



CITY OF HARTFORD
North East Neighborhood
Revitalization Zone



The State of Youth Violence in North Hartford

In Collaboration With:

The Office of State Representative Brandon McGee (5th District), The Office of State Representative Douglas McCrory (7th District), Steve Harris, 5th Assembly District Town Committee, Councilman Kyle Anderson, Craig Stallings-Hartford Board of Education, Mothers United Against Violence, The Hartford Police Department, Wilson Gray YMCA, Phillips Metropolitan CME Church, Greater Hartford NAACP, It's A Gee Thang Barber and Beauty Salon



DATE
Monday, November 17, 2014

TIME
5:30pm - 7:30pm

PLACE
Parker Memorial/Kelvin Anderson
Community Center
2621 Main Street, Hartford, CT



AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions: Darlene Childs, *President-North East NRZ*

Purpose of the Forum: Steve Harris, *Spokesperson-5th Assembly Democratic Town Committee*

Video (You Tube) Vignettes: Kelvin Lovejoy, *Dir. of School & Community Partnerships-HCTC*

Testimonies: Comments from those we have assisted

The Appeal: James O. Morton, *CEO-YMCA Greater Hartford-Resources for "Boots on the Streets" and Workforce Development resources*

Key Leader Advocacy Comments: State Representative Brandon McGee-*5th Assembly District*,
Kyle Anderson-*Hartford City Councilman*,
My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge
Craig Stallings-*Hartford board of Education*
Marta Benton-*Hartford Public Schools*
Dr. Mark McKinney-*St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center*
Adrienne Cochran-*CEO Urban League of Greater Hartford*
Deputy Chief Brian Foley-*Hartford Police Department*
Reverend Henry Brown-*Mothers United Against Violence*

Q & A: Andrew Woods, *Executive Director-HCTC*



NEXT STEPS

- 1)** Pledge to support the appeal for "Boots on the Streets" Workforce Development resources.
- 2)** Commit to attend and/or testify at Legislative hearings at State Capital, City Hall, Hartford Board of Education and other meetings to advocate for funding and policy recommendations.
- 3)** Join and attend next Violence Free Zone Coalition Meeting:
December 1, 2014 from 6:00pm - 8:00pm
at HCTC, 2550 Main Street, Hartford, CT



THE CHALLENGE

In North Hartford there is a trend toward younger and younger youth turning to social media to threaten, intimidate, disrespect and announce their plans to target rival gangs and individuals.

Each week, hundreds of messages are generated and posted on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other social networks to illicit violent, retaliatory responses between warring groups and individuals. These actions result in the use of firearms, knives and physical assaults that take place in the community, schools, and places of business and in some cases at and around programs and recreation centers where youth and families should be safe.

In North Hartford, there are two significant gangs with affiliates as young as eight and as old as twenty-four who have been targeting each other through social media on a regular basis. In the most extreme cases this year, two 14 year old youth were shot by their peers and on November 14, 2014 a 13 year old youth was shot in the face after allegedly posting a threat or disrespectful comment on Facebook and/ or YouTube.

Each week, Hartford Communities That Care receives calls from frustrated and scared parents, the Hartford Public School system, service providers concerned about the safety of their programs and youth unable to travel safely to and from school, work/training sites and recreational centers.

