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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SITUATION

For years, youth violence has been a major problem for the City of St. Louis and for the St. Louis metropolitan region. The City ranks second nationally in the rate of youth who are killed by gun violence. Its rate of 50 youth gunshot deaths for every 100,000 people is more than three times the national rate of 15 deaths per 100,000. Gun fatalities and other forms of youth violence are not, however, confined to St. Louis' central city. The surrounding 15 county region, which includes municipalities in Missouri and Illinois, ranks ninth among US metropolitan areas for the number of youth murdered with guns.



The severity of the region's youth violence crisis is most acutely experienced in St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Clair County (home to East St. Louis). In these three areas, nearly 150,000 children from birth to age 17 are exposed to risk factors that contribute to violent and delinquent behaviors. More than 85 percent of youth in St. Louis City, 31 percent of youth in St. Louis County, and 90 percent of youth in the Metro East live in communities with high to severe concentrations of poverty, low educational attainment, teen parenthood, transience, single-parent households, and other risk factors that when aggregated compromise residents' safety and well-being.

Given the present state of affairs, the need for a comprehensive, coordinated strategy to reduce youth violence in the bi-state area cannot be overstated. Though recent years have brought declines in both overall youth crime and violent youth crime, St. Louis' rates of violence are still higher than in most other places in the nation. Permanently decreasing these elevated levels of youth violence is a collective responsibility that requires the sustained effort and attention of regional leaders, stakeholders and community members.

SOLUTION

Over the last several decades, there have been a number of local initiatives to address the problem of youth crime and violence. Many of these have been led by specific stakeholder groups (like law enforcement); focused on particular topics (like school violence); or located in geographic "hot spots." In the summer of 2012, however, St. Louis City Mayor Francis Slay – in partnership with St. Louis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

County Executive Charlie Dooley and East St. Louis Mayor Alvin Parks – convened a regional task force to examine the multiple dimensions of the youth violence issue. This group, called the St. Louis Regional Youth Violence Prevention (YVP) Task Force, involved more than 200 service providers, youth, municipal officials, educators, faith based leaders, funders, law enforcement personnel, and concerned citizens in a yearlong planning process to decrease youth violence across the metropolitan area. What emerged from this effort is a far-reaching community plan that presents a detailed strategy for improving the safety and well-being of the region’s children, families and communities.

COMMUNITY PLAN

The YVP Task Force Community Plan has a guiding framework that includes its mission, vision, goals, priorities, desired outcomes and implementation approach. A synopsis of these plan components is provided in this summary. The remainder of the plan’s content consists of strategies that advance progress in its four concentration areas, which include youth violence prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry. Descriptions of the Task Force’s recommended strategies can be found throughout this planning document.

MISSION

The mission of the YVP Task Force is to develop and institutionalize a comprehensive youth violence prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry strategy for the St. Louis region.

VISION

The YVP Task Force envisions a St. Louis region where youth, families and neighborhoods are safe, healthy and thriving. Within the region, organizations, systems and communities work together to create environments of peace where young people have the opportunities and services they need to achieve lifelong success and gains in social equity improve the quality of life for all.

GOALS

At the outset of the planning process, Task Force members established three primary goals:

1. To engage a critical mass of stakeholders in the



development and execution of a regional youth violence prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry strategy;

2. To employ a Collective Impact approach to implement this regional strategy; and
3. To align funders and service providers' efforts around youth violence and community safety.

PRIORITIES

In addition to its goals, the YVP Task Force identified nine priorities that when acted upon individually or in tandem would improve youth and community safety and well-being. Eight of these are specific to the plan's four concentration areas. The remaining meta-priority transcends categorization, advancing data-driven decision-making and community accountability in all four areas of interest.

Meta-Priority	■ Develop an annual Community Safety Scorecard that increases understanding of the causes, conditions and consequences of crime and violence. Use the Scorecard's findings to more effectively and equitably focus community resources and interventions
Prevention	■ Ensure that more young people have access to job readiness, training and employment programs
Intervention	■ Expand access to high quality programs that build youth resiliency, teach positive social skills, and impart practical skills around how to cope with peer pressure, gangs, violence, drugs etc. ■ Increase youth's access to and receipt of mental and behavioral health supports and services. ■ Extend the availability and accessibility of safe places for youth during evenings, weekends and summers.
Enforcement	■ Increase alternatives to youth incarceration and detention. Enhance and expand diversion initiatives to reduce the juvenile jail population and prevent crime. ■ Strengthen collaboration and active community policing among law enforcement, youth, families, schools and other community stakeholders. ■ Reduce youth's access to and use of firearms and illegal weapons.
Reentry	■ Strengthen aftercare services that work to keep reentering youth from being arrested or convicted of future crimes, including mental health, substance abuse and independent living supports.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The principal aim of the YVP Task Force Community Plan is to reduce violence committed by youth under age 24. While Task Force members did not set an order of magnitude for this reduction, they did identify several measures that could be used to gauge the initiative's progress and help assess its community impacts. These include, but are not limited to:

- Arrests for violent offenses of people under age 24
- Reported delinquency offenses
- Reported status offenses
- Reported school incidents (with a focus on the violent act incident rate and weapon incident rate)
- Number of school suspensions and expulsions
- Number of truant youth
- Gang involvement

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

Successful implementation of this community plan depends on the continued collaboration of citizens and stakeholders from multiple jurisdictions, sectors and disciplines. The YVP Task Force will need to work with many groups and individuals to identify resources; align efforts; execute strategies; champion policy change; and engage affected youth, families and communities. To help guide these efforts, the Task Force's Steering Committee will work with St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and East St. Louis officials to build support for plan implementation; mobilize community resources; pursue funding opportunities; and expand the Task Force's regional network of stakeholders and participants.

INTRODUCTION

The St. Louis Regional Youth Violence Prevention (YVP) Task Force Community Plan presents a comprehensive strategy for improving the safety and well-being of children, families and communities in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Launched in the summer of 2012, this planning initiative has brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to align and leverage regional resources working to reduce youth violence. These stakeholders, which include area youth, municipal officials, service providers, educators, faith based leaders, funders, local law enforcement, business executives and concerned citizens, have formed a multi-sector, multi-jurisdiction community of practice to address the anti-social forces that endanger the region's youth.

Convened at the behest of St. Louis City Mayor Francis Slay, in partnership with St. Louis County Executive Charlie Dooley and East St. Louis Mayor Alvin Parks, the YVP Task Force has spent the past year devising strategies to strengthen youth violence prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry (PIER) efforts. Members have identified community concerns, inventoried regional assets, assessed critical gaps, reviewed various program models, and formulated action items as part of the YVP planning process. They have worked diligently to advance significant and sustainable progress in the four PIER areas of interest. This document summarizes their findings and puts forth their recommendations for decreasing youth violence.

The YVP Community Plan was developed with an understanding that youth violence, though a complex and complicated issue, is largely preventable. Just as the region has experienced measurable declines in other forms of violence and crime through concerted law enforcement and community action, youth violence can be drastically reduced through cross-sector collaboration, data-informed decision-making and strong community leadership. This knowledge has been a motivational force for YVP stakeholders during the planning process and will frame Task Force members' approach to plan implementation in the years to come.

The implementation of this plan is intended to cover a three-year period, from the summer of 2013 to the summer of 2016. During this time frame, the organizational and civic infrastructure for executing the plan will be further developed; the resources needed for funding the plan will be pursued; and many of the recommended strategies contained in the plan will be underway. The desired outcome from all of these efforts is a decrease in violence committed by youth under age 24, as measured by reductions in juvenile violent offenses, delinquency offenses, status offenses, school disciplinary incidents, truancy and gang involvement. Achieving success on all of these fronts requires continuous community engagement and the flexibility to alter strategy and approach as needs, trends, and conditions change. It also demands a sustained commitment by the community at-large to create supportive, healthy environments in which youth can learn, grow and thrive.

THE CHALLENGE: Youth Violence In The Region

Youth violence – and the fear of violence and crime perpetrated by young people – is a serious problem in the St. Louis region. The most recent comprehensive national data on youth gunshot deaths compiled by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that the City of St. Louis ranks second nationally in the rate of youth who are killed by gun violence. (New Orleans ranks first.) The problem of youth violence is not confined to the St. Louis region's central city. Overall, the 15-county St. Louis metropolitan area ranks ninth among metropolitan areas in the U.S. for the number of youth murdered with guns.

The St. Louis rate of 50 youth gunshot deaths per 100,000 population is more than three times the rate for other major U.S. cities. The national rate was 15 deaths per 100,000.

The toll of youth violence extends far beyond the many young people who tragically lose their lives. The fear of violence extends deep into the community, imposing constraints on the way people live on a day-to-day basis. Young people may often feel unsafe and fear walking to school, work, or the homes of friends. Residents may be unable to conduct routine business without worry or may find themselves constrained from outside recreation and exercise. Many may feel unsafe in their homes or on their streets. The consequence of all of this is that the community's overall quality of life is diminished. Economic growth is curtailed and the region's reputation is sullied.

The problem of youth crime and violence is not new and has long been the focus of community attention. A 1993 report by the Confluence St. Louis Youth Crime Task Force asserted that, "The youth crime problem, simply put, is this: Our people and our communities are afraid and our children are at risk because of dramatic increases in violent crime committed by young people."

The St. Louis region, not coincidentally, has a large number of children and families for whom basic life needs are not met and who live in concentrated areas where they are immersed in risks that contribute to violence. The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, along with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the United States Department of Justice, have identified key risk factors for youth becoming involved in crime and delinquent behavior both as victims and perpetrators. These risk factors include poverty, low educational attainment, teen parenthood and single-parent households, among other factors. The most recent indices that have been compiled related to aggregate risk factors at the zip code level indicate that the St. Louis region has stark socio-economic disparities and a large number of zip codes in which young people are exposed to high levels of risk. Local communities where risk factors are concentrated become breeding grounds for crime and violence and are areas in which prevention, intervention, enforcement and re-entry strategies should be targeted.

Composite risk indices identify 33 zip codes at the core of the region – in St. Louis City and County and St. Clair County, Illinois – in which risk levels related to violence are high to severe. The distribution of these zip codes is as follows: City of St. Louis = 15, St. Louis County = 12, and a portion of St. Clair County, IL focused around East St. Louis = 6.

