



**National Forum on Youth Violence
Prevention
Strategic Plan**

April 2011 – April 2014





Vision

“A vibrant national network of federal and local stakeholders who, through the use of multi-disciplinary partnerships, balanced approaches and data-driven strategies, strengthen communities so that they may better prevent violence and promote the safety, health, and development of the nation’s youth.”

Goals

- Elevate youth and gang violence as an issue of national significance.
 - Enhance the capacity of participating localities, as well as others across the country, to more effectively prevent youth and gang violence.
 - Sustain progress and systems change through engagement, alignment, and assessment.
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Strategic Plan, April 2011 – April 2014

I. INTRODUCTION

At the direction of President Obama, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention (the Forum) was established to build a national conversation concerning youth and gang violence that would increase awareness, drive action, and build local capacity to more effectively address youth violence through comprehensive planning. The Forum models a new kind of federal/local collaboration, encouraging



Memphis listening session with kids in August 2011.

its members to change the way they do business by sharing common challenges and promising strategies, and through coordinated action.

The Forum convenes a diverse array of stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels. Participating federal agencies include the Departments of Justice, Education, Health and Human Services (particularly the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention),

Housing and Urban Development, Labor and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Participating localities include Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Salinas, and San Jose. Other participants include faith- and community-based organizations, youth and family groups, as well as business and philanthropic leaders.

This Strategic Plan provides a conceptual framework for the Forum. Its scope is narrowly defined — the Plan is not intended to govern all activities that relate to youth violence, nor does it set out a comprehensive list of all activities governed by the Forum. Instead, it identifies the key principles and goals that will guide its future direction. More detailed information on federal strategies, objectives, and tasks is included in a separate document, the Forum's Action Plan. Additional information on local activities can be found in the individual plans of each participating locality, on the Forum's website at

http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic_preventingViolence_communities.shtml.

In order to be successful, Forum members at the federal, state, and local levels, both inside and outside government, will need to work together. If we remain committed to reaching across sectors, pushing outside comfort zones, and planning for long-term success, we will ensure a brighter, safer future for our nation's children.

II. CREATING A VISION

The vision of the Forum is as follows:

“A vibrant national network of federal and local stakeholders who, through the use of multi-disciplinary partnerships, balanced approaches and data-driven strategies, strengthen communities so that they may better prevent violence and promote the safety, health, and development of the nation's youth.”

III. UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Youth and gang violence are challenges of national importance.

- Homicide is the second leading cause of death of young people, with an average of 16 youth murdered every day (CDC, 2011).
- The problem is especially severe among African American and Hispanic youth. For African Americans between the ages of 10 and 24, homicide is the leading cause of death, resulting in more deaths than the next four leading causes of death combined. Homicide is the second leading cause of death for Hispanics between the ages of 10 and 24, resulting in more deaths than the next four leading causes of deaths combined (CDC, 2011).
- Rates of firearm homicide among 10-19 year-olds exceed the all-age rates in 80% of the United States' largest metropolitan areas (CDC, 2011).
- Homicides among young people had a total combined medical and work loss cost of \$7.7 billion in 2005, with nonfatal injuries due to physical assaults contributing another \$6.4 billion (CDC, 2007).

Youth and gang violence are problems that affect communities—urban, suburban, and rural—across the entire United States. Young people can be perpetrators, victims, or witnesses to violence. Some violent acts, such as bullying, can cause as much emotional harm as physical harm. Other acts, such as assault, with or without weapons, can lead to death or serious injury that may result in life-long impairment.

Youth and gang violence are more than just public safety issues.

Beyond public safety, youth violence negatively affects our nation's communities on multiple levels, including business viability and economic prosperity. Violence increases health care costs, decreases property values, disrupts social services, and perpetuates the cycle of poverty as education and

employment prospects decline. Both individuals and the community are affected: kids are afraid to go to school, residents avoid public activities, and businesses close. On the other hand, the benefits of preventing youth violence can be strong and long lasting. We can gain a generation of promise as thousands of youth reach their potential to become productive contributors to their families, communities, and the economy.

