

Advancing Multi-Sector Efforts to Prevent Urban Violence, a UNITY Event Summary January 7 to 9, 2015, in Oakland

The 2015 UNITY City Network convening event supported by the Langeloth Foundation was the largest in UNITY’s 10-year history, with 70 representatives of 23 cities coming together to develop new skills and renew connections. Multi-sector collaboration was the event theme, since too often groups don’t realize their full potential even though diverse partnerships are critical for preventing violence. Participants were trained to use [Multi-Sector Partnerships for Preventing Violence](#), a guide for applying Prevention Institute’s Collaboration Multiplier tool to improve safety outcomes. A site visit to the REACH Ashland Youth Center illustrated the power of multi-sector efforts.

Participating Cities

- Alameda County/Oakland, CA
- Baltimore
- Boston
- Brownsville in New York City
- Chicago
- Cleveland
- Denver
- Detroit
- Hillsborough County/Tampa, FL
- Houston
- Kansas City, MO
- Los Angeles
- Louisville
- Minneapolis
- Monterey County/Salinas, CA
- Multnomah County/Portland, OR
- New Orleans
- Oxnard, CA
- Richmond, CA
- San Diego
- Santa Clara County/San Jose, CA
- Seattle
- St. Louis



Alyshia Macaysa / Prevention Institute

Mayor Libby Schaaf welcomed the UNITY City Network to Oakland and spoke about the value of holistic approaches that address the underlying causes of violence.

Using the Collaboration Multiplier Tool to Prevent Violence

The training on Prevention Institute’s Collaboration Multiplier tool was the biggest take-away from the convening event. When asked what they would do differently as a result of the event, nearly three out of four participants said they would use Collaboration Multiplier, and 81 percent of city representatives said the event helped them identify additional sectors to engage in local violence prevention efforts.

The Collaboration Multiplier tool has been used for more than a decade to maximize the benefits of multi-sector collaboration while overcoming the inherent challenges of working together. With funding from the Kresge Foundation, UNITY applied this tool

specifically for the issue of community violence and developed a comprehensive guide that walks readers through the tool. The Collaboration Multiplier training demonstrated the tool's strengths and utility through an example from Houston (see the guide's [companion document](#)). All participants said they saw the value of the tool and could describe how the guide could improve safety outcomes for their city.

Each of the nine breakout sessions focused on engaging a particular sector in local efforts to prevent violence. These facilitated small-group discussions covered a range of potential partners, such as:

- Health care
- The economic sector, such as businesses and workforce development
- The justice sector, including law enforcement
- The news media
- Planning and zoning departments
- Young people, residents and communities affected by violence
- Foundations and other funders
- Evaluators to measure the impact of multi-sector efforts



Alyshia Macaysa / Prevention Institute

Members of the UNITY City Network are trained to use the Collaboration Multiplier tool to prevent violence and learn about the latest UNITY resource.

Participants said the breakout sessions were especially interesting and valuable: “Getting into the challenges and victories is engaging and helpful. The breakout sessions gave me ideas, concrete examples that could be implemented right away, and best practices to take home.”

Multi-Sector Strategies & Structures in UNITY Cities

Two panels featured nine city representatives who shared their experiences working across sectors, and described the coordination and staffing structures that support local violence prevention efforts. This section includes selected highlights from remarks by:

- Cornelius Bowser, San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention
- Sasha Cotton, Minneapolis Health Department
- Chris Gunther, New Orleans Health Department
- Eleuthera Lisch, YMCA of Greater Seattle
- Mariko Lockhart, Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative
- Kevin Muccular, Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety
- Sheila Savannah, Houston Department of Health and Human Services
- Lynn Sharpe-Underwood, San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention
- Kaile Shilling, Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles

WORKING ACROSS SECTORS

Houston. Young people said they felt unsafe because to get to school, they had to cross through vacant land where illegal dumping and drug activity were common. The health department led the clean-up effort in partnership with public works and engineering, youth-serving organizations, property owners and managers, and others, using principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED. “Whose responsibility is it to stop community violence? Young people said it’s everybody’s business, everybody has a role. We’ve adopted this theme for our efforts,” Savannah said.

“I appreciate the dialogue, and I love how informed and authentic the conversations are.”

—UNITY City Network
event participant

New Orleans. As part of the NOLA for Life murder reduction plan, the New Orleans Health Department integrated violence prevention programming into Maternal and Child Health programs such as WIC, the health and nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children. Positive parenting classes are part of WIC, for example, and the health department works in partnership with domestic violence prevention advocates. “Violence is a learned behavior, often learned very early in life. It’s important to develop solutions that are coordinated, integrated and cut across multiple forms of violence,” Gunther said.

Seattle. Pete Carroll, head coach of the Seattle Seahawks, has long been passionate about gang intervention. The Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative and YMCA of Greater Seattle built on his commitment and partnered with the pro football team. “Our approach and our philosophy is that we need to work together and that everybody is a resource. We have 50 people who come together every month, and we have built relationships over the years so everybody has gotten to know each other and trust each other,” Lockhart said. As a result, the initiative expanded its reach beyond city limits to cover the entire region.

COORDINATION & STAFFING STRUCTURES

Los Angeles. With more than 150 member organizations, the Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles can mobilize thousands of people committed to addressing violence as a public health issue. The coalition is a non-competitive forum for building bridges across fields. Gang intervention workers and people who provide services to survivors of domestic violence, for example, agreed that gang violence and domestic violence were connected, so they co-developed a training curriculum and referral system.

Minneapolis. When it launched its strategic plan to prevent youth violence in 2008, Minneapolis wrote into the city budget a new position housed in the Health Department—youth violence prevention coordinator. “I figure out what’s going on at the city and the community levels, and we manage a multi-jurisdictional team to make sure youth are safe in our city,” said Sasha Cotton.

