



National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention

Strategic Planning Toolkit for Communities: 2012



Make a Plan

Youth violence is directly tied to a city's quality of life, economic health, and potential growth. Across the country, cities using the Forum's comprehensive approach are working to reduce youth violence. These cities are using multi-disciplinary partnerships that develop and implement strategic plans driven by local data, with a combination of **prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry strategies**. Based on evaluated efforts over the past 20 years, integrated, multi-year plans represent a locality's best chance to sustainably reduce youth violence over time.

Most cities already engage in some level of formal planning for youth development and violence prevention, and for enforcement responses to youth and gang violence. Integrating these plans can improve outcomes for youth, and for the city as a whole. By developing comprehensive strategies that engage multiple partners, cities can take best advantage of their assets and resources.

We invite you to use the Forum's new Strategic Planning Toolkit as you develop—or revisit—your city's plan(s) to prevent and respond to youth violence.

Benefits of Forum Plans

- **Address critical problems** that no single agency can solve alone.
- **Identify areas** in which funds and time can be better spent.
- **Build partnerships** for planning and implementation. People will support what they help create.
- **Build the city's capacity** for local data sharing and analysis.
- **Develop strategies to sustain** the city's reductions in youth violence over time.
- **Improve outcomes for youth** and neighborhoods through coordinated strategies.
- **Give potential funders confidence** in the city's commitment to collaboration.

Introduction

At the direction of President Obama, the Departments of Justice and Education launched the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention (Forum) to begin a national conversation about youth and gang violence, raise awareness about the problem, and elevate the issue to one of national significance. In addition, the Forum was created to build the capacity of cities across the country to more effectively address youth violence through comprehensive planning and the sharing of common challenges and promising strategies.

Forum Participants

The Forum convenes a diverse array of stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels. Initial participating cities include Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Salinas, and San Jose. Participating federal agencies include the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Labor, and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. Other participants include local faith and community-based groups, youth and family representatives, businesses, and philanthropic organizations.

Forum Approach

Youth and gang violence are not inevitable. Research and experience demonstrate that when cities engage partners from many disciplines and perspectives and implement a data-driven, balanced approach — one that includes strategies for prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry — youth and gang violence can decrease while outcomes for youth improve. This Toolkit was developed to support cities in developing youth violence prevention plans by building partnerships, taking an inventory of local resources and assets, and designing strategies, based on local data, that address the nature of youth violence and its causes. The goal is to create a multi-year plan that continues to guide the city's efforts after the implementation phase begins.

Forum Working Definitions

Youth Violence: Violent acts committed by youth, and violent acts committed against or witnessed by youth. Forum plans are focused on violence involving youth from ages 0 through 24.

Youth Violence Prevention: Stop youth violence before it starts, and respond effectively to prevent its recurrence.

Balanced Approach: Data-driven strategies for:

- Prevention
- Intervention
- Enforcement
- Reentry

Overview: Four-Step Process

The Forum's four strategic planning steps build on one another—the results from each step inform and support the next—but the implementation phase is not the end of the process. It is only the beginning of a new way to coordinate resources and information around a challenge of critical importance.

Strategies are developed locally, based on research, evidence, local data, and knowledge of local assets and opportunities. They represent a balanced approach—a combination of prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry strategies—that has proven successful in reducing youth violence in cities throughout the nation.

The written plan itself should not be lengthy, but it should take into account all of the mobilization and assessment work that has been completed, moving forward from there.

Forum cities have used a six-month timeframe for creating their multi-year plans. Consensus among Forum sites is that the timeline was tight but reasonable and kept them on task.

Forum Four Step Process

Step 1: Build Partnerships and Raise Awareness

- ✓ 1.1: Initiate a call to action.
- ✓ 1.2: Agree on a common vision of success
- ✓ 1.3: Organize a structure for developing the plan.

Step 2: Gather and Use Data to Inform Strategies

- ✓ 2.1: Review current youth violence research and evidence.
- ✓ 2.2: Collect and share local data on youth violence.
- ✓ 2.3: Use the data to inform strategy selection.
- ✓ 2.4: Identify resources and assets.

Step 3: Write the Plan

- ✓ 3.1: Develop strategies and goals.
- ✓ 3.2: Match resources to strategies and goals.
- ✓ 3.3: Develop measurable objectives and activities.

