environment is strongly correlated to outcomes.<sup>41</sup> Resiliency factors encourage growth and can counter the negative effects of risk factors. Some theorists have particularly identified the following as important elements of resiliency: caring and supportive relationships, consistently high expectations, and opportunities for involvement, input, and impact.

The family is where such relationships and expectations first develop for many children. Even though poor family dynamics are implicated in placing people at risk for violence, many families are creating caring, supportive environments for children that make youth resilient and safe. When asked what is working in Salinas, Marli Melton, Associate Director at Community Foundation for Monterey County, replied, "Lots of families are doing a good job." She described how the family is an asset that can not be replaced by anything else, stating, "No program can do the job of a family." Salinas has numerous active parents groups that have shown an incredible commitment to creating a safe environment for their children and the entire community. Families, including parent groups, grandparents, older siblings, aunts and uncles, are key assets to recognize and include in any efforts to improve outcomes for children and youth.

It is clear from resiliency studies that the community as well as the family plays a critical role. For example, the number of significant non-parental adult relationships a child has is a significant predictor of a successful transition to adulthood. Parents, teachers, and community members who hold clearly stated expectations regarding children and young people's behavior help protect the young people from risk. When family rules and expectations are consistent with and supported by the key influences on young people — school, peers, the media, and the larger community — young people are buffered from risk even more.<sup>42</sup>

Bonnie Benard, Director of Resiliency Associates, who conducted resiliency training for the Federal Office for Safe and Drug Free Schools for nearly ten years, emphasizes that resiliency grows less out of what we do than how we do it.<sup>43</sup> As such, she suggests that shifting to a resiliency approach requires a fundamental change in the ways communities operate, respecting the notion that every interaction, no matter what the focus, represents the opportunity for participation and empowerment of members of the community.<sup>44</sup>

John McKnight, a researcher from Northwestern University, has developed a community development model based on the resiliency of communities rather than the traditional needs-based approach. He explains that a needs-based approach views a community as a list of problems and usually directs funding to service providers to come in and fix the problems. The focus is on survival, rather than serious change or community development.<sup>45</sup> Conversely, a capacity-focused or resiliency-based approach looks for all of the strengths of a community, including the gifts of individuals, citizen's

associations, and local institutions, and builds upon these assets to mobilize for development. In this sense, community members highlight and maximize the strengths of their own communities.

Identifying the strengths, or potential strengths, in a community can be done through a technique called asset mapping. Recently, communities have utilized asset mapping as a tool for violence prevention, getting youth involved to map out the existing and potential sites for youth in the community. This process allows a community to envision how its strengths can make positive change.<sup>46</sup> For example, churches in the community are noted as potential sites for child care programs, grocery stores and firehouses are identified as safe havens where children can count on adult assistance, and businesses are recognized for their potential in job training. Salinas has a committed Youth Commission that could organize such an effort for Salinas. A Youth Commission member stated, “We are concerned about our own peers, and our city, that is why we are here. We have a lot of ideas and potential that needs to be tapped into.”

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. There are examples of community groups that have successfully organized to make Salinas’s streets and parks safe. Parents’ groups have prevented alcohol outlets from opening near schools, and neighborhood watch teams have worked with police to increase safety in their neighborhoods.

There also are many examples of positive interagency collaboration. As one Core Group member described, “this is an energized community that can bring people together pretty quickly.” For example, the Violent Injury Prevention Coalition (VIPC), which began five years ago as a volunteer coalition made up of various community partners, has become a cornerstone in the community’s efforts to prevent violence. Also, the broad participation of the community in the developing of this framework represents the willingness to come together to form a strong alliance for preventing violence.

Often, schools are the most resource-rich settings in the neighborhood. Yet they are unused 65% of the time.<sup>47</sup> Full-service schools utilize the full capacity of schools by offering classes and events for the surrounding community, and can become a central resource for the community. The Healthy Start program is an example of school-centered services that offer support to parents and families and can make the school feel more like a center for the local community. Alisal Community School in Salinas is an example of how, by offering support and resources to the parents, there has been a great deal of success in getting parents involved, which is often a struggle for many schools. The colleges and university of the region are also assets to recognize, as they offer a great deal to Salinas and could provide even more.

