Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI)

$8,180,000 • 02/01/10 to 06/30/15

Goal: The VPI’s primary goals are to decrease rates of violence in identified areas of Milwaukee and possibly greater Wisconsin, and to strengthen community capacity to prevent future violence.

Progress: Programming has begun to show results for youth and families throughout the City of Milwaukee. Relevant information has been disseminated to community leaders, business leaders, government officials, educators, youth, adults, law enforcement leaders, community residents and others who have the opportunity to impact the reduction of violence. The “Evidence for Action” report was released, providing data to help understand the scope of youth violence. The report includes risk and protective factors as well as evidence-based opportunities for prevention. The report offers strategies using a “from the ground up” approach, benefiting leaders working alongside community residents to mobilize in their respective neighborhoods.

A second capacity building training was held on ethical practices for the two community teams. Over 50 community meetings around the City of Milwaukee pertaining to violence prevention included representation from the VPI staff. VPI staff finalized the recruitment and interview process to establish the VPI Youth Council in November 2011. Training sessions were held at Cardinal Stritch University that focused on youth leadership, public speaking, violence prevention strategies, and community engagement.

Programs and curricula have been identified that target parents, children, youth, and young families to increase parental skills and family stability by addressing topics such as health and nutrition, child/youth resiliency skills, development, and communication and behavior skills development in young people, parents and other adults.

Two medical students in the MCW Urban and Community Health Pathway received mentorship and educational opportunities within the VPI, as well as two MCW Public and Community Health PhD students. This expanded the efforts to connect academic students with the grass roots community. Collaboration was created with the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission’s with the goal of data sharing and development of jointly sponsored scientific journal submissions and community reports based on these data.

During this reporting period, VPI partners collaborated with national experts on violence prevention, leaders from Academic Centers of Excellence, and members of the Division of Violence Prevention at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Jonathan Shepherd, MD, from Cardiff, Wales visited Milwaukee in November 2011 to discuss the development, implementation and evaluation of the Cardiff Model which links emergency department and law enforcement data. Steve Hargarten, MD, MPH, participated in a 2.5 day “Emerging Issues in Adolescent Health” consultation event hosted by Johns Hopkins University in October 2011, where health researchers and program leaders from around the world focused on non-communicable conditions impacting adolescent health including youth violence. Dr. Hargarten also participated in the Institute of Medicine’s Forum on Global Violence workshop, “Communication and Technology for Violence Prevention” in December 2011.