



Minneapolis Neighborhood Safety Department

April 2023





Background

Prior to 2023, the City's public health-oriented violence prevention and intervention work was housed in the Office of Violence Prevention, a division within the Health Department.

As part of the City's government restructure, that work was moved in January 2023.

What was the Office of Violence Prevention in the Health Department became the new Neighborhood Safety Department in the new Office of Community Safety.



Neighborhood Safety Overview

The Neighborhood Safety Department works toward violence-free communities where everyone is safe, healthy, hopeful, and thriving.

We use public health approaches to help reduce the impact of violence on our communities.

We work to address the complex root causes of violence to change conditions so that violence is less likely to happen in the first place.

At the early signs of risk, we work to reduce factors that contribute to risk for violence and promote protective factors that can buffer against the risk for violence.

When violence occurs, we work to break the cycle of violence by supporting individuals and communities that have been impacted.



Neighborhood Safety Approaches

We are guided by evidence, driven by community, and rooted in collaboration. To achieve our objectives, we:

- Build and operate local versions of evidence-informed strategies and best practices that have shown promise for reducing violence through scientific research and study.
- Provide tools, skills, and resources to local community-based organizations so that they can build their capacity to do effective violence prevention work.
- Partner with local community-based organizations to develop and operate innovative, community-driven violence prevention strategies.
- Convene stakeholders and collaborate with partners like other City departments, other government systems, schools, libraries, parks, community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, residents, and more to build collective impact around violence prevention.

Neighborhood Safety Strategies and Initiatives

We operate many strategies and initiatives as part of our public health approach to reducing the impact of violence on communities. Most of them fall under three approaches:

Evidence-informed strategies

- Next Step (hospital-based violence intervention)
- Group Violence Intervention
- Minneapolis Strategic Outreach Initiative (Violence Interrupters)

Capacity building, innovation, and community engagement

- Blueprint Approved Institute Fellowship
- Violence Prevention Fund
- Community Navigators
- Minneapolis Violence Prevention Community Champions

Youth-centered prevention and intervention

- Inspiring Youth
- Youth Connection Center
- Coaching Athletes Into Leaders

Evidence-Informed Strategies:

We rely on strategies grounded in theory and research that have demonstrated promise or a likely positive impact.

Scientific evidence supports the potential for the effectiveness of several community violence prevention and intervention strategies.

We have adopted three of those strategies locally.

Strategy Spotlight: Next Step

Next Step is a hospital-based program that connects survivors of a violent injury like a gunshot wound to resources and support.

Hospital-based violence intervention is an important strategy because data tells us that violence is cyclical. This means people who have been violently injured once are at greater likelihood of being hurt again. Evidence also shows that sometimes victims of violence may perpetuate cycles of violence that has been committed against them.

Next Step Hospital Responders are on hand to provide immediate bedside support for people who have survived violent injuries while they're still in the hospital.

After they leave the hospital, Next Step Case Managers continue to support participants around things like: access to crime victim services funding; connections to educational, vocational training, and employment opportunities; support with housing; securing basic needs; finding safety after an injury; mental health services; court advocacy; and more.

Independent evaluations of hospital-based violence prevention programs from across the country suggest that they can reduce violent reinjury and justice system involvement and increase usage of community services.

Next Step is a partnership with Hennepin Healthcare/Hennepin County, North Memorial, Abbott Northwestern, and Minneapolis Children's and is also funded by the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs and Hennepin County.

Strategy Spotlight: Group Violence Intervention

Group Violence Intervention is an evidence-informed, internationally used strategy for addressing homicide and gun violence associated with street groups or gangs.

Research suggests that a large percentage of gun violence that occurs in cities is driven by a relatively small number of people organized into groups. The GVI strategy focuses on those groups to reduce group-involved homicide and gun violence.

GVI brings together community, social services, and law enforcement. Together, the partners help people who are involved with group violence to understand the GVI message: that the violence is unacceptable; that there are natural, procedurally just legal consequences for continued engagement in that violent behavior; and that there is help available for people wanting to disengage from cycles of violence.

At the same time, GVI support and outreach providers—people with lived experience with group violence—work with participants to:

- Help keep them safe, alive, and free
- Provide needed resources and navigate individual and systemic barriers
- Address trauma
- Create an offramp away from the cycle of violence

Evaluations suggest that the GVI strategy can reduce shooting behavior, victimization, shootings, and homicides.

Strategy Spotlight: Minneapolis Strategic Outreach Initiative

The Minneapolis Strategic Outreach Initiative is built on the principle that violence acts like a contagion. It uses public health-based strategies to help reduce community violence by interrupting cycles of violence and stopping the spread.

Violence Interrupters—credible messengers who have relationships in their communities and who are familiar with the impact of violence—canvas neighborhoods across the city. They do not carry weapons, provide law enforcement services, or respond in real-time to 911 calls.

Instead, they:

- Use credibility and training to build relationships with people who may be at risk of involvement with serious violence and use those relationships to identify and understand conflicts that may become violent.
- Work to stop the spread of that violence with their skills in de-escalation, informal mediation, and non-physical conflict resolution.
- Support behavior change for people by communicating about the costs of using violence and supporting access to services and resources.

The initiative draws inspiration from the Cure Violence model. Independent evaluations of violence interrupter strategies (like Cure Violence) suggest that the strategy can reduce gun injuries, shootings, and homicides and promote positive changes around violence norms.

Violence Interrupters and Team Leads are trained by Cure Violence Global.

Capacity Building and Innovation

The epidemic of gun violence is complex, nuanced, and multifaceted. It doesn't always look the same in different places or at different periods of time.

And, the wisdom and expertise of local community is powerful.

