

Youth Violence Prevention Initiative Mission

Reduce youth violence through policy and system change and promoting trust, safety, healing and opportunities for Worcester's highest risk youth.

Community Mobilization

- (1) Engage community leaders, residents, business owners, faith leaders, service providers, and the high risk population with the message that violence should not be viewed as "Normal" but as a behavior that can be changed.
- (2) Address structural racism via Community Conversations, addressing systemic barriers and creating a community language via Un-Doing Racism workshops for leaders, providers, and the high risk.

Early Childhood Wellbeing, Family Engagement, and Reunification							
Objective: Increase access to high quality, trauma-informed family supports and early education and health services for children of proven-risk/incarcerated parents in order to break generational cycles of violence and gang involvement							
Indicated Strategies	Family Support Pilot program for SSI cohort that includes elements of the 'Selected' strategies		Co-responder or Crisis Intervention Team model for police calls that involve children or youth as a victim or witness to violence		Universal Strategies	Reinstate nurse home visiting program for all newborns who reside in the city of Worcester.	Family Health and Pediatric Physicians trained on ACES, trauma informed care; structural competence; implicit bias
	Selected Strategies	Implement trauma-informed Father's Institute	Co-locate early childhood mental health clinicians in family health/primary care settings and Early Childcare Settings, including providing access to home-based settings	Support development of family-centered programs, aligned with Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework that include early childhood navigators/family partners who help with family stability and navigating systems		Community and Policy Change	
Support development of communitywide early childhood referral network that includes supports for housing, employment, food, medical care, and education advocacy; this network must connect home-based childcare providers					Advocate for changes in policies that support stable and healthy environments for children and families		

Diversion				
Objective: Reduce the number of youth being arrested and reduce the number of youth being charged and detained				
Indicated Strategies	Deploy clinical interventions at time and location of police response in trauma situations involving children, youth, and young adults (Crisis Intervention Teams and/or Co-Responder Model)		Universal	Expanded training for police officers on the effect of trauma on brain development, de-escalation, youth development, implicit bias, etc.
	Shift traditional response to family crisis calls involving a juvenile from a police response to a clinically based response			
Selected Strategies	Citywide Street Outreach Team focusing on juvenile crime hot spots to build relationships and connect youth with resources.		Community and Policy Change	Work with courts to reduce Warrant Arrests for Juveniles
	Increase Restorative Justice (RJ) Diversion for Youth with practices in community such as Peace Circles and a DA Diversion program			

Outreach and Engagement					
Objective: Reduce barriers for high-risk and proven-risk youth and young adults to community resources and services in order to build relationships and change norms about violence					
Indicated Strategies	Expand implementation of Cure Violence to build relationships with proven risk individuals, prevent retaliation, mediate conflicts, and connect to services		Universal Strategies	Transform Recreation Worcester for youth 7-13 featuring staffed activities in parks and a Positive Youth Development philosophy. Incorporate youth jobs. Partnership with WPS.	Diversity and racism training for all youth workers and personnel in youth serving agencies
	Respond to every shooting: whenever a shooting occurs, worker organizes a response where dozens of community members voice their objection to the shooting				
Selected Strategies	Citywide Street Outreach Team focusing on juvenile crime hot spots to build relationships and connect youth with resources.		Community and Policy Change	Organize Community: Workers coordinate with existing and establish new block clubs, tenant councils and neighborhood associations	Spread Positive Norms: Distribute materials and host events to convey the message that violence is not acceptable.
	Extend hours of positive youth development and recreation/sports programming into evening hours when juvenile arrests are most likely to happen				
Hoops Central					

Suspension Policy and School Climate						
Objective: Reduce use of out-of-school suspensions and improve the quality of educational opportunities for the highest risk students						
Selected Strategies	Institute Districtwide Peer Mediation or a Restorative Justice Model that offers alternatives to suspension and expulsion in Secondary Schools		Community and Policy Change	Research Changing School Start time in relation to juvenile crime patterns and research on adolescent sleep patterns	Review Discipline Policy and develop family education strategy on changes in the discipline policy	Delineate roles of police and school personnel through a comprehensive MOU
	Develop an evening, student-centered, competency-based school for students who have not succeeded in traditional school coupled with significant daytime employment program like YearUp					
	Track Truancy					

Employment						
Objective: Reduce barriers to employment for high-risk and proven-risk youth and young adults						
Indicated Strategies	Wrap-around and trauma informed services for highest risk youth before and during employment		Community and Policy Change	Better align and coordinate employment efforts for proven-risk youth	Increase capacity of Minority owned and small businesses focusing on businesses located in "Hot Spots" to employ older, proven-risk and very high risk youth	Address legal and racial barriers in employment
	Develop employment readiness foundation for proven-risk youth (ie.; "soft skills") and work-skills, credentialed programming (ie. "hard skills")					
Connect hard skills development to career pathways with opportunities like internships, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, and employment						

Behavioral Health and Healing & Emotional and Physical Safety of Boys and Men of Color				
Objective: Develop Peace Circles Institute. Create platforms for trauma informed recurring, participant-centered, intentional healing conversations amongst Boys and Men of Color				
Indicated Strategies	Conduct Peace Circles at partner agencies with the high risk population		Community and Policy Change	Engage the WPD in dialogues designed to address Police Relations and Trust Building and Trauma
	Develop citywide model for therapeutic spaces for boys of color developed by men of color; Spaces would be grassroots, blend restorative justice practices with boys/men rap sessions			
Selected Strategies	Conduct Community Circles with intentional focuses such as: Fatherhood Circle; Women of Color Circle		Continue to collect more data on trauma histories, school experiences	