

Summary of the City Network Convening October 10 to 12, 2012, in Minneapolis

Representatives of 22 cities gathered for the UNITY City Network Convening in October 2012, to renew connections and to learn from the success of the Minneapolis strategic plan to prevent violence, the Blueprint for Action.

Convened by UNITY and co-hosted by the City of Minneapolis Department of Health & Family Support, this event featured site visits and group discussions to illustrate the power of a shared strategic plan and broad-based collaboration. In dialogue with local practitioners, UNITY city representatives explored the possible roles for various community organizations, government sectors and local leaders in a coordinated effort to prevent violence affecting youth.

Participating Cities

(See the Appendix I for a list of Minneapolis representatives)

- Baltimore
- Boston
- Champaign
- Chicago
- Cleveland
- Denver
- Houston
- Kansas City
- Louisville
- Milwaukee
- Minneapolis
- Newark
- New Orleans
- Oakland
- Oxnard
- Portland
- Salinas
- San Diego
- San Jose
- Seattle
- St. Louis
- Tucson

Wednesday, October 10 – Summer 612 Showcase

Local youth and their families filled Pohlad Hall at the Minneapolis Central Branch Library for the Summer 612 Showcase, and UNITY launched the three-day event by lifting up the voices of young people on issues of violence and safety.



The multimedia arts initiative, Summer 612: Unlearning the Culture of Violence, supports young people in creating documentary

films, visual art projects, spoken word and other performances that share personal experiences to prevent violence. The Summer 612 Showcase featured video documentaries on topics such as the trafficking of girls, and transforming relations between the police and community. It also included a performance on the effects and causes of violence, by the Them Elements Dance Crew. A program of the Department of Health & Family Support, Summer 612



From Summer 612 website, <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/health/yyp/>

makes micro-grants for youth-led arts projects, and connects young people to community organizations such as Asian Media Access, Pillsbury House Theater and TVbyGirls.

Minneapolis also involves young people in developing policies that affect them and their peers, and remarks by the Youth Coordinating Board described the Youth Congress, where students in grades 8 to 12 weigh in on city initiatives and programs. The Youth Congress is one mechanism for youth to influence decision-makers and shape policies on education, housing, safety, employment, transportation, and health.

Hearing the stories of young people, and bearing witness to their struggles and dreams powerfully affected participants. The evaluation revealed that this event inspired many UNITY city representatives to engage young people and incorporate youth perspectives into every stage of their work.

Thursday, October 11 – Site Visits & Panel Discussions

Minneapolis Health Commissioner Gretchen Musicant shared the context for the city's efforts to prevent violence affecting youth, from learning about the public health approach to implementing a strategic plan with buy-in from all stakeholders. She also presented notable results – a 66-percent reduction in incidents involving guns and juveniles between 2006 and 2011, and a 57-percent increase in the number of youth in city jobs programs.

The Blueprint for Action serves as a foundation for the work of various local partners, and all strategies and activities support at least one of the Blueprint's four goals: 1) Connect youth to trusted adults; 2) Intervene at the first sign of risk for violence; 3) Restore youth who have gone down the wrong path; and 4) Unlearn the culture of violence.

“The Minneapolis Blueprint for Action is so straightforward and easy to grasp... It was most valuable to discuss how the strategic plan drives public policy and decisions on resource allocation.”

—UNITY City Network
Convening participant

LEADERSHIP PANEL

Mayor R.T. Rybak, Congressman Keith Ellison and City Councilmember Don Samuels welcomed participants to Minneapolis, and affirmed the value of preventing violence through a public health approach. These leaders reiterated their fundamental premise, that violence in Minneapolis is unacceptable. Mayor Rybak, Congressman Ellison and Councilmember Samuels described some ways they have made preventing violence a city priority, such as by fostering



Congressman Keith Ellison, City Councilmember Don Samuels and Mayor R.T. Rybak reflect on the history and significance of the Minneapolis Blueprint for Action.

partnerships across sectors, creating accountability, and establishing supportive systems to enhance the work.

Participants described the leadership panel as one of the most valuable aspects of the event. The event evaluation showed that this conversation challenged participants to persuade their own local leaders to build political will and “step up” to champion this issue.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SITE VISITS

Staff of city agencies and community partners joined participants at the Rotunda in City Hall and at the North Community YMCA Youth & Teen Enrichment Center, to share their work and contributions to preventing violence in Minneapolis. These local representatives described specific activities that support the goals of the Blueprint for Action, such as:

