

Blueprint for Action: Preventing Youth Violence in Minneapolis



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Executive Summary

Like many large cities in 2006, Minneapolis faced a serious rise in violent crime that was fueled mainly by violent crime involving young people. City leaders responded with an aggressive multifaceted attack on juvenile crime that included a larger, more diverse police force, the creation of a juvenile crime unit, cutting-edge public safety technology, precinct-based community crime prosecutors, and community-based youth outreach.

As a result of these efforts, by the end of 2007 violent crime in Minneapolis was down by 13 percent, violent crime with juvenile suspects was down 27 percent, and overall juvenile crime was down 15 percent compared to 2006.

Although bolstered by this progress, city and community leaders recognized that sustained reduction in crime involving young people required more than aggressive enforcement because the crisis of juvenile crime cannot be arrested away. To effectively attack the epidemic of juvenile crime that is gripping our community, City leaders declared that Minneapolis must address youth violence as a public health problem and implement a comprehensive plan that engages the entire community to address the root causes of youth violence.

That's why in January 2007, Mayor R.T. Rybak and the City Council created the Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee comprised of more than thirty community leaders and public safety experts to create and oversee the implementation of a multi-faceted, multi-sector, multi-year *Blueprint for Action to Prevent Youth Violence* utilizing a public health lens to significantly reduce and prevent youth violence in Minneapolis. Throughout 2007, the Committee reviewed best practices research, met with groups of Minneapolis youth, consulted national experts, assessed existing youth violence programs, and engaged in deep discussion of the complex issues facing too many youth in our community.

The Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee's *Blueprint for Action to Prevent Youth Violence* recognizes that youth violence is a public health epidemic that requires a holistic, multi-faceted response that aims to achieve four goals:

- Connect every youth with a trusted adult,
- Intervene at the first sign that youth are at risk for violence,
- Restore youth who have gone down the wrong path, and
- Unlearn the culture of violence in our community.

Encased in these four goals are 34 recommended action items, many which require the active involvement and coordination of multiple levels of government, community, faith, business and neighborhood partners.

The Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee members recognize that the *Blueprint for Action to Prevent Youth Violence* does not need to start from scratch, but can and must build on the many effective initiatives already underway in Minneapolis. At the same time, the *Blueprint for Action* is exactly that: a blueprint – a common vision that seeks to bring together disparate efforts and better

coordinate fragmented systems that are leaving too many youth falling through the cracks – youth who need help.

Government alone cannot eliminate violence from our community. In order to turn around the epidemic of youth violence in Minneapolis, we need to surround our youth and their families with supports and opportunities, while also holding them accountable for their actions. We need schools and youth serving organizations to better coordinate services. We need public and private funders to support proven programs and interventions.

Most importantly, we need everyone in this community to embrace the core value that youth violence affects each of us and each of us has a role to play to keep our children and youth safe.

The role of our schools is especially important in this endeavor. With a recently approved new Strategic Plan, the Minneapolis Public Schools are at an important juncture. Success in school is one of the most important components for reducing youth violence. There is a strong correlation between failing schools and neighborhoods with high rates of violence. A concerted effort to improve educational success in Minneapolis at the same time the City is focused on reducing youth violence is an opportunity to provide an unprecedented level of support to Minneapolis youth. It is in this unique context and with research about what works that we provide this *Blueprint for Action*.

The continued success of our entire community is at stake. Today's young people are the most valuable generation Minneapolis has ever raised. As we strive to prosper in a global economy where markets are created and shaped by increasingly diverse peoples, the students of Minneapolis – who speak 100 languages and come from all around the world – are the key to our competitiveness.

Seeing Youth Violence through a Public Health Lens

Minneapolis is addressing youth violence using a public health lens,¹ with an approach that is population-based targeting all city residents and treats violence as a disease or an epidemic, such as tuberculosis, polio or smoking.

From a public health perspective, youth violence is not inevitable. It is a problem that can be prevented using a scientific approach similar to what is used to address other public health problems such as automobile injuries or lead poisoning.

A public health lens contains six parts:

1. Community-based methods to identify the causes or sources of the problem.
2. Identifying risk factors that increase the likelihood that some people will have the problem and protective factors that decrease the impact of risk factors.
3. Tracking trends that influence the prevalence and incidence of risk factors.
4. Interventions based on scientific analysis designed to reduce or eliminate risk factors and introduce or enhance protective factors through:
 - Environmental changes (e.g., mandating the use of car seats for young children, banning the use of lead in paint and gasoline, or installing smoke detectors),
 - Behavioral changes (e.g., educational campaigns to reduce drunk driving, encourage hand washing, or teach children to stop, drop and roll if their clothes catch fire).
5. Evaluation of interventions to judge and improve their effectiveness.
6. Public education to share information about the problem and about effective and ineffective interventions.

A public health lens calls for prevention strategies along three levels:

- *Primary, or universal prevention* aimed at an entire population with universal strategies designed to prevent problems from developing in the first place,
- *Secondary, or selective prevention* aimed at specific groups of people who may be more at risk, and
- *Tertiary, or targeted prevention*, aimed at people who have already demonstrated serious problems.

A public health lens sees that no *single* strategy prevents violence; rather, violence prevention requires a long term commitment to a comprehensive set of strategies.

Too often policymakers have viewed youth violence as only a criminal justice issue. More arrests, larger prisons, longer sentences and trying children "as adults," will not solve the problem. Suppression and enforcement alone only serve as band-aids.

By seeing youth violence as the public health crisis that it is, we are better able to work across agencies, communities and jurisdictions with youth, parents, teachers, clergy, health providers, and others to protect youth, reduce injuries and deaths, and prevent more acts of violence from ever happening in the first place.

Youth Violence is an Epidemic Problem

Youth violence was defined by the Surgeon General in 1998 as physical assault by a youth that carries a significant risk of injuring or killing another person. This level of violence is at an epidemic status in Minneapolis similar to many cities in the United States. It is a serious public health problem and it is preventable.

The Epidemic of Youth Violence is National

Homicide rates for young people are higher in the United States than in any other developed nation. It is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10-24. In this age group, homicide is the third leading cause of death for American Indians, the second leading cause of death for Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders, and the leading cause of death for African Americans.²

The Epidemic of Youth Violence is Local

Eighty Minneapolis residents between the ages of 15 and 24 years died as a result of homicide from 2003-2006. Homicide was the leading cause of death for Minneapolis residents in this age group, accounting for almost half of all deaths.³

Violence in Minneapolis takes a disproportionate toll on people of color (especially African American males) and low-income neighborhoods. From 2003-2006, 47 African Americans between the ages of 10 and 24 years were homicide victims, compared with between 7-10 homicide deaths in each of the following groups: Hispanics, whites, Asian Americans, and American Indians. Of 57 homicides in Minneapolis among victims of all ages in 2006, half occurred within a six square mile area in North Minneapolis. From 2001-2005, 858 emergency room visits by Minneapolis residents were the result of firearm assaults, with annual increases from 109 in 2001 to 247 in 2005.

Youth violence in Minneapolis increased following severe reductions in state funding, including a loss of \$3.27 million in after-school enrichment programs, a loss of \$364,000 in Youth Risk Behavior Grants from the tobacco endowment funds, and a loss of \$700,000 for youth development and parenting support geared towards teen pregnancy prevention.

The Epidemic of Youth Violence Costs Us All

Violence exacts a financial burden on our community by increasing health care and public safety costs. The average cost for a single incident of homicide is estimated to be \$3 million and the cost for one non-fatal paralyzing injury from gun violence averages \$2-5 million over the victim's lifetime for health care, living expenses and lost productivity.

Education costs less than ignorance, preventive health care costs less than emergency room care, preventive family services cost less than out-of-home care, and early childhood education costs less than prisons⁴:

- The average annual per child cost of a mentoring program is \$1,000.
- The cost of providing a year of employment training for unemployed youths is \$2,492.

- The annual per child cost of a quality after-school program is \$2,700.
- The average cost of providing a low-income family with affordable housing is \$6,830.
- The annual per child cost for quality comprehensive full-day, full-year early childhood education is \$13,000.
- The average annual per prisoner cost is \$22,650. States spend on average almost three times as much per prisoner as per public school pupil.

