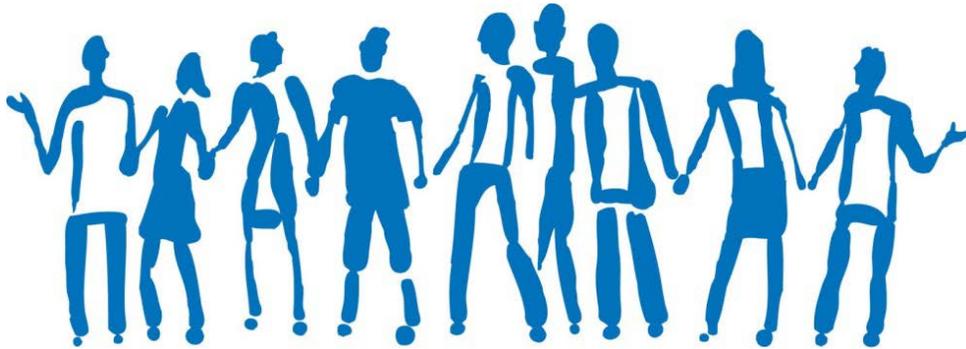




Mayor Joseph M. Petty and
City Manager Edward M. Augustus, Jr.

YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE



Community Assessment:

A comprehensive Youth Violence Prevention Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning Process revealed the following youth and gang violence risk factors and trends:

- Nearly one-third of Worcester youth live in poverty; jumping to 44% for Latino youth.
- Only 34% of WPS 3rd graders read at grade level, compared to 57% in Massachusetts.
- Over 700 out-of-school suspensions were issued to students in preschool through 3rd grade in 2011-2012. The most common reasons for these suspensions include: physical assault on a student or employee, disruption of school, and repeated school violations. Elementary schools with elevated out-of-school suspension rates are located in neighborhoods with very high numbers of arrests of males 11-24 for crimes such as robberies, aggravated assaults, drugs, and property crimes.
- Over 30% of young men involved in gun and knife violence in Worcester had their first police contact before the age of 12, the majority of the time as a victim of assault and battery or a domestic dispute requiring medical attention.
- A relatively small network of Latino and African American males are disproportionately involved in gun and knife related violence in Worcester. These young men are caught in a cycle of retaliatory, gang-related violence. WPD has identified close to 500 males under the age of 25 as gang-involved.
- At least one-third of the young men involved in gun and knife violence are now fathers of infants and very young children, which is part of a cycle of generational violence.
- Community-level risk factors such as poverty, structural racism, unemployment, incarceration, gun availability, and family instability have created a situation of chronic, toxic stress for thousands of families living in Worcester's lower income neighborhoods. Early and ongoing exposure to toxic stress is a key component of youth vulnerability and involvement in violence.

Joint Structure:

(Please see document attached.)

Initiative Agreements:

1. Metrics: The plan has clear metrics to monitor changes in youth violence. All strategies in the plan can demonstrate how they (the strategies) support the metrics and can produce data on progress relative to the metrics biannually.
2. Coordination and cooperation: We recognize that no one agency, group or individual is sufficient to address drivers of youth violence in Worcester; therefore, we agree to collaborate across efforts to ensure our approaches are comprehensive and coordinated.
3. Service delivery: We recognize that the marginalized groups we are seeking to serve must be engaged as part of the system of delivery and oversight.
4. Communication: We affirm that we have a shared commitment to ensuring the wellbeing of youth in Worcester and reducing youth violence. We realize and respect that we have different philosophies, histories, and areas of expertise when it comes to the issue of youth violence. We agree to communicate with each other about our differences when they arise so as to not undermine progress or work done for and with young people in the city. We recommend that this communication happens in quarterly meetings convened by the City Manager and as needed as issues may arise.
5. Capacity: We recognize that it is critically important and necessary to increase the capacity of grassroots and minority led organizations to address the environmental factors that increase risk of violence in impoverished communities.

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.

Areas of Focus:

➤ **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

➤ **Diversion**

Objective: Reduce the number of youth being arrested and reduce the number of youth being charged and detained

