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FIRST AID HEALS A CITY

by Carrie Nathans

RETHINKING THE BEST-LAID PLANS

by Dave Marsden

Dwight Eisenhower once said, "In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." President Eisenhower's message was clear: while plans can go awry, it's the planning process that allows one to accept what hasn't worked in the past, preserve what has, and develop a new strategy that can withstand an ever-changing landscape. Ongoing planning is and will continue to be essential for the success of strategic plans that aim to reduce violence in the 15 National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention cities.

San Jose, Calif., has accomplished this in spades. In 1991, the city was struggling with an outbreak of gang violence. Without a working plan to address the problem, there was no clear way forward. Then-Mayor Susan Hammer didn't know how to remedy the fighting, but she was willing to put \$1 million toward a fix, according to Angel Rios, director of the San Jose Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS). Mayor Hammer convened a task force, and the group began with a simple white paper. It was the first publication of the emerging Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF) and beginning



When the right person intervenes at the right time, there is a chance to turn even the most turbulent of tides. It's a combination of compassion and foresight that best precludes a mental health crisis—something many cities already know. In this spirit of prevention, Philadelphia, Pa.'s, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) program is serving its residents and its economy.

MHFA is a program built on early intervention. It addresses behavioral health issues before they spiral—to prevent the pain and suffering that too often become unbearable. "It's useful to think of MHFA like first aid or CPR, because it's designed for the layperson," said Bryan Gibb, director of public education for the National Council for Behavioral Health. "The first time people show signs of a problem, we want someone to be able to assist them. It's about comfort and stability and de-escalation."

of the iterative planning process that, even today, sustains efforts like the National Forum. Twenty-three years later, the MGPTF, housed at PRNS, is still going strong, with the consistent support of four mayors and a soon-to-be-sworn-in mayor, Sam Liccardo.

Because the white paper was devoted to violence suppression through heightened law enforcement efforts, it was restricted in purpose. Similar to federal "Weed and Seed" efforts, it sought to restore stability and prosperity to a city affected by crime. Since that time, as MGPTF learned what worked, what didn't, and what showed great promise, the task force has produced four updated plans reflecting its progress and broadening the scope of its goals and objectives. Each plan has been titled in a way that clearly communicates the city's growth, development, and success.

San Jose's first real strategic plan was approved in 2005, and was in effect through 2008. Titled "Reclaiming Our Youth," the plan was "more than breaking up fights," said San Jose Forum Coordinator Mario Maciel. "It was [meant] to reclaim youth from the influence of gangs, and reconnect them to the community through cognitive approaches." The plan was updated in 2009 and retitled "Action, Collaboration, Transformation" or "ACT." ACT focused on transforming young people through collaborative service delivery from MGPTF partners and the community. It wasn't just about improved services. It was about transforming neighborhoods.

In 2011, ACT 2.0 was released. With new goals to address public and private partnerships and reentry, the updated strategic plan expanded on previous objectives, but was by no means a departure from the original. ACT 2.0 also marked the beginning of the National Forum's influence on planning in San Jose, as reentry is one of the four core Forum strategies.

"Trauma to Triumph" is the most recent iteration of San Jose's strategic plan for reducing youth violence. The influence of the Forum is clearly evident in this plan, as it emphasizes the findings of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (a featured presentation at the [2013 Summit on Preventing Youth Violence](#)). Trauma-informed care reflects growing awareness of childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction; the need to understand how these experiences influence behavior; and our dedication to respond to these effects with evidence-based practices and programs.

To develop the latest plan, neighborhood input was sought at Town Hall meetings and through numerous focus groups. "Each community deserves a strategic plan with their own DNA in it," said Jose Salcido,

Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14.^[1] Among youth, anxiety and mood disorders strike 46 percent; substance use disorders affect 11.4 percent. But of the one in eight young people struggling with depression, only 30 percent receive treatment. The other 70 percent are youths who *will not* or *cannot* seek out treatment on their own.

Mental Health First Aid is mobilizing teachers, parents, counselors, and first responders to help people in psychological distress. First launched in Australia, the program has [proven efficacy](#)—particularly in responding to individuals who are experiencing suicidal thoughts, acute stress, panic attacks, or psychotic behavior. One study^[2] showed that in addition to providing more meaningful support, those trained in MHFA are drawing some of the stigma away from conditions like depression, anxiety, and addiction. With more than 300,000 Mental Health First Aiders globally, the initiative is a compelling way to maximize resources without relying solely on capital spending.