Arrest rates increase for youth who are placed in detention centers, county home schools and prison and the costs of the related arrest, court appearance, and imprisonment cycle are significant. For example, detention costs at Hennepin County Detention Center are \$9,360 per month per youth. Because the Detention Center houses an average of 98 juveniles a day, this adds up to a monthly detention expense of \$917,280 or *\$11 million* a year.

We Know What Predicts and Prevents Youth Violence

Why do some youths get involved in violence and others do not? There is no simple answer to this question. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, exposure to violence and victimization are strongly associated with subsequent acts of violence by victims.⁵ When children are asked about the causes of youth violence, they cite violence in the home and bullying at school as the number one and number two causes.⁶ Basic causes include dysfunctional and violent families, racism and oppression, unemployment and financial stress, alcoholism and drug abuse, gangs, social isolation, and lack of community connections.⁷

Adolescent survey research has also identified a number of things that put children and youth at risk of violent behavior and some things that seem to protect them from the effects of risk.⁸

Risk factors are those aspects of a young person's life that are associated with an increased likelihood of violence or other harmful behaviors. There are individual, familial and community/school risk factors.

Protective factors are the events, opportunities, and experiences that buffer young people from harm, and promote their healthy development. Like risk factors, protective factors exist at the individual, familial, and community/school levels.

Individual Level Factors

Youth are **more likely** to be involved in violence when they:

- Have previous involvement in violent behavior,
- Have a history of being a victim or witness of violence,
- Have learning problems,
- Skip school,
- Repeat a grade,
- Have a high level of complaints about not feeling well or have poor health,
- Use alcohol and marijuana,
- Have a history of treatment for emotional problems, or
- Have high levels of emotional distress.

But they are **less likely** to be involved in violent behavior when they have:

- A sense of spirituality, with a sense of connectedness to a creative power in the universe greater than themselves;
- A positive sense of the future, and
- A higher grade point average.

Family Level Factors

Youth are **more likely** to be involved in violence when there is:

- A suicide attempt of a family member,
- Easy access to firearms in the home (for boys), or
- A parent who has been incarcerated.

But they are **less likely** to be involved in violent behavior when they:

- Can discuss problems with their parents/guardians,
- Believe their parents have high expectations for school performance,
- Feel connected to parents and family (all kinds of families – single parent, dual parent, extended family, adoptive families),
- Report frequent shared activities with parents, and
- Have at least one parent who is consistently present during at least one of the following times: when awakening, arriving home from school, evening mealtime, or at bedtime.

Community and School Level Factors

Youth are **more likely** to be involved in violence when they:

- Perceive prejudice among students in their school, or
- Have a friend who has attempted or committed suicide.

But they are **less likely** to be involved in violent behavior when they:

- Feel connected to their school (young people report their teachers are fair; are interested in them as a person; have high expectations and care about their success),
- Feel connected to adults outside their immediate family (nurturing adults, who have high expectations and help young people to succeed), and
- Feel safe in their neighborhood.

Research shows that even if a child has one or more of these risk factors, while potentially harmful, there's a good chance that the child's resiliency – buoyed by an infusion of protective interventions from a parent, teacher, counselor, relative, parole officer, pastor, youth worker, or some other adult, can help that child not use violence to resolve problems. But a young person exposed to six or more risk factors faces more significant challenges. For that reason, a dual approach of increasing or strengthening protective interventions coupled with strategies to reduce risk factors and behaviors predictive of violence will yield more powerful results than either of these strategies alone.⁹

Preventing Youth Violence is Possible: A Blue Print for Action

The City of Minneapolis is making youth violence a high priority public health concern. Through Mayor Rybak's leadership and the commitment of the Minneapolis City Council, the opportunity exists for systemic change and a new mind set.

The Committee's target population for this *Blueprint for Action* is all youth in Minneapolis from birth to age 22. The emphasis, however, is on youth ages 8 to 17 who face factors that place them at higher risk for being a perpetrator or victim of crime, including those who:

- Have been brought to the Juvenile Center for curfew or truancy violations.
- Are in family situations that are unstable.
- Had one or more encounters with law enforcement or the justice system.
- Are gang members, gang affiliates, or gang associates.
- Have been suspended or expelled from school.
- Are victims or witnesses of violence.
- Live in the Folwell, Hawthorne, Jordan, McKinley, or Phillips neighborhoods – where the majority of homicides in Minneapolis occur.

There is strong agreement that research-based youth violence prevention and intervention can reduce youth violence. This is not to say it is easy. Positive pressure must be exerted everywhere children are, regardless of whether they've never engaged in violence or have had multiple experiences with violence.

Together, we must:

Connect youth to trusted adults. At the core of any prevention effort is the role of caring, trusted adults in the life of every young person. Relationships are how children and youth learn about the world. The goal is to make sure those relationships are positive and nurturing. Whether through family, employment, a mentor, joining a community-based or faith-based group, quality after-school programs, participating on a team, or doing community service – all young people need a caring adult in their life. Students who spend no time in extracurricular activities, such as those offered in after-school programs, are 49 percent more likely to have used drugs and 37 percent more likely to become teen parents than are students who spend one or more hours per week in extracurricular activities. Beyond simply offering a safe haven, after-school programs offer children and youth opportunities to learn new skills such as conflict resolution, prepare for a successful career, improve grades and develop relationships with caring adults. These skills can be critical in helping youth develop in positive ways.

Support and education for families on effective parenting skills is also an effective prevention strategy. This is especially true for teen parents, and why we must work to reduce unwanted teen pregnancy and provide support to teen parents. Teen parents often have little energy left to provide the stimulation critical to a child's early development. Children who begin their first critical years with unhealthy starts are likely to begin school not ready to learn. Children who struggle in school are at increased risk for engaging in violence during childhood and adolescence.

Intervene at the first sign that youth are at risk for violence. Action is at the heart of this plan: intervene early when a young person or family first exhibits signs that they are at risk for or involved in violence. All the places where young people go (parks, schools, health care facilities, and social service organizations) need to know how to support and provide assistance to young people who witness or are a victim of violence. We must help young people who engage in risky behavior (e.g. skip school/are suspended from school, substance use) find a different path.

In our families, communities and schools, we must create alternative opportunities to gain skills, while still holding youth accountable for their behavior. We must take steps to ensure our schools and our communities are safe and welcoming, and have policies supporting the academic success and healthy development of all children and youth. And we need to shore up the community resources to meet young people's emotional and mental health problems that increase their risk for violence. Lastly, parents of young people who are at-risk of using violence or re-offending need education and support so they have the tools and resources they need to help their children move in a positive direction.

Restore youth who have gone down the wrong path. Youth can change the trajectory of their life if given the support, opportunities and services they need within the juvenile justice system and when they return home to their community. As young people re-enter a community they and their families need support that includes education, employment, physical and mental health, positive social relationships outside mandatory ones (probation), and perhaps repairing the damage to themselves and their community created by their actions.

Upholding this belief requires changing our mindset from focusing solely on punishment to holding young people accountable while also providing opportunities for healthy youth development. This requires all systems working with youth offenders and their families to strengthen or re-invent how they coordinate and collaborate to support better outcomes.

Unlearn the culture of violence in our community. Researchers have proven that long-term public education campaigns on violence prevention, family education, alcohol and drug prevention, and gun safety are effective strategies to help prevent delinquency. Researchers also agree that involving youth and developing community consensus around these values are essential to an effective public education process.

A well-designed public education campaign can make a positive impact on public opinion and be a cost-effective way of providing critical information to a large number of people. For example, it can enhance community understanding about the nature and value of the juvenile justice system. It can educate all members of the community about effective prevention and intervention strategies. It can help communities identify and access local resources. And it can inform policymakers of proven options for effective juvenile justice at all levels.

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION GOAL #1:

Every young person in Minneapolis is supported by at least one trusted adult in their family or their community.