So, we believe that our responses should reflect and be responsive to the needs and uniqueness of our local communities.

We also believe we have a role to play in supporting incubation of new and promising ideas rooted in community.

Strategy Spotlight: Blueprint Approved Institute

Through the Blueprint Approved Institute, we train and fund small, grassroots organizations who are working to prevent violence.

As part of a cohort, participants receive training and support to learn skills and build capacity for further development of their organizations.

They also receive funding to provide violence prevention programming with hands-on support and technical assistance.

Though all of that, we help to build capacity, develop leadership skills, foster additional violence prevention programming in our communities, create a place where fellows can network with each other and create long-lasting collaborative relationships, and set organizations up to succeed in securing other funding and evaluating their efforts.

Strategy Spotlight: Violence Prevention Fund

The Violence Prevention Fund invests in community-led strategies that address multiple forms of violence in diverse ways.

It is built on the understanding that a successful citywide approach to violence prevention must incorporate strategies that are rooted in the experience and wisdom of community-based practitioners.

Once or twice per year, we issue a Request for Proposals so that community members can apply for funding. Through that open, competitive solicitation process, community organizations submit proposals for funding. Through a proposal review process, some organizations are identified for funding.

Violence Prevention Fund activities have included things like community building, space activation, youth skills training, youth-led programming, leadership development, street outreach, trauma awareness and resilience work, restorative justice events, partnership development across organizations and systems, community meals, resource referrals, and more.

Strategy Spotlight: Community Navigators

Community Navigators help promote trust between community and the City's community safety systems through cultural and issue-specific lenses.

Community Navigators establish and grow traditional and non-traditional partnerships between Neighborhood Safety, the Minneapolis Police Department, service providers, and community members, while supporting procedural justice and community engagement.

Community Navigators were created with equity in mind. The team is equipped to serve the diverse communities of Minneapolis.

Strategy Spotlight: Minneapolis Violence Prevention Community Champions

In 2022, we launched our new Minneapolis Violence Prevention Community Champions Institute (MVPCC) initiative.

MVPCC is one part of a five-year grant we received from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention focused on youth violence prevention, social determinants of health, and racial equity.

Through MVPCC, we provide trainings and skill building to community members who want to play an active role around violence prevention in their communities. Training institutes are free and open to the public.

Community Champions receive foundational training on the public health approach to violence prevention, adverse childhood experiences, and conflict resolution and de-escalation skills.

We also offer additional free, public deep dive trainings. Past topics have included: Healing from Childhood Trauma, Psychological First Aid, How to be an Askable Adult, 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities & Intimate Partner Violence Prevention, Stop the Bleed, and more.

Youth-centered Prevention and Intervention

The roots of our work date back to 2006, when the City Council declared youth violence a public health crisis.

The early focus on youth violence prevention remains with us today.

We focus on reducing risk factors and building protective factors for young people.

By centering young people, we can make a difference for today and tomorrow.

Strategy Spotlight: Inspiring Youth

Inspiring Youth is an early intervention resource for young people ages 10-17 meant to reduce risk factors that may increase the risk for involvement with violence and promote protective factors that may be a buffer against the impact of risk factors.

A strong and growing base of scientific evidence suggests that there are multiple prevention strategies that reduce youth violence. Inspiring Youth emphasizes several of those strategies:

- Promoting family environments that support healthy development
- Strengthening youths' skills
- Connecting youth to caring adults and activities

The approach is trauma-informed, strengths-based, and culturally responsive and draws from elements of cognitive-behavioral mental health interventions and the principles of Positive Youth Development. Participating young people are referred by schools, juvenile diversion partners, and other sources. Participation is voluntary. Participants are matched with a trained Youth and Family Worker who meets weekly with the young person to provide:

- One-to-one mentoring
- Navigation of culturally relevant community resources
- Help with basic needs
- Assistance with setting and achieving short-term and long-term goals
- Support with participation in school, recreational activities, career pathways, leadership opportunities, and civic engagement.
- Funds to cover fees for things like driver's education, camps, tutoring, classes, sports teams, field trips, and more.

Strategy Spotlight: Youth Connection Center

The Youth Connection Center (YCC) is an early intervention resource for young people ages 10-17 who encounter law enforcement for low-level offenses, curfew, or truancy.

The YCC is jointly governed in collaboration between the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and Minneapolis Public Schools.

The YCC is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It is staffed by youth workers from a contracted community-based provider, The Link.

Staff from The Link use Positive Youth Development approaches to work with young people to understand their needs, provide immediate crisis support, and ensure they make it home safely.

When a young person arrives at the YCC, immediate services include:

- Risk and needs screening
- Mental health screening and connections to mental health services
- Assistance with parent/guardian involvement
- Enriching and educational activities
- Information on rights and responsibilities
- Connections and referrals to community services
- Resources for sexually exploited/trafficked youth

Young people served at the YCC can also engage in long-term case management services that provide further community-based support.

Strategy Spotlight: Coaching Athletes Into Leaders

Through Coaching Athletes into Leaders, we partner with high school-aged youth sports coaches to use a curriculum to talk with athletes about healthy relationships.

Coaching Athletes into Leaders is based on a national model that has been independently evaluated and shown to have promise of effectiveness in areas related to teen dating violence prevention.

Coaches have tremendous influence in their athletes' lives. Leveraging that influence can be a powerful way to reach young people about:

- Recognizing dating and relationship violence
- Standing up for healthy relationship behaviors
- Solving problems without using violence
- Setting a positive example for peers.

We have worked with coaches at high schools and in community settings.



For questions or more information,
please reach out to:

ViolencePrevention@minneapolismn.gov