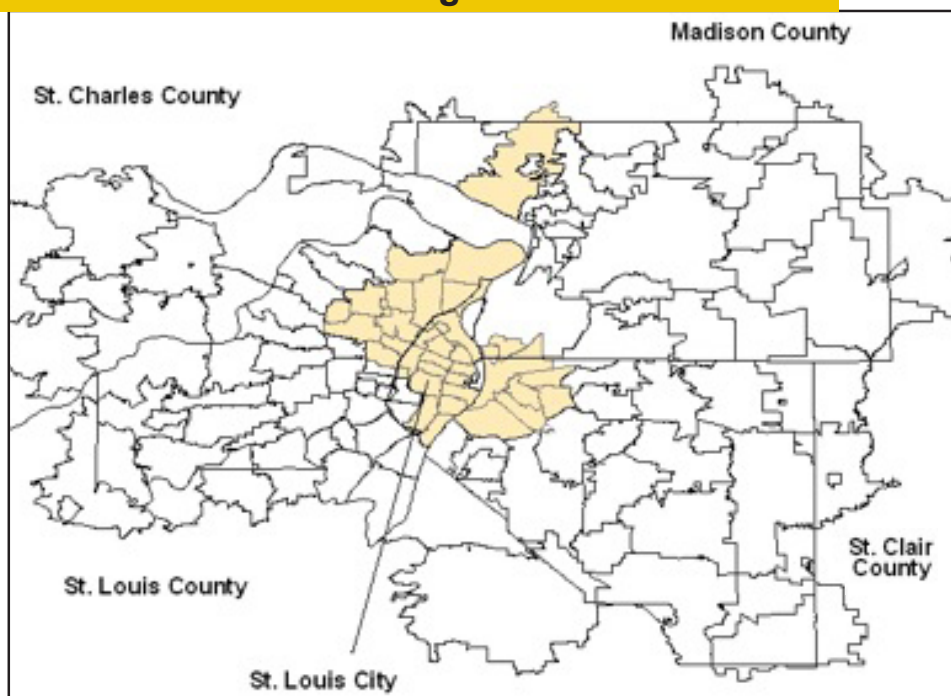
According to the 2010 U.S. Census, nearly 150,000 young St. Louisans from birth to age 17 live in neighborhoods with high levels of multiple risks that contribute to and increase the likelihood of youth violence. In the City of St. Louis, 85.5 percent of young people live in such circumstances. In St. Louis County, 31.3 percent of children and youth live in communities where risk factors that contribute to violent behavior are high to severe. And in the Metro East area, depending on how the boundaries are drawn, more than 90 percent of children may be immersed in conditions that contribute to crime and violence.

While both overall youth crime and violent crime committed by young people have declined over the past two decades, the rates of such crime are higher in the bi-state area – the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, East St. Louis, and the region as a whole – than in most other places in the nation. There are immediate tactical steps that can, and should, be taken to reduce the incidence of such crime and violence. Yet in the long-term, permanently decreasing the elevated levels of youth violence will depend on employing strategies that address the risk factors known to contribute to such violence. This approach is particularly critical in local neighborhood communities

where high concentrations of risk are exacerbated by social isolation and economic disinvestment.

As evidenced by the previously cited risk factors map (and the zip code map in Appendix A of this plan), the YVP Task Force can identify high-risk communities with precision. Members know what protective factors contribute to reducing violence and the interventions and strategies that promote increased safety and well-being. The need is to act immediately and decisively on the information available to advance the health and welfare of the entire St. Louis region.

Areas Where Risk Factors for Youth Violence are High to Severe



COMMUNITY PLANNING

OVERVIEW

This community plan is the result of an extensive stakeholder and public engagement process that involved 200 civic and organizational leaders, service providers, youth and concerned citizens in the development of a regional youth violence agenda. Representatives from more than 60 organizations served on the YVP Steering Committee, Task Force and/or Work Groups where they participated in six planning meetings between July 2012 and May 2013. Collectively, these stakeholders spent nearly 1,200 labor hours discussing critical youth violence issues, establishing the Task Force's planning framework, identifying agenda priorities, developing and refining strategies, and deliberating on plan implementation. The structure, events and milestones of this participatory planning process are described in greater detail on the following pages.

STRUCTURE

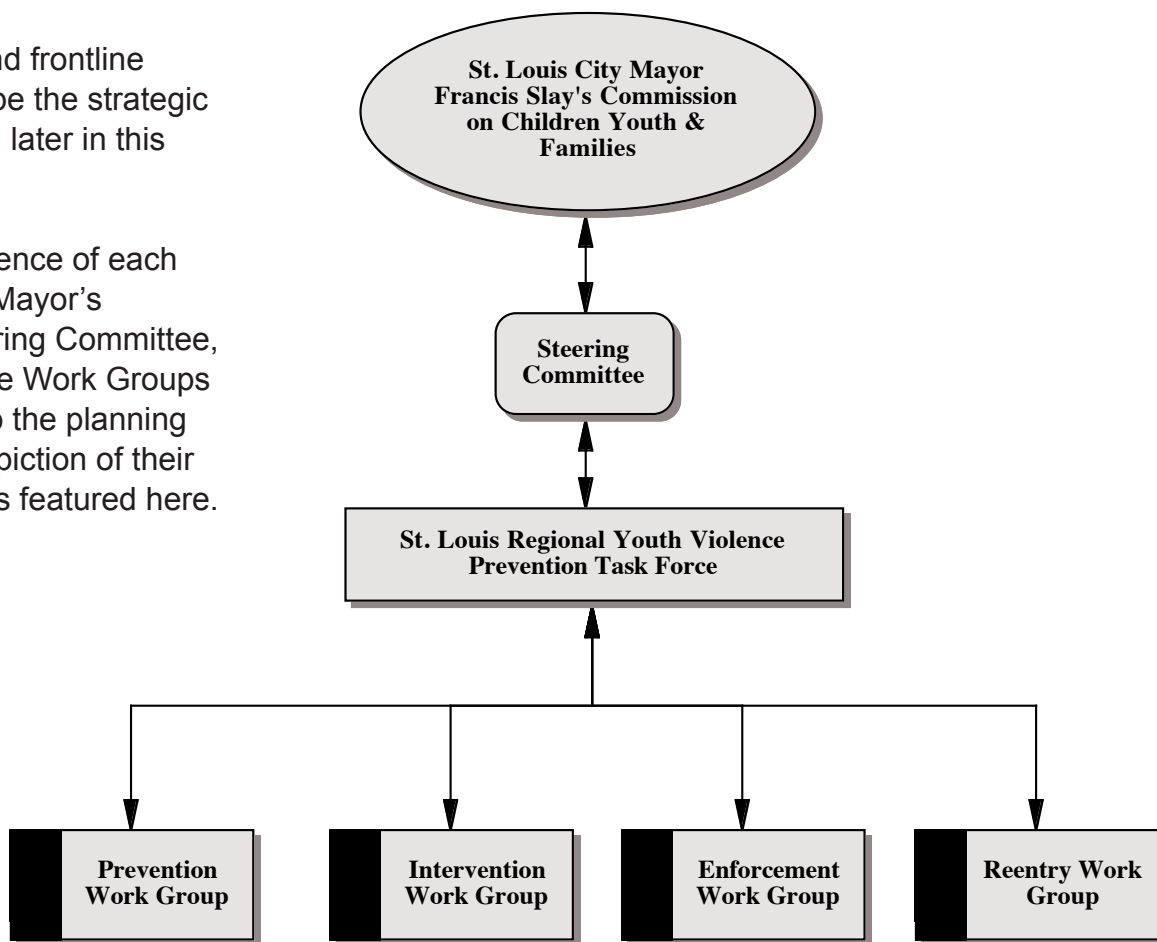
The YVP Task Force is an effort of St. Louis City Mayor Francis Slay's Commission on Children Youth and Families undertaken in partnership with St. Louis County Executive Charlie Dooley's Office and City of East St. Louis Mayor Alvin Parks' Office. Three members of the Mayor's Commission – Starsky Wilson of the Deaconess Foundation, Bridget Flood of the Incarnate Word Foundation, and Matt Kuhlenbeck of the Missouri Foundation for Health – were appointed to serve as its co-chairs. As the initiative's leaders, the co-chairs formed a Steering Committee comprised of themselves and municipal executives from the three partnering communities. This Committee, with support from a project coordinator, managed the planning process and formally constituted the Task Force.



Directors of the region's leading service agencies and community groups were invited by the Steering Committee to join the YVP Task Force. This planning body, which included agencies from different sectors, jurisdictions and areas of expertise, was charged with forming a comprehensive regional strategy to reduce and prevent youth violence. As part of their work, Task Force members helped to set the initiative's strategic priorities and involved representatives from their staffs and other organizations in the initiative's four planning Work Groups. The Work Groups focused on prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry in alignment with the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention's multidisciplinary planning model. Group participants were subject matter experts whose

years of experience and frontline insights helped to shape the strategic action items presented later in this document.

The efforts and intelligence of each of these groups – the Mayor’s Commission, the Steering Committee, the Task Force, and the Work Groups – was indispensable to the planning process. A graphic depiction of their working relationships is featured here.



EVENTS & MILESTONES

In YVP’s yearlong planning process, there were six large group planning sessions in which stakeholders participated. These facilitated meetings were typically two and one half hours in length with the exception of the Community Forum, which was a six-hour, conference like experience. Meeting attendance ranged from 20 to 135, with youth and adults participants engaged from all three of the YVP target areas. A visual snapshot of the meeting process is presented on the following page.

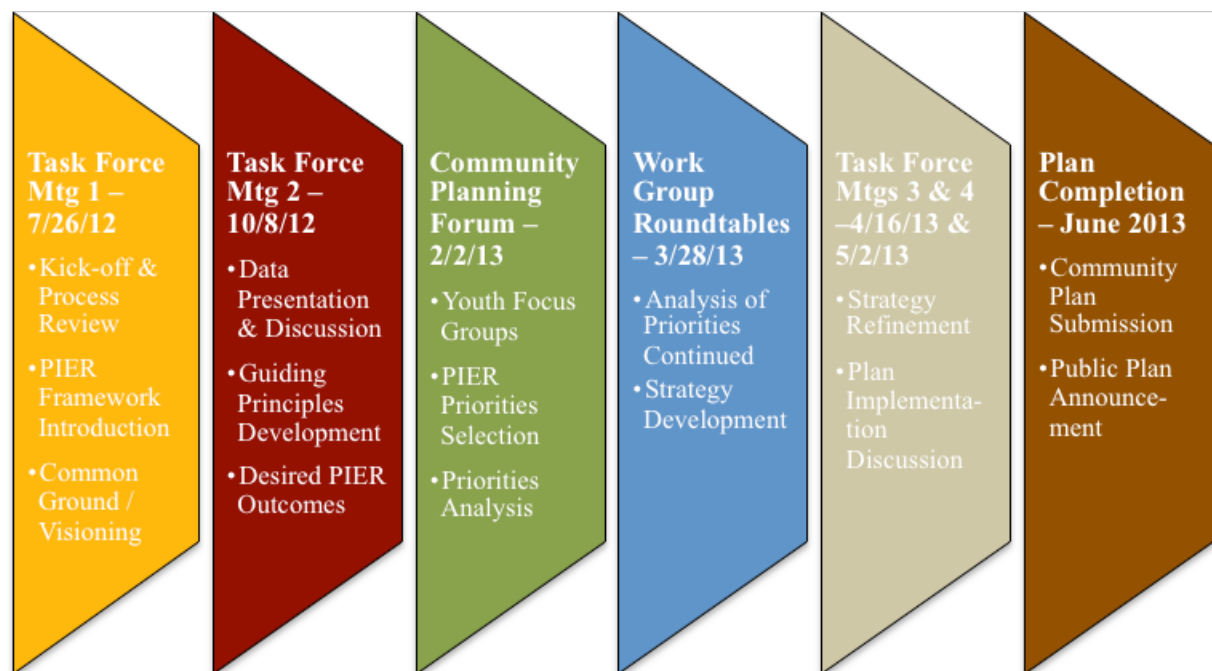
The first YVP meeting was held in July of 2012. It served as the process kick-off where participants learned of the National Forum’s PIER (prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry) planning framework and established a vision of success for the group to work towards. A second meeting followed in October that involved stakeholders in discussions about the strategic use of data, the plan’s guiding principles, and possible PIER priorities.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

In February of 2013, the YVP Task Force hosted a Community Planning Forum that opened the planning process to a wider range of interested community members and stakeholders. Fifty organizations took part in the event, yielding 135 participants, 59 of whom were youth. Working in large and small groups, attendees: 1) shared the work that they were doing to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors associated with youth violence; 2) identified additional measures and resources needed to engender systemic change; and 3) further developed PIER priorities and strategy recommendations.