Recommendations:

- Ensure there is a trusted adult in the life of every young person in Minneapolis by increasing the number of quality mentoring opportunities for young people, along with proper training for mentors of all ages and backgrounds.
- Increase the number of private businesses providing jobs through the City of Minneapolis STEP-UP to give more young people the opportunity for employment and positive interactions with engaged adults.
- Strengthen the coordination of public and private youth programs, services and opportunities.
- Increase the number of high-quality community-based youth programs, services and opportunities, including leadership training. Equip these organizations and their leaders with the skills needed to direct youth away from violence and towards positive alternatives.
- Reestablish Minneapolis Police liaisons in Public Schools to give young people opportunities to build positive relationships with the Minneapolis Police and to strengthen coordination between schools, parks and police.
- Provide year-round *Youth Are Here* bus service so that young people have safe reliable transportation to services and activities.
- Give young people safe spaces for activities during out-of-school times by increasing the hours when Library, Park and School buildings are open.
- Provide young people with consistent, effective and meaningful violence prevention training by developing a shared curriculum and coordinated training program for the Minneapolis Libraries, Parks, and Schools.
- Increase the number of training and support programs available for parents of teenagers so they have the knowledge, tools, education and resources to spot early warning signs and raise teens that do not condone or engage in violence.
- Increase teenage pregnancy prevention programs in Minneapolis, so teens do not become parents before they have completed their own education or before they are prepared to take on the responsibility of raising children.
- Reduce the number of second children to teen parents by connecting every teen parent with health, education and parenting resources to ensure that they have the tools they need to raise healthy children.

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION GOAL #2:

Intervene at the first sign that youth and families are at risk for or involved in violence.

Recommendations:

- Find meaningful employment for young people who may be more difficult to employ by expanding the summer employment programs for at-risk youth, expanding the City's STEP-UP youth jobs program, and better connecting to County employment programs for youth already in the justice system.
- Provide focused attention and resources toward early intervention with juvenile offenders by establishing the juvenile supervision and service center and maintaining the Minneapolis Police Department's juvenile unit.
- Develop a standard protocol and train adults to use it in parks, schools and health care facilities in the aftermath of critical violent incidents so that those incidents can be used to educate young people on the ways to prevent and de-escalate violent behavior.
- Establish and promote a youth help line to give young people a safe, confidential way to report trouble or seek help.
- Establish policies and training making every library, park and school a nonviolence zone, so that young people see nonviolence being actively practiced and do not see violence being ignored or condoned by adults at facilities that are meant to be safe places for learning and activities.
- Support alternatives to suspension and expulsion in Minneapolis schools as a way to determine effective tools and policies to prevent violence and address violent incidents.
- Provide young people with consistent and effective support by creating a common definition of "risky behavior," and coordinating a set of actions to be taken as a result; to be shared and used by Minneapolis Parks, Schools, and City government, Hennepin County, and the broader juvenile justice system.
- Increase training and support programs for parents of at-risk teenagers, including juvenile re-entry, so that these parents have the knowledge, tools and resources they need to get their kids back on the right track.
- Increase the capacity of Hennepin County's truancy intervention program for students with mental health and chemical dependency issues so that these young people have the added support and resources to stay in school and out of trouble.
- Provide young people who have an incarcerated parent with additional adult support by creating mentor programs that match these youth with individualized support.
- Expand street level outreach, including bold door-to-door outreach that engages families and re-connects youth exhibiting risky behavior with quality education and employment opportunities.

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION GOAL #3:

Do not give up on our kids, work to restore and get them back on track.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen cross-jurisdictional mechanisms so that different parts of the juvenile justice system (probation, police, corrections, health care providers, community-based organizations, etc.) can better coordinate services and support systems for young offenders.
- Expand the scope and increase the funding of juvenile probation to better integrate young offenders back into the community. This should include incorporating youth development practices into probation instead of solely focusing on punishment and monitoring.
- Implement a comprehensive assessment tool that identifies a juvenile's mental health and related needs and connects them to available services without risking self-incrimination.
- Decrease re-offense rates by better connecting youth offenders to educational opportunities, employment skills and health care services.
- Expand restorative justice programs for youth offenders, which have been shown to effectively reduce re-offenses by reintegrating offenders into the community, and enable offenders to assume active responsibility for their actions.
- Strengthen and expand proven after-care models to ensure that each youth returning from out of home placement has a comprehensive plan to re-enter their community. Better engage community and faith organizations in helping to provide after-care solutions for these youth and their families.
- Develop relevant and culturally appropriate rites of passage to support a more comprehensive process for youth offenders to re-enter the community. Helping these youth and their families will alleviate many community concerns and buoy their confidence and civic engagement.
- Expand sentencing options for youth to include comprehensive and intense behavioral training and therapy for young offenders and their families.
- Ensure that support systems for youth offenders are extended to strengthen the families these youth come from and return to.

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION GOAL #4:

Recognize that violence is learned and can be unlearned by reducing the impact of violent messages in our media, culture and entertainment.

Recommendations:

- Work with local experts and youth to develop a local public education campaign to ensure that young people and our entire community see their roles and responsibilities in stopping violence, while providing the knowledge and tools to reduce violence and safely intervene when violence occurs.
- Recognize that youth violence is a national problem and Minneapolis should lead the discussion by partnering with other mayors and leaders in other cities to form a national coalition against youth violence.
- Support sensible illegal gun laws and work to change community values around the acceptance of guns. This includes seeking stronger penalties for people who sell and distribute illegal guns, and profit from the sale and distribution of illegal guns to young people.

Implementing the Blueprint: 100 Days

The next step for the Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee is to begin implementing the recommended action items in the *Blueprint for Action*. In the next 100 days, Mayor Rybak and Committee leadership will present this *Blueprint for Action* to the City Council, County Board, School Board, Park Board, and key community allies to solicit their support and partnership.

The 2008 City of Minneapolis budget adopted by the Mayor and City Council included \$175,000 to specifically support the implementation of the *Blueprint for Action*. This amount is in addition to \$110,000 the City is providing and \$610,000 the County is providing to create a new juvenile curfew and truancy center in City Hall, which is a key recommended action item in the *Blueprint*. Chief among the Committee's immediate objectives is to identify additional public and private resources to effectively implement the recommendations of the *Blueprint*.

With the funding amount already committed for 2008, the City will create a new position - a Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator - to work with the Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee to establish implementation steps for the *Blueprint*, including:

- Refining and prioritizing recommended action items in the *Blueprint*.
- Identifying possible public and private resources to support the recommended action items in the *Blueprint*.
- Identifying community partners to take responsibility for aspects of the *Blueprint*.
- Instituting the evaluation of indicators and outcomes to measure progress.
- Reporting on progress to the Mayor and the City Council.

Measuring Results: Reducing Future Youth Violence

Nine key measures have been selected to assess results of the *Blueprint for Action*. These measures were selected based on their validity and availability and involve data collected routinely by government agencies and are updated at least annually, and in some cases, quarterly.

Four are direct measures of violent acts committed by or against young people:

- Homicides of Minneapolis residents and homicide deaths within City limits for youth ages 15-24
- Aggravated assault arrests of youth under 18 years of age and ages 18-24
- Simple assault arrests of youth under 18 years of age and ages 18-24
- School suspensions for violence related incidents ages 10+

Three measures address risk factors associated with violence:

- Curfew and truancy pick ups for youth ages 10-18
- Weapons possession arrests of youth under 18 years of age and ages 18-24
- Teen pregnancy among youth ages 15-17

Two measures address factors associated with a lower likelihood of violence:

- Funding for youth development activities for communities with higher crime
- High school graduation rates; college readiness

Additional indicators related to protective factors such as family, school, and community environments, are also important and will be reviewed when available. However, these indicators are not as valuable for tracking shorter-term trends. These data tend to be collected less often (such as through surveys conducted every 3 years) and may be more biased (representative of only the students or families that completed the survey). The Committee recognizes that more and better data about these "attitude" trends and protective factors is needed and welcomes partnerships with research institutions to meet this need.