➤ **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

➤ **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

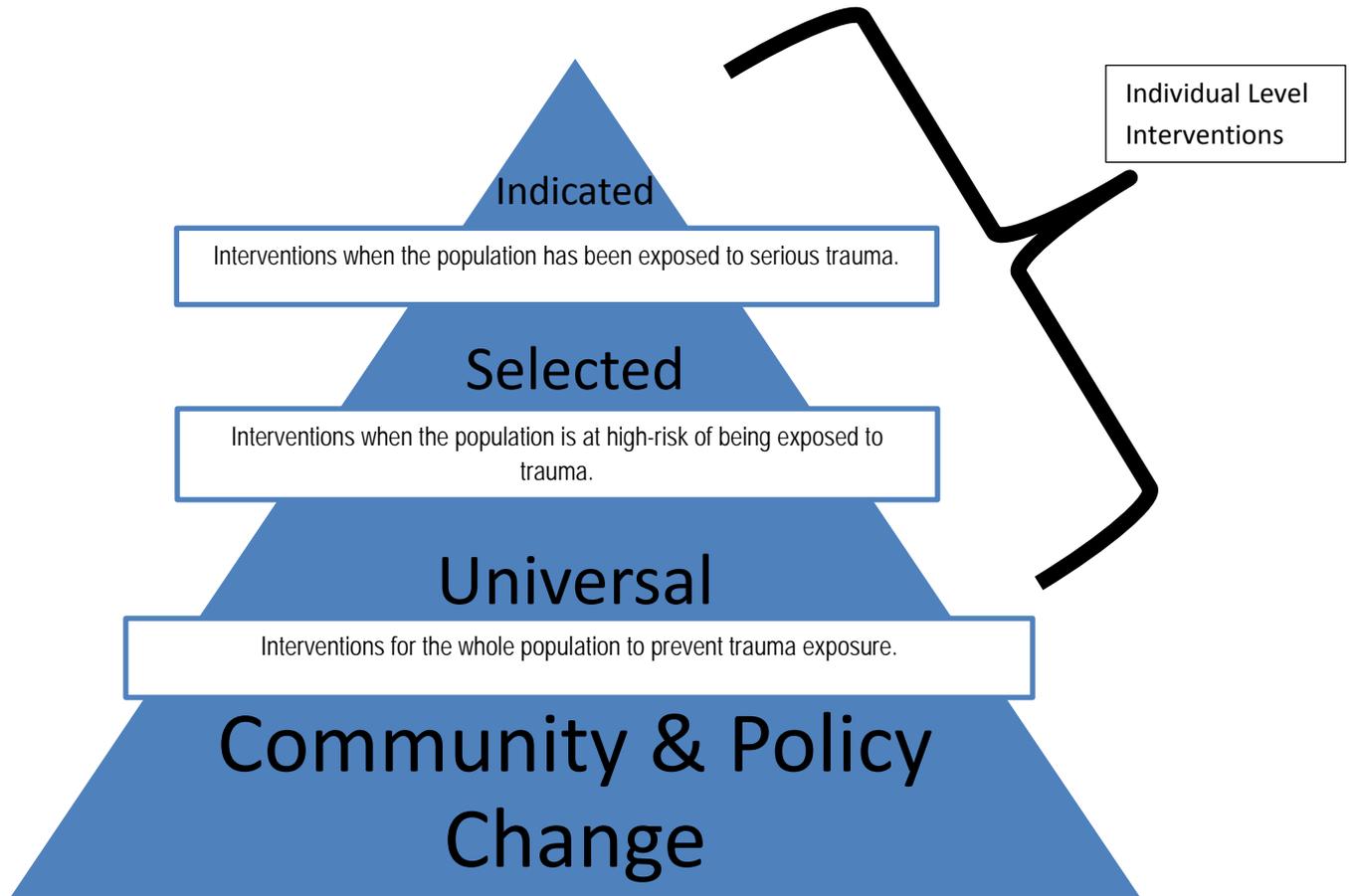
➤ **Employment**

Objective: Reduce barriers to employment for high-risk and proven-risk youth and young adults

➤ **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

Definition:



Note: the size of the font and of each slice of the pyramid corresponds to the ratio of people who would be involved at each level of the intervention, with *indicated* representing the smallest number of people, but likely the most intensive and expensive interventions.

Community Partners Involved:

Boys & Girls Club of Worcester
Center for Non-Violent Solutions
Central MA Workforce Investment Board
Charles E. Shannon Community Safety Initiative and Safe and Successful Youth Initiative partners
Christian Community Church- Shalom Neighborhood Center
City of Worcester
Clark University
Community Healthlink
Community Legal Aid
Department of Youth Services
Dismas House
District Attorney Joseph Early, Jr. Office
Edward Street Child Services
Fairbridge Project
Greater Worcester Community Foundation
Guild of St. Agnes
HOPE Coalition
Latino Education Institute
LUK Crisis Center
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Mosaic Cultural Complex
Multicultural Wellness Center
Nativity School of Worcester
Pernet Family Health Service
Straight Ahead Ministries
UMass Memorial Medical Center
Worcester Community Action Council
Worcester Division of Public Health
Worcester Educational Collaborative
Worcester Juvenile Court
Worcester Police Department
Worcester Public Schools
Worcester Violence Prevention Coalition
Worcester Youth Center
Workforce Investment Board
YMCA
Youth Opportunities Upheld, Inc.
YouthConnect
YWCA of Central MA

60 Day Plan:

1. Coordinate a citywide Summer Street Outreach Model during evening hours and times/places where juvenile arrests are most likely to occur
2. Convene Joint Committee
3. Launch of Recreation Worcester
4. MOU between schools and police

Outcomes:

Worcester is a community that loves and values all of its youngest members by ensuring their caregivers are safe and secure and that they have access to safe places to live, quality medical care, access to healthy nutrition, and excellent, culturally appropriate early education opportunities.

1. Children and youth are engaged in age appropriate, quality learning activities
2. Children and youth meet developmental benchmarks for physical and mental health
3. Reduction in exclusion of children and youth from all educational settings, including early childhood
4. Reduction in racial/ethnic disparity in youth being excluded from educational settings, including early childhood
5. Reduction in number of child abuse/neglect calls for police service
6. Reduction in low-level youth arrests
7. Reduction in racial/ethnic disparity at the point of youth arrest
8. Safety net is more coherent and connected so that essential services including housing, food, medical and mental health care, and education are easily accessible to families and families in high need report less transition and interruption in accessing needed supports and services.

(If we see above changes, we will have fewer incidents of youth and gang violence in Worcester, MA and more young people will feel hopeful about their future and will be engaged in the community. We will break generational cycles of violence, and boys, men, girls, and women of color will experience physical and emotional safety as well as educational and economic equity.)