Meetings in March, April and May of 2013 built upon the findings and success of the Community Forum. In March, the Work Groups from the Forum reconvened to continue their analysis of the PIER priorities and to refine and augment their strategy recommendations. They and other members of the Task Force met again in April to make their final strategy selections, choosing action items that when implemented would impact multiple PIER focus areas and significantly improve the well-being of children,

youth and families. YVP Stakeholders attended their last planning meeting in May to review the outcomes of the planning process and to think through their next steps regarding plan implementation.



While YVP's official planning process concluded in May of 2013, efforts to fully resource and execute components of the community plan are just getting underway. All of the involved stakeholders and an even broader set of community actors are being brought into plan implementation to help mobilize widespread public interest in, support for and action around the regional youth violence prevention agenda.

GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Between June and December of 2012, the YVP Task Force developed a conceptual framework to guide the development and implementation of the community plan. Included in this framework are the plan's mission, vision, goals and guiding principles. Combined, these components help to clarify the principal work of the Task Force and reveal the aspirations and implementation expectations of its members.

MISSION

The mission of the YVP Task Force is to develop and institutionalize a comprehensive youth violence prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry strategy for the St. Louis region.

VISION

The YVP Task Force envisions a St. Louis region where youth, families and neighborhoods are safe, healthy and thriving. Within the region, organizations, systems and communities work together to create environments of peace where young people have the opportunities and services they need to achieve lifelong success and gains in social equity improve the quality of life for all.

GOALS

At its outset, the Task Force had three founding goals. They included:

- Engage a critical mass of organizations focused on youth violence prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry in the development of a comprehensive youth violence prevention strategy. Convene stakeholders across jurisdictions, sectors and areas of expertise to advance a broad course of action;
- Employ a Collective Impact approach to implement the regional strategy, focusing on the development of a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities and continuous communication; and
- Align funders and service providers' efforts around youth violence and community safety.

As strategy / plan implementation gets underway, these goals may be expanded upon or amended by Task Force members and community stakeholders.

GUIDING FRAMEWORK

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Task Force members identified six principles to guide their planning and implementation efforts in the near and long-term. As part of their deliberations, they focused on the results that adherence to these principles would help them to achieve as well as on the processes or strategies that would engender their desired results. YVP's guiding principles are presented in the accompanying tables.

Guiding Principle	Desired Results / Outcomes	Processes / Strategies For Achieving Results
<i>Collaboration</i>	■ Open communication within and outside of the YVP Initiative ■ Collective focus on a shared vision/regional agenda ■ A non-proprietary approach to resource and information sharing ■ Greater alignment of data gathering efforts among groups with youth violence interests ■ Increased cohesion and cooperation among all of the stakeholders / groups working on youth violence issues	■ Share data openly, in a transparent manner that can be manipulated for multiple needs. Adopt an open source approach to information gathering and analysis ■ Establish a communication infrastructure that facilitates connection, learning and decision-making among stakeholders ■ Bring together the many stakeholder groups that are working on youth violence to develop a shared vision and to better align their efforts ■ Plug new grassroots efforts into the regional framework and connect them to what already works ■ Develop and adopt shared metrics for evaluating YVP efforts, effects/outcomes and processes
<i>Community Engagement & Representation</i> "Nothing about me, without me"	■ A balanced, comprehensive approach to youth violence prevention that includes interested, invested and impacted stakeholders / groups in planning and implementation ■ Broad buy-in / universal ownership of YVP's plan and comprehensive strategy	■ Invite to the planning, decision-making and implementation tables a broad cross-section of stakeholders who touch youth violence issues in many different ways. Maximize representation ■ Share the plan with the community to obtain feedback and insights. Vet the plan in multiple forums
<i>Equitable Distribution of Resources</i>	■ Sufficient resources to respond to the youth violence challenge ■ Better alignment and coordination of resources, scope and need	■ Deliver comprehensive, well coordinated solutions to help meet the challenges with which violence ridden communities must contend ■ Adopt a targeted universal approach to plan implementation. This approach is inclusive of the needs of both dominant and marginalized groups, but focuses more attention and resources on addressing the conditions of marginalized populations
<i>Community-based Culturally Competent Service Delivery</i>	■ Implementation of youth violence interventions / services that are respectful of and responsive to the needs of the communities in which they operate	■ Involve the community in thinking about youth violence issues and in identifying, developing and executing solutions ■ Build upon the existing leadership and assets of the community ■ Define culture broadly, so that it includes ethnicity, age / generation, gender, lifestyle and other critical factors

Guiding Principle	Desired Results / Outcomes	Processes For Achieving Results
<i>Built-in Accountability</i>	■ Regular evaluations of YVP efforts ■ Shared accountability for outcomes across jurisdictions sectors, and areas of expertise ■ Increased coordination among public sector decision-makers, community-based groups, non-profit sector stakeholders, academics, faith-based groups and private sector leaders	■ Develop a data dashboard for the collaborative that tracks its function, progress towards goals, and outcomes. Establish built-in accountability measures ■ Advance cross-agency planning, operations and funding ■ Endorse data driven policies ■ Evaluate community change and openly communicate/share findings ■ Seek greater private sector involvement in violence reduction efforts
<i>Data-driven Decision-making</i>	■ Increased efficacy achieved through data-driven decision-making and data-sharing policies / practices ■ Implementation of long-term solutions that prioritize the use of data driven planning ■ A sustained and effective implementation of policies and programs that support safe and healthy families / communities	■ Tie goals and programming to research, evidence and best practices ■ Eliminate barriers to information sharing ■ Develop protocols for information sharing and imbed these into the Task Force's operations and culture ■ Standardize and classify data across entities, using similar language to facilitate common understanding

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The primary outcome that this community plan is working towards is a decrease in violence committed by youth under age 24. During the planning process, YVP Task Force members did not set an order of magnitude for the reduction in youth violence, a task they will have to undertake in the first phase of plan implementation. They did, however, identify several measures that could be used to gauge the initiative's progress and help assess their community impacts. These include, but are not limited to:

- Arrests for violent offenses of people under age 24
- Reported delinquency offenses
- Reported status offenses
- Reported school incidents (with a focus on the violent act incident rate and weapon incident rate)
- Number of school suspensions and expulsions
- Number of truant youth
- Gang involvement

The availability and accessibility of data for each of these measures is subject to jurisdictional protocols, collection mechanisms and reporting practices.

PIER PRIORITIES

Establishing the priorities of the YVP Initiative was an iterative process that involved input from Community Forum participants, fine-tuning by Task Force and Work Group members, and guidance from the Steering Committee. Together, these groups conceived nine strategic priorities to direct plan deliberations and inform the community's future actions. Eight of these priorities were devised to move outcomes in one of the plan's PIER (prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry) concentration areas. The remaining priority was developed as a meta-priority to drive improvements in all four areas of interest. Each of the plan's priorities is presented in this section for ease of reference and review, though detailed attention is given to the meta-priority. In depth explorations of the eight PIER-specific priorities are provided in subsequent sections of this plan.

META-PRIORITY

In keeping with two of the Initiative's guiding principles – data-driven decision-making and built-in accountability – the Task Force recognized a need to create a regional dataset that would help community stakeholders, service providers and members of the public not only track the incidence of youth violence, but also examine its contributing factors and consequences. To accomplish this, planning participants recommended the formation of a Community Safety Scorecard that would document public safety conditions among neighborhoods in order to focus public attention, mobilize collective action, and target regional investment. This Scorecard would also enable users to monitor data indicators in each of the PIER concentration areas, offering a snapshot of interacting socio-economic risk and protective factors by zip code that either contribute to or lessen violence in the community. Given the Scorecard's benefits, its development (and the strategic use of data that it affords), has become a meta-priority of the Task Force.

PRIORITY DESCRIPTION

Develop an annual Community Safety Scorecard that increases understanding of the causes, conditions and consequences of crime and violence. Use the Scorecard's findings to more effectively and equitably focus community resources and interventions.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Vision for Children at Risk, University of Missouri – St. Louis, St. Louis University, Washington University, Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville, St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, St. Louis County Police Department, East St. Louis Police Department, Metro East Police District, United States Attorney's Office – Eastern District of Missouri, United States Attorney's Office – Southern District of Illinois, St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis County school districts, East St. Louis School

District 189, St. Louis Children's Hospital, SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center

TARGET POPULATION

- Community leaders, service providers and members of the public in St. Louis City, St. Louis County and the City of East St. Louis

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<i>1. Produce a regional Community Safety Scorecard that is annually published, updated and publicized.</i>	Central to the YVP Initiative's success is the development of common metrics to track progress on its safety agenda across jurisdictions, sectors and organizations. Such metrics do not currently exist given the region's fragmentation and entrenched political divisions. The Community Safety Scorecard would provide a scalable platform for sharing data, advancing learning, improving strategy, and catalyzing coordinated community action.	Development of an annual Community Safety Scorecard	X	X	X

PIER-SPECIFIC PRIORITIES

In addition to the plan's meta-priority, the Task Force identified eight PIER-specific priorities to improve youth and community safety and well-being. Two of these priorities were in the areas of prevention and reentry combined, and the remaining six priorities were evenly split among intervention and enforcement. Taken together, these priorities address a wide range of strategic issues, including:

- Youth employment and job training;
- Youth resiliency and skill development;
- Access to mental and behavioral health resources;
- The availability and accessibility of safe places;
- Alternatives to youth incarceration and detention;
- Collaboration among law enforcement, families and the community;
- Youth's access to and use of firearms; and
- Aftercare services for reentering youth.

A graphic depiction of all nine of the plan's priorities is presented on the following page.

PIER PRIORITIES

PIER PRIORITIES AT-A-GLANCE



Meta-Priority: Develop an annual Community Safety Scorecard that increases understanding of the causes, conditions and consequences of crime and violence. Use the Scorecard's findings to more effectively and equitably focus community resources and interventions.

PREVENTION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

AREAS OF FOCUS

The broad arc of youth violence prevention covers a host of causal and contributing factors including, but not limited to, bleak socio-economic conditions, family instability, limited youth development, poor educational attainment and rampant unemployment. YVP stakeholders chose to focus their planning efforts on three areas of interest that have captured regional investment and attention – early childhood development, educational achievement, and youth employment. In each of these areas, they identified a corresponding priority or goal around which to coordinate action. Their priorities were originally as follows:

- Increase participation by at-risk families in high quality prenatal and early childhood development programs, with a focus on family strengthening and improved parenting skills;
- Improve the educational attainment levels and quality of educational offerings for both youth and adults; and
- Ensure that more young people have access to job readiness, training and employment programs.

After moving forward in the planning process, Task Force members realized that most of their recommended actions for the first two priorities were already being considered or undertaken by other multi-year, multi-sector collaborative initiatives. For these priorities there exists an extensive civic infrastructure that could benefit from YVP's support and involvement, but that does not require its guidance or direction. Efforts like the St. Louis Family and Community Partnership, the St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council, the St. Louis Maternal Child and Family Health Coalition, Project Launch, Childcare Aware, and United 4 Children are currently advancing greater alignment, capacity building, and program and service delivery in the areas of prenatal and early childhood development. Similarly, St. Louis Graduates (formerly College Access Pipeline), St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis County school districts, East St. Louis School District 189 and other community organizations have undertaken sustained efforts to enhance and reform local educational systems. Regrettably, severe cuts in public funding have brutally compromised coordinated community action and organizational programming in the area of youth employment, though there are noteworthy initiatives underway. As a result, this issue is the principal focus of YVP's prevention efforts.

TARGET POPULATION

- Children and youth, middle school age and up, who are at-risk of committing or experiencing violence due to chronic / concentrated poverty, low academic achievement, family instability, social isolation and/or other risk factors
- Youth returning to the community from incarceration, including youth detention facilities, area jails and state penitentiaries

PREVENTION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

PRIORITY # 1

Ensure that more young people have access to job readiness, training, and employment programs.

RATIONALE

Poverty and high unemployment create depressed conditions in which widespread criminal activity and violence emerge. Helping youth gain the skills needed to achieve long-term social and economic mobility while avoiding illegal activity requires a system of supports that rigorously prepares them for employment. Such preparation and training endows youth with a range of competencies that expands their access to opportunities; heightens their educational attainment; and increases their productivity and life-long earnings. It also helps them to develop the mindsets, motivations and pro-social behaviors critical to their future success and society's well-being.

DATA FINDINGS

According to a summary released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics the unemployment rate for youth ages 16 to 24 in the United States was 17.1 percent in July 2012. At the same time, the unemployment rate for young men was 17.9 percent, while the rate for young women was 16.2 percent. This gender gap in youth unemployment was exceeded by the pronounced disparity in unemployment rates across racial categories. In July 2012, the jobless rate for white youths stood at 14.9 percent, compared to 28.6 percent for African Americans, 18.5 percent for Hispanics, and 14.4 percent for Asian youth.¹

While youth unemployment data at the state and local level is often unavailable, the unemployment rates for the general population can give some indication of the trends for youth. In April 2013, the projected unemployment rate for Missouri was 6.6 percent while the projected unemployment rate in Illinois was 9.3 percent. During this same month, the unemployment rate in the United States was 7.5 percent.² Based on these numbers in 2013, one might expect youth in Missouri to have a slightly lower unemployment rate (though still significantly higher than that of the general population) than that for the United States and Illinois. Conversely, in 2013 one might expect a higher youth unemployment rate in Illinois than that for the United States and Missouri.

Furthermore, in 2012 (the most recent year for which county-level data is available) the unemployment rate stood at 6.7 percent in St. Louis County, 9.3 percent in St. Louis City and 9.7 percent in St. Clair County.³ Based on this data, it is likely that one might find higher youth

unemployment rates in St. Louis City and St. Clair County than in St. Louis County. This is especially noteworthy considering the high concentrations of African American youth who reside in portions of these two counties. As previously mentioned, African American youth have the highest youth unemployment rate of any racial category.

¹ *United States Department of Labor. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment and Unemployment Among Youth Summary. Summer 2012. Accessed at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/youth.nr0.htm>.*

² *United States Department of Labor. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Accessed at <http://www.bls.gov/lau/>.*

³ *United States Department of Labor. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. County Data. Accessed at <http://www.bls.gov/lau/#cntyaa>.*

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / COMMUNITY RESOURCES

St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment, St. Louis Development Corporation, St. Louis County Economic Council, St. Louis Regional Chamber, Missouri Career Centers, Better Family Life, City of East St, Louis, St. Clair County WIA Youth Grants, Youth Employment Strategy Work Group of the St. Louis Children's Agenda, St. Louis County Youth Resource Center, Junior Achievement of Greater St. Louis, St. Louis Public Schools, East St. Louis School District 189, Work Experience and Career Exploration Program (in District 189), Cooperating School Districts, Missouri Connections, Stl Youth Jobs, Incarnate Word Foundation, MERS Goodwill, Ranken Technical College, St. Louis Internship Program, St. Louis ArtWorks, Inroads St. Louis, St. Louis Job Corps Center, Emerson Park Development Corporation, St. Louis County Juvenile Justice Association, St. Louis City and Family Court – Juvenile Division, Innovative Concept Academy, Fathers' Support Center, Jobs for Missouri Graduates



PREVENTION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Create a regional youth workforce development plan that increases coordination around skills building among educational, economic development, government, business and community stakeholders.	Efforts to address issues of youth workforce development have been locally focused, resulting in a need for a comprehensive strategy that responds to the workings of the regional economy. A regional youth workforce development plan could increase coherence among the different municipal efforts, helping to align systems, programs and services to meet youth and employers' needs.	Youth workforce development plan created with significant stakeholder buy-in and implementation partners identified	X		
2. Utilize innovative social and electronic media to address job skills gaps among more youth and young adults. Local programs, like Junior Achievement's JA BizTown, use participatory activities and online training to expose youth to career opportunities.	Many of the region's youth have difficulty accessing job skills and training resources because of social isolation and transportation barriers. Targeted social and electronic media can expand youth's access to critical information, support networks, and interactive programming.	New and improved social and electronic media resources, smart phone "apps," and/or other technology that advance youth job skills	X	X	
3. Lobby area school districts to require that secondary schools mandate that students learn soft skills like resume writing and interviewing as part of their graduation requirements.	Often students finish high school without the requisite interpersonal and job readiness skills needed to secure gainful employment. The lack of workforce development courses in schools, when coupled with limited direction from guidance counselors early and often in the educational experience, places many youth at a disadvantage.	Expanded curricula and graduation requirements resulting in greater student proficiency on critical job readiness competencies	X	X	X
4. Through tax breaks and public incentives, increase the number of job opportunities that foster economic growth and development in the communities where many impoverished youth live. This helps to reduce the spatial mismatch and transportation barriers that routinely serve as impediments to youth employment.	Areas with the highest concentrations of youth at-risk for violence have experienced rampant economic disinvestment. Residents in search of employment usually have to look outside of their neighborhoods for jobs, which imposes heavy costs upon those least able to bear them. Addressing this, in part, requires creating more jobs where youth in need live.	Increased number of jobs available in targeted, high poverty neighborhoods Increased number / percent of eligible youth working for neighborhood employers	X	X	X

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
5. Develop and maintain a central data resource that provides information on the job training services and supports available to youth. Regularly update and heavily publicize this resource so that youth and their families are aware of it and use it. Service providers may also utilize it as a source for referrals and prospective partners.	Many youth and their families are largely unaware of the job training services, supports and resources that exist. Even service providers often have incomplete information given the region's fragmentation. A central data repository that is easy to access, understand and use could increase the numbers of youth taking advantage of and benefiting from area youth employment efforts.	Easily accessed and fully operational online repository of youth employment supports and services	X	X	
6. Assess and address job skills training gaps for youth. Promote innovative, place-based strategies that could be customized to meet youth's training needs in their neighborhoods.	Identifying the gaps in job training programs, services, outreach and resources for youth is essential to developing a strategic course of action. The resulting assessment could help to establish priorities; target interventions; reveal best and promising practices; and clarify leverage points. Findings / insights could then be applied to neighborhoods of interest.	Completed assessment of youth skills training gaps Recommendations report for closing the gaps developed, presented to the community, and being implemented	X	X	X
7. Partner with Stl Youth Jobs and other youth employment programs to advance a multi-year, multi-sector youth employment initiative.	Established in response to declining public funding for summer youth employment, Stl Youth Jobs is a pilot program that is providing concentrated funding to employ youth ages 16 to 23 from two high-risk St. Louis neighborhoods. Expanding the scope, scale and footprint of this initiative to serve more youth in the future requires an expansion of its resource base and partnership infrastructure.	Multi-year youth employment initiative underway with increased investment from the region's civic, corporate, philanthropic and community leadership	X	X	X

INTERVENTION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

AREAS OF FOCUS

Like effective youth violence prevention efforts, successful interventions promote resiliency against risk factors by building upon personal and community assets. Helping youth to turn away from dangerous influences, behaviors and situations is a comprehensive undertaking that involves not only addressing individual beliefs and choices, but also broad external conditions. Recognizing this, YVP stakeholders identified as their intervention areas of focus:

- Expanding access to high quality programs that build youth resiliency, teach positive social skills and impart practical skills around how to cope with peer pressure, gangs, violence, drugs etc.
- Increasing youth's access to and receipt of mental and behavioral health supports and services; and
- Extending the availability and accessibility of safe places for youth during evenings, weekends and summers.

There are considerable community resources for the YVP Task Force to engage when taking action on these priorities. The Wyman Center, Youth In Need, the SPOT and Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House are but a few of the acclaimed youth serving institutions whose model programs help youth meet their basic needs while building critical skills and competencies. Some of their work and that of many other organizations, specifically in the areas of mental and behavioral health, have been underwritten by the St. Louis Mental Health Board, St. Clair County Mental Health Board and St. Louis County Children's Services Fund. Funding from these agencies has enabled the delivery of acute services and evidence-based programs to youth in distress. It must be noted, however, that enhancing this support base is essential to ensuring the long-term safety and well-being of the region's youth and families.

TARGET POPULATION

- Children and youth who are at-risk of committing or experiencing violence due to chronic / concentrated poverty, low academic achievement, family instability, social isolation and/or other risk factors
- Children and youth who are at very high risk of offending or being victimized due to behavioral and mental health issues and/or repeat exposure to violence, drugs and gangs

PRIORITY # 1

Expand access to high quality programs that build youth resiliency, teach positive social skills and impart practical skills around how to cope with peer pressure, gangs, violence, drugs etc.

RATIONALE

Evidence shows that youth who possess greater self-efficacy and resiliency achieve better outcomes when facing challenging circumstances than their peers who lack these traits. Youth who have developed pro-social behaviors; are attached to school; have hope for the future; and maintain connections to positive adults, peers and organizations are less likely to engage in violent activities. These young people are often confident in their ability to act positively in a variety of situations and have the potential to be leaders among their peers. Programs that help these youth to develop positive self-image and social skills reinforce their ability to resist negative influences and deal with traumatic experiences. In an environment of shrinking social safety nets, this emphasis on learned behaviors and practical traits is not misplaced.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / COMMUNITY RESOURCES

CeaseFire East St. Louis, Stop The Killing Initiative Project, Wyman Center's Teen Outreach Program, Youth In Need, Better Family Life, Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, the SPOT (Supporting Positive Opportunities with Teens), Redeploy Illinois, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, Land of Lincoln (Education Advocacy Project), St. Louis County Youth Resource Center, Matthews-Dickey Boys' & Girls' Club, Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club, Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri, Greater St. Louis Area Council – Boy Scouts of America, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri, Real Talk Inc. – St. Louis, Girls Inc., Children's Advocacy Services of Greater St. Louis, Covenant House Missouri, HALO (Helping through Action, Love & Outreach) Project Inc., St. Louis Public Schools, East St. Louis School District 189, St. Louis County school districts, Ritenour School District, SSEHV (Sathya Sai Education in Human Values) Service – St. Louis, Innovative Concept Academy, Emerson Park Development Corporation, Curtis Miller Alternative High School, Anytown Youth Leadership Institute (a program of the National Conference For Community and Justice of Metropolitan St. Louis), YWCA Metro St. Louis Youth Leadership Academy, Cultural Leadership, Association of Settlement Houses, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, United 4 Children, CHARACTERplus, Epworth Children & Family Services, Lutheran Family & Children's Services, North Grand Neighborhood Services, Safe Connection's Teen Dating Violence Prevention Education Program, Voices For Children, Youth At Risk: Finding Solutions Together, Youth & Family Center

INTERVENTION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Advocate for the reexamination and recalibration of privacy laws so that they become less of an impediment to vital information sharing and coordinated service delivery.	Systems often have difficulty identifying and engaging youth who are at risk because of confidentiality protocols that prohibit information sharing. Increased data sharing among education officials, social service providers and law enforcement could significantly improve access to, the timing of, and the overall effectiveness of intervention efforts/programs.	Greater flexibility in the application of privacy laws and protocols that focus on youth	X	X	X
2. Advance the replication and expansion of programs that adopt developmental and restorative approaches in meeting the needs of high-risk youth.	Many intervention programs that target at-risk youth for services are punitive in their approach, reactive in their methods, limited in their aspirations, and unhelpfully isolating. Programs that recognize and respond to youth's changing developmental stages are often better at engaging and positively transforming youth.	Increased program capacity and youth participation in evidence-based / informed social and emotional development programs	X	X	X
3. Promote the increased professionalization of youth development and youth workers. Seek more professional development, interdisciplinary training opportunities and compensation for people who work with at-risk and opportunity youth.	Youth programs and development initiatives are frequently staffed by people who receive limited professional training and inadequate compensation. Connecting these workers to the skills, supports and resources they need to be effective would improve outcomes for them and the youth they serve.	More highly trained, skilled and effective youth development workers	X	X	X
4. Create an asset map / inventory of youth development and intervention programs that work. Make the findings both user-friendly and easily accessible to service providers, parents / care givers and youth.	The bi-state area has numerous youth development and intervention programs, but no central resource that promotes widespread knowledge of and connection to them. Efforts like United 4 Children's Youth Program Directory provide models that can be learned from and replicated.	Interactive asset map developed, online and fully operational	X	X	

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
6. Expand the capacity of and support for comprehensive alternative schools that address the cognitive, social and emotional needs of challenged youth and young adults.	Alternative schools play a major role in advancing educational attainment, skill development, behavioral interventions and employment connections for high-risk youth. Yet because they are often isolated and under-resourced, they require greater community support.	Strengthened and better resourced alternative schools	X	X	X
7. Pursue a collective impact model that crosses systems of care and advances greater collaboration and alignment among youth development and intervention programs.	Six local organizations have recently come together to invest in a collective impact feasibility study for the St. Louis region. This study will assess the community's readiness to undertake a coordinated effort that helps prepare the region's youth for college, work and life. The findings from this study will aid in the development and implementation of a local collective impact model.	Establishment of a collective impact initiative focused on positive youth development	X	X	X

PRIORITY # 2

Increase youth's access to and receipt of mental and behavioral health supports and services.

RATIONALE

The economic recession of the mid and late 2000s led Missouri and other states to sharply reduce funding for mental health and substance abuse services targeting children and youth. Faced with severe gaps in resources, area counties like St. Charles, Jefferson, Lincoln, St. Louis and the City of St. Louis passed local tax measures to augment state funding for these vital services. The results, both in terms of program and service delivery and improved youth outcomes, have been largely positive. Yet, considerable work remains to be done to ensure that more children and youth who need mental and behavioral health supports are readily able to access and utilize them.

INTERVENTION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

The importance of access to mental and behavioral health resources cannot be overstated. Untreated needs, issues and illnesses in these areas often underlie drug use and violent behavior. They also frequently lead to poor functioning in school and close association with dangerous groups and individuals. Psychological treatment, coping skills, and support – especially in response to trauma – are critical to youth’s healthy development and success in adult life. Ensuring access to these types of interventions early and often is thus an essential component of YVP’s comprehensive agenda.

DATA FINDINGS

Sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) gathers data on a number of indicators that provide insight into the mental and behavioral health status of American youth. In most cases, this data is not encouraging and strongly supports the need to increase youth’s access to and receipt of support services. According to the 2009 Missouri High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and the 2011 Illinois (excluding Chicago) Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 27.1 percent of Missouri youth and 27.2 percent of Illinois youth felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row, which contributed to them not engaging in some usual activities during a specific 12 month period. Distressingly, 15.4 percent of Missouri youth and 14.1 percent of Illinois youth seriously considered attempting suicide. Even worse, 6.4 percent of Missouri youth and 6.6 percent of Illinois youth attempted suicide one or more times within a set 12 month time frame. ^{4,2}

Data on physical fights and bullying also point to a need for mental and behavioral health interventions. Nearly 29 percent of Missouri youth and 27.9 percent of Illinois youth reported being in a physical fight one or more times within a specific 12 month period. In this same time span, 22.8 percent of Missouri youth and 20.4 percent of Illinois youth stated that they had been bullied on school property. And lastly, 10.7 percent of Missouri youth and 10.1 percent of Illinois youth acknowledged that they had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend within the 12 months leading up to the survey. ^{1,2}

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / COMMUNITY RESOURCES

St. Louis Mental Health Board, St. Clair County Mental Health Board, St. Louis County Children’s Service Fund, St. Louis Area Crisis Intervention Team, NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Southwestern Illinois, St. Louis Children’s Hospital, BJC Behavioral Health, SSM Cardinal Glennon Children’s Medical Center, SSM Behavioral Health Services, St. Louis Behavioral Medicine Institute, Youth In Need, The SPOT, St. Louis County Youth Resource Center, Covenant House Missouri,

Amanda Luckett Murphy Hopewell Center; Children's Advocacy Services of Greater St. Louis programs – Project TASK (Trauma Assessment Skills & Knowledge), CBITS (Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools) and TISC (Trauma-Informed System of Care); Children's Home Society of Missouri, Epworth Children & Family Services' Family Support Network Program, Family Resource Center, Great Circle, Kids in the Middle's School Outreach Counseling Expansion Project, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Neighborhood Houses' Caroline Mission Family Support Project, One Hope United's Functional Family Therapy, Our Little Haven's Keystone Mental Health Treatment For Children Project, Places for People's Multisystemic Therapy Project, Safe Connections, KUTO (Kids Under Twenty One), SAMHSA (St. Louis, MO – Illinois), St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis County school districts, East St. Louis School District 189

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). Missouri High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey. 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/states/mo.htm>.*

² Child Health Data Lab. *Illinois (excluding Chicago) Youth Risk Behavior Survey. 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.chdl.org/yrbs.htm#results>.*

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Advocate for increased insurance reimbursement for mental health services.	Many mental health providers do not offer services to youth because of low insurance reimbursement rates. Depending on the service, local providers receive from Medicaid anywhere from \$.30 to \$.50 on the dollar for services rendered. This single policy change would greatly increase the number of providers in the field and significantly expand access to care.	Shift in state policy resulting in higher reimbursement rates for youth mental health services	X	X	X
2. Work with hospitals and other mental and behavioral health providers to offer psychiatric tele-health services to youth.	Tele-health services are becoming increasingly more common as a cost-effective means of providing services to physically and socially isolated youth. Locally, BJC HealthCare is offering these services in Farmington. Nationally, the University of California, Davis is using psychiatric tele-health to deliver mental health supports to incarcerated youth and school students.	More providers start psychiatric tele-health programs More youth access and utilize psychiatric services	X	X	X

INTERVENTION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
3. Advocate for the broadening of existing health education curricula to include mental and behavioral health information and literacy. Better integrate health education and overall wellness training into school's basic education offerings.	Few schools have integrated mental and behavioral health literacy into their health education offerings. Students' and families' lack of knowledge makes identifying and addressing their mental and behavioral health needs more difficult. Greater curricular emphasis would help to demystify and destigmatize these topics.	Mental and behavioral health literacy incorporated into school health education programs	X	X	X
4. Advance collaborations / partnerships among schools and pediatric hospitals (as well as other providers) to imbed mental and behavioral health professionals in early childhood, elementary and secondary education settings.	While some schools have social workers and guidance counselors, a critical mass lacks ready access to mental and behavioral health professionals. More providers working in and with schools could conduct annual baseline behavioral assessments of students and perform crisis interventions when traumas occur. Such partnerships would lead to providers having a greater "frontline" presence that ultimately facilitates more proactive treatments and responses.	Increased number of mental and behavioral health professionals work in / with area schools More students receive needed mental and behavioral health assessments and services	X	X	X
5. Advocate for a change in school policies so that a diagnosis or IEP (individualized education program) is not necessary to access social services and mental health supports.	For youth who lack IEPs, getting mental and behavioral health supports in school is a real challenge. The reality, however, is that most students with behavior / performance issues could benefit from the resources reserved for those with a diagnosed disability.	Greater numbers of students receive helpful social services and mental health supports	X	X	X
6. Support the provision of evidence-based mental and behavioral health programming to students who have been placed in in-school suspensions.	In-school suspensions frequently serve as little more than holding places for youth who have been disruptive or exhibited challenging behavior. Using these "time outs" to 1) address youth's emotional and mental states and 2) strengthen their academic performance would help fulfill their intent and advance their effectiveness.	In-school suspensions become more effective platforms for addressing students' social, emotional and mental health needs	X	X	
7. Better coordinate the behavior management and mental health services already available in schools.	Schools have developed numerous intervention plans for at-risk youth, but there is often limited accountability and follow-through. Routine coordination and assessment of mental and behavioral health services in schools would help make their delivery less cursory, fragmented, and haphazard.	Increased coordination around and accountability for the delivery of mental and behavioral health services within schools	X	X	X

PRIORITY # 3

Extend the availability and accessibility of safe places for youth (ex. community centers, schools, churches etc.) during evenings, weekends and summers.

Rationale

Access to safe environments and positive peer culture outside of the home meets a developmental need of youth. Safe places offer structured environments that reinforce positive social behaviors; facilitate relationships with caring, empowered adults; and engage youth in constructive, supervised activities. They also connect children and youth to peers who are developing good social skills like teamwork, empathy and discipline, and provide opportunities for the routine practice of these skills.

Among the greatest benefits of safe places is that they serve as protective factors for youth experiencing considerable risk factors. They minimize the opportunities for sexual, verbal and physical abuse and reduce exposure to drugs, alcohol and other harmful influences. They also decrease stress on parents and caregivers, providing greatly needed supports and services.

Regrettably, the effectiveness of safe places is often compromised by operational parameters that are not attuned to the realities of youth culture. Many community centers, schools and neighborhood havens maintain conventional business hours and/or work weeks that leave youth with few positive options when they need them the most. Evenings, weekends and warm weather months are times of great delight for youth, but also function as peak periods for conflict and violence. Extending the availability and accessibility of safe places during these periods is thus key to keeping children and youth out of harm's way.