Measuring Results: Recent Youth Violence Trend Data

Measures of violent acts by or against young people:

Indicator 1: Homicide

Number of homicide victims (age 15-24) in Minneapolis, 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Resident homicides ¹	25	21	15	19
Homicides occurring in Mpls ²	24	19	17	26

¹ Resident homicides includes deaths by homicide of Minneapolis residents regardless of where the death occurred. Source: Vital Statistics.

² This includes of deaths by homicide within Minneapolis city limits. Source: Minneapolis Police Department.

Indicator 2: Aggravated Assault Arrests

Number of Arrests for Aggravated Assault

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Under 18 years	117	131	133	99	116
18-24	237	215	238	254	221
Total 24 and under	354	346	371	353	337

Source: Minneapolis Police Department.

Indicator 3: Simple Assault Arrests

Number of Arrests for Simple Assault

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Under 18 years	692	674	675	621	653
18-24	601	587	588	560	564
Total 24 and under	1293	1261	1263	1161	1217

Source: Minneapolis Police Department.

Indicator 4: School Discipline for Violence Age 10+

These data are under request from the Minnesota Department of Education, which has had a data tracking system in place since the 2004-05 school year. Expulsions are reported within 30 days, while suspensions are typically not reported until year-end. In-school suspensions are not counted, except for special education students.

Measures of risk factors associated with violence:

Indicator 5: Curfew and Truancy Pick ups

Curfew/Truancy Center Pick ups by Year

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007 ¹
Curfew	1376	1275	964	875	1105	2246	1439
Truancy	1612	1585	762	387	730	1463	1168
Other	0	0	0	0	396	703	547
Total	2988	2860	1726	1262	2231	4412	3154

Source: Minneapolis Urban League November 2007 Monthly Report (12/13/07).

¹Data through November 2007.

Indicator 6: Weapons possession arrests¹

Number of Arrests for Weapons Possession

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Under 18 years	178	203	227	214	240
18-24	301	287	237	325	396
Total 24 and under	479	490	464	539	636

Source: Minneapolis Police Department.

¹Counts include arrests where weapons possession was the most serious offense.**Indicator 7: Teen Pregnancy**Minneapolis Teen Pregnancy Rate per 1,000 (age 15-17) during 1999-2005.¹

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Teen pregnancy rate	76.0	73.5	54.9	58.2	55.7	49.9	45.1

¹Rates since 2000 are based on denominators derived from 2000 U.S. Census data. To the extent that the number of girls has changed since 2000, rates in subsequent years will be inaccurate. Source: Vital Statistics.

Measures of factors associated with a lower likelihood of violence:**Indicator 8: Funding for Youth Development Activities**

State Funding Cuts/Increases for Selected Youth Development Activities in Minneapolis

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
After School Enrichment Grants	(\$3,270,000)	-	-	-	-
Youth Risk Behavior Grants	(\$364,000)	-	-	-	-
TANF youth development grants	(\$700,000)	-	-	-	-
MN After-School Community Learning Center Grants	-	-	-	-	\$636,795

Source: State of Minnesota

Indicator 9: High School Graduation RatesMinneapolis Public Schools Graduation Rate¹

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006
Percentage	56.82	52.8	54.51	60.69

¹This does not include students attending alternative, charter, or private schools.

APPENDIX A:

Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee and the *Blueprint for Action*

Recognizing the severity of the youth violence problem, the Mayor and City Council of Minneapolis passed a resolution in November of 2006 acknowledging youth violence as a public health problem and recommending the establishment of a Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee to oversee further efforts to develop and implement a plan.

By January 2007 a Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee was appointed by the Mayor's Office and the City Council. It consisted of 32 members including three co-chairs and three ex officio members. As the committee's work progressed, additional guests and representatives were invited to share their interest and expertise. The Millennium Consulting Group was selected to facilitate the Committee.

The Committee began with a commitment to honor all viewpoints, acknowledging that no one person or group has the answer, but that everyone has to be involved. There was an understanding that nothing short of a new mindset about our youth and our community would be successful in preventing youth violence.

The Committee developed a *Blueprint for Action* using a universal approach and vision for Minneapolis. At the initial meeting each member was asked to reflect on their dreams and hopes for our community and our children. The Committee expressed the belief that all youth are capable of growing up properly and avoiding trouble if they can be attached to a variety of social resources that facilitate healthy development and discourage harmful behavior. The Committee envisioned:

Our city as a place:

- With safe schools, safe neighborhoods, safe streets, and safe parks
- That is healthy, safe, and vibrant
- That honors the cultures of its communities
- That truly listens to its youth
- Where no one group owns the truth
- Where youth are not feared, where youth are a positive force, and where youth are recognized for their positive contributions
- That knows and acts like youth violence can be prevented

Our youth:

- Connected to caring adults, their communities, and to their culture
- Nurtured and protected by the systems that surround them
- Are engaged as partners in problem solving
- Feeling safe in their homes, schools, and community
- Having a sense of responsibility for their actions – to themselves and others
- Getting the skills and knowledge they need to become contributing adults
- As advocates for peace
- Understanding that violence is not inevitable, but preventable
- Hopeful about their futures

Our parents and guardians:

- Having the skills and means to nurture and protect their children
- Helping youth believe in themselves
- Playing a major role to increase the protective factors and reduce the risk factors for their children
- As productive city residents helping their children become productive city residents

Our leaders, policy makers, and other caring adults:

- Taking public action to put policies and resources in place to support the success of youth
- Ensuring a wide range of stakeholders are involved in violence prevention
- Widely promoting and supporting youth violence prevention and reduction

The Committee's Underlying Principles

- We are all stakeholders in this situation.
- A spirit of cooperation, trust and respect will drive our process.
- Violence prevention is a long-term effort.
- Partnerships and collaboration are vital.
- Leveraging and aligning cross-sector resources is vital.
- Youth and family engagement is crucial.
- We will build on what is working and will not be afraid of innovation.
- We ascribe to promising and best practices.
- We acknowledge the invaluable contribution of law enforcement efforts but realize that prevention is not the same as containment and suppression. Law enforcement alone cannot prevent violence.

Using a public health approach for the prevention and elimination of youth violence in Minneapolis set the stage for the emergence of a model unique to our community while building on the successes of other national models.

The Committee defined violence as:

- A community-wide problem in which violent injury and death disproportionately affects adolescents and young adults in the United States.
- The intentional use of physical force or power (threatened or actual) against another young person that either results in or will likely result in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation.
- Rooted in forms of economic, political or social discrimination.
- Including bullying, verbal violence, dating abuse, family abuse, wounding, robbery, murder, shooting, gang activity, self-afflicted wounds.

The first Committee meeting was on March 15, 2007 with a presentation by Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith from the Harvard School of Public Health, a national leader on youth violence prevention. She shared her experiences and made some recommendations which included:

- Violence is preventable; be intentional about participation with young people and hear from the diverse group around you.

- Look at the full spectrum of prevention – if you deal with only one age, you'll never get out of the box.
- Get in for the long haul – it won't happen short-term.
- Use a "Johnny Apple-seed" approach – not a "cookie cutter" approach.
- Avoid not getting out of the dock. While designing the perfect vessel – don't worry about it being perfect – take a leap of faith.

Twelve steering committee meetings were held from March to October under the leadership of the committee's three co-chairs: Mayor R. T. Rybak, Karen Kelley-Ariwoola of The Minneapolis Foundation, and Ellen Luger of the General Mills Foundation with facilitation from Yvonne Cheek and Linda Stevenson of the Millennium Consulting Group. The co-chairs also met periodically with the facilitators to review the committee's progress.

Meetings were well attended and highly interactive. Members candidly shared their expertise, their observations and their stories. Each meeting was a dynamic dialogue. Additionally, steering committee members participated in small working groups outside of the large group meetings. These groups worked on planning related to Family Support and Responsibility, Out of School Activities, Youth Employment, School and Juvenile Justice/Law Enforcement.

These groups continued to meet through the end of June; each group averaged about five meetings. Their recommendations were integrated into a first draft of the Blueprint for Action. Small groups continued to work on drafts through October until a final draft was approved by the full committee.

