

## Prevention

• Prevention of violence occurs along a continuum that begins in early childhood with programs to help parents raise healthy children. A comprehensive community approach recognizes that no single program is sufficient and there are many opportunities for effective prevention. Youth who are at risk of being involved in gun violence will benefit from any prevention programming that targets healthy development and overall well-being. However programs that would be especially beneficial for this population might focus on:

- Anti-bullying
- Healthy coping skills
- Prosocial peers and activities
- Healthy relationship with positive adult(s)
- Conflict mediation
- Communication skills
- Reduce hostile attribution bias (HAB), which can be extremely valuable for African American male elementary and middle schoolers. HAB is the tendency to interpret the behavior of others, across situations, as threatening, aggressive, or both. People who make the HAB often respond to the other person's behavior in an aggressive manner because they perceive it as a personal threat.

## Intervention

• How to intervene should be based on local data and tailored to meet the needs of the community. An local example of violence prevention initiative is Cure4Camden.

Modeled after Chicago's Cure Violence program, Cure4Camden approaches violence as a disease that can be stopped. Cure4Camden utilizes the Cure Violence three-pronged public health approach that involves:

- Detection and Interruption - Trained violence interrupters and outreach workers aim to prevent shootings by identifying and mediating potentially lethal conflicts in the community and following up to ensure that the conflict does not reignite
- Behavior Change - Trained, culturally appropriate outreach workers identify and work with the highest risk individuals, those likely to shoot or be shot, in an effort to make them less likely to commit violence. They will walk by their side and help them understand the cost of violence and connect them with social services in an effort to better their lives. Outreach workers will redirect high risk individuals to positive pursuits, including jobs, job training, and returning to school
- Changing Community Norms - The Cure4Camden interrupters and outreach workers engage the community to get involved by conveying the message that violence is not normal and the behavior can change. Posters, brochures, flyers, yard signs, banners, t-shirts and other materials are used to facilitate behavior change, promote non-violence, and carry pointed messages about the consequences of shootings and killings.

## Keep in Mind

"Lost in the gun debate is that even in high-crime cities, the risk of gun violence is mostly concentrated among a small number of men.

- In Oakland, for instance, crime experts working with the police department a few years ago found that about 1,000 active members of a few dozen street groups drove most homicides.
  - o That's .3 percent of Oakland's population. And even within this subgroup, risk fluctuated according to feuds and other beefs. In practical terms, the experts found that over a given stretch of several months only about 50 to 100 men are at the highest risk of shooting someone or getting shot."
- Pro Publica, *How the Gun Control Debate Ignores Black Lives*, November 24, 2015

We need to make sure we are looking at the root causes of youth violence, and not just focus on the effects of it. The following is an example to illustrate the importance of digging deeper:

## Defining Problem/Gathering Data:

- Define at risk or high risk
  - With a variety of stakeholders at the table, “at risk” or “high risk” can mean a variety of different things (at risk or high risk of dropping out of school, being re-arrested, engaging in risky behavior, substance abuse, etc.)
    - Our focus is identifying youth who are high risk for being a perpetrator or victim of gun violence (?)
- Clear problem statement
  - At its core, what are we trying to achieve?
- Discussion of effective prevention from a community perspective should include identification of the community being examined.
  - What communities are we targeting? What resources already exist? What gaps can we fill? What strengths can we build on?
- In order to measure impact of a gun violence reduction initiative, need baseline data on the following:

### *Gun violence indicators:*

- Number of shootings
- Number of gun-related homicides
  - Possible to tease out retaliation shootings?
- Gun-related crime conviction rates for youth and young adults
  - Data should include info on youth in the juvenile justice system, as well as young adults (18-24) in either juvenile or adult system

### *Additional data:*

- Community/local norms re: violence
- “Hot spots” map
- If gangs/cliques are fueling the problem, need more info on these groups
- What support services already exist to help target population, such as mental health, school-based conflict mediation, job training, etc.
  - Possible overlap with prevention resources, but this list should also include entities who work exclusively or primarily with target population

### **Example from Atlanta’s Gun Violence Reduction Initiative**

Started with question: How common was gun violence in Metro Atlanta?

1. State Crime Statistics: Juvenile weapons offenses and assaults.
2. County Medical Examiner and State vital statistics: Number of firearm related deaths.
3. Local firearm injury reporting system: Non-fatal juvenile shootings.
4. **Focus group sessions with Atlanta youth and individual interviews with incarcerated youth: Where, why, how, and when youth acquire and carry guns.**

### • *Agency/system responses to gun violence:*

- Police
  - Current strategies to reduce gun violence and engage communities
- Court/Juvenile Justice
  - What types of dispositions do youth receive? For those in the adult system, what re-entry services and supports are available to them?
  - What kind of treatment is effective to reduce recidivism OR solely looking at committing new gun related offense (need to define)?

*NOTE: JDAI data and reports have limitations in helping us define our problem and evaluate solutions. This data is based on cases pre-adjudication (i.e. a youth has been accused of, but not convicted of a crime). So an increase in detention admissions for gun-related charges and homicides is a good indicator of a larger problem, but only a small piece of the puzzle.*