Potential Partners / Community Resources

Youth In Need's Project Safe Place (and all Safe Place locations), YMCA of Greater St. Louis, Epworth Children & Family Services and Epworth's Youth Drop-In Center, St. Louis County Youth Connection Helpline, St. Louis City 24-Hour Help Line, Behavioral Health Response, Wyman Center's Teen Outreach Program, ASAP (After School for All Partnership for St. Louis), ARCHS (Area Resources for Community and Human Services), Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House – Midnight Basketball Program, St. Louis County Youth Resource Center, North County Recreation Complex, Brentwood Parks & Recreation, Maryland Heights Parks & Recreation, Greensfelder Recreation Complex, St. Vincent Community Center, Affton Community Center, North Central Community Health Center, the SPOT, Matthews-Dickey Boys' & Girls' Club, Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club, St. Louis Public Library, YWCA Metro St. Louis, Covenant House, Urban K Life, The Salvation Army, Safe Connections, QuikTrips, Walgreens, UMB Bank, Local Police & Fire Departments, St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis County school districts, East St. Louis School District 189, Central Baptist Church, Trinity Christian Reformed Church, Mount Olive Lutheran Church, South Side Church of God, Immanuel Lutheran Chapel, Peter Lutheran Church, Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church

INTERVENTION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Create an asset map / inventory of safe places for youth so that families and communities have better, more comprehensive knowledge of the resources that exist. Make the findings both user-friendly and easily accessible to service providers, parents / care givers and youth.	Youth, families and service providers have limited knowledge of the supportive resources and programs that exist, often within their neighborhoods / communities. Raising awareness of these safe places, their hours / days of operation, and their services would increase their utilization and further improve youth outcomes.	Regional asset map of safe places for youth developed Map and/or its findings integrated with online inventory of youth development and intervention programs	X		
2. Pursue greater alignment of intervention and enforcement efforts neighborhood by neighborhood.	Safe places work best when they operate in conjunction with efforts to address neighborhood climates of fear. Youth can be in a safe place, but if the overall environment is one of danger, then the utility of the place is beset by a diminished impact. Partnerships and positive connections with law enforcement are integral to making safe places work.	Increased cooperation and collaboration among neighborhood-based youth service providers, community members, and local law enforcement	X	X	X
3. Seek earlier detection and identification of children and youth who demonstrate violent / dangerous tendencies. Provide these youth with additional services / supports in structured, supervised, safe environments that facilitate their growth and development.	Youth intervention services and resources are usually extended in response to a crisis, which is often too late to prevent serious social, emotional and/or physical harm. Earlier detection and identification of high risk youth could result in more effective and timely course corrections.	Widespread adoption of proactive identification, connection and intervention methods for youth in distress	X	X	X
4. Enlist more community and neighborhood-based organizations, faith groups, local businesses and others to serve as safe places for youth during peak and non-peak hours.	The lack of available safe places, particularly during non-peak hours like the middle of the night, leaves the needs of many adolescents and young adults unmet. In this void, youth activity remains unsupervised and opportunities for violence multiply.	Increased numbers of safe places for youth and young adults open during peak and non-peak hours	X	X	

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
5. Seek increased funding and resources for the system of supports that make safe places work.	Safe places are part of an ecosystem of supports that connects youth and families to vital resources and services. The persistent lack of funding for these services – like shelters and case management resources – restricts the effectiveness of these places and programs. They are left with fewer means by which to meet the needs of the populations they serve.	More funding for the system of supports (housing, mental and behavioral health, family services etc.) upon which safe places rely	X	X	X
6. Provide more professional and youth development training to the staff people who work in safe places.	Many of the people tasked with providing wrap around services to youth in need lack sufficient training and experience to be really impactful. Their relative affordability and easy rapport with youth (especially if they are young adults) makes them attractive, though not necessarily effective, hires. They require more guidance, assessment, and training to respond to the challenges that routinely arise.	More highly trained, skilled and effective youth development / intervention workers	X	X	X
7. Encourage more collaboration and greater alignment among agencies that provide safe place options.	There are numerous safe places across the region, but competition for resources habitually undermines meaningful connections and collaborations among them. The fragmented service delivery that results, especially within neighborhoods, is detrimental to children, youth and families.	Greater alignment and collaboration among safe places, particularly at the neighborhood level	X	X	X
8. Work with local emergency rooms to connect youth in crises with neighborhood based resources that can help them get the supports they need in more sustainable, effective and less costly ways.	In too many instances, local emergency rooms serve as default safe places for youth and young adults. This is a costly intervention that while sometimes addressing immediate needs does little to resolve the underlying causes of social, emotional and physical distress.	Fewer emergency rooms serving as safe places of last resort for youth Strengthened referral system connecting emergency health care providers to youth and family services	X	X	

ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

AREAS OF FOCUS

In recent years, violent crime has fallen across the region in response to concentrated law enforcement and community efforts. Youth violence has, however, remained a growing and intractable community concern. For YVP stakeholders, achieving and sustaining significant declines in this area involves the continuation of effective enforcement strategies, particularly around gang deterrence and the illegal use of firearms. Equally important, however, is the development of more alternatives to youth incarceration and detention since confinement often compounds social dysfunction and frequently contributes to an escalation of criminal behavior. Preventing this escalation is the work not only of the police and juvenile justice system, but also of community stakeholders including youth, their families, service providers and various neighborhood interests. Strong collaboration among these and other groups is both a fundamental component of creating safe communities and a priority of the YVP Task Force. YVP's three enforcement priorities are presented below:

- Increase alternatives to youth incarceration and detention. Enhance and expand diversion initiatives to reduce the jail population and prevent crime;
- Strengthen collaboration and active community policing among law enforcement, youth, families, schools and other community stakeholders; and
- Reduce youth's access to and use of firearms and illegal weapons.

TARGET POPULATION

- Children and youth involved with police and the court system
- Children and youth in detention and/or jail

PRIORITY # 1

Increase alternatives to youth incarceration and detention. Enhance and expand diversion initiatives to reduce the juvenile jail population and prevent crime.

RATIONALE

Since the late 1960s, programs that divert youth from involvement in the juvenile justice system have become increasingly more common as community stakeholders realize that imprisonment is often unnecessary to achieve society's goals. Diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration have in many communities helped to decrease rates of recidivism; reduce crowding in detention facilities; provide youth more appropriate interventions and treatments; and address issues of family instability.

By seeking to minimize youth's involvement in the court system, they have also worked to keep young offenders from growing up into hardened criminals.

This emphasis on jail or detention alternatives is not to be confused with a soft stance on crime. These programs do not relieve youth from taking responsibility for their actions. They do, however, operate with an understanding that all delinquent youth cannot be locked up and that arrests alone are an inadequate response to the issue of juvenile delinquency.



DATA FINDINGS

In every year for which data are available, the overwhelming majority of confined youth are held for nonviolent offenses. In fact, in 2010 only one of every four confined youth was locked up for a violent offense (homicide, aggravated assault, robbery or sexual assault).⁵ This greatly underscores the need to increase alternatives to youth incarceration, since the data clearly show that: 1) most youth pose a relatively low level of risk to public safety; and 2) the detriments of youth detention and confinement are considerable.⁶

Across America, there has been a decline in the confinement of all youth, including significant reductions for the five largest racial groups. Yet, tremendous disparities remain in youth confinement rates by race in the U.S., a trend that unfortunately is also apparent in both Missouri and Illinois. In the U.S., "African-American youth are nearly five times more likely to be confined than their white peers. Latino and American Indian youth are between two and three times more likely to be confined. The disparities in youth confinement rates point to a system that treats youth of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, more punitively than similar white youth."⁷

In Missouri the number of youth in confinement has fallen from 1,401 in 1997 (a rate of 246 per 100,000) to 1,197 in 2010 (a rate of 214 per 100,000). Comparatively, in Illinois the number of youth in confinement has decreased from 3,426 (a rate of 278 per 100,000) in 1997 to 2,217 in 2010 (a rate of 178 per 100,000).⁸

In the City of St. Louis, there were 688 referrals to the Juvenile Division for felony offenses in 2012. Slightly more than 1,500 referrals were made for misdemeanor offenses and 402 referrals were made for status offenses. A total of 564 youth were detained by the city in 2012.⁹

ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / COMMUNITY RESOURCES

City of St. Louis Department of Human Services – Juvenile Jail Diversion Project, Innovative Concept Academy, One Hope United Youth Diversion Program, St. Clair County Youth Diversion Program, Boy Scouts of America – Lewis & Clark Council, St. Louis Police Department – Gang Unit and Police Athletic League, St. Louis County Truancy Court, Family Court of St. Louis County, St. Louis County Police Department – Law Enforcement Explorer Program, East St. Louis Police Department – Police Camp, Metro East Police District, Missouri Juvenile Justice Association, The Ethics Project, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House – Teen Reach Program, University of Missouri – St. Louis, St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis County school districts, East St. Louis School District 189

⁵ Annie E. Casey Foundation. *KIDS COUNT Data Snapshot: Reducing Youth Incarceration in the United States*. February 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={DFAD838E-1C29-46B4-BE8A-4D8392BC25C9}>

⁶ Annie E. Casey Foundation. *NO PLACE FOR KIDS: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/OurWork/JuvenileJustice/JuvenileJusticeReport.aspx>

⁷ Annie E. Casey Foundation. *KIDS COUNT Data Snapshot: Reducing Youth Incarceration in the United States*. February 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={DFAD838E-1C29-46B4-BE8A-4D8392BC25C9}>

⁸ Annie E. Casey Foundation. *KIDS COUNT Data Snapshot: Reducing Youth Incarceration in the United States*. February 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={DFAD838E-1C29-46B4-BE8A-4D8392BC25C9}>

⁹ City of St. Louis Family Court. *Report to the Community 2012*. Accessed at <http://www.stlcircuitcourt.com/index2.html?XMLFile=xml/FamilyCourt.xml>

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Expand the capacity of all levels of law enforcement to make referrals to prevention and intervention programs, particularly programs located in neighborhoods with large concentrations of high risk and offending youth.	Police and court personnel often serve as the front line in dealing with disorderly and delinquent youth. While responsible for holding young people accountable, these officials can, if knowledgeable and supported, link youth to intervention resources that facilitate the adoption of more positive behaviors; engender lasting course corrections, and prevent more serious interactions with the criminal justice system.	More referrals of youth offenders to intervention, diversion and graduated sanction programs by law enforcement officials	X	X	X

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
2. For matters involving family related issues like truancy, household conflict, runaway youth and incorrigibility, work to divert law enforcement action away from court proceedings to crisis interventions that help stabilize both youth and their families.	Too often youth enter the court system because of family instability and conflicts that are better addressed through crisis intervention services. The most effective of these have as their goal the correction of negative youth behaviors and the stabilization of difficult family situations. They also refer youth and their families to community agencies that provide wrap-around services and supports.	Fewer arrests and detentions of youth for family related and nuisance issues Increased participation of youth and their families in crisis interventions programs	X	X	X
3. Support continued innovation in and expansion of model programs like St. Louis City's Juvenile Jail Diversion Project, St. Louis County's Truancy Court, and St. Clair County's Youth Diversion Program.	From Innovative Concept Academy to Truancy Court, the St. Louis region has developed innovative programs for addressing juvenile delinquency. In many cases, these efforts are severely underfunded and could be more impactful with greater resources and community support. This would enable not only their expansion, but also more widespread replication of their best and promising practices.	Increased funding and support for diversion programs that work Expansion and replication of effective diversion initiatives	X	X	X
4. Enhance rehabilitation programs for young people in jails and detention centers to reduce their incidence of reoffending and prevent future incarcerations.	Evidence shows that incarcerated youth and young adults can benefit from rehabilitation programs that are tailored to their developmental stages. These programs help them acquire needed interpersonal skills and provide cognitive behavior interventions that address dysfunctional emotions and maladaptive behaviors. Youth in these programs are less likely to reoffend, especially when given reentry supports.	Stronger, better resourced rehabilitation programs for offending youth Greater youth participation in rehabilitation programs	X	X	X
5. Involve more private sector, faith-based and community interests in the funding and development of diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration.	Severe cuts in public funding have eroded the resource base for local diversion initiatives. Broadening their community support by partnering with the private sector and faith-based groups is crucial to sustaining their effectiveness and ensuring their long-term survival.	Increased funding for local diversion programs More private sector and faith-based partnerships to support diversion initiatives	X	X	X
6. Foster greater collaboration and alignment among law enforcement, youth services and community development stakeholders. Connect this collaboration to the collective impact initiative described under Intervention Priority # 1, Strategy 7.	Interventions for troubled youth and communities are frequently conducted in silos that impede their effectiveness and positive impact. Increasing connections, alignment and collaboration among law enforcement, schools, youth services and community development agencies would yield more coherent systems of support for children, youth and families.	Less fragmentation among law enforcement, youth intervention and community development efforts	X	X	X

ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

PRIORITY # 2

Strengthen collaboration and active community policing among law enforcement, youth, families, schools and other community stakeholders.