At an April 2007 meeting Dr. Michael Resnick from the University of Minnesota made a presentation. He spoke of clear protective factors which buffer youth from harm, promote their healthy development, and reduce youth violence. The factors apply across social and ethnic groups and include:

- A strong sense of connectedness to parents and family.
- A strong sense of connectedness to other adults and organizations.
- A strong sense of connectedness to school.
- A sense of spiritual connectedness.
- A positive sense of the future with the involvement of nurturing adults.

He defined healthy youth development as "an intentional, deliberate process of providing support, relationships, experiences, resources and opportunities that promote positive outcomes for young people." Outcomes which include four C's: Capacity, Confidence, Competence, and Character.

In early June, eleven youth of different cultures from across Minneapolis joined with committee members for a panel discussion. With candor and courage these youth answered questions and gave their insights on youth violence, root causes, and influence of the media while sharing their own stories and advice for the committee. The youth expressed their fears about worsening violence, their concerns about

confidentiality, their need for safe places and better role models, and their desire for more responsibility and leadership opportunities.

In addition to steering committee meetings, nine field trips were organized to experience first-hand some key programs and institutions in the community. Field trip sites included Judge Tanya Bransford's Juvenile Court, Detention Court, the County Home School, the Plymouth Youth Center, the Circle of Discipline, MAD DADS, the Juvenile Detention Center, and Bolder Options.

All of the field trips provided a more in-depth look at the challenges of youth violence prevention. The conversations with youth were powerful exchanges and provided invaluable insights on how and where to act as well as whom to involve.

Two community forums were held in July, one in south Minneapolis and one in north Minneapolis. The purpose was to get input from the community on reducing youth violence, to encourage their participation, and to integrate their ideas into the *Blueprint for Action*. Each forum included a cross-section of community members including youth, parents, volunteers, professionals and newspaper and television reporters.

Both forums were well attended with about 70 people at each. Community members shared their views on what is working, what is missing, what the various sectors can do to prevent youth violence, and what each person would be willing to do to help reduce youth violence. Participants expressed their ideas, concerns, frustrations, and hope for a future without youth violence. Their feedback and interest demonstrated the kind of grass roots support that is a cornerstone for a successful action plan.

Financial Support for the Committee

The Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee wishes to thank and acknowledge the generous financial and staff support provided by the following towards the completion of this *Blueprint for Action to Prevent Youth Violence*:

City of Minneapolis
County of Hennepin
Minneapolis Foundation
General Mills Foundation

APPENDIX B:

City Council Resolution

Recognizing the severity of youth violence in Minneapolis, Mayor R.T. Rybak and the City Council adopted this resolution November 17, 2006:

RESOLUTION 2006R-571

Recognizing Youth Violence as a Public Health Problem and Establishing a Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee

Whereas, one of the City Goals, A Safe Place to Call Home, is to ensure that all Minneapolis residents live in a healthy environment and feel safe in the City with a specific strategic direction that "Guns, Gangs, Graffiti" be eliminated; and

Whereas, On February 24 the City Council Authorized City staff to work with community foundations to co-sponsor a community dialogue focused on violence prevention; and

Whereas, a group of 28 community leaders and elected and appointed local government leaders met 3 times to begin the work of identifying key components of violence prevention activities, and developing indicators to measure progress; and

Whereas, this group strongly supported the recommendations outlined in this resolution that call for a recognition of youth violence as a public health crisis that requires a long term, comprehensive and strategic response and the establishment of a Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee to oversee further efforts to develop and implement that plan; and

Whereas, violence results in the tragic loss of life and serious injury, undermines families and neighborhoods, threatens the overall well-being of the City including the ability of children and adults to safely be outside their homes, and affects an overall sense of community connectedness and hope; and

Whereas, violence takes a disproportionate toll on people of color (especially African American males) and low-income neighborhoods with 6 out of 3 neighborhoods in the City having 90% of the homicides; and

Whereas, violence exacts a financial burden by increasing health care and public safety costs, with the average public criminal justice costs for a single incident of homicide estimated at 3 million dollars, and the costs for one non-fatal paralyzing injury resulting from gun violence may total 2-5 million dollars over the victim's lifetime for health care, living expenses, and lost productivity; and

Whereas, the United States Surgeon General, the World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have all identified violence as a priority public health issue challenging local, national, and global communities by its negative influence on morbidity, mortality, and quality of life; and

Whereas, homicides are the leading cause of death for Minneapolis residents aged 15-24 years, and the 65 deaths by homicide among persons in this age group between 2002 and 2004 were more than four times higher than the 15 motor vehicle deaths and the 14 accidental deaths recorded during that period; and

Whereas, 858 emergency room visits by Minneapolis residents between 2001 and 2005 resulted from assaults by firearms, and this total number of gunshot-related admissions reflects annual increases from 109 incidents in 2001 to 247 incidents in 2005; and

Whereas, the risk for violence among youth is increased by their developmental stage which is characterized by impulsiveness and inability to anticipate long term consequences yet it is not an inevitable occurrence but is a learned behavior that is the result of preventable and controllable factors in the life of youth, such as poverty, family instability, domestic abuse, mental or physical illness, educational failure, a lack of engagement in productive and affirming activities, and diminished relationships with supportive adults; and

Whereas, the risk for youth violence can be reduced by increasing connectedness to family and other supportive adults and institutions; by increasing commitment to academic achievement, through connection to a positive value system; and by being able to contribute to community wellbeing; and

Whereas, the factors that contribute to or protect against youth violence can be measured, as can the effectiveness of interventions addressing those factors, and the racial and socioeconomic disparities that persist; and

Whereas, the City of Minneapolis acknowledges that a public safety approach alone is insufficient and inadequate and that innovative, comprehensive solutions that engage government, community organizations, faith communities and businesses need to be sought; and

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by the City Council of the City of Minneapolis:

That it recognizes that youth violence is a public health problem and requires a strategic, long-term, and multi-faceted response; and

Be It Further Resolved that the City of Minneapolis endorses the establishment of a Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee to oversee efforts to significantly reduce youth violence in Minneapolis by doing the following:

- Develop a multi-year implementation plan that includes components addressing outreach, education, communications and infrastructure to oversee implementation plans and outcomes. Special emphasis will be placed on strategies to engage and support parents and opportunities for youth to connect trusted adults and with their culture.
- Develop a timeline and assign responsibility for implementation of various plan components;

- Define and measure community-wide outcomes;
- Coordinate City and County efforts to prevent youth violence;
- Facilitate cross-community partnerships and communication among various groups with a stake in project outcomes;
- Identify gaps in services, policy and funding;
- Advise the City Council, Mayor and other policy makers and funders on needs for resources, programs and policies.

Be It Further Resolved that the Steering Committee consist of no more than 15 members, up to seven members appointed by the Mayor and up to eight members appointed by the City Council, to include: representatives from the communities most affected by youth violence including at least one representative each from a faith community and the business community; elected officials representing the City and the County; appointed officials representing public safety and public health. The membership of the panel shall reflect the ethnic and the cultural diversity of Minneapolis and be co-chaired by one community representative and one government representative. The membership of the panel shall include one member of the Youth Coordinating Board.

Be It Further Resolved that the Steering Committee will report back to the City Council and the Youth Coordinating Board with a progress report no later than May 31, 2007.

Adopted 11/17/2006.

