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## FORUM FEATURE: SALINAS

## FROM TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH

*"Sometimes the course of our lives depends on what we do or don't do in a few seconds, a heartbeat, when we either seize the opportunity, or just miss it. Miss the moment and you never get a chance again." —Aidan Chambers*

For those of us fighting to reduce youth violence, there is a point at which intervention stands to have a life-changing influence. It may last as long as a few days or no more than a few hours, but this window of opportunity—when violence victims are more receptive and willing to change their life course—opens in an unexpected place: the emergency rooms and trauma centers of hospitals throughout the country.

The City of San Jose is conducting a pilot program for violence victims admitted to Valley Medical Center's (VMC's) emergency room. Partnering with the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force, the VMC Trauma to Triumph program meets victims at a symbolic precipice, intervening with patients, their families, and friends at a time when they are frightened and susceptible to retaliating. At this crucial point, victims may be more receptive to services that can turn their lives



### Staying Connected in Salinas: Social Media and Youth Violence Prevention

The avenues of communication for today's teens are constantly repaved and widened by advances in technology. Keeping pace with a generation on the cutting edge is challenging, but the City of Salinas, California, found that a promising opportunity accompanies that challenge, providing information, resources, and support—important tools in a community's struggle against youth and gang violence.

With trends in gang recruitment showing a focus on adolescents and teens, reaching out to youth in the most effective ways possible is crucial for reducing participation and youth violence as a whole. As more young people access the Internet and participate in social media, the door to reaching community youth en masse is wide open. According to a March 13, 2013, report<sup>[1]</sup> released by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, 78 percent of American teens have a cell phone. Forty-seven percent of those devices are smartphones capable of accessing the Internet anywhere, anytime. Ninety-five percent of polled teens use the Internet and 71 percent said their primary

in a positive direction and divert them from perpetuating a cycle of violence that leads to more crime, jail time, injury, depression, or death. The Trauma to Triumph program brings opportunity, high-impact settings, and resources together in one place to end violence once and for all.



"What excites me most about this program is the opportunity to maximize the 'golden window' to get to young people at the right time and place," said Mario Maciel, San Jose's National Forum Coordinator. "With this program, we are not reacting too late."

Program staff at VMC emphasize the importance of making an impact during a victim's brief period of vulnerability. If the opportunity is missed, victims may think because they survived, they must be invincible—an irrational, sometimes dangerous belief.

The program had its origins in 1993 when tattoo removal became a recognized way to assist intervention efforts, making it easier for young people to separate themselves from gangs and gang lifestyles. Trauma to Triumph is based on longstanding programs in Oakland and San Francisco and was initiated in San Jose in September 2012. Thirty-three people have met the criteria for admission, but only 26 were solicited due to appropriate staff being off duty (community interventionists and medical social workers are not available on weekends) when they were admitted to VMC. Of these 26 individuals, 21 agreed to service after providing full consent.

VMC trauma staff and community interventionists meet monthly to review active cases as part of a larger memorandum of understanding between the City of San Jose and VMC that outlines how the program should be operated. Domestic violence cases are not accepted and trauma staff must be vigilant in avoiding ethnic profiling of gang members.

Maciel and a network of service providers are responsible for victims after they are released from VMC. They follow the victim for 6 months and use city/county services, support from the faith-based community, and even relocation

computer is shared by family.

The City of Salinas and other members of the Community Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP), a coalition of community leaders and local organizations, educators, and nonprofits, are working to make the most of these trends. "We have a Web site, [www.future-futuro.org](http://www.future-futuro.org), which highlights programs, interviews, and resources for community members to learn more about what is offered in our city and county," said Georgina Mendoza, Community Safety Director for the City of Salinas and CASP Director. "We also have a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/future.futuro>) to pass on the message and reach out to more people, as well as [to] give people an opportunity to share their resources and opinions."

Along with providing a forum for community members to post and share their experiences, Future-Futuro.org and For Our Future/Para Nuestro Futuro on Facebook serve as repositories for violence reduction strategies and provide resources, book recommendations, and a trove of community activities to keep youth off the streets and out of trouble. But CASP's adult members are not alone in pursuing a gang and violence-free community—youth from Salinas and Monterey County play key roles in getting the message out to their peers.

One such youth leader making a big impact on the effectiveness of CASP's social media tools is Fernanda Ocana. Fernanda began volunteering in her community in 2010. Getting the opportunity to work alongside other CASP members inspired her to go further. "I was first introduced to CASP by Georgina Mendoza," said Ocana, who believes involving youth in the violence prevention mission has been a success for Salinas. "Hearing about the great work CASP members are constantly doing made me want to be part of it. The more youth who get the privilege to have mentors or the opportunity to work and be around great community leaders, the more amazing leaders we will have later."

CASP gives presentations at local schools to make students aware of the resources available through the coalition's Web site and Facebook page. As part of a project for the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, Mendoza and Ocana worked together to form a Salinas youth council—an opportunity for local young people to learn about leadership and positive influences.

According to Ocana, the efforts to connect with youth through social media have been successful. "The Facebook page and Web site are definitely great ways to reach out to our community members," she said. "Aside from the pages themselves, I believe the way they have been presented to youth [help] introduce community members to the different work CASP is [doing], and most importantly, what community members can do to make a positive change themselves."

According to the Pew report, one in four teens is a "cell mostly" Internet user with mobile access to the Web. In the future, CASP may be able to instantly reach this growing portion of ever-connected young people through Twitter. "We are looking into starting a Twitter account, since we know how effective it can be," said Mendoza. In the meantime, CASP will continue to rely on youth leaders to communicate and connect with peers about the critical missions of violence prevention and fostering a peaceful community.

planning for at-risk youth. Eighteen people currently participate in Trauma to Triumph. Three people have completed the program: two were successfully discharged while one person was unsuccessful.