Step 4: Implement the Plan

- ✓ 4.1: Work the plan.
- ✓ 4.2: Revisit and update the plan.

Step 1: Building Partnerships & Awareness

Youth violence problems are too complex for law enforcement or any single agency to resolve alone. Solutions require partnerships dedicated both to stopping youth violence before it starts and to responding effectively when it does occur.

The strength of a plan may turn largely on the number and quality of the partnerships it includes. Strong plans include a diverse range of engaged stakeholders, including:

- Law Enforcement
- Education
- Social Services
- Public Health
- Labor
- Community and faith-based organizations
- Parents and youth
- Business and philanthropic organizations

Four Concept Areas

Strong plans also include robust strategies in *the four concept areas* of **prevention**, **intervention**, **enforcement**, and **reentry**, and importantly, the plans link strategies across these concepts.

This balanced approach requires a mix of organizations and individuals with expertise in the four concept areas. In Forum cities, efforts span from early childhood to young adulthood.

- **Prevention programming** examples include youth development and family support services, educational and community mentoring, and in-school and out-of-school activities.
- **Intervention programs** engage with high-risk and gang-involved youth in a range of settings, and may include educational, health, drug treatment, and other services.
- **Law enforcement efforts** focus on the most serious, violent, and chronic youthful offenders and on crime hot spots.
- Finally, **reentry programs** support youth offenders returning from confinement to the community and begin providing this support prior to their release.

Step 1.1: Initiate a Call to Action

A call to action initiates the plan development process. It typically begins with the mayor inviting to a meeting stakeholders whose endorsement and support are essential for developing a comprehensive plan—for example, the chief of police, school superintendent, and directors of other agencies and organizations whose missions include preventing youth violence. Additional calls to action are extended to the broader community, but initial buy-in from these key decision makers is critical for moving the planning process forward and implementing the strategies developed. These leaders will be asked to come prepared to review the types of information, staff skills and participation, and other resources they can contribute to a comprehensive planning effort to prevent youth violence. In addition to providing clarity on the Forum planning approach, the agenda includes gaining commitments to proceed with first steps, such as forming a steering committee to develop the plan, identifying other community leaders who should be involved in the effort, and convening listening sessions to encourage community members to contribute information.

Listening Sessions

Forum cities have convened listening sessions to gather information about the nature of youth violence locally and the impact it is having on youth and communities. Listening sessions are public forums that involve stakeholders who do not traditionally participate in city strategic planning sessions. These sessions may be one of the city's first outreach efforts after key partners respond to the call to action, with additional sessions scheduled to continue engaging community members in strategy development. The information from these sessions is invaluable for accurately interpreting data on youth violence, and for identifying additional community assets and resources.

Listening sessions involve concerned citizens, youth and families, faith-based organizations, businesses and philanthropic organizations, and others who know or work with high-risk youth, or whose neighborhoods are affected by youth violence. Participants are encouraged to discuss youth violence, envision desired outcomes, and identify local resources and opportunities. These sessions also pave the way for the further involvement of community members and leaders in planning and decision-making, advocacy for systems and policy changes, and engagement in other meaningful ways.

Step 1.2: Organize a Plan Structure

Because the youth violence prevention plan is the result of a documented process that includes multiple stakeholders, organizing this effort effectively is critical if the process is to move beyond the meet-and-discuss stage.

The checklist items at right represent keys to a successful structure for plan development, based on experiences in Forum communities and other cities with similar youth violence prevention plans.

Top-level Commitments

At a minimum, there must be demonstrated and visible commitments, support, and leadership from the Mayor, Chief of Police, and School Superintendent. The involvement of the local U.S. Attorney has also proven helpful, and the Forum recommends engaging other top-level leaders connected to youth violence prevention, such as the Public Health Department Director.

By providing visible, top-level support for crafting a jurisdiction-wide plan, these leaders also send a public message that “this level of violence will not be tolerated in our community,” and that the city is committed to putting the plan into action. Partners who enforce the law can often serve as the one of the best and most persuasive spokespersons for prevention.

