

A Comprehensive Health System to Substantially Reduce Violence Nationwide



Background: Violence Is a Health Issue

In recent years, much progress has been made in understanding violent behavior from a scientific perspective with hundreds of studies showing violence as a health problem, including its relationship to trauma, anxiety, PTSD, and depression. Dozens of studies demonstrate violence as a contagious health process. Furthermore, there are dozens of programs based on this understanding of violence, including many health departments and hospitals effectively preventing violent events.

Just as we have now discovered that it is more effective and cost saving to treat drug addiction as a health issue than to punish it, it likewise makes more sense to treat violence by preventing events, providing treatment for people at high risk, and changing social norms. Like all potentially harmful behaviors – drug addiction, smoking, eating too much, exercising too little, risky sexual behavior and other behaviors – violent behavior can be understood, diagnosed, and treated through a health lens.

Opportunity: Activate the Health Sector to Reduce Violence

Health approaches to violence prevention have been developed, proven effective, and successfully replicated in many different communities, contexts, and sectors. However, these approaches cannot be fully implemented because currently the health sector – including health departments, hospitals, and others – are severely underfunded in the field of preventing and treating violence. There are several existing health-based models that could immediately increase their efforts to prevent violence, including ones based in health departments, community organizations, hospitals, trauma centers, and among practitioners (framework available).

Proposal: Fund Health Approaches to Preventing Violence

Make resource streams available to fund the health sector (in DOJ, HHS, and other agencies) so the health sector can do more to identify and treat those at risk for perpetrating violence, identify and interrupt ongoing conflicts, perform behavior change, and other demonstrated effective interventions. This may be through new funding streams or by opening up current funding streams for health-based interventions.

Proposal

Comprehensive System to Address Violence in Local Jurisdictions: \$870,000,000

- Public Health Departments, non-profits, and universities collaborate with and disseminate funding to the following sectors to implement the evidence-informed policies, programs and procedures w.
 - Public Health Department Violence Prevention in up to 50 high violence cities and counties
 - University/School of Public Health to develop of courses, evaluate health-related violence interventions, and support local and regional violence prevention efforts that promote resilience;
 - Criminal Justice Violence Prevention to improve law enforcement at the local level to support innovative joint health-criminal justice efforts to work together on violence as a health issue.
 - School Violence Prevention and Trauma Mitigation
 - Primary and secondary public school districts for the development and implementation of programs to promote pro-social norms, non-violent conflict resolution, social skills.
 - Hospital-Based Violence Prevention implementation in coordination with existing violence prevention initiatives.
 - Development of and contribution to city wide/metropolitan area health data collection systems
 - Behavioral Health Violence Prevention for the development and implementation of trauma informed protocols and practices and training for counselors, police, schools and other sectors;
 - State Health Sector Violence Prevention Program (PHSVP): \$30,000,000.
 - Deployment of comprehensive health-focused responses to violence and the prevention of violence at the state level in coordination with local health departments.
 - National Health Violence Prevention Program (NHVP): \$100,000,000.
 - Office of Applied Violence Prevention Research to generate new knowledge about violence prevention by investing in up to 15 research institutions annually.
 - National Advisory Board on Violence Prevention - a national team of experts tasked with identifying public policies that prevent violence.
 - Violence Prevention Training Programs for development of leaders using the health approach.
 - Office of Data Collection and Evaluation for the development a nationwide data collection system for violence and violence prevention initiatives.
 - Office of Violence Prevention Education and Outreach to provide outreach and technical assistance services to high violence/high risk communities for the implementation of educational programs on violence prevention and effective responses to violence.
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