Other programs of this nature are becoming viable options for juvenile victims in the United States. SafERteens is one such program, where teens taken to the emergency room as a result of heavy alcohol use or violent encounters complete a series of decisional balance exercises and role-playing scenarios that emphasize risk avoidance and healthy decision making.

"The opportunity to partner with organizations such as the hospital in the early stages creates relationships with great possibilities for future collaboration," said Maciel.

Extricating young people from dangerous circumstances and poor lifestyle choices is challenging work. Mario's efforts are supported by the VMC trauma staff led by Director John Sherck with assistance from Program Manager Eileen Hoover, Medical Social Worker Lauren Schmidt, and Injury Prevention Coordinator Susie Ward. Together they are turning tragic circumstances into opportunities to reduce violence for life.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

### Training Opportunities

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges will hold its **76th Annual Conference** in Seattle, Washington, July 14–17, 2013. The conference will provide juvenile and family court officials with information and tools to improve case processing and outcomes for children, youth, families, victims, and their communities.

On July 16, 2013, the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services will host "**Safety Organized, Trauma-Informed, Solution-Focused Approach to Domestic Violence Cases in Child Protection**," as part of a Webinar series. The Webinar will discuss safety-organized, solution-focused engagement strategies for children, mothers, and fathers in settings where domestic violence is a protective concern.

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice will host its 2013 Youth Summit, "**Empowering Young**

[1]Mary Madden, Amanda Lenhart, Maeve Duggan, Sandra Cortesi, and Urs Gasser. 2013. "Teens and Technology 2013." Pew Internet & American Life Project. Accessed June 12, 2013. <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teens-and-Tech.aspx>.

## NEWS & VIEWS

### Reports

#### Reforming Juvenile Justice

*National Academies Press, 2012*

Looking at evidence on adolescent development and effective responses to adolescent offending, this **report** aims to consolidate progress in science and policymaking and establish a strong platform for a 21st century juvenile justice system.

#### PTSD, Trauma, and Comorbid Psychiatric Disorders in Detained Youth

*Juvenile Justice Bulletin, 2013*

The authors **discuss their findings** on prevalence of trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among juvenile detainees and PTSD's tendency to co-occur with other psychiatric disorders. Presence of PTSD increases the likelihood that at least one other psychiatric disorder exists—a challenge to the criminal justice and mental health systems.

#### Juveniles in Residential Placement, 2010

*OJJDP, 2013*

In a **review** of national and state-level data from the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement, this bulletin shows the population of juvenile offenders in custody has declined by one third since 1997. The number of status offenders in custody is down 52 percent.

### News

#### Boston's Summer Public Safety Strategy

Mayor Thomas M. Menino joined his summer safety team, including the Boston Police Commissioner, Public Health Commissioner, Chief of Human Services, and Boston Public Schools Superintendent, to announce a **comprehensive, proactive violence prevention strategy** for summer. The approach will emphasize more outreach, more engagement, more officers, more collaboration, and more technology.

### Other Resources

#### Reconnecting Youth

New materials on youth issues and evidence initiatives are available on **FindYouthInfo.gov**. According to "**Reconnecting Youth**," disconnected youth are often defined as young people who are homeless, in foster care, involved in the justice system, or without employment or structured education. Approximately 6.7

**Leaders for Juvenile Justice Reform,"** August 2–3, in Washington, D.C. Sessions will provide information on juvenile justice basics, disproportionate minority contact, the school-to-prison pipeline, and leadership development.

On August 12–15, 2013, the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center and Dallas Police Department will host their annual **Crimes Against Children Conference**. Workshops will include Preparing Children to Testify in Court, Resiliency 101: From Victim to Survivor, Modifying Assessments for Child Sex Trafficking Cases, and Sexual Victimization of Children: A Law Enforcement Perspective over 40 Years.

## Funding Opportunities

OJJDP seeks applications for its **National Juvenile Justice Information Sharing Training and Technical Assistance Program** to build capacity of juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, and education systems and use existing information-sharing standards, procedures, tools, and practices to improve services and outcomes for youth, families, and communities. Applications are due July 9, 2013.

The **Division of Innovation and Research Fellowship Program on Juvenile Justice Data** fellowship will provide an opportunity for researchers in juvenile justice, survey methodology, and statistics to help implement collaborative cross-agency strategies, policies, and programs that enhance and improve data. Applications are due July 15, 2013.

or without employment or structured education. Approximately 6.7 million youths exhibit one or more of the above risk factors and encounter multiple systems in the United States.

### Pathways for Youth

The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs has released **Pathways for Youth**, a strategic plan to improve youth outcomes—particularly for the most vulnerable youth. In developing the report, the Working Group collected input from young people, families, schools, nonprofit organizations, State Children's Cabinet directors, and government organizations.

### Childhood Bullying and Adult Psychiatric Disorders

In a **study** conducted by Duke University, researchers revealed the degree to which bullying can affect a person's mental health. The study followed more than 1,000 youths starting at ages 9, 11, and 13, and interviewed the children each year until they turned 16.

### Juvenile Justice System Structure and Process

OJJDP has released the **first in a series of national overviews** that describe where states stand on various juvenile justice issues, including how they classify status offenses, extended age of jurisdiction, and administration of community supervision and aftercare services.

### Journal of Juvenile Justice

In its spring 2013 issue of the **Journal of Juvenile Justice**, OJJDP addresses family-focused juvenile reentry services, parental acceptance–rejection theory, and functional family therapy for youth with behavioral problems.

## Contact Us

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

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