

Success
Stories

Safe Communities are Strong Communities

How can academic and community expertise be channeled to give community members manageable steps for preventing violence and fostering positive youth development?



Challenge

The youth homicide rate for 10–24 year old Philadelphians is about 4.7 times the national average, and 2.7 times the rate of other large metro areas. Police data and community surveys indicate that Philadelphia youth are exposed to, victimized by, and contribute to persistently high levels of community violence. Researchers at the Philadelphia Collaborative Violence Prevention Center (PCVPC) recognize that even when the immediate wounds have healed, violence can scar communities, so they were challenged to provide community members in West and Southwest Philadelphia with strategies for dealing with youth violence. Fortunately, stopping youth violence does not always require lengthy or complex interventions.

Solution

In 2008, PCVPC used its network of community and academic partners to empower various stakeholders in the communities of West and Southwest Philadelphia with the message that everyone can be involved in violence prevention using strategies that have been proven to work. These partners drew on their individual expertise to craft violence prevention tips, accompanied by supporting evidence about their effectiveness in preventing violence.

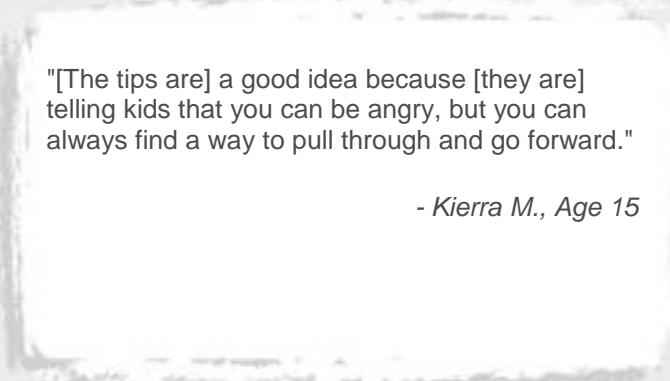
Each tip provides a concrete action that youth, parents, or community members can take to prevent violence and reduce its impact on the community. The list of tips cites simple strategies that can influence behavior, like talking to kids about gangs, getting to know neighbors, or holding parent support groups. PCVPC used scientific evidence to expand the tips by including why each action is important and how it can help the community. Community partners then reviewed the expanded tips to check for relevance and appropriateness of content and language. As a CDC Academic Center of Excellence (ACE) in Youth Violence Prevention, PCVPC was then able to tap into the national network of ACE centers. Experts at ACE centers throughout the country suggested changes, added language and references, and contributed new tips. By the end of the process, the collaborative effort resulted in 57 Safe Neighborhood Tips. The tips communicate that every member of the community can help to decrease the number of injuries and disabilities caused by violence, and, just as important, reduce the emotional impact on individuals.

Highlights

The Philadelphia Collaborative Violence Prevention Center (PCVPC) channeled local and national academic and community expertise to create a list of 57 Safe Neighborhood Tips. These tips were selected for relevance to the community as well as scientific evidence. They provide concrete actions, grounded in evidence, that various stakeholders including youth, parents, and community members can take to prevent violence and reduce its impact on the community. The tips are shared through websites and newsletters, and PCVPC continues to develop new methods and channels of dissemination.

Results

PCVPC disseminated the tips in novel and creative ways. The tips, divided by target audience and topic, are available for download on the PCVPC website, phillyviolenceprevention.org. A link to this page is posted as a resource on the CDC website SafeYouth.gov, and over 350 visitors have viewed the PCVPC page since it was posted. In order to bring the tips directly to the community members who can use them to build stronger, safer communities, PCVPC held an art contest for local children, and printed bookmarks that paired a tip with each winning piece of art. The bookmarks have been disseminated at numerous community events throughout Philadelphia. Additionally, tips have been displayed at various violence prevention initiatives throughout the city, including a local 5K called "Legs Against Arms." Utilizing the Philadelphia mass transit system, the tips are displayed on billboards located on a highly-traveled train line and feature PCVPC's digitally animated characters, Briana and Damon, accompanied by a Safe Neighborhood Tip. To date, more than an estimated **2,856,000** people have been exposed to the ads through this mechanism.



"[The tips are] a good idea because [they are] telling kids that you can be angry, but you can always find a way to pull through and go forward."

- Kierra M., Age 15

Future dissemination plans for the tips include displaying digitally animated videos highlighting selected tips on YouTube and the implementation of a social media campaign.

Contact Information

Ayana Bradshaw
PCVPC
3535 Market Street, suite 1150
Philadelphia, PA 19104
215-590-3118
pcvpc@email.chop.edu
www.phillyviolenceprevention.org