

TURNING THE CURVE
**YOUTH
VIOLENCE
PREVENTION
STRATEGIC PLAN**
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY • 2015

**The Youth Violence
Prevention Task Force
Mission is to create:**

an equitable, united, and safe county where all youth are engaged in family, school and community, have a sense of safety and wellbeing, feel they have a voice and are empowered to use it, and are able to access opportunities for successful transition into adulthood.

INTRODUCTION

**“THE COUNTY’S FUTURE
COULD BE A POSITIVE
OR NEGATIVE ONE, IT
ALL DEPENDS ON THE
WILLINGNESS OF THE ENTIRE
COMMUNITY TO UNITE AND
SUPPORT THE YOUTH.**

**WITH AN EMPOWERED
YOUTH GIVEN THE RIGHT
OPPORTUNITIES, THE FUTURE
OF THE COUNTY WILL BE
NOTHING BUT GOOD.”**

*- Verenise Valentin Youth Representative,
YVPT STEERING COMMITTEE; CITY MANAGER, WATSONVILLE YOUTH CITY COUNCIL*

Youth violence both directly and indirectly impacts the health, quality of life and future of our youth and our community. In response, the Youth Violence Prevention Task Force (YVPT) was formed in October 2012 as a project of the Criminal Justice Council (CJC) of Santa Cruz County to better understand the problem and its solutions. The Task Force and its three workgroups and steering committee is comprised of over 75 stakeholders including elected officials, law enforcement, schools, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, youth, formerly incarcerated individuals and concerned citizens.

Over the last three years, the YVPT has engaged well over 200 community stakeholders including elected officials, law enforcement, schools, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, youth, formerly incarcerated individuals and concerned citizens in a countywide youth violence prevention strategic planning process. This inclusive multi-sector collaborative is committed to addressing youth violence through a strength based public health approach of prevention, intervention and suppression.

The youth and the communities that make up Santa Cruz County are the reason for this work, and they are also part of the solution. Together we can create safer communities, supported families, and opportunities for successful youth.

METHODOLOGY

YVPT chose to use Results Based Accountability for the planning process because it allowed a common agenda and solve problems together, bridging divides and rising above special interest. Methods used include informant interviews, bi-lingual focus groups, surveys and police ride-alongs. Planning included

IMPLEMENTATION

YVPT is committed to moving from planning to action. Successful implementation will require equity, and inclusion (REI). Successful implementation must occur at the neighborhood level through focus groups and action plans. To measure our success, we will be asking the three basic

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN

The following table outlines the strategic plan. It identifies

Results & Strategies

YOUTH ARE LIFE, COLLEGE, AND CAREER READY

- Early identification of challenged/at-risk students
- Improve teacher-student-parent relationships
- Increase knowledge of & access to academic supports and community resources
- Safe routes to schools
- Continuum of responses
- Family engagement
- Data analysis & policy review
- School climate strategies
- Personalized education paths
- Targeted intervention for challenged/at-risk students
- Academic support
- Business engagement
- Youth employment services
- Outreach to disconnected youth & their families
- Diversion and alternatives to justice system involvement
- Multi-disciplinary approaches

YOUTH ARE SUPPORTED BY CARING ADULTS

- Social-emotional learning curriculums/ programs
- Improve youth-teacher/education staff relationships
- Teacher engagement strategies
- School climate strategies
- School-based behavioral health services
- Community-based organization (CBO) prevention & intervention on school campuses
- Increased knowledge of & access to pro-social activities
- Law enforcement-youth relations
- Mentoring
- Street outreach

YOUTH ARE VALUED AND HAVE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN THEIR COMMUNITY

- Increased knowledge of & access to pro-social activities
- Program evaluations
- Increase availability of a diverse array of options for activities

FAMILIES HAVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

- Develop family-to-family peer support networks
- Increase knowledge of & access to social services, mental health & substance abuse treatment
- Update & utilize resource directories
- Increase informal supports for families
- Law enforcement/community relations
- Work with existing initiatives

FAMILIES ARE CONNECTED, ENGAGED, AND VALUED

- Utilize schools as venues to reach out to & engage families with each other
- Increased connectivity through neighborhood-based supports & events
- Inclusion of families in decision-making
- Increase access to volunteer opportunities
- Civic engagement programs and organizations
- Family engagement in academics
- Community-based organization (CBO) prevention & intervention programming
- Support parent liaison approaches
- Increase knowledge of & access to academic supports and community resources
- Increase family participation in school activities & events

COMMUNITY IS CULTURALLY AND RACIALLY AWARE AND RESPONSIVE

- Collaborative initiative to address racial and ethnic disparities in the justice & education systems
- Culturally responsive programs
- Law enforcement/community relations
- Best-practices through Probation to reduce racial and ethnic disparities
- Increased knowledge of & access to pro-social activities
- Restorative Justice
- Targeted gang involvement intervention strategies