“The opportunities to network and exchange ideas—invaluable!”

—UNITY City Network
event participant

Richmond, CA. The Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) was created because “no city can sustain violence prevention efforts without people who are paid to deal with the issue where it happens,” said Kevin Muccular. ONS builds relationships with the two dozen people who are responsible for the vast majority of violent crime in the city. “Too often this population is left out of the equation. Who’s collaborating around these people?” said Muccular. “The young people pulling triggers in your city, do you know their names? Do they know that you care about them?”

San Diego. The San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention was established through the municipal code for coordination among law enforcement, faith-based organizations, schools and other partners to curtail gang involvement. “There are all these agencies working together and when there are issues, we deal with them together,” Bowser said.

Miss the Event?

Browse the [photo album](#), and read the [Storify summary](#) of #UCN2015 tweets.

REACH Ashland Youth Center

[REACH Ashland Youth Center](#)

is a shining example of multi-sector collaboration in action. After a day of training and discussing the challenges of multi-sector work, visiting REACH Ashland Youth Center inspired participants to persevere and overcome the obstacles.

Since the REACH Ashland Youth Center opened its doors, the area has seen poverty decrease and a drop in vandalism at a nearby mall. “We’re excited about the



Alyshia Macaysa / Prevention Institute

Culture keepers and the choreographer teach participants the Ashland Shuffle at the REACH Ashland Youth Center in unincorporated Alameda County. The dance is part of the center’s efforts to create a sense of place and local pride.

transformation happening here. We have public, private, non-profit organizations willing to work together toward collective goals, helping ensure there's healthier kids, healthier communities and healthier society," said Executive Director Pedro Naranjo. "We made a commitment to make REACH multi-sector—integration instead of working in isolation."

"The amazing part of having something like REACH is that it's a safe place for kids to be themselves, to try new things, instead of getting in trouble," said Marilyn Hanson, a youth consultant. Operated by the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, REACH recruited partners to offer services and programs to young people ages 11 to 24 years old, free of charge (see "Multi-Sector Partnerships at REACH" on page 5).

Participants said the visit showed them what was possible through partnerships. The central role of young people in the creation of REACH also inspired city representatives to push for greater youth involvement in developing and implementing programs.

Multi-Sector Partnerships at REACH, reachashland.org

Recreation. The **Hayward Area Recreation and Park District** has a gym next door, and the **Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League** runs recreation and fitness programs there and at a school field adjacent to REACH, as part of a community policing strategy.

Education. Through the **San Lorenzo Unified School District**, REACH is a qualified local education agency that provides meals, after-school programs, tutoring and ways to make up academic credits. **The Alameda County Library** has also integrated books and magazines throughout the facility. The career development center has books with advice on job interviews and resumes, for example, while the computer lab has references materials on visual and graphic design. The **Community Association for Preschool Education** runs The NEST, a child development center. By providing child care, REACH promotes access and support to families in an area with historically high rates of teen pregnancy and child abuse.

Arts and Creative Expression. The REACH facility has music and sound recording studios as well as dedicated spaces for the **Alameda County Arts Commission** to promote creative self-expression among young people and support their visual, digital and performance arts projects. Two percent of the construction budget was allocated for public art, and young people collaborated with the architect on building colors, layout and materials.

Career Development. The **non-profit organization Soulciety** leads a youth employment program out of REACH, where young people explore careers, and are matched with internships, job training and long-term employment opportunities. Before REACH, 45 percent of people in the area ages 16 to 19 were looking for work but couldn't find it.

Health, Wellness and Housing. Through a contract with **La Clinica de La Raza**, REACH is a federally-qualified health center that provides free health education, medical and dental services in an area especially affected by health disparities compared to the rest of Alameda County. Counseling is provided by **Fuente Wellness Center** and the **Alameda County Health Care Services Agency**. Housing is under construction on the same block, and **Alameda County Supervisor Nate Miley** helped negotiate for eight units reserved as transitional housing. REACH also has showers and a clothes washer and dryer that homeless youth use before shelter placement and referral.

Reflection & Next Steps

An unprecedented number of cities asked to bring additional representatives to this event because UNITY “helps build connection, partnership and inspiration in ways that we couldn’t do locally,” as one participant said. Nearly 90 percent of participants strongly agreed that the UNITY City Network was a vehicle for sharing ideas, strategies and innovations that could strengthen and re-energize local efforts to prevent violence. All participants said they had meaningful contact with other city representatives.

Prevention Institute has a reputation for building capacity, and creating spaces for honest conversations and authentic sharing. As another participant said, “Being part of a national community of practice is critical for the continued development of this field.” This is consistent with the eight-year evaluation, wherein 75 percent of UNITY cities said their efforts to prevent violence were more effective due to UNITY training, technical assistance, tools and events.

UNITY challenges violence prevention practitioners in their thinking and practice, helps them develop new skills and “gives me perspective and direction moving forward. UNITY is a tremendous inspiration.” The way cities address violence has shifted dramatically even in the last 10 years, and there is still room to improve practice, to innovate, and to integrate violence prevention into policies and systems.

This UNITY City Network event laid the foundation for additional training, technical assistance and tool development on multi-sector collaboration. In the coming months, UNITY will launch a webinar series to explore more deeply issues related to multi-sector collaboration, and host regional in-person trainings to increase local capacity and support for a prevention approach.

“The total experience was very rich. We are energized and inspired.”

“The event was top-quality in all aspects. This was incredibly awesome!”

—UNITY City Network event participants

For More Information

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UNITY is a Prevention Institute initiative, and this event was supported by the Langeloth Foundation. UNITY has also been supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The California Wellness Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation.