

An Assessment of Youth Violence Prevention Activities in USA Cities: An Overview June 2008

Research has shown that violence is a serious issue for cities. Despite the evidence little data have been collected reporting on cities' overall strategies, resources, and activities to address this problem. In an effort to inform urban efforts to reduce violence, UNITY conducted an assessment to establish baseline measurements of the magnitude of youth violence, the level of concern within the city and collaborative efforts to address and monitor the issue.

The assessment was conducted by Southern California Injury Prevention Research Center (SCIPRC) at UCLA School of Public Health. The study included standardized interviews with Mayors, Police Chiefs, Health Department Directors and School Superintendents, or their designees in a representative sample of the largest cities, populations of 400,000 or more, across the U.S.

Major Findings

- Most cities cited a lack of a comprehensive strategy.
- Public Health Departments are not generally included in city strategies.
- Law enforcement and criminal justice are the most prevalent strategy used in the cities.
- Gang violence was identified as the major type of youth violence.
- Cities, for the most part, lack clearly developed outcomes, evaluations, or evaluation plans to measure and monitor their efforts.
- **Cities with the greatest coordinated approach also had the lowest rates of youth violence.**

Recommendations

For cities:

- Adopt a comprehensive approach to youth violence that includes an equitable distribution of prevention, intervention and suppression/enforcement.
- Establish greater collaboration between city entities and across jurisdictional borders to county and state entities.
- Develop and implement a city-wide plan with measurable objectives and an evaluation component.

For the nation:

- Create a national agenda to address youth violence in the largest cities developed and adopted by several national partners.
- Provide training for State and Local Public Health Departments about their role in violence prevention and also provide incentives and opportunities to participate in city-wide efforts.
- Provide cities with the opportunity to network and mentor each other in their efforts to reduce and prevent violence through UNITY.

For a complete version of the report, please link to:

<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/UNITY.html>

Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth through Violence Prevention (UNITY) is a national initiative building support for effective, sustainable efforts to prevent violence before it occurs so that urban youth can thrive in safe environments with supportive relationships and opportunities for success.

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*Violence is not the problem
of one neighborhood or group,
and the response and solutions
are not the responsibility
of one sector of the community
or of one agency, professional
group, or business.
Coming together and
owning this problem and
the solutions are central.*

—Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith