

# Evidence on Community Safety Strategies

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# Call to Action

- Resulting from Alameda County's County Health Improvement Planning process, 3 priorities for health improvement were selected
- Focus for today: **community and public safety**
  - For this report, defined as: focuses on crime, abuse prevention and neighborhood safety

# Rationale

- Unsafe communities propel and **reinforce health inequities**
- Safer communities is a **preventative** approach to health
- Mandate for a **multi-pronged** approach – across public health, healthcare, social service and criminal justice systems
- Explicit **identification of key outcomes** and **both risk and protective** practices

# Proposed Indicators of Success:

1. Violent Crime Rate
2. High school graduation rate
3. Employment rates

What are the most effective strategies to improve community safety and move the needle on the above indicators?

# Research Approach

- Review academic literature
  - In particular systematic reviews
- Include research from major centers
  - The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) at the U.S. Department of Justice
  - The Blueprints for Violence Prevention project developed by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV)
- Relevant case studies

# Some Limitations

- Focus on programmatic action and particular age groups
- Limited evidence on policies that impact the root causes of health inequities such as institutional racism, income inequities, historical disinvestment, segregation – the more upstream factors
- Translational component to context and specific to public health

# Findings: Summary Target and Key Strategies

## Children and Youth

- 1. Creating positive environments (classroom, families, individually)
- 2. Mentoring
- 3. Paths through therapy and academic and career opportunities

## Neighborhoods

- 1. Physical Changes
- 2. Problem Solving Interventions for ACUTE Circumstances
- 3. Community-based Interventions

# Most Effective for Child & Youth:

## 1. Creating positive environments (classroom, families, individually)

- Study of 9 programs with 3,600 participants found childhood programs can prevent criminal involvement
- Examples of programs include:
  - Nurse-Family Partnership
  - Infant Health and Development program
  - High/Scope Perry Preschool Program
  - Good Behavior Game
  - Second Step: Student Success through Prevention Program curriculum

# Most Effective for Child & Youth:

## 2. Mentoring

- 46 randomized control or quasi-experimental studies of mentoring programs
- Modest effect for outcomes related to academic achievement, drug use, and aggression
- Best performing programs included advocacy, teaching and emotional support
  - Example: Mentoring - Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
    - Reductions in alcohol and drug use and truancy in addition to increased Grade Point Average

## Most Effective for Child & Youth:

### 3. Enhancing paths through therapy and academic and career opportunities

- Multisystemic Therapy – Intensive individual and family therapy on peer pressure, behavior, communication, and parenting.
  - Reductions in reported drug use, incarceration, days incarcerated, fewer arrests
- Career Academies - integrates career and academic curricula and opportunities
  - Reduced drop out rates, higher earnings, more hours worked per week

# Most Effective Programs for Neighborhoods:

## 1. Vibrant Neighborhoods through Physical Changes

- Effective programs/contexts which enhanced safety included:
  - Access to transit
  - Building repairs – Example: Enforcement of a Doors and Windows Ordinance in Philadelphia
  - Greening vacant lots
  - Reduction in alcohol outlets – 1 unit increase in outlets = 2.2% increase in violent crimes

# Most Effective Programs for Neighborhoods:

## 2. Problem Solving Interventions for ACUTE Circumstances

- Must shift from policing people to places
  - 30 randomized or quasi-experimental tests of disorder policing
    - Disorder policing (focus on social and physical) reduced crime (such as violent property and drug crime)
  - 25 tests of hot spots policing – clusters of crime
    - Small but stat significant effect
- “Coproduction” (where reductions in crime stem from cooperation with community members), rather than a zero-tolerance policy at specific places

# Most Effective Programs for Neighborhoods:

## 3. Comprehensive community-based interventions

- Meta-analysis on Fire-arm Violence – 3 Types of intervention:
  1. Gun buy-back programs (marginal effect)
  2. Gun laws (overall marginal effect)
    - ✓ Prison terms (weak effect)
    - ✓ Waiting period/background check (null effect)
    - ✓ Weapons bans (moderately high effect size)
    - ✓ Safe storage laws (ineffective)
  3. Law enforcement campaigns
    - ✓ Probation strategies (promising but more data needed) and Prosecutorial (more data needed)
    - ✓ Policing and community strategies
    - ✓ **Community Interventions (partnerships and coordination of resources) show the most promise across multiple studies and methodologies**

# Most Effective Programs for Neighborhoods:

## 3. Comprehensive community-based interventions

- Comprehensive community-based interventions outperformed limited interventions
  - Ex. Comprehensive Intervention On Robbery and Physical Disorder =
    1. Situational prevention strategies (improved street lighting, implementation of video surveillance, dispersing groups of loiterers, performing code inspections, cleaning up vacant lots)
    2. Social service action
    3. 42 percent reduction in robbery calls in treatment areas relative to control areas

# Most Effective Programs for Neighborhoods:

## 3. Comprehensive community-based interventions

- Ex. Comprehensive intervention Reducing Homicide=
  - The Milwaukee Police Department, criminal justice entities, service providers, and communities investigate, provide emergency services, assess community factors contributing to homicide, and educate the community
  - 52 percent decrease in the monthly count of homicides in the intervention districts

# Key Components of Success

- When assessing success, must consider type of program to determine the most appropriate outcome, but also scale of which it is implemented
- Regardless of program, three major factors correlate to effectiveness:
  1. A therapeutic intervention philosophy (such as counseling and skills training)
  2. Quality of implementation
  3. Serving high risk offenders (though may not be aligned with values of org)

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# Adaptation

- Must consider: local evidence, specific needs, priorities, legislation, policies and resources, and the scope of work within the local health system
- Adopt broader principles consistent with participatory processes include: 1. Participation of key stakeholders; 2. Consideration of context during adaptation to ensure relevance for local practice and policy; and 3. Transparent reporting to promote confidence in the recommendations of the adapted guideline.  
(Harrison et al., 2010)

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