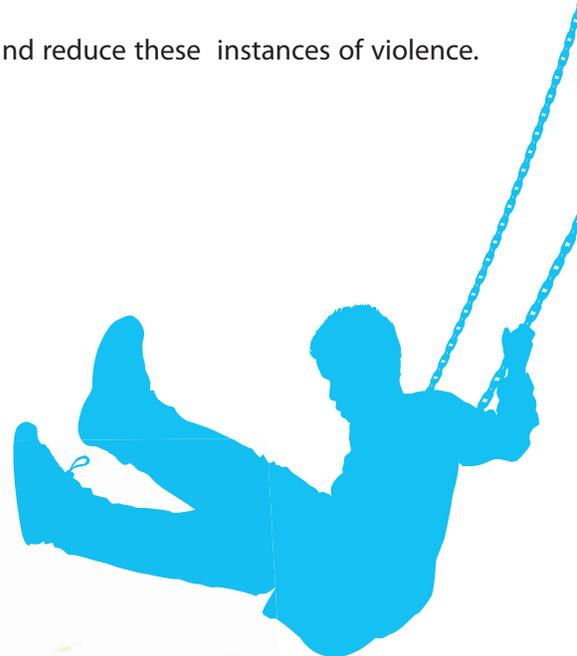
Since January 2014, the Hartford Communities That Care (HCTC) staff and our YMCA partners have responded to and provided support to nineteen families/ individuals impacted by gun violence, stabbings and other forms of assault that required hospitalizations or resulted in death.

In each case, anywhere between 25 and 60 hours of staff time is required to provide crisis intervention, gang mediations, consultations and referrals for additional services. This involves a unique blend of skills, commitment, intergenerational connectivity and staff that are grounded in the community to be effective.

Generally the approach is to engage high risk and “at-risk” youth to prevent and reduce these instances of violence. In this case, we are dealing with “in-risk” youth; which refers to youth that are already involved in acts of aggression toward their peers and others.

While there’s a tendency to encourage punitive measures to lock up these individuals, let’s not forget that the majority of these offenders are still children and adolescents. Further, many of these youth have been either witnesses of community and domestic violence and in too many cases victims of abuse, neglect, and other forms of violence.

Unfortunately, without adequate resources our ability to reach these youth and prevent and reduce violence is limited. However, with adequate and sustained resources, we can not only engage these young people but offer meaningful options and opportunities for “in risk” youth and their families.



FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Secure resources to hire Street Outreach/ Gang Intervention Specialist (“Boots on the Street”) modelled after the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model. Components include:

- Street Intervention and Outreach workers
- Linking youth to necessary services and supports
- Work with youth on employability skills
- Recognize and reinforce positive behaviors
- Resolve difficulties between youth, their families, other youth and/or agencies and schools
- Provide crisis response in conjunction with other agencies following a violent incident
- Act as a liaison between youth and service providers
- Provide quality interaction with youth and their families
- Provide youth with LifeSkills and workforce development training
- Provide Case Manager(s) to assist and support youth and their families

Secure Workforce Development resources to train and hire youth involved in the program:

Such resources can be used to incentive youth involved in the program that have demonstrated and met agreed upon outcomes such as:

- Staying in school and progressing to next grades
- Attending and completing other academic programs such as a GED or vocational training
- Demonstrated reduction of violence and aggression toward others
- Reduction in school suspensions and other disciplinary problems in school
- Reduction in arrest and/or opting out of gang involved activities

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a State-Wide Urban Violence Review Committee to examine and make recommendations to the Governor, Legislature, and other key stakeholders on what can and needs to be done to address urban violence in Connecticut cities.
- To expand the availability of mental health supports for witnesses of violent crime under the age of 18 years of age. Currently, no such resources exist for these individuals.
- Insure that local Crisis Response Teams in urban areas receive adequate resources to respond and support victims of violent crimes and their families
- To establish a hospital and community based trauma support partnership(s) in urban areas where victims of violent crime have a higher rate of re-victimizations due to retaliatory and increased exposure to violent encounters.
- Establish School-Police-Community Collaborations for School Safety in urban areas to prevent and decrease incidents of youth violence and increase linkages to effective trauma supports and other youth services.
- Insure that the appropriate resources are made available for crime scene clean-up to reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization among witnesses and victims of a violent crime.
- Insure that indigenous groups and agencies receive the technical assistance and support to assist crime victims in urban areas where resources are limited but the need for support is high.



SAINT FRANCIS
Hospital and Medical Center



Urban League
OF GREATER HARTFORD



PHILLIPS METROPOLITAN CME CHURCH



Hartford Behavioral Health



Andrew Woods, Executive Director
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Hartford Communities That Care

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