RATIONALE

People in communities beset by violence have an extensive knowledge and resource base that makes them powerful allies to local law enforcement in youth violence prevention efforts. Many possess an awareness of the risk factors that give rise to anti-social behaviors and have experienced firsthand the devastating consequences of these behaviors. When networked and aligned, these stakeholders, including youth, families, residents, schools, churches, service providers and police have created various community partnerships with the bench strength to tackle serious threats to public safety. Their efforts, whether proactive or incident oriented, have helped to make neighborhoods across the region safer for the people who live, work and play in them.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / COMMUNITY RESOURCES

St. Clair County Sheriff's Department, St. Louis Police Department, St. Louis County Police Department, East St. Louis Police Department, Metro East Police District, Neighborhood / Community Policing Programs, School Resource Officers, St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis County school districts, East St. Louis School District 189, Neighborhood Watch, Citizen Patrol Program, Citizen & Teen Police Academies, D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Program, Safe Schools Partnership of St. Louis County, WAVE (Working Against Violent Elements) Task Force, Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, Inc. – Public Safety Advisory Council, Better Family Life, Boy Scouts of America – Lewis & Clark Council, Youth Development Service, Inc., Positive Alternatives for Youth, Manasseh Ministry, St. Louis Muhammad Mosque # 28, Washington Tabernacle Baptist Church, St. Alphonsus Liquori "Rock" Catholic Church, St. John's United Church of Christ, Central Baptist Church, Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church, St. Louis University, Youth & Community Empowerment Collaborative, The Ethics Project

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Advocate for the widespread implementation of “critical incident response teams (CIRTs)” that facilitate a coordinated response to youth violence among law enforcement, health care providers, school officials, and community members.	CIRTS take a comprehensive approach to addressing youth violence. They connect victims and their families with mental health trauma experts; debrief survivors; engage police and hospital workers; and notify schools of young people’s involvement in violent incidents. These actions help to ensure appropriate follow-up with youth who have witnessed, experienced or been party to violence.	Increased coordination among stakeholders responsible for handling the aftermaths of violence Stronger individual, family and group recoveries from traumatic events	X	X	X
2. Expand public health based violence prevention training for police officers, hospital personnel, school officials and community members to help broaden their understanding of and response to youth violence.	The public health approach to violence prevention assesses a variety of factors including health, education, social services, criminal justice and public policy to improve the safety and well-being of affected populations. By following this approach, community stakeholders gain a better grasp of the problem’s magnitude; have a clearer understanding of risk and protective factors; and are often able to conduct more successful interventions.	More effective youth violence interventions for affected populations	X	X	
3. Increase support for and participation in proactive community partnerships with law enforcement like Neighborhood Watch programs, the Urban League’s Public Safety Council, Community / Neighborhood Policing, and St. Louis County’s Safe Schools Partnership.	Creating safe environments in which children and youth can achieve their full potential is not the domain of law enforcement alone. Community partnerships that increase public knowledge and spur collective action help to advance multi-pronged responses to youth violence.	Increased funding for and involvement in community / law enforcement partnerships	X	X	X
4. Build the capacity of families, community members, congregations, schools, after school programs and service providers to work with gang involved and disconnected youth. Through training, technical assistance, networking, community summits, and police partnerships, help them to develop the skills they need to redirect youth from gangs and violence.	Helping violent, gang involved and disconnected youth embrace more positive life paths requires a depth of knowledge and expertise that many community stakeholders lack. Capacity building efforts can help close this gap, increasing the overall efficacy of community initiatives targeting these youth.	More effective school and community interventions for troubled youth Decreased numbers of youth active in gangs	X	X	X

ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

PRIORITY # 3

Reduce youth's access to and use of firearms and illegal weapons.

RATIONALE

Key to reducing the level of gun violence across the region is decreasing youth's access to and use of firearms and illegal weapons. Much of this violence, including aggravated assaults and homicides, is committed by members of rival street gangs whose hostilities are often concentrated in chronic hot spots. Increasing the safety of children and youth who are involved in or affected by gang violence is a comprehensive undertaking that requires among other things targeted law enforcement action, community-based problem-solving, and restricted access to deadly weapons.

DATA FINDINGS

In both Missouri and Illinois, the data suggest that far too many youth have access to weapons, carry weapons (including on school property), and have used weapons to threaten or injure others. According to the 2009 Missouri High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and the 2011 Illinois (excluding Chicago) Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 16 percent of Missouri youth and 12 percent of Illinois youth reported carrying a weapon (ex. a gun, knife, or club) on at least one day in the 30 days preceding the survey. More specifically, 5.8 percent of Missouri youth and 3.3 percent of Illinois youth stated that they had carried a gun at least one day in the 30 days before the survey.

For youth survey participants, weapons possession on school campuses and the surrounding environs was a concern. A little more than 5 percent of Missouri youth and 3.8 percent of Illinois youth reported carrying a weapon on school property at least one day in the 30 days leading up to the survey. Additionally, 7.8 percent of Missouri youth and 7.0 percent of Illinois youth said that they were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey.

The 2012 Missouri Student Survey (which surveys youth in the 6th, 9th and 12th grades and asks students to consider behavior in the past year, rather than just the past 30 days like the YRBS) found that almost half (45.6 percent) of all youth did not believe that a young person possessing a gun in their neighborhood would be caught by the police. Nearly 37 percent of youth surveyed thought it would be easy or very easy to get a gun if they wanted one. Survey findings also revealed that "older youth were more likely to report that they had one or more friends who had carried a gun for non-sport related reasons in the last year than younger youth. [Alarminglly,] around 30% of 12th grade students said they had peers who had carried a gun in the past year, a significant increase compared to 2006 when gun possession among peers was around 10%."

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / COMMUNITY RESOURCES

St. Clair County Sheriff's Department, St. Louis Police Department, St. Louis County Police Department, East St. Louis Police Department, Metro East Police District, WAVE (Working Against Violent Elements) Task Force, St. Louis Police Foundation, Better Family Life – Put Down The Pistols Initiative, Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, Inc., Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club, Washington Tabernacle Baptist Church, St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis County school districts, East St. Louis School District 189, CeaseFire East St. Louis, FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation); DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration); ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives); St. Louis City Sheriff's Department, Missouri Highway Patrol, St. Louis County Prosecutor's Office, Illinois State Police, U.S. Marshals' Office, St. Louis Family Court, Missouri Probation and Parole, St. Louis Children's Hospital



ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Expand the Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program.	Focused on reaching children before the prime ages for gang recruitment and involvement, G.R.E.A.T. works to prevent youth delinquency, violence and gang membership. More than 2,000 area youth have received training on topics such as anger management and decision-making. G.R.E.A.T. now operates in 23 public / charter schools and Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club. Expanding the footprint of this effective, evidence-based program would enable it to serve more youth at-risk of becoming victims and perpetrators of violence.	Reduced gang membership Fewer incidents of youth violence Improved relationships between law enforcement and participating youth	X	X	
2. Seek additional funding and resources for the Gun Buyback Program.	With Gun Buyback programs in 2007 and 2008 netting nearly 1,500 guns, the St. Louis Police Department is attempting to repeat its earlier successes in an effort to get both legal and illegal guns off of the street. To implement this initiative, more funds are needed to serve as incentives for prospective program participants.	Decreased legal and illegal gun possession	X		
3. For youth who have illegally accessed firearms, push for mandatory community service hours instead of a simple “no summons” if they are under age 17. Hold parents responsible for their children’s compliance.	Adolescents who have illegally accessed firearms can work to repair some of the harm caused by their criminal actions through mandatory community service. Service not only holds them accountable, but it also helps them develop useful skills through supervised work activities that improve the community’s quality of life.	Greater community accountability for adolescents who illegally possess firearms Decreased illegal gun possession among youth	X		
4. Advocate for restrictions on Missouri’s Right To Carry (RTC) law, seeking concealed weapons permits for inside and outside of automobiles.	In Missouri, the open carrying of firearms is permitted and anyone over the age of 21 can carry a handgun concealed in the glove compartment of his or her vehicle. New RTC restrictions mandating permits for firearm possession inside and outside of automobiles would further public safety.	New RTC regulations that require gun permits for inside and outside of vehicles	X	X	X
5. Increase the availability of gunlock boxes and help raise public awareness of their importance.	Gunlock boxes are one means of promoting the safe storage of handguns. They help to prevent gun-related pediatric injuries and reduce firearm theft. Getting more people to use them requires additional resources and the continuation of safe storage campaigns. These public awareness efforts often consist of television and radio announcements, educational materials, billboards, and discount coupons.	Increased use of gunlock boxes Fewer gun-related pediatric injuries Decreased gun theft and trafficking of stolen firearms	X	X	

REENTRY PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

AREAS OF FOCUS

After incarceration and detention, youth who return to the community encounter personal, social and economic obstacles that increase the likelihood of their reoffending. For YVP stakeholders, successfully addressing these challenges goes beyond young people's willingness to change their attitudes and behaviors. It more broadly encompasses the alignment of complex systems that when working together provide a continuum of services for youth and their families. Among the key offerings within this continuum are job training and employment programs, mental health and substance abuse resources, housing supports, and community connections that promote positive interactions and behaviors. With these offerings as their base, Task Force members established an initial set of reentry priorities that included:

- Providing more job training programs, job readiness assistance, and employment options to reentering youth;
- Strengthening aftercare services that work to keep reentering youth from being arrested or convicted of future crimes, including mental health, substance abuse and independent living supports; and
- Increasing reentering youth's positive associations and social networks so that they more easily access supportive people and resources.

This list of priorities was subsequently narrowed to a singular focus on aftercare services. Stakeholders recognized that much of the aftercare infrastructure and program capacity was oriented to adult ex-offenders, leaving critical gaps in the supports for youth. Targeted investment and action in this area by the YVP Task Force would help to close these gaps.

The remaining priorities have been retained, but are presented in other sections of this plan. Youth's job readiness training and employment are captured under prevention. And, youth's social skills and connections are addressed under intervention.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth returning to the community from incarceration, including youth detention facilities, area jails and state penitentiaries

REENTRY PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

PRIORITY # 1

Strengthen aftercare services that work to keep reentering youth from being arrested or convicted of future crimes, including mental health, substance abuse and independent living supports.

RATIONALE

The research on aftercare services indicates that when they are combined with community surveillance, they help to prepare incarcerated youth for reentry into the community; advance rehabilitation and behavior change; and appreciably reduce recidivism. Studies show, however, that their success hinges on several critical factors. Aftercare that works is built upon strong collaborations with community resource providers, offenders' families and the court system. It is also focused on reintegration during incarceration and involves a gradual transition between confinement and community life. Lastly, effective aftercare connects youth to essential supports that address their physical, mental, and emotional needs while helping them to manage the dangerous influences and circumstances that could lead them to reoffend.