IV. IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS: MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PARTNERSHIPS, BALANCED APPROACHES, DATA-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS, COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Youth and gang violence are not inevitable. Research and experience demonstrate that when communities engage in multi-disciplinary partnerships and implement balanced, data-driven approaches, youth and gang violence decreases while desirable youth outcomes improve. Information on data and evidence-driven programs and processes is available at <http://www.crimesolutions.gov/>.

Multi-Disciplinary Partnerships

Because youth and gang violence are tied to the quality of life and economic health of a community, localities are more likely to be successful when they implement violence prevention strategies through multi-disciplinary partnerships. Effectively addressing youth violence and crime requires coordination by diverse partners including law enforcement, education, labor, social services, public health, businesses, philanthropic organizations, and faith- and community-based organizations, along with parents and youth themselves.



Surgeon General Dr. Regina M. Benjamin meeting with Mayor Donahue of Salinas (left) and public health officials at the Summit

Balanced Approaches

Law enforcement agencies recognize that they alone cannot be responsible for solving our communities' youth violence problems. Arresting our way out of these problems is neither possible nor cost effective, and is unlikely to garner widespread community support. The Forum promotes the development and implementation of locally tailored approaches that balance prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry. These strategies should include prevention efforts spanning from early childhood into young adulthood, such as youth development, family support, school and community mentoring, and school-based and out-of-school recreational activities. Such strategies should also include "relational" intervention programs that engage with high-risk and gang-involved youth, as well as reentry programs that plan for returning youthful offenders prior to their release. Such strategies should coordinate closely with law enforcement efforts that focus on the most serious, violent, and chronic youthful offenders and crime "hot spots."

Data-Driven Strategies

Addressing youth and gang violence in any community is a collective responsibility that requires collaborative effort. Collaboration can be enhanced by embracing principles of distributed intelligence, the idea that many perspectives are better than one, and by sharing structured data—from databases, case management systems, etc.—in a deliberate, effective, grounded, and ethical manner. Successful sharing of knowledge and data requires the sharing of information and data after a thorough assessment of local risk and protective factors. Thus, to be truly comprehensive, a community's strategy for data sharing should strive to be inclusive of all stakeholder agencies and integrate a wide-range of data from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, law enforcement, education, public health, child protection/welfare, labor, and housing.



Senior Advisor to President Obama Valerie Jarrett at the Summit on Preventing Youth Violence April 2010

The Importance of Comprehensive Planning

Without planning, there is no means of coordinating action among multiple stakeholders over time. Before joining the Forum, participating localities pledged to develop or enhance comprehensive, local plans to prevent youth and gang violence in their jurisdictions, using the multi-disciplinary

partnerships, balanced approaches, and data-driven strategies described above. The Forum engages with communities during this process, helping them to strengthen local partnerships, improve coordination, and increase adherence to data driven practices, programs, and policies. The Forum also provides access to technical assistance from experts across multiple federal agencies and, perhaps even more importantly, connects communities with each other to share information about successful local models.

Through its support of the principles above, the Forum helps communities increase their capacity to access and utilize resources to more effectively address local youth violence issues over the medium and long term. Youth and gang violence cannot always be addressed quickly; instead, the Forum's comprehensive strategy lays the foundation for a sustainable approach by a community that, over time, can result in lower rates of youth and gang violence and higher rates of safety, health, and economic prosperity. For more information, see the Forum Logic Model, available on the Forum's website at http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic_preventingViolence_logicModel.shtml.

V. SETTING GOALS: AWARENESS, CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION

The Forum has the following overarching goals that serve as benchmarks of success:

Elevate youth and gang violence as an issue of national significance.