THE COMMUNITY IS SAFE AND THRIVING

- Use of effective alternatives/diversion programs for low-level offenders
- Effective law enforcement strategies
- Neighborhood-based strategies
- Multi-disciplinary approaches
- Reduce access to guns through safe storage campaign
- Reduce youth
- Increase access to mental health
- Law enforcement
- Probation/Juvenile
- Street outreach

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY KEY YOUTH FINDINGS



THE OVERALL CRIME RATE HAS DECLINED SINCE 2005, BUT REMAINS HIGHER THAN THE STATE

56%

DROP IN JUVENILE ARRESTS IN 2013



26%

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT DROPPED BETWEEN 2007 AND

...s a diverse group of stakeholders to utilize a data-driven decision making process to develop a common language, create interests. Extensive quantitative and qualitative material was also gathered and utilized to inform the plan, including key included three phases: Community Assessment, Community Capacity Building and Community Engagement and Planning.

...will require action at the programmatic, policy and systemic levels using a multi-sector approach through the lens of race, food and community levels. The YVPT will work with the County, Cities and Schools to develop implementation work questions of Results Based Accountability: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?

...es the long term goals, specific results, and strategies that will help reach these results. The results are highlighted in teal.

Goals

YOUTH ARE SAFE AND FEEL SAFE AT SCHOOL

- Anti-bullying strategies
- Continuum of responses
- Family engagement
- School climate strategies
- Community-based organizational (CBO) prevention & intervention on school campuses
- Raise awareness about why students feel compelled to bring weapons to school
- Safe routes to schools
- Preventative evidence-based programming on school campus
- Develop a protocol to anonymously report weapons on school campus
- Targeted gang involvement intervention strategies
- Gang education in schools
- Increased knowledge of & access to pro-social activities
- Increase availability of a diverse array of options for activities
- Access to alternatives to gang involvement
- Family support & engagement
- Multi-disciplinary approaches
- Capacity building for appropriate responses to actual or potential violence
- Data analysis & policy review
- Bias-free classroom and respectful school environments
- Staff should reflect the diverse populations they serve

PROMOTE POSITIVE CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:

In a strength based approach to youth violence prevention, focusing on increasing a youth's assets is key.

ALL FAMILIES ARE EQUITABLY SUPPORTED BY THE COMMUNITY

- Affordable housing, poverty prevention & job creation
- Increased knowledge of & access to social services, mental health & substance abuse treatment
- Update & utilize resource directories
- Culturally responsive programming & training
- Staff should reflect the diverse populations they serve
- Monitor equal access laws & policies using data to track progress
- Free trainings that explain equal rights
- Ensure family/ population served has representation on decision making boards
- Target responses to specific family needs and opportunities
- Ensure equal access to services
- Increase funding for access to services

ENSURE SUPPORTED AND FUNCTIONING FAMILIES:

Families play a critical role in the prevention of youth violence, and therefore must be equitably supported to be there for their youth and young adult.

...access to alcohol and other drugs
 ...s to effective substance use disorder treatment and services
 ...ent/community relations

- Targeted gang involvement intervention strategies
- Access to alternatives to gang involvement
- Examine the issue of trying youth as adults

...venile Hall
 ...h

FOSTER SAFE AND VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS:

Youth and their families are only a part of the picture of youth violence prevention using a public health approach. It is also critical to address the neighborhoods and environments within which youth group up.

...ENT
 ...D 2013



ONLY 6 OUT OF 10 STUDENTS FELT 'VERY SAFE' OR 'SAFE' AT SCHOOL IN 2012-2014



LATINO YOUTH ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN DETENTION. 50% OF THE YOUTH POPULATION IS LATINO, YET THEY REPRESENT 84% OF YOUTH IN DETENTION



WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

Government

- Help make violence prevention a community priority through funding and policy decisions.
- Support local action by joining community-based initiatives and coalitions.
- Be a champion for implementing best practice policies and programs.

Law Enforcement

- Implement best practices and training in community/youth relations to build mutual trust.
- Participate in prevention and intervention activities along with suppression.
- Collect and utilize data to identify and address disparities in enforcement.

Schools

- Implement school climate strategies that support youth wanting to be at school.
- Work across districts to develop common data collection and evaluation tools.
- Examine school disciplinary practices for unintended consequences and disparities.

Service Providers

- Implement best practices and evaluation of program outcomes.
- Reduce barriers and increase access to services provided.
- Participate in early identification of challenged families/youth and cross-referral.

Businesses

- Create opportunities for meaningful youth employment.
- Be a designated safe haven for youth.
- Serve as a mentor and offer internships/apprenticeships.

Community Members

- Serve as a mentor or volunteer with a youth serving organization.
- Create opportunities for meaningful youth engagement in the community.
- Advocate for prevention as a community priority.

Faith Community

- Serve as a mentor or volunteer for a youth.
- Be a resource for youth and their families, referring them to appropriate services.

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For more information and to view the full strategic plan: WWW.SCCYVPT.ORG