Businesses are part of the fabric of the community. As a result, they have a vested interest in violence prevention and in Salinas, and they want to be a part of the solution. They are concerned because the cumulative effect of violence and related problems results in a community climate that will not support the evolution of Salinas’s economic environment. In addition, businesses may be staffed by community members. When the community is healthy, businesses are more likely to be successful. Currently, businesses participate in and support youth sports and community non-profits, and have resources that may assist in other community programs. Business representatives have expressed their interest in

continuing to share their resources, and want to know how the community will benefit. Business leaders have been a part of this framework development, illustrating their commitment to taking part in creating opportunities for youth in Salinas.

The local media in Salinas has been involved in programs promoting peace, worked with local organizations to promote parent education about media, and supported other community programs. The local media is involved in local violence prevention programs and supports other community programs by announcing programs or covering positive events in the news. The cable industry has worked with national PTA and Girl Scouts to promote parent education about media and educate them on program ratings and V-chip technology for use in controlling kids' access to all forms of violent media.

By creating opportunities for increased resiliency and minimizing exposure to risk factors, Salinas aims to be a compassionate community and provide youth and their families with abundant opportunities and resources.

# A Strategy for Prevention

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Reducing violence and achieving a community rooted in compassion, respect, and responsibility has the best chance for success with a prevention strategy that addresses norms. Norms, or community standards, influence and model behavior. Risk and resiliency factors impact the way individuals and communities interact. If violence is seen as typical and is reinforced by the media, family, community, or school, it will occur with greater frequency and lethality. On the other hand, in a community that respects youth, demonstrates consistently high levels of support and expectations, and models non-violence, more positive outcomes can be expected.

Violence, like many of the health and social problems that currently face cities across the nation, consists of a complex set of issues and thus requires a comprehensive solution. In recognition of the complexity of violence, the Core Group recommended that a multifaceted approach and systemic change be greater priorities than the creation or expansion of new programs. Making use of a Prevention Institute tool called Evolution to Effective Prevention,<sup>48</sup> the Core Group specified their highest priorities as follows:

## *Evolution of Prevention in Salinas*

<b>To move from:</b>	<b>To:</b>
The absence of an overall strategy	Creation of an overall strategy
	⇒
Short-term fix-it approaches	Long-term focus and outcomes
	⇒
Programs aimed at only changing individuals	Efforts aimed at changing people, norms, and policies
	⇒
Fragmented and independent activities and programs	Linked, collaborative initiatives and partnerships across disciplines
	⇒

In the following section, the two key elements of strategy — the *what* of a comprehensive approach (*Spectrum of Prevention*) and the *who* (Collaboration) — are described, along with the evaluation approach.

## ***Spectrum of Prevention***

The *Spectrum of Prevention* is a Prevention Institute tool for developing system-wide change. It has been used nationally in a wide range of prevention initiatives including violence prevention, traffic safety, tobacco prevention, and the promotion of nutrition and physical activity. It helps to architect a multifaceted range of initiatives. In Salinas, the tool was used by the Core Group to review existing efforts and for planning further initiatives and should help in structuring ongoing efforts in violence prevention.

The Spectrum identifies six levels of intervention that enable practitioners to move beyond an educational approach to achieve broad prevention goals. Each level is necessary, but not sufficient on its own to address violence within communities. Instead, these levels (delineated in the following chart) are complementary and when used together produce a synergy that results in greater effectiveness than would be possible using a single level of the Spectrum in isolation or any linear model. This synergy enables violence prevention advocates to have a greater effect on community norms than focusing on any single level would achieve.