APPENDIX C:**Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee Members**

R. T. Rybak City Hall, Mayor's Office	Co-Chair	Carlos Quezada Hoffman HC Strategic Initiatives/Comm. Engagement
Karen Kelley-Ariwoola The Minneapolis Foundation	Co-Chair	Khao Inxiengximay Lao Advancement Org. & Cultural Center
Ellen Luger General Mills Foundation	Co-Chair	Tom Johnson Council on Crime and Justice
Tim Dolan Minneapolis Police Department	Ex Officio	Mary LaGarde Little Earth of United Tribes
Gretchen Musicant City of Minneapolis, Health/Family Support	Ex Officio	Adam Lares Minneapolis Parks and Recreation
Judith Kahn Youth Coordinating Board	Ex Officio	Sean McMenomy Southwest High School
Shukri Adan Universal Home Health Care Agency		Mike Opat Hennepin County
Carol Batsell Benner Hennepin County		Deborah Christine Owens HC Juvenile Probation
Kirk Crow Shoe Division of Indian Work		Shane Price NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center
Mike Christenson City of Minneapolis, CPED		Sondra Hollinger Samuels Peace Foundation
Gary Cunningham NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center, Inc.		Lamarr Scott Achieve Minneapolis
Roberta Englund Folwell Neighborhood Association		V. J. Smith MAD DADS
Michael Favor North High School		John Strand Transitions Plus/CHEER
Peggy Flanagan Board of Education		Rufus Thibodeaux, Sr. Word of Life Ministries
Mike Freeman Hennepin County		Doris Thomas Mothers of Crime Victims
Cam Gordon Minneapolis City Council, Ward 2		Wesley Walker Northway Community Trust
Clarence Hightower Minneapolis Urban League		Charlie Weaver Minnesota Business Partnership

Endnotes:

¹ Adapted from *Youth and Violence, Medicine, Nursing and Public Health: Connecting the Dots*, the Commission for the Prevention of Youth Violence, December 2000

² Centers for Disease Control, 2005

³ Vital Records, Minnesota Department of Health

⁴ Children's Defense Fund

⁵ Commission for the Prevention of Youth Violence. *Youth and Violence. Medicine, Nursing, and Public Health: Connecting the dots to prevent violence*. December 2000, www.ama-assn.org/violence.

⁶ Horn D. *Bruised Inside: What Our Children Say About Youth Violence, What Causes It, and What We Need to Do About It*. Washington, DC: National Association of Attorneys General; April 2000.

⁷ Commission for the Prevention of Youth Violence.

⁸ Resnick MD, Ireland M, Borowsky I. Youth violence perpetration: what protects? What predicts? Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2004;35(5):347-349.

⁹ Research on this section is from Iris Wagman Borowsky and Michael D. Resnick.

For More Information Contact:

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Minneapolis, MN 55415

Phone: 612-673-2301

health.familysupport@ci.minneapolis.mn.us

**RESULTS
OF
MINNEAPOLIS'
VIOLENCE
PREVENTION
INITIATIVE**

City of Minneapolis

US Attorney General Holder lauds Minneapolis' youth violence prevention initiative (2011)

United States Attorney General Eric Holder and Minneapolis Mayor R. T. Rybak, joined United States Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken, on Friday, May 27 to celebrate the positive results of Minneapolis comprehensive Youth Violence Prevention initiative. The Blueprint for Action Youth Violence Prevention Conference, co-sponsored by the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Foundation, reviewed the successes of the initiative which began in 2008 and is an ongoing, multi-year collaboration in 22 Minneapolis neighborhoods that treats youth violence as a public-health epidemic that requires a holistic, multi-faceted response.

Attorney General Holder observed that the "great strength" of Minneapolis approach is that it recognizes that violence among and directed toward young people is not only a public-safety issue its also a public- *health* issue. And it demands a public-health response."

The Youth Violence Prevention initiative began as a response to a spike in violent crime in Minneapolis in 2005-06 that data revealed was driven by violence by and against youth. That comprehensive, collaborative, public-health approach has led to safer youth and a safer community. Since 2006, the number of youth arrested for or suspected in violent crime has dropped 56%. In the same period, the number of incidents involving guns and youth has dropped 58%

The decrease in youth violence has driven a sharp decline in overall crime rates in Minneapolis. In 2010, citywide violent crime in Minneapolis fell to a 28-year low. In addition, in 2011 so far, violent crime in Minneapolis has fallen 16% more compared to the same period in 2010.

The initiative is guided by the four goals of the initiatives Blueprint for Action, which are to: 1) connect every youth to a trusted adult; 2) intervene at the first sign that youth are at risk of violence; 3) restore youth who have gone down the wrong path; and 4) unlearn the culture of violence in the community.

Comprehensive efforts inspired by the Blueprint's goals have not only cut youth violence, they have led to greater numbers of high-quality summer jobs for youth, higher graduation rates in Minneapolis Public Schools and greater numbers of graduates attending college free of charge, among other positive results

Also participating in the conference were youth, community organizers and organizers, educators, faith leaders, public-health professionals and law-enforcement professionals, among others. The conference was organized as an opportunity for youth, community members and policy makers to assess results and challenges going forward — and above all, to listen to and learn from each other.

Selected results of the Blueprint for Action: Preventing Youth Violence in Minneapolis:

- Decrease in youth arrested for or suspected in violent crime, 2006-10: 56%
- Decrease in incidents involving guns and youth, 2006-10: 58%
- Decrease in firearm-related assault injuries of youth, 2006-10: 36%
- Decrease in percent of Minneapolis 9th graders who strongly agree that "illegal gang activity is a problem at this school": from 42% in 2007 to 28% in 2010
- Decrease in homicides of youth, 2006-09: 77%
- Decrease in curfew arrests, 2006-10: 57%
- Decrease in number of pregnancies per 1,000 youth aged 15-17, 2006-09: 36%
- Increase in number of youth annually in STEP-UP and other City of Minneapolis job programs, 2005-10: 44%
- Number of youth in STEP-UP and other City of Minneapolis job programs: 13,064 since 2005
- Increase in Minneapolis Public Schools high-school graduation rates: from 55% in 2005 to 73% in 2010

- Number of Minneapolis Public Schools graduates attending college free of charge under Minneapolis Promise: 1,648

Selection of Youth Violence Prevention tools in Minneapolis:

- The Minneapolis Promise, an innovative cluster of coordinated efforts that eliminate barriers to college for Minneapolis students. The Minneapolis Promise provides young people with high-quality summer jobs, privately-funded College and Career Centers in every public high school that help them plan a vision for their future, and financial assistance to attend college.
- Streetch, a partnership between the City and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to directly and personally engage at-risk youth in four neighborhoods who are not otherwise engaged in positive opportunities.
- Bike Cops for Kids, which takes Minneapolis police officers who serve in Minneapolis Public Schools during the year and puts them on bikes in eight neighborhoods during the summer to continue build relationships with children and youth, and promote public safety by giving away free bike helmets and bikes.
- The Minneapolis Youth Congress, an organization of 55 teens in 8th through 12th grade from neighborhoods across Minneapolis who collaborate with elected officials to create and influence public policies that positively affect local youth.
- The Juvenile Supervision Center, a partnership with Hennepin County that provides safe supervision and other needed services to youth who have been picked up for truancy, curfew or other low-level violations that do not require secure detention. The goal of the center is to halt a youth's progress into the juvenile-justice system and increase connections to school and positive behavior.
- Speak Up Minneapolis, an anonymous tip line that allows youth to phone or text reports of potential violence including weapons in schools, parks, libraries or other locations.
- A protocol at two Minneapolis hospitals for youth victims of violence that comprehensively evaluates the social, economic, medical, chemical and legal risk factors that the youth faces and makes appropriate referrals for help to community-based agencies.
- The North 4 Project, an intensive supportive-employment program for 30 gang-involved youth in four neighborhoods that have been deeply affected by violence and the recession.
- BUILD and the Gang Prevention Mentoring Project, both designed to strengthen and mentor youth who may be gang-affiliated and help them develop personal strengths, relationships and commitments to education and community.
- Community Power Against Violence, a media and mobilization campaign in, with and for communities experiencing youth violence.
- A toolkit of youth violence prevention initiatives for youth, families, practitioners and community.

Visit [Youth Violence Prevention](#) for complete information on Minneapolis' youth violence prevention initiative.

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Blueprint for Action— Preventing Violence in Minneapolis

Representatives from five UNITY cities participated in the panel discussion "Prevention Works: UNITY City Network members from around the country share their successful local efforts," moderated by Neil Rainford of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The panel was part of The California Wellness Foundation's Conference on Violence Prevention, held in October 2010, in Los Angeles. The following narrative is excerpted from Bass Zanjani's presentation on preventing violence in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and is supplemented by his remarks at the 6th Annual Youth Violence Prevention Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, in March 2011.