From initial listening tours to subsequent summits, a key goal of the Forum has been to raise national awareness of the importance of addressing youth and gang violence, highlighting both its individual and societal impact. An ongoing activity of the Forum, whether through periodic summits, national listening tours, or targeted media outreach, will be to continue to elevate youth and gang violence as an area of national concern.

Enhance the capacity of participating localities, as well as others across the country, to more effectively prevent youth and gang violence.

Strategies initiated by the Forum, most notably the development and implementation of local comprehensive plans, will be embedded into the ongoing work of participating localities, changing how they do business and leading to a drop in youth violence and an increase in desirable outcomes for youth, families, and communities. By sharing information with non-participating localities, the Forum helps others learn about the Forum's comprehensive approach and gives them access to youth violence prevention tools that will help them replicate the success of the Forum in their communities.

Sustain progress and systems change through engagement, alignment, and assessment.

From the beginning, the Forum has promoted a new model, based on increased communication and coordinated action, for addressing youth and gang violence. Such communication and coordination was necessary to develop the local comprehensive plans recently completed by participating localities and will be critical to ensuring their successful implementation. Interagency collaboration, which includes the braiding and blending of diverse funding sources, has been a hallmark of the effort at the federal level. Lastly, a diverse group of private sector funders is currently exploring ways they can help support the work of the Forum and its members through public/private partnerships.

VI. PROGRESS TO DATE: OCTOBER 2009 TO PRESENT

Every day, stories of brutal violence perpetuated and experienced by youth capture the attention of our communities and serve as powerful reminders that more must be done to ensure the safety and health of our young people. The Forum was created by the Obama Administration in recognition of and response to this continued challenge and concern.



Police Chief Ralph Godbee, Mayor Dave Bing, and Congressman John Conyers, Jr. speaking about Detroit's comprehensive youth violence plan in September 2011

Initiative Development

Planning for the Forum began in late 2009, with the Departments of Justice and Education leading the development of the initiative. In January and February 2010, a small number of cities—Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Salinas and San Jose—were invited by the Obama Administration to participate in the Forum on the basis of need, geographic diversity and willingness and

capacity to engage with a federal interagency effort relating to youth and gang violence. Rural and tribal representation was also considered.

Listening Sessions

Beginning in May 2010, listening sessions took place in each of the selected localities so Forum participants could learn about the challenges they face in preventing youth and gang violence. Interagency federal teams heard the experiences of local leaders, stakeholders and youth, and engaged with them in a candid dialogue about the youth violence issues and strategies they employed.

A broad array of local stakeholders participated in the sessions, including youth, senior government officials, local and federal law enforcement officers, educators, public health and social service providers, community and faith-based organizations, research partners, businesses, and foundations.

Forum Launch and First Working Session

As listening sessions continued, the Forum's federal team began to plan an initial Working Session to be held in Washington, D.C. The session would be the official launching point for participating localities to begin development of their youth violence prevention plans, and would continue the candid federal/local dialogue begun with the listening sessions.

Representatives from multiple federal agencies came together to discuss the progress to date, lessons learned from previous initiatives, and ways those lessons could be applied to improve the coordination and sustainability of efforts in the participating localities. Participating localities identified leaders to spearhead the development of comprehensive plans that would blend prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry strategies.

In October 2010, the first Forum Working Session was held in Washington, D.C. Over the course of two days, participating jurisdictions discussed current efforts to prevent youth violence and explored ways to improve them. Federal and local experts offered information on evidence-based and data-driven practices. Representatives from federal agencies partnered with localities to explore how existing federal resources could be identified and better coordinated in support of local efforts.

Based on the information shared at the Working Session, participating localities began the work of developing or enhancing their youth violence prevention plans.

Local Plan Development

While planning, participating localities engaged in peer-to-peer learning, developing their plans in collaboration with one other and with federal interagency teams who provided technical assistance as needed. Written guidance and monthly conference

calls helped to further sustain planning momentum. Prior to the submission of the localities' final plans in March 2011, each locality received written and oral feedback on drafts from a panel of federal experts.



