



Milwaukee's Blueprint for Peace

Charting the path forward with the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework

The need to address Adverse Community Experiences and the opportunity to foster resilience

In 2015, Milwaukee experienced one of its deadliest years, with homicides jumping from 86 in 2014 to 145 in 2015. In 2016 Milwaukee was ranked as the fifth most dangerous city in the US. Milwaukee also faces high rates of other forms of violence such as intimate partner violence and sexual assault. Although violence affects the entire city, it takes an inequitable toll on specific neighborhoods and populations, including youth, women, and people of color. Milwaukee also has high degrees of economic inequality and residential segregation, low degrees of income mobility, and high rates of incarceration of African American men. These and other factors contributed to high levels of community trauma, reflected in disconnectedness among residents and institutions and limited community-government trust.

Precious Lives, a two-year 100 part radio series about young people and gun violence in Milwaukee, and exposés in the local paper about multigenerational trauma began to illuminate the problems of violence

“The community strongly embraced the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience framework for its ability to connect the dots between social determinants of health, violence, and trauma.”

– Reggie Moore, Director, Office of Violence Prevention

and trauma in Milwaukee and to increase the calls for action. While countless individuals have worked tirelessly to promote safety and prevent violence and trauma in Milwaukee, the city lacked a unifying vision and plan for working in a more coordinated manner to promote public safety. Recognizing this gap and the urgent need for an “all hands on deck” approach, Mayor Tom Barrett and other city leaders called for a public health approach to violence in Milwaukee – one that would address the underlying factors that contribute to violence, build on community assets and culture, and systematically apply data and science to ensure effective solutions.



Using the *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework* as a tool for planning and implementation

Prevention Institute's [Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience \(ACE|R\) report](#) served as a key framework for the Blueprint. Prevention Institute shared the Framework with participants throughout the planning process through formal presentations and informal discussions. The Framework informed the planning process and was integrated into the Blueprint. According to Reggie Moore, Director of OVP, "The framework was a timely and critical tool for capturing the intersection between people, place and opportunity." In particular, the Framework resonated in Milwaukee because it:

- Affirmed residents' lived experiences of various forms of violence and community trauma;
- Acknowledged the impacts of structural violence and institutional racism in the production of community violence and community trauma; and,
- Facilitated the inclusion of strategies that counter structural violence and promote healing and resilience from community trauma in the Blueprint.

The *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework* supported the Blueprint planning process by offering examples of strategies at the community level to prevent community trauma, build community resilience, and promote community healing, and by highlighting that the most effective strategies engage multiple sectors, involve community healing, and build on community knowledge, expertise, and leadership. Many of the examples of strategies were included in the Blueprint, including: strengthening connection to a positive cultural identity; improving public spaces; and implementing restorative justice practices. Also, many of the Framework's strategies to counter structural violence were included in the Blueprint, such as increasing collective capacity for action, and removing barriers to housing and employment access for formerly incarcerated individuals. A number of strategies to reduce implicit bias were also included,

"Poverty is traumatic. Segregation is traumatic. Experiencing life as a 'have not' among 'haves' is traumatic."

-Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace Planning Contributor

Mayor Barrett appointed a diverse Steering Committee to provide leadership and oversight and charged the Milwaukee Health Department's Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) with facilitating a transparent process with broad community input that would engender collaboration, solutions, and action. Funding for the planning process was provided by a generous grant from the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment at the Medical College of Wisconsin, and partial funding from the Tides Foundation and the Federal ReCAST Milwaukee initiative. OVP engaged Prevention Institute to co-facilitate the planning process and develop the Blueprint. Over a 10 month period, a Steering Committee of residents, parents, youth, organizers, advocates, elected officials, and public servants came together and engaged over 1,500 additional residents to develop Milwaukee's Blueprint for Peace, a living document designed to promote a long-term, community-engaged, multisector, public health approach to preventing violence and promoting community resilience.



such as implementing policies, practices, and training to reduce implicit bias across government departments and other sectors, and engaging the media to reduce bias in reporting while lifting up preventive solutions.

The Blueprint for Peace puts forth a structure for implementation to ensure effectiveness and sustainability, including high-level leadership, and a multisector Peace Collaborative that will steer implementation, evaluation, and sustainability efforts. An understanding of community trauma also shaped the development of goals and activities to strengthen this infrastructure for violence prevention. For example, in the realms of communications and capacity building, the Blueprint includes objectives and activities to promote understanding and a shared narrative about peace, community, equity, and resilience that are informed by an understanding of community trauma.

Moving toward community resilience

At a time of increased violence in Milwaukee, the city relied primarily on a criminal justice approach to address the problem. The Blueprint Planning process, aided by the ACE|R framework, supported a deep, comprehensive planning process that resulted in the emergence of a public health approach to violence as a distinct, viable, and complementary strategy to a criminal justice approach to public safety. As a direct result, the Common Council's Public Safety Committee was renamed as the Public Safety and Health Committee, and private and public resources are now beginning to flow to support the Blueprint's implementation. The ACE|R framework was critical to the success of the Blueprint process, as it named and accounted for structural violence and community trauma and related contributing factors and symptoms, and pointed the city toward immediate solutions that would support healing and prevent future violence and trauma while promoting resilience. Further, the planning process itself, informed by an understanding of community trauma and resilience, catalyzed greater understanding of community violence, community trauma, and prevention, and helped foster a stronger culture of positive relationships, collaboration, trust, and transparency. This culture is informed by a growing narrative of resilience and opportunity to collectively face and transform conditions in Milwaukee together. More information about the Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace can be found at <http://city.milwaukee.gov/414Life>.

Authorship & Resources

ABOUT PREVENTION INSTITUTE

Prevention Institute is a nonprofit, national center dedicated to improving community health and wellbeing by building momentum for effective primary prevention. Primary prevention means taking action to build resilience and to prevent problems before they occur. The Institute's work is characterized by a strong commitment to community participation and promotion of equitable health outcomes among all social and economic groups. Since its founding in 1997, the organization has focused on community prevention, injury and violence prevention, health equity, healthy eating and active living, positive youth development, health system transformation, and mental health and wellbeing. For more information, visit www.preventioninstitute.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Prevention Institute's report, *[Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: A Framework for Addressing and Preventing Community Trauma](#)*, provides a groundbreaking framework for understanding the relationship between community trauma and violence. Funded by Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit in Northern California, and based on interviews with practitioners in communities with high rates

of violence, the report outlines specific strategies to address and prevent community trauma – and foster resilience – using techniques from those living in affected areas. For additional information and resources on addressing community trauma, go to our [project page](#).

Since the initial development of the *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework* in 2016, multiple networks and communities have shared it, as well as adopted, adapted and/or implemented it to address and prevent community trauma. *[Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: Learning from Practice](#)* reflects valuable lessons from their practice.

[What? Why? How? Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework](#) builds off of core concepts in the *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework* and addresses questions that have emerged in early practice and implementation.

This profile was supported by grants from Kaiser Permanente National Community Benefit and Kaiser Permanente Northern California Community Benefit programs..