### ***Spectrum of Prevention***

<p><b>Influencing Policy &amp; Legislation</b> Developing strategies to change laws &amp; policies</p>
<p><b>Changing Organizational Practices</b> Adopting regulations &amp; shaping norms</p>
<p><b>Fostering Coalitions &amp; Networks</b> Convening groups &amp; individuals for greater impact</p>
<p><b>Educating Providers</b> Informing providers who influence others</p>
<p><b>Promoting Community Education</b> Reaching groups with information &amp; resources</p>
<p><b>Strengthening Individual Knowledge &amp; Skills</b> Enhancing individual capacity</p>

## **Collaboration**

Linkages are a critical component of the *Spectrum of Prevention* (Level 4: Fostering Coalitions & Networks) and of a comprehensive approach. By bringing together existing organizations, groups, and individuals, it is often possible to have greater impact on an issue than any single person or organization

working in isolation could achieve. Working in partnerships, collaborations and coalitions can be challenging, but can be powerful ways to mobilize individuals to action. Such associations can bring community issues to prominence, and lead to policy development. These associations are also effective means for integrating health services with other human services so that resources are not wasted and efforts are not needlessly duplicated.

A recent study by the National Crime Prevention Council highlights six cities that have demonstrated significant crime reduction over the past ten years by utilizing a collaborative approach. From this study, Jack Calhoun, Executive Director of the National Crime Prevention Council concludes, “Cities that bring together government, other public organizations, and residents in a collaborative, problem solving way, find new strengths as well as new solutions to old problems.”<sup>49</sup>

There is interplay between developing partnerships and multifaceted approaches. New partners will add to the array of approaches, and new suggestions for approaches will necessitate new partners.

## ***Evaluation***

As Salinas prioritizes and implements some or all of the recommendations that emerged from the framework development process, undoubtedly, people will want to know what is working, and what is not. The purpose of evaluation is to determine exactly that, as well as to identify additional actions that might improve community prevention efforts. While evaluation of comprehensive, norms-based initiatives such as the one described in this report can be difficult, there are a number of evaluative steps that should be taken in five specific areas that are outlined below.

However, it is first important to note that this violence prevention framework, which constitutes an environmental review of the community climate in Salinas, is not, and was never intended to be, an evaluation of specific programs.

Further, evaluation continues to be a challenge in the violence prevention movement. Some organizations do not have the resources to conduct effective evaluations and requiring every organization to produce its own “attempt” at evaluation would be a misuse of vital funds. In addition, the national state-of-the-art in evaluation has been more impressive in regard to simple initiatives than with multifaceted approaches. To date, most evaluation methods have tended toward linear and quantitative models, measuring programs or initiatives in isolation, and measuring only certain outcomes. Such evaluations are generally inadequate for assessing the complex interaction of community systems, thereby accurately reflecting the true impact of a long-term, strategic approach.

In violence prevention, much of what does and does not work can best be seen through a qualitative lens. For example, the results of new partnerships, the value that a program has in a specific community, and the synergistic effect of multiple initiatives working in tandem are often missed by quantitative measures. Certain actions may not have immediate impact, but importantly, may lay the foundation for future efforts to be successful.

The wisdom of the practitioner often goes ‘uncaptured’ by formal evaluations, though many observers of the field believe this is one area in which a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience must be tapped. In Salinas, the expertise of involved community representatives and government leaders offers important lessons for the violence prevention effort.

Evaluation must consider a broad range of outcomes and processes to respond to the breadth of issues addressed by this framework and to serve as a basis for future violence prevention planning in the city.

## **Measures of Effectiveness**

There are five different areas in which evaluative questions must be answered:

### ***1) Effectiveness of Follow-Through on the Framework***

Once the recommendations of *Cultivating Peace in Salinas* have been prioritized and charted in a timeline for action, it will be critical to assess follow-through. Are recommendations being developed thoroughly and implemented in a timely manner? Importantly, community members and representatives of Salinas are encouraged to revisit this framework on an annual basis to assess progress and make necessary modifications to the action timeline.

### ***2) Effectiveness of Specific Recommendations***

As the recommendations made in this framework are implemented, it will be important to ask, “Are they having the desired results?” Leadership groups and community members must take a central role in delineating the measures for effectiveness, and in so defining these, make periodic recommendations for what can be modified and what has been learned to strengthen such efforts.

### ***3) Effectiveness of Violence Prevention Programs***

Are the specific programs involved in violence prevention effective? One model for assessing this has been used by the Department of Social Services, County of Monterey as well as United Way and governmental groups across the United States. In this model, the service providers to be evaluated come together to determine their own indicators of a successful program. In this way, service providers are able to establish their own measures of success. This method should be compared to the current practices in Salinas. The City and County should then discuss whether or not to establish consistent evaluation criteria. The Department of Social Services has had success using this matrix model with Healthy Start and would be willing to provide training and support to the City on the implementation of this type of evaluation.

### ***4) Effectiveness of Networks & Collaborations***

Collaborations such as the Core Group that developed this framework play a very important role. The behaviors and relationships that emerge from these networks may be difficult to measure, but clearly they have an additive value to initiatives. New methodologies that measure the depth and frequency of interaction between network participants provide an important indicator of the worth of coalitions. Measures include: Are agencies receiving increased referrals or recommendations from sources in the network? Are organizations developing joint initiatives or grant proposals? Do organizations contact one

another when policy or funding initiatives emerge?

### ***5) Assessing the Effectiveness of the Framework Overall***

While the four evaluation criteria above help determine the effectiveness of specific elements of the strategy, the fundamental questions are: “Is the overall framework working? Is the approach contributing to an overall effective strategy for reducing violence?” Other issues for inquiry include the following: What modifications and improvements need to be made? How often should the framework be revisited and assessed? (One important tool for assessing the framework could be an annual report card proposed by Mayor Caballero and described in the recommendation section.) Also, qualitative assessments by Core Group members and other community representatives could provide critical input.

### **Hard Choices**

Based on the results of the evaluation activities above, there may be hard choices that government officials and other funders need to make to ensure that the finest quality and most cost-effective services, practices, and policies are being supported in Salinas. It is premature to make such decisions in the absence of evaluation. The above criteria should enable decision makers to meet their fundamental responsibility to make hard decisions.

# Cultivating Peace: Recommendations

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

<b>6. Influencing Policy &amp; Legislation</b>	<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>
<b>5. Changing Organizational Practices</b>	<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>
<b>4. Fostering Coalitions &amp; Networks</b>	<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>
<b>3. Educating Providers</b>	<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>
<b>2. Promoting Community Education</b>	<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>
<b>1. Strengthening Individual Knowledge &amp; Skills</b>	<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>

The *Spectrum of Prevention* offers a guide to developing a comprehensive strategy for violence prevention in Salinas. Given the synergy between levels of the *Spectrum*, many of these initiatives address more than one level of the *Spectrum*, but they are listed only at the level to which they most directly correspond.

### **A. Translate report recommendations into an action plan for the ballot**

Specific steps need to be taken to ensure that this report and planning process leads to changes in the community. In Contra Costa County, a violence prevention plan ballot initiative approved by 78% of the voters demonstrated the will of the voters to commit resources to comprehensive violence prevention activities.

- ◆ Synthesize the recommendations into an action plan to be adopted as city policy.
- ◆ Convene government sectors to identify their specific roles in action plan implementation.
- ◆ Select initial priorities for action plan.
- ◆ Consider putting the action plan on the ballot as a mechanism for educating and engaging the citizenry in violence prevention.

### **B. Develop public policies to address alcohol as a risk factor for violent behavior**

- ◆ Support the alcohol policy initiatives being developed, particularly under the leadership of PARTS, and strengthen ties between alcohol prevention and violence prevention efforts.
- ◆ Ensure that leadership on policy arises from the community, not just politicians.
- ◆ Expand access to effective alcohol and drug abuse treatment. Although the purview of this report is primary prevention, treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction cannot be ignored as a means of returning affected individuals to productive roles in society.

### **C. Develop public policies to address gun regulations in Salinas**

- ◆ Adopt the MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) model of changing norms by combining community education with legislation to reduce gun violence.
- ◆ Build on previous Salinas regulations and the work of other communities to develop ongoing gun policy efforts.
- ◆ Ensure that leadership on policy arises from the community, not just politicians.
- ◆ Support statewide and national gun legislation.

### **D. Increase after-school and recreation opportunities**

Research clearly shows that it is in the after-school hours that children and youth are most at risk of being either victims or perpetrators of violence. Offering supervised activities during these hours is an effective strategy for channeling young energy positively. Finding space for such activities can sometimes be a challenge in Salinas, which has often been described as “facility poor.”

- ◆ Invest in new infrastructure: facilities for children and youth in every neighborhood.

- ◆ Offer a diversity of programs beyond sports (e.g., arts, dance, or other activities that youth express interest in).
- ◆ Establish schools as centers of community, available to the community as a whole and beyond regular school hours.
- ◆ Increase partnerships and sharing of resources between the recreation department and other youth services that can use school facilities to provide programs.
- ◆ Involve youth in planning, shaping, and leading. For example, the “Mapping Neighborhood Potential to Reduce Youth Violence” is a program in which youth map the existing and potential resources in their community.<sup>50</sup>

### **E. Prioritize economic development and job training for youth**

The overall economic climate is critical to the effectiveness of all programs and the availability of opportunities for all residents.

- ◆ Address the critical need for a healthy, stable economic climate and its relationship to youth success.
- ◆ Offer job shadowing programs in which youth follow an employee through his/her day and can learn about different types of employment as well as be connected to successful adults for guidance and support through mentoring.
- ◆ Take advantage of opportunities for service learning promoted by the State Department of Education to provide educational opportunities through the schools. Service learning broadens the horizons of youth, gives opportunities for socially oriented employment and, importantly, provides a mechanism for youth to “give back” as contributing members of the community.
- ◆ Provide job skills training for incarcerated or high-risk youth who drop out of school.
- ◆ Secure the commitment of local businesses to participate in training and mentoring youth, which is essential to ensuring a skilled workforce that can foster economic growth in Salinas.

### **F. Implement measures to reduce truancy**

Truancy and the lack of a consistent plan to address it have been identified as significant problems. Diverse sectors of the community need to be involved to successfully impact truant behavior.

- ◆ Establish an ad-hoc task force engaging schools, police, city officials, service programs, and community representatives.
- ◆ Document the extent and causes of truancy.
- ◆ Develop an outreach plan to reach families who have children and youth who are not enrolled in school.
- ◆ Look at current responses of the districts and model programs across the U.S.
- ◆ Make formal recommendations to the school districts and identify ways other elements of the community can provide assistance.

### **G. Promote family-friendly practices among businesses, government, and other major community institutions**

The practices of local institutions help set the tone for the whole community. Government and other large employers have an important role to play as models for other organizations.

- ◆ Expand availability of quality childcare.
- ◆ Offer ‘flex time’ for parents and other adults to remove a significant barrier to their participation in the schools.
- ◆ Promote employee participation in mentoring programs for youth.
- ◆ Sponsor parenting classes at work sites.
- ◆ Publicize and praise businesses that are family-friendly.

## **H. Foster coalitions and networks**

This level of the *Spectrum of Prevention* — Fostering Coalitions & Networks — is particularly important because continued and improved collaboration in Salinas is essential in order to carry out all of the recommendations of the framework.

- ◆ The Core Group should continue to maintain responsibility for this effort for a six-month period in order to prioritize next steps, determine responsibilities, and seek additional funding.
- ◆ Develop official collaboration between City and County government and School Districts to assume official responsibility for implementation of plan, with the City maintaining primary responsibility and leadership.
- ◆ Continue VIPC to coordinate overall violence prevention activities in Salinas. The coalition must be strengthened through expanded participation (i.e., youth serving agencies) and by increased staffing.
- ◆ Establish an intergovernmental youth services board to assure an integrated approach towards violence prevention. This group should include representatives from health, education, justice, recreation, and other youth-serving governmental agencies and should meet on a regular basis. One method to explore would be to broaden participation of the city and non-profit organizations in the Children’s Council.
- ◆ An important outcome of governmental collaborations should be a report card on an annual basis. Key measures of progress for families and children should include not only indicators of needs but indicators of success as well.
- ◆ A shared approach to data collection, analysis, and mapping must be developed. A shared analysis will provide a more accurate picture of the areas of high risk in which strategies addressing underlying issues related to numerous health and human service concerns will be effective. Mapping will help policy makers, practitioners, and the general public more clearly visualize problem areas, gaps in services, and community resources.