Youth MHFA training targets kids from 12 to 18 and focuses on five different areas: depression, anxiety, psychosis, eating disorders, and substance abuse disorders. Before being certified, trainees must become "literate" about mental health, gaining understanding of various mental illnesses and addictions, how these conditions affect a person's daily life, and what helps individuals pull through. Then it's on to response. Through scenario-based instruction, role play, and videos, the course teaches ALGEE, a five-step action plan for assisting young people in crisis and noncrisis situations:

- A—Assess** for risk of suicide or harm
- L—Listen** nonjudgmentally
- G—Give** reassurance and information
- E—Encourage** appropriate professional help
- E—Encourage** self-help and other support strategies

MHFA teaches recovery and resiliency. It's not just about momentary relief. The idea is to instill hope—that things can get better and people can get well. "As far as a citywide effort, Philadelphia is the best example," said Gibb. The city's goal is well-equipped, confident communities that are ready and willing to assist anyone who needs it: friends, neighbors, relatives, or coworkers. Philly is maximizing MHFA funding and resources by working toward large-scale training, and aims to certify 10 percent of its residents.

"To date we have conducted over 400 MHFA citywide trainings, trained 190 instructors, and certified over 7,300 Philadelphians to respond to a behavioral health crisis or noncrisis situation," said Maria Boswell, acting director of Mental Health First Aid at the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual

senior policy advisor for public safety in the mayor's office. "Residents should recognize their community when reading the plan, and see comments that were made at the community meetings."

Community consensus was achieved, and the priorities were ranked. Youth programs, including after-school, late-night, and early drug and gang prevention programming, took the first slot. Next was collaboration with schools to leverage resources, from early intervention to aftercare, parent education on childrearing, gang and drug education, and teen parenting. Closing out the priorities was increased community policing to improve law enforcement–community relations, coordinate gang suppression actions, and build neighborhood capacity.

"This is the best strategic plan we have developed," said Salcido. "The plan reflects our growth from just working and consulting among ourselves to working with others in Santa Clara County and with efforts like the National Forum. We finally seem to be on the same page—talking the talk and walking the walk." Salcido also said a Research Development Association grant has given San Jose greater capacity to conduct research that will better inform its planning and lead to new insights.

"The MGPTF is housed in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services for a reason," said Rios. "It was placed there so law enforcement activity could be balanced with other community needs, and alternative methods could be explored." And this appears to be working. San Jose once saw a re-offense rate of 78 percent among 15- to 18-year-olds in the city. Those involved in MGPTF are experiencing an inverse response, with 74 percent succeeding. "This is a great number," Rios said.

There is much to be learned from San Jose's perseverance and readiness to improve, adapt, and change its strategic planning process. The city's diligence has paid off, as it has become judicious enough to continue tackling the toughest problems while re-prioritizing ongoing efforts and focusing on new, evidence-based approaches to violence prevention. Then again, San Jose's determination to make the city safer has always been more than a plan. It's a promise.

NEWS & VIEWS

disAbilities Services.

More than 1,700 law enforcement professionals have already been trained, including 375 school police, more than 500 Philadelphia police officers, and more than 200 staff members from the Philadelphia Fire Department. "Trainings have taken place in Philadelphia's courts, prison system, and district attorney's office," said Boswell, "and the plan is to continue training all new Philadelphia police cadets upon entry into the Philadelphia Police Academy."

Eventually, everyone who comes into contact with young people—school staff, coaches, bus drivers, camp counselors, youth group leaders, primary care professionals, and students—will have the opportunity to become competent supports for those in need.

While federal Project Aware grants are supporting MHFA training across the country, the long-term goal is for dedicated foundation and government funding.

Philadelphia wants to keep MHFA going and growing, with a goal to connect young Mental Health First Aiders with peers who might need them. "Plans are in place to expand the youth training to younger adults, including the possibility of training graduating high school seniors in the Higher Education Curriculum in preparation for college," said Boswell.

Whether it's human nature, kindness, or altruism that compels us to respond in an emergency, perfect strangers have long saved each other's lives. If goodwill is the best way to power a program, there's no limit to what MHFA can do.