The number of youth suspects in violent crime in Minneapolis has decreased by 62 percent since 2006, the peak of a substantial increase in violent crime and homicides. If you're wondering, "What are you doing? Are you locking everybody up?" the answer is no, we are not arresting our way out of the problem. Changing behavior and social norms around violence, and taking a very pro-active youth development and public health approach is working well.

Adopting a Public Health Approach

Eleven-year-old Tyesha Edwards was sitting at her kitchen table with her mom. She was trying to get her homework done so she could go to the mall, and there was some gang activity outside her house. Shots broke out, and Tyesha was struck in the throat by a bullet.

After Tyesha Edwards's unfortunate homicide, Minneapolis saw a tragic increase in the number of homicides from 2003 to 2006, including 80 youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 24. Homicide was not only the leading cause of death in this age group, but also accounted for almost half of all homicides in Minneapolis; homicides of juveniles and young adults was a major driving force of violent crime in the city.



Bass Zanjani is deputy district director of the Office of Congressman Keith Ellison. At the time of his remarks, Zanjani was the youth violence prevention coordinator at the Department of Health & Family Support in the City of Minneapolis. As manager of the mayor's Blueprint for Action initiative, Zanjani's chief responsibility was to implement the city's strategy and to staff the Blueprint for Action Executive Committee, which is comprised of a cross-section of stakeholders and partners. Earlier in his career, Zanjani served as chief of staff at NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center, a federally-qualified health center that provides quality care to underserved populations. He also served as staff to United States Senators Paul Wellstone and Dianne Feinstein. He has also worked as a policy advisor for the Baha'i International Community at the Baha'i World Centre, an international non-governmental organization focused on human rights issues in Haifa, Israel. Zanjani has a degree in international relations from the University of Minnesota where he is a Humphrey Policy Fellow.

During that same period we saw an increase in firearm-related injuries for youth aged 18 to 24, up to 159 per year, and incidents of violent crime increased to 766 in 2006.

In response to this increase in violent crime, the community called for policy change and for government to take action. There was a growing list of stakeholders who kept meeting with policymakers and demanding, "How are things changing? What are you doing to address violence?" Community members came to government to voice their concern, and government responded to their outcry.

The City Council had instituted a number of law enforcement strategies to address violence—more police officers, more cameras on streets and shot spotters. From a law enforcement perspective, they had really maximized their efforts, but they weren't still seeing results. It costs taxpayers \$21,800 for every shooting that takes place in Minneapolis where the victim that is sent to the hospital. For every juvenile incarcerated for one year, it costs taxpayers \$44,000. So we started looking at the public health model and asking, "What are we doing to get in front of the issue, not just responding afterwards? What are we doing as a city to try to prevent homicides from taking place?"

The Minneapolis City Council began to look at youth violence beyond the traditional criminal justice approach. Among the models the council examined was one that treated youth violence as a public health issue and worked more upstream. The Minneapolis City Council adopted this approach, unanimously passed a resolution that declared youth violence a public health issue, and mandated a multi-faceted long-term solution to address youth violence.

Blueprint for Action

The Blueprint consists of four objectives:

- Connect youth to trusted adults.
- Intervene at the first sign of risk.
- Restore youth who have been in the juvenile justice system—how do we reintegrate them back into the community?
- Unlearn the culture of violence.

We developed various strategies from mentoring to employment to accomplish these goals. We incorporated many effective existing and ongoing violence prevention strategies into the Blueprint. We mapped all the different resources in Minneapolis and put them into a more structured coordinated framework. They used to be scattered, like the

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS FOR MORE FUNDING

The work in Minneapolis was made possible by the City Council, which designated funding for a youth violence prevention coordinator, and because the city encouraged partnerships among various stakeholders to accomplish each of the Blueprint's goals.

For example, all the Minneapolis organizations with mentoring programs meet on a regular basis to identify the greatest needs in the community and to decide how to collectively address them. These groups provide services as part of a coordinated plan, and local foundations have expressed interest in collaborative efforts.

Partnerships require increased communication, which reduces redundancy of programs across agencies. Coalitions working together can have a greater impact than if those same resources were allocated to individual organizations. The mentoring organizations in Minneapolis presented a united front to funders and were able to demonstrate success using quantifiable outcomes. These groups received grants to work with ex-offenders and young people whose parents are incarcerated, which supplemented resources from the city.

Youth Are Here buses, a transportation service where youth are able to avoid gang territory and travel safely from community-based organizations to parks and libraries, or the Juvenile Supervision Center, a facility for at-risk youth who have been picked up by law enforcement for low-level offenses such as curfew violations and truancy.

In the past, youth sit there in detention, parents are called in and they get to go home. We said, "While the youth are sitting there, why aren't we learning more about what's making them ditch school? Why aren't we using that as a moment to build a relationship with the youth and family, and work with the schools?" So we created a Juvenile Supervision Center where a community-based organization conducts an assessment, has a conference with parents when they pick up their child, and then follows up 30, 60, 90 days, and six months later.

To connect youth to trusted adults, we placed Minneapolis police officers in all the high schools, working as school resource officers and mentors. In the summer, these officers are in parks, out in the community, on bikes, all to be a visible, positive presence in the life of youth.

Another example is Step Up, an employment program for youth ages 14 to 18. The city made a decision to provide structured environments where youth can learn and feel they have a career ahead of them. For youth ages 14 and 15, the city provides them with non-profit jobs and pays their wages. We place the older youth in corporations where the employer pays most of their salary.

We created an anonymous tip line for youth to call or text that there was going to be a fight or other threat. We read a report that said in school shootings, 82 percent of youth knew that someone had a gun at school but they weren't comfortable telling anyone. Snitching is a big thing, and this way they're not disclosing their identity. Community organizations are now using this technology too, when they know of something happening in parks or other areas of the neighborhood.

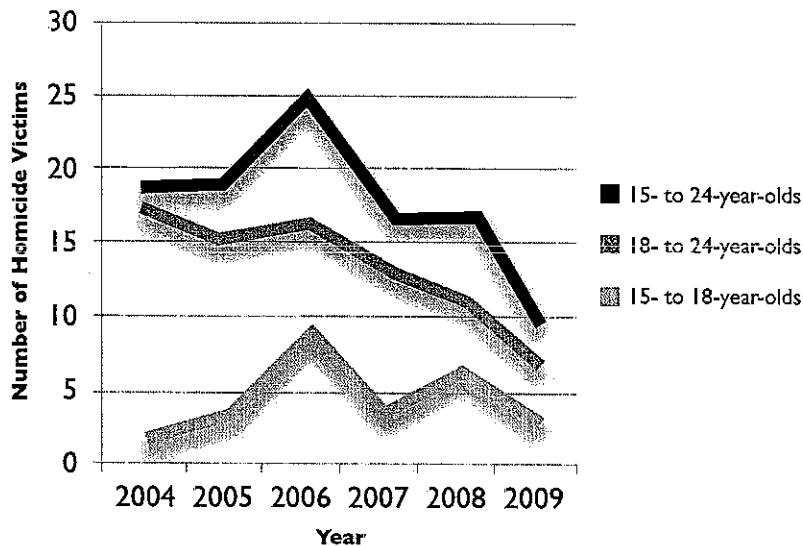
We've also expanded the capacity for groups in Minneapolis to develop rites-of-passage programs. One group that works with Native American boys draws on restorative justice principles and uses drum circles so the program's in line with their traditions and culture. We're also developing a culturally-specific program for Somali youth to bring healing to the youth and peace to the communities.

In these and other ways, we are trying to think outside the box and create opportunities where the community provides more services for youth in a non-traditional way.

