

Preventing Youth Violence BEFORE it Starts: Youth, Families, and Faith-Based Partners

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Addressing fatherhood can play a key role in the addressing youth violence in our communities. This reality was recently front and center at a session of a two day working session of cities participating in the >National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention.



Howard Spivak, MD, Director Division of Violence Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Joseph Jones, Jr., President, Center for Urban Families, Pastor Keith Norman, First Baptist Church Broad, Memphis, TN, Wendy Wheeler, President, Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development

In response to this crisis of Youth Violence we are facing, President Obama directed the Departments of Justice and Education to partner with other federal agencies to launch the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. This is a six city network dedicated to stopping youth violence in our nation's cities. The six participating cities— Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Salinas, CA and San Jose, CA –have made significant progress toward implementing comprehensive youth violence prevention strategies.

At the two day working session, teams from these cities — including chiefs of police, public-health officials, educators, city officials, community and faith leaders shared the progress they've made. This progress has come through the use of evidence-based strategies to prevent youth violence and help formerly incarcerated youth become

productive citizens. We recognize that family, including fathers and youth engagement our critical elements to successful youth violence prevention strategies.

In the sessions that titled, “Preventing Youth Violence BEFORE it Starts: Youth, Families, and Faith-Based Partners,” Joe Jones, President of the Center for Urban Families drove home the importance of engaging fathers. In addressing the role that father absence plays in Youth Violence, Joe described his programs efforts to train fathers on how to engage with their children and the mother of their children. Joe shared how the Center for Urban Families works with a number of young dads through the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project.

Pastor Keith Norman also participated sharing his efforts to engage the Faith community around a Memphis’ Comprehensive Youth Violence Prevention plan. Pastor Norman discussed the important role that Faith-based organizations can play in partnering with law enforcement and other groups in order to prevent youth violence and creating opportunity for young people.

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