

PRIORITIZED STRATEGIES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE BEFORE IT OCCURS*

UNITY (*Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth through Violence Prevention*) asked young people and representatives from cities across the country to prioritize strategies to prevent violence before it occurs. The identified strategies span the prevention continuum and were reframed by Philadelphia youth as ***Upfront***, ***In the Thick***, and ***Aftermath***, respectively. These labels were adopted by participating cities and young people at the UNITY City Representatives Meeting.

Although efforts to prevent violence at each point on the continuum are important, city representatives and young people purposely prioritized more upfront strategies. They asserted that these are the strategies that can support positive attitudes and behaviors before the threat or onset of violence, and are the kinds of strategies that cities typically have the least resources to put in place and bring to scale. These prevention strategies are meant to complement existing intervention and enforcement/suppression strategies and can be put in place alongside them. To maximize success, the following strategies should be reflected in programs, organizational practices, and policies.

UPFRONT: Strategies everyone needs to be safe and thrive

POSITIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION Foster age-appropriate social, emotional, and cognitive skill development within the context of strong attachments and relationships.

POSITIVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT Support a process of growing self-awareness and self-regulation, often measured by an ability to pay attention, make transitions from one activity to another, control impulses, and cooperate with others.

PARENTING SKILLS Train parents and other caregivers on developmental milestones and culturally appropriate, effective parenting practices to support a nurturing, safe, structured environment.

QUALITY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING Provide safe and enriching activities with structure and supervision during non-school hours.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP Support and engage young people in decision making and give them age-appropriate authority.

QUALITY EDUCATION (including universal, school-based violence prevention strategies) Foster a positive and safe school climate in which young people learn violence prevention skills (e.g., conflict resolution, impulse control, anger management, problem solving, empathy, bystander, and anti-bullying)—all in support of improved academic achievement.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS IN NEIGHBORHOODS Strengthen ties (characterized by trust, concern for one another, willingness to take collective action for the community good, and increased social sanctions against violent behaviors) among neighbors and community members.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Improve economic conditions and viable noncriminal economic opportunities with training and support for communities, families, and youth most at risk for violence.

* This document is excerpted from UNITY materials. UNITY (*Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth through Violence Prevention*) builds support for effective, sustainable efforts to prevent violence before it occurs so urban youth can thrive in safe environments with supportive relationships and opportunities for success. Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The California Wellness Foundation, [UNITY](#) has information and tools on advancing a public health approach, including the [UNITY RoadMap: A Framework for Effectiveness and Sustainability](#).

IN THE THICK: Strategies designed for those who may be at increased risk for violence

MENTORING Provide supportive, non-judgmental role models who can form a strong and enduring bond with young people who are at risk.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES Ensure early identification and provision of quality, affordable, therapy and support to address trauma and anxiety and to enhance coping skills.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES Provide integrated family services (e.g., therapy, case management, home visiting, income support, employment services and support) to families in need so that they are able to achieve self-sufficiency and foster nurturing and trusting relationships within the family.

CONFLICT INTERRUPTION/STREET OUTREACH Reduce violence, injury, and lethality through detection, interruption and de-escalation with street outreach workers in highly impacted neighborhoods and change the thinking and behaviors of the highest risk persons.

AFTERMATH: Strategies to help individuals, families, and communities heal from violence and move forward in positive ways

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES Ensure provision of quality, affordable mental health and substance abuse treatment (including individual, group, and/or family therapy) and ongoing support for young people who have already demonstrated violent or seriously delinquent behavior to reduce the risk of future violence and crime.

SUCCESSFUL REENTRY Support a successful transition from incarceration/detention to the community and reduce recidivism with services during incarceration (e.g., GED attainment, job training, substance abuse treatment, mental health services) and extend to post-release (e.g., housing assistance, job placement and support, education support, case management, income support, restorative justice, family support, substance abuse and mental health services, tattoo removal).

The upfront, in the thick, and aftermath strategies delineated here will be more effective when implemented as part of a comprehensive strategy as delineated in the [UNITY RoadMap: A Framework for Effectiveness and Sustainability](#).