



VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) is a forum for the leaders of America's largest metropolitan health departments to exchange strategies and jointly address issues to promote and protect the health and safety of the 62 million people they serve. Together, these public health officials directly affect the health and well-being of nearly **one in five Americans**.

Together, we aim to create healthy, more equitable communities through big city innovation and leadership.

► Building Safer, More Resilient Communities by Preventing Violence

Violence occurs in several different, yet interconnected, forms.

Community gun violence, domestic violence, bullying and childhood violence have profound negative impacts on individuals, families and communities. These negative impacts can include high levels of trauma, increased levels of mental illness and substance use, as well as reduced levels of health, well-being and economic opportunity across impacted communities.

Violence, like many public health challenges, is preventable. Yet historically, most investments are directed to addressing its aftermath. Communities can be safer by investing in a comprehensive approach to prevent violence, one that supports individuals and families, and by extension, the community at large. A comprehensive approach allows individuals to beat the odds of being impacted by violence, while also going upstream to lower the odds that violence will occur (See illustration on page 18). This is a public health approach to community resilience.¹

A public health approach to preventing violence and building safer, more resilient communities acknowledges structural racism and other forms of discrimination. Crucially important to this approach is an acknowledgement that the current situation—in which communities of color face concentrated policing, fewer opportunities and deteriorated community conditions—isn't just happenstance. Nor was it the fault

of community members themselves. These conditions were created by policies and practices that have marginalized people of color and poor people into neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage.²

A public health approach to violence prevention, among other things:

- **Puts community members in the lead**—Those impacted by violence have some of the best and most creative ideas about how to prevent it. For a comprehensive violence prevention plan to succeed, community members must set priorities for what can be done to improve conditions to prevent violence and create safety.
- **Is data driven**—Policy makers must look at the specific profile of violence in the community, and determine who is most affected, what's contributing, and what's helping to create safety. And, when strategies are being developed, they must be designed specifically

to influence the conditions that are increasing the risk of violence, according to the data.

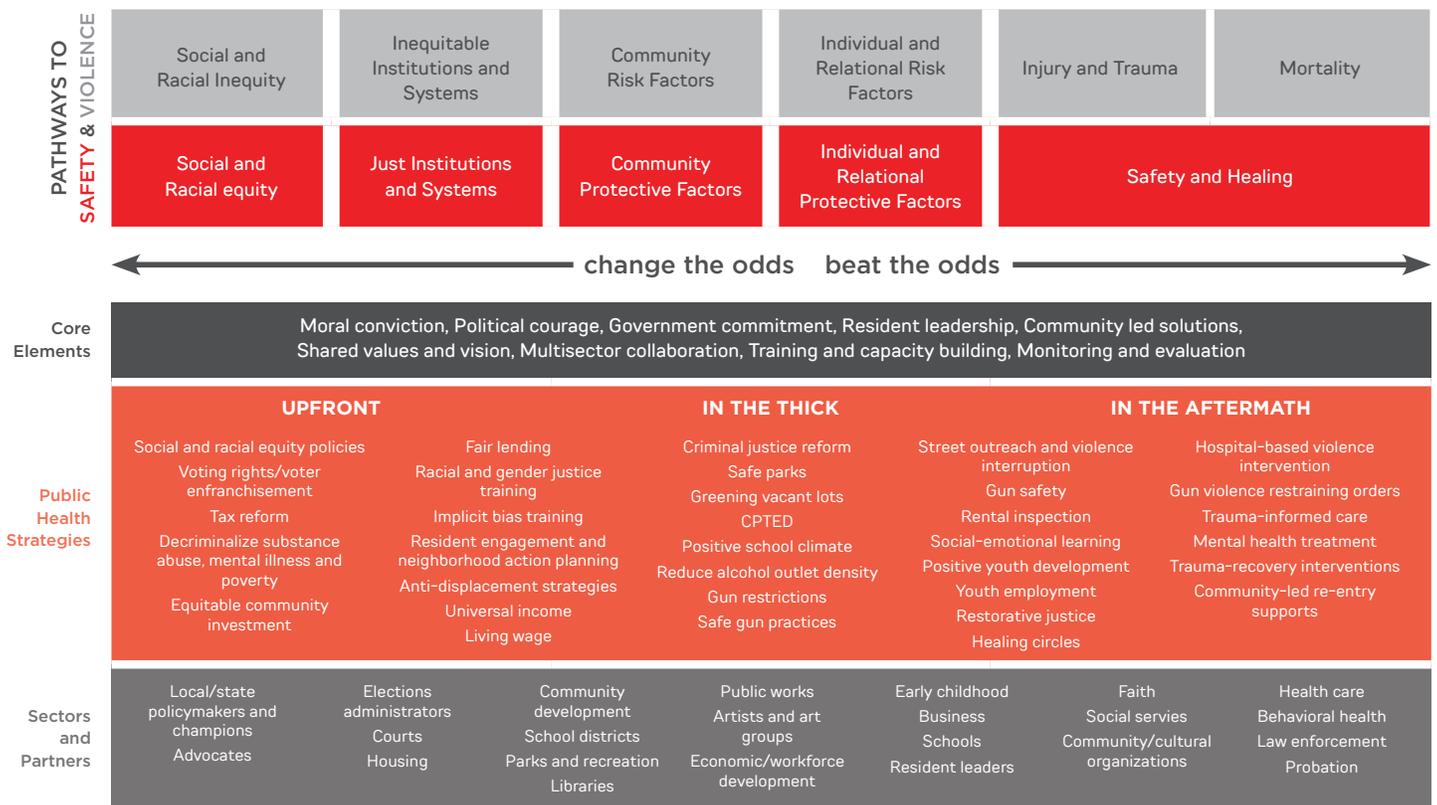
- **Considers community conditions**—As our surroundings shape our experiences and behaviors, successful prevention plans cultivate safety in streets, parks, jobs, schools, places of worship, and elsewhere.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact common sense gun laws that reduce access, particularly among youth and those most at risk of harming themselves or others, such as:
 - Comprehensive background checks, including those sold at gun shows;
 - Enhanced prosecution for those found with guns purchased illegally;
 - Access to safe and secure firearm storage among;

- Ban the sale, transfer, importation, and manufacture of assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines; and
- Adopt “red flag laws” that permit law enforcement, friends or family members to petition a court to issue an “extreme risk protection” or “gun violence restraining” order if they consider a person to pose a significant threat to themselves or others.
- ▶ Strengthen funding and other policy mechanisms that support community prevention, as well as implementation of violence interruption and trauma informed approaches that are proven to work.
- ▶ Create a CDC-led comprehensive, multisector response to violence that addresses social, emotional, and mental health in addition to physical health in partnership with local public health agencies.
- ▶ Provide increased funds to the CDC for firearm prevention research.
- ▶ Implement and fully fund a nationwide infrastructure to collect a key set of indicators regarding violence in their communities, and identify those indicators that measure community resilience.

Violence Prevention Framework



Framework developed in partnership with Prevention Institute; Report forthcoming.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Forthcoming BCHC/Human Impact Partners Report: *Equity Lens Tool for Local Public Health Departments* (Working Title).
- 2 Forthcoming BCHC/Prevention Institute Report: *When Beating the Odds Means Having to Change the Odds: Pathways to preventing Violence to Build Safe, Resilient Communities* (Working title).