References

1. National Institute of Mental Health. 2005. "Mental Illness Exact Heavy Toll, Beginning in Youth." Retrieved from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/science-news/2005/mental-illness-exacts-heavy-toll-beginning-in-youth.shtml>.
2. B.A. Kitchener and A.F. Jorm. 2004. "Mental Health First Aid Training in a Workplace Setting: A Randomized and Controlled Trial." *BMC Psychiatry* 4(23):1–8.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

Funding Opportunities

Operation AmeriCorps

Operation AmeriCorps is a new program with two

Reports, Guidelines, and Briefs

Violence Exposure: American Indian and Alaska Native Children

The Attorney General's Advisory Committee on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence made official [recommendations](#) to improve related programs and services. Suggesting significant enhancement of services provided to Indian Country, the report encourages assistance and input from tribes, and increased funding for effective, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate programs.

Forming Healthy Teen Relationships

This [report brief](#) examines research on adolescent dating violence from the teen perspective—particularly, how peers shape each other's experiences in the realm of romantic relationships. Teens highly value their relationships with peers, and use many of the skills they've honed through friendships as they begin to date. According to the authors, programs and policies aimed at preventing relationship violence and promoting healthy teen dating are likely to be most effective if they account for the potential ways in which peers interact.

Young Adults: A Focus on Health and Happiness

The years between late adolescence and adulthood can have a lifelong influence, particularly on economic security, health, and well-being. A committee of experts convened by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council [reviewed](#) what is known about these aspects of young adults' lives and offered policy, program, and research recommendations. The report's suggestions could lead to better support for young adults and enable them to improve the country's workforce, global competitiveness, public safety, and national security.

Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

This [paper](#), developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, describes a trauma-informed approach that can be adapted to various systems: child welfare, education, criminal and juvenile justice, and primary health care. Through working definitions and key principles, the guidance aims to build better understanding of the connections between trauma and behavioral health issues, and to guide systems to become more trauma-informed.

A Report Card on Child Homelessness

Based on two reports previously published by the National Center on Family Homelessness (NCFH), a new report, [America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness](#), documents the number of homeless children in each state, their well-being, and state-level planning and policy efforts. Although progress has been made reducing homelessness in certain populations, the number of

funding priorities: the first focuses on specific postsecondary outcomes for students; the second allows localities to identify their most pressing challenge. Funding is available for state service commissions and tribal and local governments, including counties, cities, towns, and school districts. Applicants should identify a high-priority local challenge that AmeriCorps members can address in 2 years or less, and [submit proposals](#) by Jan. 13, 2015.

Solicitation for Coordinated Tribal Assistance Programs

The 2015 [Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation](#) allows federally recognized tribal governments and consortia to submit a single application for all funding opportunities supporting public safety, victim services, and crime prevention in tribal communities. Applicants may apply for funding under nine different purpose areas that best address tribes' concerns for public safety, criminal and juvenile justice, and needs of victims or survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other violence. Applications are due Feb. 24, 2015.

Performance Partnership Pilots

The U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services have partnered to help communities achieve better outcomes for disconnected youth. [Performance Partnership Pilots \(P3\)](#) test innovative, results-focused strategies to achieve improvements for disconnected youth in education, employment, and other key outcomes. This initiative will enable up to 10 pilots to combine funds already received from discretionary programs and align programs and reporting requirements. Applications are due on March 4, 2015.

Training Opportunities

Partnering Nonprofits With Law Enforcement

This 1-hour [Webinar](#), hosted by the Center for Missing and Abducted Children's Organizations, will help nonprofit organizations specializing in community and child safety determine which of their services are most valuable to law enforcement. Participants will assess ways in which they can form long-lasting professional relationships with law enforcement. The Webinar begins at 10 a.m. on Jan. 13, 2015.

National Mentoring Summit

["Expanding the Mentoring Effect"](#) is a summit designed for mentoring practitioners, researchers, corporate partners, government and civic leaders, youth-serving organizations, and MENTOR's network of affiliate Mentoring Partnerships. More than 60 workshops will share successful program models,

homeless children in the U.S. has reached a historic high. In 2013, 2.48 million (1 in 30) children experienced homelessness. The report ranks states in four domains—extent of child homelessness, child well-being, risk for child homelessness, and state policy and planning efforts—and from best to worst. According to NCFH, effective responses to this issue must include safe, affordable housing; education and employment opportunities; services incorporating trauma-informed care; and research identifying evidence-based programs and services.

News

Boston Launches Comprehensive Public Safety Plan

Boston Mayor Martin Walsh has launched a **public safety plan** expanding on two initiatives that protect the city's neighborhoods. The Boston Foundation will provide \$3.1 million to integrate StreetSafe into a citywide effort, putting more Violence Interrupters—people working to stop gang and gun violence before it starts—in Boston communities. Targeting at-risk youths ages 14 to 24, the program will soon partner with others offering job training and trauma support, and have a full staff, with a Violence Interrupter assigned to each of Boston's 19 housing developments.