U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder speaking at the Summit on Preventing Youth Violence in April 2011

Summit

In April 2011, the Forum hosted the Summit on Preventing Youth Violence in Washington, D.C. For two days, the local leadership, including mayors, presented the localities' comprehensive plans. Private, state, and local funders discussed promising practices as well as opportunities for localities to secure additional funding for their efforts. Senior leadership from across the Administration participated, including Attorney General Eric Holder, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin and Senior Advisor to the President Valerie Jarrett. Members of Congress also attended the summit and offered their support. Portions of the event were open to press in order to showcase the localities' efforts, and each locality received favorable media coverage.

Site Visits

Federal interagency teams conducted site visits in Boston, Detroit, Memphis, Salinas and San Jose from August 2011, through September 2011, to view the implementation of the localities' comprehensive plans firsthand. The visits included meetings with a wide range of stakeholders including mayors, police chiefs, U.S. Attorneys, steering committees, faith- and community-based groups, law enforcement officers, youth, and business leaders. Each site visit included tours of the implementation target areas in each city. Technical assistance was provided and discussed in key policy areas and tailored to local needs. At the conclusion of each visit, the federal teams debriefed local leadership on the continued implementation of their comprehensive plans.

Next Working Session

On October 31, 2011, representatives from Forum localities returned to Washington, D.C., for another Working Session. Unlike the summit and the initial session that were focused on plan development, this meeting focuses on the progress each city is making and the challenges they face in implementing their comprehensive plans. In particular, this session brings together federal and local experts to discuss how Forum localities can continue to build the necessary multidisciplinary partnerships needed to move their plan forward. Additional topics include how to effectively implement evidence-based prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry approaches. Afterwards, Forum members will return to their communities to apply the lessons learned at this session to continue the exchange of information and sharing of ideas with their peers and fellow Forum members around best practices.

VII. FUTURE PROGRESS THROUGH APRIL 2014

Implementation

The Forum will continue to support its current local members as they implement their comprehensive plans. Forum Working Groups will develop and offer new tools to support local implementation, and federal members will continue to fund peer-to-peer learning, offer training and technical assistance, and coordinate federal resources in support of local plan implementation.

Assessment

A multi-method assessment of the Forum is currently underway. A team led by Dr. Jeffrey Butts, Executive Director of the Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Dr. Caterina Roman, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at Temple University, will objectively measure the effectiveness of the Forum's ability to improve local capacity to reduce and prevent youth and gang violence. Interim results are expected in March 2012.

Outreach

The Forum is expanding its outreach efforts in order to meet its key strategic goals. While supporting the success of current local members is critical, the Forum must also engage and offer value to localities across the country. Through its Web page on the FindYouthInfo.gov website, the Forum will offer tools and resources to all communities seeking new approaches to reduce and prevent youth and gang violence. The Forum expects to attract and convene new members at the national level, particularly among the business and philanthropic communities.

Expansion

A number of new localities have expressed interest in joining the Forum. The President's Fiscal Year 2012 Budget includes a request of \$6 million for the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to expand the current local membership of the Forum from six to eighteen localities.