USING POLICY TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

The success in Minneapolis resulted in robust legislative and policy initiatives, according to Bass Zanjani. The Minnesota legislature passed the Youth Violence Prevention Act in 2009, which defined youth violence as a public health issue. It mandated that the Minnesota Department of Health set up four sites around the state to replicate the Blueprint for Action, and it required the Department of Health to find resources for the development and implementation of local plans to prevent violence. To read the full text of the Minnesota legislation, visit <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/2009-156.pdf>

Homicides of Youth and Young Adults in Minneapolis (2004-2009)



Homicides of Youth and Young Adults in Minneapolis (2004-2009). After a rash of youth and young adult homicides, the City of Minneapolis implemented the Blueprint for Action in 2007. Within two years, Minneapolis saw a 64 percent decrease in homicides of young people aged 15 to 24 years. The number of youth suspects has dropped by 60 percent from 2006 to 2010, and the number of youth arrested for violent crime is down 31 percent compared to four years ago.

Community Partnerships

Perhaps the greatest single critical factor underlying the success of the Blueprint has been the support and partnerships from community stakeholders. We've been able to form some innovative partnerships at multiple levels that have helped us implement a lot of the strategies in the Blueprint. We wouldn't be nearly as effective without partnerships. Some strategies include mentoring for at-risk youth and gang-affiliated youth in parks. We also have a protocol at two of the Trauma One-level hospitals where youth who are admitted as a result of a violent incident are given a psycho-social assessment, and then referred out to the community for follow-up.

The community is really the driver of this and recognizes the value of this initiative. It was the community that brought this issue to the mayor and got the mayor involved and the city council behind it. We held a series of community forums and discussions because we wanted to make sure that the ideas matched the community's needs. We brought different stakeholders—traditional and non-traditional allies—to look at whether

MEASURING PROGRESS

There is a strong and growing evidence base that violence is preventable. Early results from the Blueprint for Action in Minneapolis indicate it is possible to reduce the likelihood of violence.

Minneapolis tracked a number of indicators to gauge success of the Blueprint for Action. These included homicide victims (ages 15 to 24); arrests for aggravated assault (ages 0 to 24); arrests for simple assault (ages 0 to 24); curfew/truancy pick-ups; arrests for weapons possession; teenage pregnancy rates (ages 15 to 17); and high school graduation rates.

Violent crime in the four neighborhoods prioritized by the Blueprint fell by 43 percent in the first two years of the initiative. As a result of this remarkable early success, the Blueprint for Action expanded its programs from the four initial neighborhoods to 22 neighborhoods in 2009. Rather than look solely at areas with the most youth homicides, the city considered criteria such as poverty, number of youth residents and existing neighborhood assets to assess community risk.

Intervention, suppression and enforcement are necessary but cannot sufficiently reduce violence on their own. Cities need a balanced approach that includes prevention. Focusing on decreasing risk factors and promoting resilience among youth most likely to behave violently is an investment that is paying off in Minneapolis.

the plan makes sense, and we had several advisory committees give us feedback. We wanted parents, we wanted schools, we wanted everybody to be invested in this process and to make sure that this direction made sense for the community.

We wanted to be effective in developing a coalition, [so] we developed an oversight structure with an executive steering committee from a strong cross-section of folks in the community and city leadership, ranging from public schools to the County to foundations to local businesses to the University of Minnesota, and a substantial number of community organizations and youth. We have a community advisory group made up of individuals from the neighborhoods that we meet with on a bi-monthly basis, so there's ongoing dialogue and a consistent feedback loop.

The Minneapolis Blueprint for Action is an embodiment of a value change from within the community. Some of the strategies we have are evidence-based practices, but some of the strategies are not. They are the strategies that the community said, "We think this is a good idea and we want you guys to try it, and let's see how it works." And so we're trying both. At the heart of what we're doing, we're always mindful that we must be responsive to the needs of the community.

"Perhaps the greatest single critical factor underlying the success of the Blueprint has been the support and partnerships from community stakeholders. The community is really the driver of this, [and] we wouldn't be nearly as effective without partnerships. At the heart of what we're doing, we're always mindful that we must be responsive to the needs of the community."

— BASS ZANJANI
FORMERLY OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH & FAMILY SUPPORT,
CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth (UNITY) builds support for effective, sustainable efforts to prevent violence before it occurs, so urban youth can thrive in safe environments with ample opportunities and supportive relationships. A Prevention Institute initiative, UNITY is funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as part of the CDC's national youth violence prevention initiative, Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE), and in part by The Kresge Foundation and The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF). Created in 1992 as an independent, private foundation, TCWF's mission is to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness, education and disease prevention programs.

For more information, visit www.preventioninstitute.org/unity

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Minneapolis Creates Blueprint to Prevent Youth Violence

Question

How were community leaders in Minneapolis able to apply their collective knowledge and lessons learned in preventing other health problems like sexually transmitted infections to prevent the epidemic of youth violence?

Challenge

Between 2003 and 2006, homicide was the leading cause of death for youth in Minneapolis between the ages of 15 and 24. Most of the 80 deaths that occurred during these years took place within five neighborhoods—a six mile square area of North Minneapolis. Stepping up police action in this area wasn't enough to significantly reduce youth homicides, so leaders began exploring other strategies. Both the private and public sectors needed to view the problem through a fresh lens. Community and city leaders reasoned that violence was not inevitable; indeed, it could be prevented. But they recognized that a coordinated approach involving all aspects of the community would be needed to prevent youth violence in the city. A City Council member was the first to suggest the public health approach, a four step process used to solve health problems across the globe.

Solution

There was great community support for using a public health approach to prevent youth violence. The Health Department and the Minneapolis Foundation convened a group that spanned a wide range of ages, cultures, and neighborhoods to identify the city's strengths and gaps in violence prevention. They looked at youth arrest and detention data collected by the Minneapolis Police Department. These data defined what was happening and where it occurred. Next, they looked "upstream" for risk and protective factors to help understand how to prevent youth violence—what things increased or reduced the likelihood that young people would or not be violent? For example, job skills and a connection with safe adult mentors could help protect a youth from violence. All of the factors people wanted to focus on—safety, family interactions, employment, a promising future—could be addressed through the umbrella of the public health approach. In 2006, the City Council adopted a resolution to declare youth violence as a public health issue. A multisector Steering Committee that included the Mayor, City Council, local foundations, healthcare and public health, schools, youth and families, parks, police, the county, non-profit agencies, neighborhood associations, and businesses formed to draw up the *Blueprint for Action: Preventing Youth Violence in Minneapolis*. The Steering Committee consulted local and national experts to gather input on proven and promising community driven practices for the Blueprint. Launched in 2008, the Blueprint provides a framework to coordinate the work of partners from all sectors. A multisector Executive Steering Committee oversees the implementation of the Blueprint.

Results

The partners track the success of their efforts with 'Results Minneapolis.' Each year, the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) chart progress on 18 distinct indicators that map to each aspect of the Blueprint. For example, MPS uses a survey of students to track six indicators to measure youth connection to trusted adults. Examples of the six indicators include student participation in after-school programs and extra-curricular activities and help from family members with homework. Factors like these protect youth from violence. The Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) also compiles data about youth arrests and detention. According to statistics released by MPD in fall 2010, the number of juvenile suspects has dropped 28 percent since 2008. Juvenile arrests have dropped by 18.4 percent in the last two years. In part due to the contribution of the Blueprint, community groups and the city have been able to attract new funding from philanthropic and federal sources, including U.S. Justice Department funding for gang assessment and prevention. Minneapolis expanded the initiative from the original 5 neighborhoods to include 22 neighborhoods in 2009.

VIOLENCE HOME and the state has mandated that the Minnesota Department of Health support this approach to youth violence prevention in additional Minnesota cities. By joining Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth (UNITY) a component of CDC's Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE) a national effort to stop youth violence before it even starts, the city gets valuable technical assistance and networks with other cities on policy initiatives at the national level.

Highlights

The City of Minneapolis defined youth violence as a public health concern, and partners from the public and private sectors teamed up to create a Blueprint for Action to prevent youth violence based on a public health approach. The Blueprint is organized around four goals that span the continuum of prevention: 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. This approach has been so successful that the state will expand the Blueprint to more cities.

Quote

"By seeing youth violence as the public health crisis that it is, we are better able to work across agencies, communities and jurisdictions with youth, parents, teachers, clergy, health providers, and others to protect youth, reduce injuries and deaths, and prevent more acts of violence from ever happening in the first place." Blueprint for Action

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