DATA FINDINGS

It is important to note that until recently few states measured the recidivism of youth discharged from their youth corrections facilities. Still today, the juvenile justice field has not settled on a standard measure of recidivism, so comparing youth recidivism rates from one state to another is challenging. Nevertheless, studies show that an overwhelming 70 to 80 percent of juveniles released from youth corrections facilities are rearrested within two or three years for a new offense.¹³

While few states track the success that youth exiting juvenile corrections facilities have in enrolling in school and securing legal employment, there is no doubt that a high percentage of youth in most states remain disconnected from school and work following release. According to one study, just 12 percent of formerly incarcerated youth earned a high school diploma or GED by young adulthood, compared to a national average of 74 percent. This strongly supports the need to provide comprehensive support services to youth upon exiting the juvenile justice system.¹⁴

According to the "Juvenile Offender Recidivism Report: A 2009 Statewide Juvenile Court Report," slightly more than 2 percent (15,910) of Missouri's 648,648 youth aged 10-17 were juvenile law offenders in 2007. Of the 15,910 juvenile law offenders studied, about 26 percent re-offended with a new law violation within one year of their release. Furthermore, nearly 41 percent of recidivating juvenile offenders re-offended within the first three months of their release date. There were also

substantial racial disparities in recidivism rates among Missouri youth. Thirty-one percent of African American juvenile offenders assessed recidivated within the first year — the highest rate among all race categories.¹⁵

According to the report “Juvenile Recidivism in Illinois: Exploring Youth Re-Arrest and Re-Incarceration,” 60 percent of youth were arrested for the first time within the first year of release, 17 percent in the second year, and 8 percent in the third year. Cumulatively, this means that 86 percent of Illinois youth were re-arrested within three years of their release. White youth had the lowest three year re-arrest rate at 78 percent. Hispanic / Latino youth had a rate of 87 percent and African American youth had the highest rate at 90 percent.¹⁶

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / COMMUNITY RESOURCES

STAR (St. Louis Alliance for Reentry) Program, St. Louis City Continuum of Care, City of St. Louis’ Department of Human Services, ARCHS (Area Resources for Community & Human Services), St. Clair County Youth Coalition, St. Louis County Department of Justice Services, Multiple Options Inc., Missouri CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants), Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis, Missouri Department of Social Services, Missouri Department of Corrections, Missouri Department of Mental Health, Office of Congressman William “Lacy” Clay, Illinois Department of Corrections, Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, Places For People, ARCA (Assisted Recovery Centers of America) Midwest, The Ethics Project, St. Louis University, Washington University, University of Missouri – St. Louis, St. Louis Community College, Exodus 8 Christian Fellowship Assembly, Hope Church, Barak Christian Church

¹³ Annie E. Casey Foundation. *The Missouri Model: Reinventing the Practice of Rehabilitating Youthful Offenders*. Mendel, Richard A. 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={0DFFAE2F-6B48-4CB3-ADBB-ADF8A2EB6652}>

¹⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation. *The Missouri Model: Reinventing the Practice of Rehabilitating Youthful Offenders*. Mendel, Richard A. 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={0DFFAE2F-6B48-4CB3-ADBB-ADF8A2EB6652}>

¹⁵ Supreme Court of Missouri. Office of State Courts Administrator. *Juvenile Offender Recidivism Report: A 2009 Statewide Juvenile Court Report*. 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.courts.mo.gov/file.jsp?id=34387>.

¹⁶ Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. *Juvenile Recidivism in Illinois: Exploring youth re-arrest and re-incarceration*. August 2012. Accessed at http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/pdf/researchreports/idjj_recidivism_delinquents_082012.pdf.

REENTRY PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES / ACTION ITEMS

Strategy / Action Item	Critical Issues Addressed	Anticipated Deliverable(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. Advocate for a re-evaluation of policies that restrict safety net supports for ex-offenders.	The toughening of federal, state and municipal laws has resulted in an increasing number of ex-offenders being excluded from valuable social programs and employment opportunities. The range of exclusions vary, but can include anything from an inability to get a driver's license to a lifetime ban on receiving federal welfare. As a result, many ex-offenders have a diminished social and economic status, which severely limits their chances of success in the free world.	Dismantling of the collateral sanctions and safety net restrictions that impede ex-offenders' full citizenship	X	X	X
2. Increase information sharing and collaboration among court and corrections officials, community organizations, and youthful offenders' families so that at intake and release, parents / caregivers are more aware of the services available to their children and families.	The parents and families of offending youth are often unaware of the services and resources available to help their children. Without information and targeted intervention, the patterns of dysfunction that precipitated their children's criminal activity can go uninterrupted. Greater information sharing and collaboration among service providers, court and corrections officials and families is key to successfully redirecting youth.	Heightened awareness of resources and services among youth, their families and service providers Increased youth participation in available programs	X	X	X
3. Expand rehabilitation programs for incarcerated youth so that counseling, substance abuse, and behavior modification resources are provided before their release to better prepare them for reentry.	Age appropriate rehabilitation programs can help incarcerated youth and young adults obtain the socialization, mental and behavioral health resources, and interpersonal skills they need to better function. Youth in these programs are less likely to reoffend, especially when provided strong guidance and support following their reentry.	Stronger, better resourced rehabilitation programs for offending youth Greater youth participation in rehabilitation programs	X	X	X
4. As a standard part of service delivery, work to imbed mental health and substance abuse supports into residential and aftercare programs.	Emotional trauma and substance abuse are common among reentering youth and young adults. However, both conditions remain untreated among large numbers of youth because of a lack of knowledge and access, and limited resources. By imbedding more mental and behavioral health supports into residential and aftercare programs, more youth would receive the critical help that they need.	Increased access to and receipt of mental health and substance abuse services by reentering youth	X	X	X
5. Solicit additional funding and resources to increase housing and independent living options for reentering youth.	Stable, safe, affordable housing is in short supply for youth reentering society. Because of limited and often no options, many become homeless or are forced to live in dangerous situations beset by criminal activity. This increases reentering youth's social isolation and frequently leads to recidivism.	More and better housing options for reentering youth and young adults	X	X	X

IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

STRUCTURE & APPROACH

As with the planning process, successful implementation of this community plan requires the involvement of a broad cross-section of stakeholders – youth, community leaders, service providers, funders, elected officials, business executives, faith leaders and members of the public. To make this plan work, these groups will need to prioritize and share resources; align efforts; coordinate activities; champion policy change; and communicate frequently with the public. They will also have to find or develop an institutional home for the plan that advances its comprehensive approach while ensuring the coherence of its many parts.

To guide the transition from planning to implementation, the YVP Steering Committee will work with St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and East St. Louis officials to develop a targeted execution strategy. Together, these stakeholders will:

- Serve as champions and advocates for the YVP community plan;
- Identify initiative partners to undertake portions of the community plan;
- Expand YVP's regional network to include more decision-makers, issue experts and affected community members;
- Increase community ownership of the plan through the adoption of key priorities by community partners;
- Mobilize existing resources to support plan priorities and strategies; and
- Support the acquisition of new funding for approved plan initiatives.

The Steering Committee and its municipal partners will also have to locate the work of the YVP plan within the context of the regional Collective Impact initiative currently underway with The Forum for Youth Investment. Clarifying expectations and how the projects will collaborate will be crucial in advancing a cohesive regional agenda that focuses rather than fractures efforts, resources and public attention.

Once municipal and community ownership has been established, strategy implementation for the plan can commence in earnest. A host of regional actors and service providers with widespread organizational interests, areas of expertise, and programmatic constituencies will undertake this work. As these groups move forward in their efforts, it is important that they adhere to a common set of operational guidelines. At the very least, these should include:

- Adopting a needs based, youth and family focused model of service delivery rather than a categorical service model;
- Building upon existing community strengths and evidence based programs;

IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

- Sequencing efforts so that the early focus is on that which is most doable and meaningful, thus generating buy-in and momentum;
- Undertaking a targeted universalism approach to implementation that concentrates attention and resources on youth at highest risk of experiencing and/or perpetrating violence;
- Deepening community engagement to include more underrepresented, albeit integral, constituencies like the business community and reentry providers; and
- Structuring youth participation in implementation decision-making and strategy execution so that young people have a permanent voice and role in the initiative's work.

EVALUATION & LEARNING

To assess the initiative's efficacy, progress on YVP priorities, and overall community impact, the backbone agency will need to assemble a data team comprised of researchers, academicians, data specialists and issue experts. This team's first task will be to develop the Regional Community Safety Scorecard that will enable users to monitor data indicators in each of the PIER (prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry) concentration areas. Once approved and operational, the Scorecard will offer a snapshot of interacting socio-economic risk and protective factors by zip code that either contribute to or lessen violence in the community. It should be noted, however, that there are major data challenges, jurisdictional complications, and political considerations that have to be addressed and resolved in order for the Scorecard to become a viable community resource. If successfully established, the Scorecard would not only be a major tool for stakeholder and public learning, but also a catalyst for sustained community action.

In addition to work on the Scorecard, the data team will need to devise other evaluation tools that help to accurately measure the initiative's impact. These tools will help YVP stakeholders determine what is and is not working in a "no fault" environment that advances their awareness and understanding of youth violence dynamics. Their learning should inform the development of needed course corrections and should be shared widely with the broader community.

CONCLUSION

This community plan is an evergreen document, subject to revision and refinement as implementation needs and external conditions demand. It does not address the totality of what is being or could be done to prevent youth violence, but instead identifies key leverage points that if pushed could have a tremendous impact on children, youth and families' safety and well-being in the near and long-terms. When taken together, these leverage points or priorities present a collective action agenda for area governments, philanthropies, businesses, agencies, faith-based organizations and community groups to endorse and support.

On both sides of the Mississippi River, the magnitude of the youth violence challenge necessitates a coordinated, comprehensive response that is not fractured by jurisdiction, sector or area of expertise. This plan recognizes how crucial cross-government, cross-sector and cross-agency collaboration is to keeping children and youth safe wherever they live in the region. As the plan's authors, the members of the St. Louis Regional Youth Violence Prevention Task Force are committed to working together to create environments of peace in which young people have the opportunities and services they need to achieve lifelong success. And through sustained effort, the Task Force hopes to advance gains in social equity that will improve the quality of life for all of the region's residents.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PLANNING PARTICIPANTS & CONTRIBUTORS

The St. Louis Regional Youth Violence Prevention Task Force would like to thank the more than 200 community stakeholders, youth, funders, service providers, issue experts, elected officials and concerned citizens who contributed to the development of this plan. Without their commitment, time and intelligence, this undertaking would not have been possible. The following pages feature a list of planning participants (excluding youth) who are to be commended for their efforts to improve the safety and well-being of the region's children, families and communities.

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Planning Participants & Contributors

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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STEERING COMMITTEE

At the behest of the region's civic leadership, the YVP Steering Committee provided oversight and guidance for the planning process and made critical decisions at project milestones. This seven member volunteer team served graciously and tirelessly, meeting monthly to assess the Task Force's progress; convene stakeholder meetings; and execute planning action items. Committee members included:

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The staff members of Vision for Children at Risk researched, analyzed and compiled the data findings in this report. Their efforts were invaluable to the planning process and helped to reveal the data needs and challenges that await the Task Force in plan implementation. Special thanks are extended to:

- Rich Patton
- Elizabeth Hoester
- Ashleigh Harold

FUNDERS

Funding for the YVP Task Force was provided by several of the region's leading philanthropic organizations. Their project support and involvement made this plan possible and helped to catalyze widespread community action. Participating funders included:

- Daughters of Charity Foundation
- Deaconess Foundation
- Incarnate Word Foundation
- Lutheran Foundation
- Missouri Foundation for Health
- St. Louis Mental Health Board
- The Saigh Foundation

APPENDIX A: Map of Zip Codes Where Risks Factors for Youth Violence are High to Severe