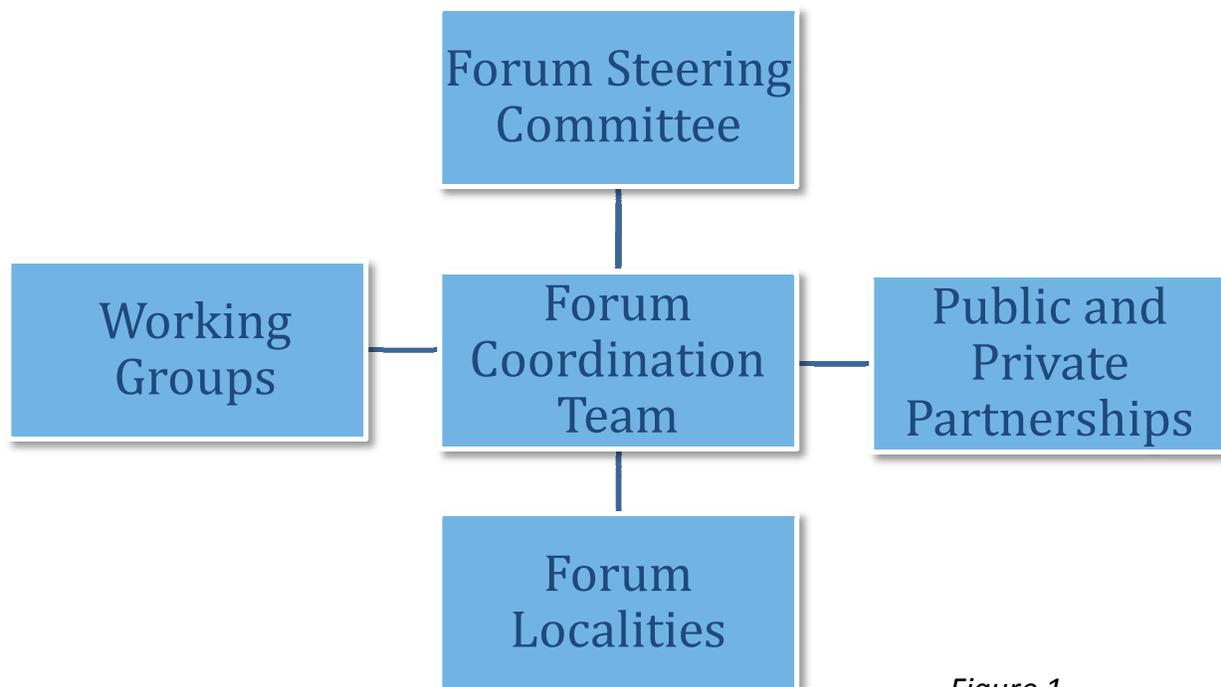


Figure 1

VIII. ADMINISTRATION

The Forum is not a program that disburses and monitors funds to grantees. It is not a conference, or a series of conferences, designed to bring together participants temporarily around a single issue. The Forum is a network, a community of loosely affiliated individuals and organizations with diverse backgrounds and expertise but whom share a common purpose and long-term goal: the prevention of youth and gang violence in the United States. The Forum's administrative structure reflects its comprehensive approach and inclusive focus. The work of the Forum is driven by five institutions that, taken together, represent the membership of the network as a whole:

1. **A Forum Steering Committee (FSC)**, convened by the White House, meets quarterly to provide Administration leadership with the opportunity to review the progress and set strategic direction for the Forum as a whole.

2. **A Forum Coordination Team (FCT)** meets on a monthly basis to coordinate the work of the Forum and implement the Action Plan. FCT members include every federal agency participating in the Forum. The FCT is led and supported by the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP).
3. **Working Groups** including both local and federal representation meet as needed in order to advance specific goals and strategies as set out in the Forum's Action Plan. Current working groups advance activities to address a range of issues identified by the Forum localities as requiring special emphasis, including training and technical assistance; business, philanthropic and faith-based outreach, and youth and family engagement.
4. **Ongoing consultation and collaboration with Forum localities** is an essential component of the Forum. Through monthly conference calls with local leaders and the activities of dedicated Federal personnel serving as local site coordinators, federal members of the Forum are in regular contact with participating localities, offering them opportunities for feedback and input on the ongoing work and direction of the Forum. For instance, most if not all of the Forum's Working Groups were established in response to needs voiced by its local members.
5. **Outreach and engagement to establish public/private partnerships** is another core component of the Forum. Working groups are already partnering with certain core constituencies, but the Forum is constantly search for new members and collaborators.

“By linking cities and federal agencies to one another, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention is sending a powerful message... ‘You are not alone. We are all in this together.’”

– Senior Advisor to the President, Valerie Jarrett