## **I. Develop a strategy to reduce gang violence**

A comprehensive strategy for preventing gang violence must be developed. Some programs implemented by Second Chance, VIPC, and the police department have shown promise, but such a complex issue needs a community-wide strategy.

First, set up a working group to intensively study and develop strategies for reducing gang violence. The following are major issues to explore:

- ◆ Review programs nationally that have shown success in reducing gang violence.
- ◆ Improve linkages between gang prevention efforts and elementary school efforts such as PeaceBuilders® and Healthy Start. Also investigate the role of out-of-school programs for “marginalized” youth.
- ◆ Investigate what brings people into gangs and what happens when the gangs are intergenerational/multigenerational.
- ◆ Include current and former gang members as part of the solution.
- ◆ Investigate the impact of nearby prisons on the gang problems in Salinas.
- ◆ Explore the expansion of community policing and/or Neighborhood Watch models to additional neighborhoods.

### **J. Support practitioners who work in violence prevention**

Violence prevention is very challenging work. Support and training are essential to enhancing the work of violence prevention service providers. The notion of violence prevention practitioners needs to be expanded to include teachers, recreation staff, neighborhood watch leaders, block parents, and others who work with children and youth.

- ◆ Provide comprehensive training on state-of-the-art methods in violence prevention.
- ◆ Offer training in leadership skills to practitioners.
- ◆ Establish a network of providers and identify methods of further supporting and recognizing violence prevention practitioners.

### **K. Develop initiatives that promote positive community values**

Initiatives that are community-wide and are applicable in schools should be encouraged. There is a need to broaden such initiatives to reflect values of the entire community so that these values become integrated into community interactions and activities throughout Salinas.

- ◆ Inspire a broader discussion about common values of the community.
- ◆ Connect programs to the vision of a caring community. For example, block parties, school activities, and neighborhood events support the “kindness of knowing your neighbor,” and cultural events that celebrate and share traditions of the diverse cultures found in Salinas exemplify “valuing diversity.”
- ◆ Identify special needs of agricultural and other low-income workers and provide additional support.

### **L. Enhance positive media messages and reduce the impact of negative messages**

Media has a powerful influence on community norms. Programming often glorifies violence and depicts negative images of youth and minorities and promotes gender stereotypes. At the same time, media provides the potential to disseminate valuable information and promote positive role models to thousands of community residents.

- ◆ Conduct a media-community summit to discuss the impact of national and local media on violence and youth.
- ◆ Provide more media literacy training within the schools and in community workshops to offer youth and parents critical thinking skills to better understand the specific ways in which media influences people.
- ◆ Engage local media in promoting peace and non-violence in their programming and highlighting valuable contributions of youth to the community.

### **M. Encourage more positive role models and mentors for youth**

Developing strong, affectionate relationships with adults who care about and are committed to their healthy development is essential for youth.

- ◆ Support and expand existing programs such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Police Activities Leagues, Girl and Boy Scouts, and Recreation Department programs, and others that offer children and youth time with committed adults from the community.
- ◆ Expand one-on-one mentor opportunities. Many community members particularly noted the need among boys who often lack male role models due to absent fathers.
- ◆ Mentors for girls are essential. Female mentors can exemplify the many options for girls beyond the often narrow ideas of women's roles.
- ◆ Reduce barriers that potential mentors in low-income communities may face by seeking funding to pay mentors, and make facilities available throughout the community for mentoring activities.

### **N. Convene a community-wide dialogue on discipline**

Parents in the community have voiced their concerns about their ability to discipline their children. Many fear that police will arrest them if they discipline their children as they feel they need to. The community also has concerns that child abuse be appropriately addressed. It is a complicated issue but an open dialogue can be a first step towards eliminating misunderstanding and fear, and offering parents support and skills.

