

Synthesis Notes

UNITY City Network Web Forum August 25, 2009

1. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Prevention Institute hosted a follow-up Web Forum to the June 2009 City Convening to refine and strengthen an emerging national urban agenda and to update members on accomplishments since early June. Rachel Davis, UNITY Project Director, moderated the discussion which included more than 25 UNITY members from across the United States.

Tom Simon of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) opened the web forum bringing greetings from the CDC. Tom affirmed that the CDC sees UNITY as a core part of their strategy development to prevent violence and has supplemented its cooperative agreement with UNITY in order to support UNITY's development of content for a national strategy. He also shared that the CDC will be releasing more information about public health strategy in the next few months and is looking for significant resources to support cities on the ground. Both Tom and the UNITY Program Officer, Neil Rainford, are available by email: tsimon@cdc.gov and nrainford@cdc.gov respectively.

2. OUTLINE OF AN EMERGING URBAN AGENDA FOR REDUCING VIOLENCE

Based on the intensive and creative discussions during the UNITY City Convening and previous input from city representatives, UNITY has been developing an urban agenda which was presented and discussed during the web forum. Howard Pinderhughes provided an overview of the two fold agenda:

- A. Invest in cities to develop, implement, coordinate and evaluate effective and sustainable approaches to preventing community and gang violence.
 - I. Local planning and implementation
 - II. National activities to strengthen and maximize local planning and implementation
- B. Enhance public health's capacity and infrastructure at the federal, state, and local levels to address the ongoing public health crisis of violence in the most impacted cities.

Participants affirmed the direction of the emerging urban agenda to prevent violence and offered detailed feedback which will be incorporated into the next draft of the agenda. Examples of feedback included: making sure that it includes promoting a youth-oriented system of care, including youth employment and economic development, focusing on pre-entry

Violence is not the problem of one neighborhood or group, and the response and solutions are not the responsibility of one sector of the community or of one agency, professional group, or business. Coming together and owning this problem and the solutions are central.
—Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith

along with re-entry, involving labor and transportation, addressing trust building between grassroots and community-based organizations, including community building as a key element, and including more on data collection at the local level.

3. REPORTS FROM CITY PARTNERS

Louisville: Darrell Aniton, the Director of Youth Affairs in the Louisville Metro Office of Youth Development, is working with local funders to increase sharing of information with and between schools, to improve school programs, and to evaluate data to measure effectiveness of the programs. They have also been working on providing training to parents and community members, and bringing employment to 2,000 young people.

Cleveland: Ada Jackson, Assistant to the Chief of Education in the Office of the Mayor, spoke about efforts to increase youth activities and community involvement, including work with arts and culture, and youth performances of various kinds all over the city. Three thousand youth were employed this summer and the Youth Advisory Council is also involved in meetings with the mayor to further advance a youth development agenda.

Minneapolis: Bass Zanjani, the Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator at the Department of Health and Family Support, highlighted the city's blueprint, which has been successful in reducing youth homicide rates in the four neighborhoods with the highest youth homicide rates and there is a desire now to expand the program city-wide.

San Diego: Lynn Sharpe-Underwood, Executive Director of the San Diego Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention sent the following text chat update, "We have begun working with youth organizations and supporting their efforts instead of setting up a youth commission. The Commission is now facilitating a dialogue with the SDSU Graduate Institute of Public Health on bringing the Chicago Ceasefire model to San Diego."

Tucson: Annemarie Medina, Office of the Mayor sent the following text chat update, "We have brought together a wide reaching collaborative group and, in partnership with the University of Arizona, is currently surveying all agencies and organizations that serve youth to create a city wide data base of programs and services. We are currently preparing a draft outline of our city wide plan with a strategic planning committee. We have identified three high risk, high violence areas where we will initially focus our efforts to create model programs that we will then roll out across the Tucson region."

4. UPDATES

White House Conference on Preventing Gang Violence and Controlling Crime: Larry Cohen, one of the co-chairs of UNITY and the Executive Director of Prevention Institute, was recently invited to attend a White House meeting of high-level local, state, and federal officials on gang violence prevention and crime control. Attorney General Eric Holder led the meeting. Mayors are very concerned about safety and, along with the Justice Department, agreed that collaborative efforts are needed to address these issues. It is important to note that the White House meeting signaled a shift towards emphasizing urban needs - "mayors have been invited back to the White House" and are seen as partners. Larry reported that he was almost the only voice advocating a prevention approach from a health/public health perspective. He notes that there was widespread support for prevention, though it was understood differently by different players. Many participants approached him with an interest in learning about prevention from a public health perspective, before the critical need for criminal justice and re-entry programs.

Outcomes from the National Association of City County Health Official's (NACCHO) Annual Conference : Annie Lyles, UNITY staff from Prevention Institute and Tasha Toby of NACCHO reported back from a series of events held at the conference around the theme “Preventing violence before it occurs – Recognizing public health’s role in engaging multi-sectors to advance this effort.” UNITY and NACCHO hosted a breakfast where local public health leaders joined the CDC, NACCHO, and UNITY staff to brainstorm on collaborative goals for preventing violence with a public health approach. This was followed by a session in which UNITY, the CDC, and local health officials Adewale Troutman (Louisville) and Gretchen Musicant (Minneapolis) presented UNITY and a prevention approach to a packed audience of health officials. As a result of this session, additional cities are in discussions about joining the UNITY Network. It was also clear from discussions during the session that there is not widespread understanding of a public health approach to preventing violence and the role of public health in preventing violence. Amongst attendees, there was considerable interest in receiving more information about UNITY, a public health approach to preventing violence, and the *UNITY Roadmap*.

Current Federal Legislation around Preventing Violence: As we focus on national opportunities to discuss prevention, there are four pieces of legislation in Congress that could have an impact on local efforts: 1) The Youth PROMISE Act, sponsored by Congressman Bobby Scott, 2) The Gang Abatement and Prevention Act, sponsored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, 3) The Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Act, sponsored by Congressman Adam Schiff, and 4) The National Criminal Justice Commission Act, sponsored by Sen. Jim Webb. Participants were given a summary matrix in advance of the web convening. If you’d like a copy, please contact UNITY staff.

Staffing Update: [Howard Pinderhughes](#) of UCSF, who joined us at the Convening, officially joined our team part-time. Program Assistant [Christine Chang](#) and Program Coordinator [Kion Jordan](#) of Prevention Institute are the newest members of the UNITY Staff. They will work closely with senior leadership to expand UNITY’s efforts to prevent violence and look forward to working with all Network members.

5. OUTCOMES AND THE WORK AHEAD

- UNITY staff is incorporating feedback from participants into the emerging national agenda. We will send out a revised version in the coming weeks with the hope that city partners will bring it to their various constituencies.
- We are exploring tools to enhance communication between UNITY City Partners and between the Network and UNITY Staff.
- A training and technical assistance plan is in development. Cities will be contacted directly for their input in the coming months.