- The BUILD gang prevention and intervention curriculum, and other programs grounded in the North Community YMCA’s urban youth development model. This model makes the YMCA “a hub that connects assets and opportunities, creating hope and social change.”
- Six community engagement initiatives that emphasize healing through the pursuit of peace, coordinated by Kwanzaa Community Church.
- The North 4 Youth Employment Model, presented by Emerge Community Development. This model provides job training opportunities, employment and additional support services for gang-involved youth in four North Minneapolis neighborhoods.
- Street outreach, community events and other empowerment activities organized by MAD DADS, to enhance public services and promote healthy development for children and youth.
- Youth mentoring to strengthen positive relationships, and the Youth Bus that provides safe transport to parks and other places for youth. These are just two ways that the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board (MPRB) simultaneously fulfills the MPRB vision and supports the Blueprint for Action goals.
- The Juvenile Supervision Center (JSC) at City Hall, coordinated by The Link. JSC staff members assess the strengths and risks of young people who violate curfew or cut school classes, and they provide case management and connect youth to services and resources for staying safe and in school.
- The Picturing Peace project, a collaboration of the Downtown Improvement District and the Health Department. Picturing Peace engaged teenagers to explore the issue of violence using the Photovoice method. The photos young people took were used to decorate 22 frequently-tagged utility boxes, and these images inspired other residents to envision a community of peace. Picturing Peace is part of a larger effort to make downtown Minneapolis a safe and welcoming place to visit, live and work.

“The visit to the community, doing a deeper dive into what’s going on in Minneapolis... I got a lot of ideas throughout the visit. ”

—UNITY City Network
Convening participant



Sherenia Gibbs of Minneapolis Parks and Recreation describes initiatives for youth.

The bus tour, narrated by Councilmember Don Samuels, provided context for the on-the-ground work in these neighborhoods. The tour included Emerge Community Development and Kwanzaa Community Church, as well as two micro-enterprise sites for youth employment – Cookie Cart and Venture North Bike Walk & Coffee, where youth learn to rehab bikes and develop skills around their resale and re-use.

A number of participants remarked how memorable the site visits were. These excursions allowed participants to explore neighborhood spaces, and immersed participants in the real-life look

and feel of places where young people grow up. City Councilmember Cam Gordon welcomed city representatives upon their return to Pohlrad Hall at the Central Branch Library.

PANEL ON COORDINATION & SYSTEMS

The sheer number of activities and sectors needed to prevent violence creates a huge opportunity to integrate prevention activities into existing initiatives related to economic development, education, safety and social services. Representatives of three city agencies and departments highlighted their cross-cutting initiatives, such as:

- The tip line Speak Up! Minneapolis, established by Minneapolis Public Schools. This creates a way for people and organizations to anonymously report a gun on campus and other neighborhood threats. It enables responsible adults to intervene at the first sign of risk for violence, both at school and otherwise.
- Bike Cops for Kids, a program of the Minneapolis Police Department. Officers ride their bikes through parks and neighborhoods, building positive relationships with youth and other residents. The juvenile unit of the police department also works closely with the Juvenile Supervision Center, schools system, county social services, and community groups to support the Blueprint.
- STEP-UP Jobs matches youth ages 14 to 18 to non-profit, public sector and corporate internships, via Minneapolis Employment and Training Programs. STEP-UP is part of the city's economic development strategy, and is supported by partnerships. Funding from local business, government and other sources allows young people to explore career options, practice job skills, and learn from community and business leaders.



Julie Young-Burns of Minneapolis Public Schools shares a Speak Up! poster on anonymously reporting threats.

These presentations sparked discussion and gave participants new ideas, such as reaching out to the local workforce investment board and labor unions as part of a larger effort to engage the business sector. Others were motivated to strengthen infrastructure to prevent violence over the long term, especially structures and systems within the public health sector. Participants remarked on how the strategic plan provided an umbrella for the array of activities that prevent violence, which lent a coherence and larger meaning to efforts in Minneapolis.

Friday, October 12 – Concurrent Sessions

UNITY city representatives participated in facilitated small-group discussions on the following topics, which are related to themes reflected in the site visits:

- Advancing Public Health's Role and Leadership at the Local Level
- Engaging the Business Sector
- Engaging Young People
- Integrating Prevention and Intervention Strategies into a City-Wide Effort
- The Role of Strong Communications in Advancing Prevention Goals
- Using Data to Make the Case for Prevention

As a result of the small-group discussions, participants planned to make a concerted effort to share data with partners. They also said they will prioritize communications and speak persuasively about violence as a public health problem that requires a community-wide response.

Reflection & Next Steps

The UNITY City Network Convening was successful on many accounts. Participants appreciated sharing their struggles and successful strategies, and said it was valuable to learn what other cities were doing. One participant said that “interacting with others and the cross-pollination of ideas was priceless.” Another city representative said, “Interfacing with colleagues from across the country provided food for thought. I loved every minute of it.” Nearly all participants enjoyed meaningful contact with other city representatives.