- ◆ Conduct meetings involving parents, police, and family service agencies to clarify differences between abuse and discipline.
- ◆ Provide training on alternative methods of discipline that don't involve corporal punishment.
- ◆ Meetings should be conducted in Spanish and English and discuss appropriate discipline from a multicultural perspective.
- ◆ While it is essential that police are committed to this effort, leadership needs to originate from parents and community groups.

### **O. Invest in early childhood and parent-support initiatives**

From business owners to students, everyone agreed that it is critical to start earlier to support positive childhood development. Support and training for parents are key to ensuring positive development.

- ◆ Conduct home visits to new parents and parents with young children, with a focus on low-income single parents and teen parents. Long-term studies suggest that home visitations by public health nurses positively impact outcomes for children well into their teenage years.
- ◆ Expand availability of neighborhood-based parenting classes, support groups, and individual consultations for parents.
- ◆ Develop an incentive “Parent Card” program that gives parents credit for child-related activities and can be redeemed for merchandise from local stores.
- ◆ Utilize Proposition 10 funds (tobacco tax) to expand early childhood development programs that improve outcomes for children when they enter school.

## **P. Improve literacy rates for children and adults**

Literacy and English proficiency provide increased opportunities for success in school and employment.

- ◆ Prioritize maintaining grade-appropriate reading levels in all schools. Ensure that there are adequate resources such as after-school tutoring and summer classes to assist students.
- ◆ Direct special attention to literacy programs for incarcerated offenders, particularly juveniles.
- ◆ Involve businesses in providing incentives to employees to volunteer as tutors as well as in ensuring adequate reading skills among their workforce.
- ◆ Expand literacy programs for adults and ensure that they are available in all neighborhoods.
- ◆ Make literacy training available in Spanish as well as in English. Spanish-speaking adults should be assisted in developing English skills while recognizing their capacity in Spanish. For Spanish speakers who are not literate in Spanish, research has shown that it is easier to become literate in a new language after becoming literate in one’s native language.

# Initial Outcomes & Next Steps

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## *Initial Outcomes*

Under the leadership of the Mayor and the Core Group, a serious effort has been undertaken to develop this framework. This document represents a well developed assessment by many thoughtful community leaders and members engaged in the issue of violence prevention.

The following has already been accomplished:

- ◆ Key concerns and problem areas have been identified.
- ◆ A broad community voice has been synthesized.
- ◆ Momentum has been built for a cohesive community approach to violence prevention.
- ◆ A process of communication across disciplines and programs has enabled stakeholders to share valuable approaches.
- ◆ Discussion of integrated approaches that will lead to cross-disciplinary work (e.g., City and County collaboration) on data has been initiated.
- ◆ The comprehensive framework has been created.
- ◆ The framework has provided a basis for the development of proposals including a Safe Schools grant.

## *Next Steps*

Critical next steps to ensure implementation of this framework are:

- ◆ Continue Core Group meetings for the next six months to maintain overall management and coordination of the implementation of this framework.
- ◆ Develop a list of recipients of the report and invite them to participate in implementation.
- ◆ Present the framework to the Salinas City Council for formal adoption and delineation of the role it will play.
- ◆ Present the framework to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors for formal adoption and discussion of the role it will play in implementation.
- ◆ Present the framework to local school boards, including elementary and high school boards, and Hartnell Community College Trustees for formal adoption and discussion of the roles each will play.

- ◆ Present the framework to state and national legislature representatives and state government officials to seek active support.
- ◆ Convene branches of government to discuss the report and identify key elements of participation.
- ◆ Convene youth-serving agencies together with United Way representatives to look at the framework and discuss roles they can play.
- ◆ Ask the Salinas Youth Commission to hold a hearing with youth to discuss the findings of this report.
- ◆ Hold press events to share the report with media and ask them to support violence prevention efforts in the city.
- ◆ Further discuss and modify risk and resiliency factors upon release of the 1999 Tellus Survey data.
- ◆ Seek ongoing funding from local foundations to facilitate the prioritization and coordination process and develop the initiatives described in the proposal.
- ◆ Provide a report to the community on implementation of the framework at the VIPC November town hall meeting.

# Footnotes

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# Extended Network Members

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