Summer Employment Decreases Youth Violence

Youths who **work during summer**—the time of year when violence is often high—may be less likely to commit violent crimes, according to a study in the December issue of *Science*. The University of Pennsylvania and University of Chicago Crime Lab looked at 1,634 middle- and high-school students from some of Chicago's poorest and most violent neighborhoods. Students participated in a summer jobs program called One Summer Plus. The results suggest just 25 hours of minimum-wage employment each summer week is enough to reduce teen violence by 43 percent for the next year. One Summer Plus places 8th–12th graders in jobs as summer camp counselors, community garden workers, or office assistants. An adult mentor is assigned to about 1 in every 10 students. Some youths also receive social-emotional learning through the program.

Memphis Plans to Expand City Youth Programs

Memphis, Tenn., Mayor A C Wharton wants to **expand more than 50 city programs** on youth wellness, law enforcement, and intervention. He's moving forward quickly with the plans, starting with recruiting young people to feed the hungry over the holidays. The city's Office of Youth Services will run the programs, which will include counseling, sports, and summer jobs. There are also goals to reestablish the Memphis Youth City Council and develop better-parenting programs.

research, technologies, and resources that have advanced mentoring's positive effect on young people. The summit will be held Jan. 28–30, 2015, in Washington, D.C.

Collaborative Community Partnerships

This **introductory course** looks at partnerships in American Indian communities that support the mission, goals, activities, and ultimate success of Tribal Youth Programs. There are four learning objectives: 1) to define collaborative community partnerships and their impact, 2) to recognize the characteristics, function, and key players of such partnerships, 3) to identify strategies for creating, structuring, and maintaining collaborative partnerships, and 4) to determine measures of success in collaborative community partnership efforts.

Bullying Prevention Task Force Launched

The White House announced a new Interagency Initiative on Hate Crimes, including the **Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Bullying Prevention Task Force**, to proactively address bullying in the AAPI community. The task force will work to uncover hindrances that prevent the AAPI community from seeking relief and support, analyze data on bullying prevalence, improve outreach, develop training and toolkits, and explore and recommend policies that address bullying.

Other Resources

Engaging Key Fields in Violence Prevention

Multisector Partnerships for Preventing Violence

articulates the benefits of collaboration in improving safety outcomes for youths, communities, and cities. Clarifying the roles and contributions of various fields, this publication describes what private and public sectors can bring to the table. The guide also explains Prevention Institute's Collaboration Multiplier, a useful tool designed to encourage meaningful collaboration across diverse fields.

Internet Safety: A New Resource Guide

Developed by the Children's Safety Network, this **guide** provides links to organizations, programs, publications, and resources focused on Internet safety as well as information on cyberbullying, sexting, social networking, and suicide and other self-harm.

Two New NCJRS Online Features

The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) launched two special features to keep youths safe online and at school. The first is a collection of resources on **Internet safety**, including links to information on online victimization, safety, and privacy. The **school safety** feature contains information on the impact of school violence and provides links to resources on bullying, violence, and related training.

LGBT Youth in Juvenile Justice Systems

This **fact sheet** focuses on improving policies and practices for youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) in juvenile justice systems. Many LGBT youths experience victimization by families or at school before age 18, which can make accessing appropriate care and support more difficult, especially when they are placed in supervised systems. This resource explores the experiences of LGBT youth in juvenile justice systems and looks at opportunities to provide more protection and focused support.

Serving Juvenile Justice System–Involved Youth

Developed through a partnership between the U.S.

Departments of Justice and Education, the **Correctional Education Guidance Package** is designed to inform the efforts of states, school districts, and juvenile justice facilities that serve system-involved youth. There are four main components: the guiding principles for high-quality correctional education, and three Dear Colleague Letters on education for students with disabilities in correctional facilities, civil rights of students in juvenile justice residential facilities, and access to federal Pell Grants for students in juvenile justice residential facilities.

Contact Us

Send questions or feedback about the newsletter to NFYVP@dsgonline.com or [subscribe](#).

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[1] National Institute on Mental Health. 2005. "Mental Illness Exacts Heavy Toll, Beginning in Youth." Retrieved from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/science-news/2005/mental-illness-exacts-heavy-toll-beginning-in-youth.shtml>.

[2] BA Kitchener et al. 2004. "Mental Health First Aid Training in a Workplace Setting: A Randomized and Controlled Trial." *BMC Psychiatry* 4(23):1–8.