“These events are so critical in sustaining our efforts. It can feel like you’re alone in your stance, and it’s good knowing there is a vibrant movement to prevent violence.”

—UNITY City Network Convening participant

Many city representatives said they would take steps toward developing a formal strategic plan and a shared vision upon returning home, using the public health approach as the foundation. One participant said that everything he witnessed would inspire others back home and help further the local dialogue and strategic planning process.

City representatives also intend to include residents and young people more fully in planning and decision-making, and to reach out to new partners, such as high-level leaders, the private sector, and state-level government agencies.

This participant described a common sentiment: “It’s been very inspiring to experience UNITY and see how this youth violence prevention work has progressed across the country.”

UNITY extends our deepest appreciation to the Minneapolis Department of Health & Family Support for co-hosting the event, and congratulates all local partners on the success of the Blueprint for Action. Participants were impressed by the stakeholders’ passion for this work and their commitment to keeping young people safe. Thank you!

For More Information

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UNITY city representatives reflect on the site visit and panel discussions, and share new insights.

Appendix I: Minneapolis Representatives

Elected Officials:

- Congressman Keith Ellison
- City Councilmember Cam Gordon
- Mayor R.T. Rybak
- City Councilmember Don Samuels

Community-Based Organizations:

- Asian Media Access – Mong Vang
- Emerge Community Development – Will Wallace
- Kwanzaa Community Church – Alika Galloway and Anthony Jermaine Ross
- The Link – Peter Rosenblatt
- MAD DADS – V.J. Smith
- Minneapolis SafeZone Collaborative for Downtown – Shane Zahn
- North Community YMCA – Henry Crosby
- Pillsbury House Theater – James Williams
- TVbyGirls – Barbara Weiner

City and County Agencies:

- Hennepin County Library – Bernie Farrell
- Department of Health & Family Support – Gretchen Musicant
- Department of Park & Recreation – Sherenia Gibbs
- Juvenile Unit, Minneapolis Police Department – Andy Smith
- Minneapolis Employment and Training Program – Tammy Dickinson
- Minneapolis Public Schools – Julie Young-Burns and Jason Matlock
- Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board – Ann DeGroot

Minneapolis Youth Violence Prevention Executive Committee:

- Gary Cunningham, co-chair
- Marina Lyon, co-chair

Appendix II: Resources for Participants

UNITY City Network Convening, Minneapolis
October 10 to 12, 2012

The UNITY RoadMap and Gauge

The [UNITY RoadMap](#) is a resource for cities to map out solutions that effectively and sustainably prevent violence before it occurs. The UNITY RoadMap helps cities assess their current efforts, describes the core elements necessary to prevent violence, and provides information, resources and examples to support cities in planning, implementation and evaluation. The [UNITY RoadMap Gauge](#) can provide a snapshot of your city's efforts and help prioritize focus areas.



The UNITY Policy Platform

The [UNITY Policy Platform](#) describes what needs to be in place on the ground in cities to prevent violence, and delineates the supports cities need for their efforts to be successful and sustainable. The UNITY Policy Platform emphasizes the need to bring to scale a multi-sector approach to reduce violence in U.S. cities. The UNITY Policy Platform was developed in partnership with representatives from cities across the country and is endorsed by the city representatives.

Fact Sheets: Links Between Violence and Chronic Diseases, Mental Illness and Health Equity



Violence has far-reaching consequences for young people, families and neighborhoods, beyond serious physical injury and death. [These three fact sheets](#) describe how violence affects other health problems and community concerns, such as chronic diseases, mental illness and poor learning. Violence and fear of violence are major factors that undermine health and worsen health disparities. [This fact sheet](#) demonstrates how preventing violence is an important component of any effort to achieve health equity and create healthy communities.

Explore these resources and other valuable tools at www.preventioninstitute.org/unity

From the City of Minneapolis

Blueprint for Action: Preventing Youth Violence in Minneapolis

The Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee's [Blueprint for Action: Preventing Youth Violence in Minneapolis](#) recognizes that youth violence is a public health epidemic that requires a holistic, multi-faceted response that aims to achieve four goals: 1) Connect every youth with a trusted adult; 2) Intervene at the first sign that youth are at risk for violence; 3) Restore youth who have gone down the wrong path, and 4) Unlearn the culture of violence in our community. Encased in these four goals are 34 recommended action items, many of which require the active involvement and coordination of multiple levels of government, community, faith, business and neighborhood partners.

Results Minneapolis – Youth Violence Prevention

[Results Minneapolis](#) highlights key youth violence prevention outcomes for Minneapolis. The report is organized by the four goals and programmatic efforts identified in the Blueprint for Action.

Explore these resources and other valuable tools at http://www.minneapolismn.gov/health/yvp/dhfs_yv