

PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM SURVEY- Injury

Contact Information

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Short Title: Violence Intervention & Prevention Initiative

Program Location: 4 sub-neighborhoods in Boston with the highest levels of gang activity and youth violence

Objectives and Goals:

The *Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP)* initiative addresses violence in four sub-neighborhoods in Boston that have the highest levels of gang activity and youth violence. VIP is a data-driven collaborative approach relying on coordination and collaboration of city partners, community based organizations and the Boston Police Department. Key program goals and objectives are: strengthening resident and community engagement through the development of neighborhood coalitions; increasing youth access to employment, summer and after-school opportunities; and reducing physical disorder (such as abandoned cars and broken streetlights) that contributes to crime.

Methods:

Central to the VIP Initiative is coalition building. VIP funds four community-based organizations as lead coordinators of coalitions in each VIP neighborhood. Each coalition is staffed by a VIP Neighborhood Coalition Coordinator employed by the local neighborhood agency. Each VIP coalition has designed and is implementing a Neighborhood Violence Prevention plan that describes the nature and extent of violence in the community and identifies goals, objectives and outcomes. Through the coalitions, VIP implements evidence-based best practices. The coalitions and city agencies have partnered to increase access of youth to after school, summer and employment opportunities. Numerous studies find that after-school programs can keep young people safe, and help steer them away from negative and unsafe behaviors. The neighborhood coalitions also identify and address physical issues in the community, such as abandoned cars, broken streets lights and other indicators of physical disorder. Research has shown that improving the physical environment in high-crime neighborhoods, when combined with community engagement, can reduce crime.

Program Length:

The Violence Intervention & Prevention Initiative began in November 2007 and is an ongoing program of the Boston Public Health Commission.

Number of target population reached by effort:

From January to May 2009, the coalitions have held 22 meetings with 103 residents and 141 community and city partners attending. In addition, they have implemented 46 events or activities in their neighborhoods with 3,267 participants. To increase resident participation, the coalitions have distributed 9,300 flyers and conducted 4 door knocks where they visited 272 homes and made 98 resident contacts.

Demographic Info:

The four VIP sites are located within the inner-city neighborhoods of Roxbury and Dorchester. Roxbury has a population of approximately 57,000 and is majority Black (64%) with a fast-growing Latino population that now accounts for 26%. Approximately 1/3 of the population is below 18 years of age. Dorchester has a diverse population of 93,000: Blacks comprise 39% of residents, Whites 32%, Latinos 12% and Asians 12%. The area has approximately 4,800 residents in the 10-14 age range. Both neighborhoods have a much higher percentage of children living in poverty, much lower median incomes and much higher rates of children living in female-headed families.

Overall Cost:

Currently, the budget for the VIP Initiative is \$250,000 per year which funds a Program Manager, a VIP Coalition Coordinator who provides technical assistance directly to the coalitions, and 4 VIP neighborhood coalitions at \$30,000 each.

Funding Sources:

27 % Local
73 % Other, Private grant
percentages are NOT estimates

Outcomes:

Crime statistics are available from the first year of the initiative. There is some fluctuation across the four VIP sites, but overall we saw decreases in crime within VIP areas from 1/1/08 through 11/30/08, compared to same period the previous year. These are positive trends but the initiative has not been evaluated and we are not certain if they can be attributed to the intervention.

Did you make any estimates regarding costs deferred, outbreaks averted or deaths prevented?

N/A

Additional Information:

N/A

Future Plans:

In October 2009, VIP will be receiving a two year federal grant from the Department of Justice that will allow us to expand our programming and increase our operating budget from \$250,000 to \$450,000 per year. In Year 1, we will expand the geographic areas of each of the four VIP areas by 20% and increase resident engagement in each neighborhood by 50%. We will also add a fourth goal to the initiative to address maternal and child health and environmental health outcomes in each of the neighborhoods. This will include but not be limited to, ensuring home visiting and case management for every family from pregnancy through age 5; Referral to Early Intervention or other programs for infants and toddlers with special needs; Linkage to public benefits and supports; Youth leadership opportunities; Family consultation to assure coverage and medical home for every family member; Home inspection for lead and other household hazards

In Year 2 of the federal grant, we will add an additional neighborhood to the VIP areas by analyzing current crime trends and contract with a lead community based organization through a competitive bid process.