Plan Development Leader

An identified leader for plan development is critical for completing a comprehensive Forum plan for youth violence prevention. This individual must be empowered to lead a multi-disciplinary effort within a well-designed, staff-supported organizational structure, which includes a steering committee and operational teams. The following skills, knowledge, and abilities will be needed to direct the plan development effort:

- Ability to understand and work within complex systems such as law enforcement, education, public health, and social services, and to develop short- and long-term plans for implementation.
- Understanding of data collection and analysis protocols, and an ability to assess, interpret, and clearly explain data orally and in writing to a wide range of audiences.

Checklist: Organizing a Structure for Plan Development

- ✓ Top-level commitments
- ✓ Plan development leader
- ✓ Steering committee composition : City and county agencies; Federal partners; Nonprofit organizations; Community and faith-based organizations
- ✓ Steering committee member roles: Operational teams; Work groups, ad hoc committees; Expert facilitator; Advisors, e.g., research partner

- Flexibility to personally handle or provide professional oversight for a variety of complex tasks, from public speaking and writing grants to managing project funds and effectively supervising personnel.
- Professionalism in dealing with personnel at different levels of responsibility, from agency heads to grassroots personnel, and from a variety of disciplines, including law enforcement, education, social services, justice systems, and outreach.
- Meeting facilitation, conflict resolution, and consensus-building skills that enable the individual to serve as an intermediary between agencies, resolve differences of opinion during meetings, and effectively address potentially divisive topics in which participants are professionally or emotionally invested.
- An understanding of complex material such as risk factors leading to gang involvement, local gang activities and gang research, community dynamics and history, and prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry strategies; and an ability to explain these concepts to others from a range of educational and cultural backgrounds.
- Skill in engaging and motivating staff from a variety of agencies and ethnic and economic backgrounds, including staff over whom the leader does have direct supervisory authority. This is especially important when working with outreach staff who may have prior offending histories, prior gang affiliations, and unstable work histories.
- Ability to generate passion and enthusiasm to inspire others to achieve solid results.

Forum cities also found it beneficial to designate one person responsible for recording information, taking notes, organizing materials, and managing the timeline throughout the planning process.

Steering Committee Composition

The steering committee is the broad-based, multi-disciplinary group that develops the written plan—with data and guidance from many sources—and coordinates both initial implementation and later revisions to the plan. Strategies will be developed for prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry, and each of these major plan components must be staffed. That staff should have a leader serving on the steering committee. Leaders from the following groups should be represented:

- **Local agency representatives.** Agency representatives and other steering committee members will have roles in implementing and sustaining the plan. These roles will be stated in the plan document. Depending on the relationship of a given city to its respective county government, the plan will also describe roles for ongoing coordination with county systems, such as schools, social services, juvenile justice, probation, public health, and child welfare.

- **Federal agencies.** In Forum cities, the local U.S. Attorney's Office is a helpful steering committee participant and contributor. Other federal agencies may also be represented on steering committees, including the regional HUD Office, the Department of Labor's Job Corps, and other federal agencies whose staff contribute to local youth violence prevention efforts.
- **Nonprofit organizations.** These may include philanthropic foundations, direct service providers, local colleges and universities, and business organizations.
- **Community and faith based organizations,** such as faith communities and inter-faith alliances. Their inclusion in the planning process is crucial for successfully implementing and sustaining a youth violence prevention plan. The faith community is often an essential partner in a city's youth and gang violence prevention work. Obligations to assist those in need are central to most faith traditions. Many faith community members want to help prevent youth violence but are uncertain how to get involved with the city's efforts. Those leading comprehensive planning and action must realize that faith communities have different capacities and concerns and should be provided the widest possible range of involvement opportunities, which can include:
 - Grief response
 - Street work/peacekeeping
 - Joint patrols with police, probation, or parole
 - Mentoring
 - A neutral locale for mediation between gangs
 - A convening place for neighborhood meetings
 - A source of volunteers for prevention work of all sorts; for example, those not comfortable working with gang-involved youth might be engaged in tutoring young children in local libraries.
 - A communications network, e.g., through bulletins or announcements during services
 - A bridge between the community and government
 - Anti-violence/peace marches

To ensure broad representation, city leaders should work through existing inter-faith committees or ministerial alliances. Working with only one religious tradition or with only one denomination narrows the volunteer pool and may send a message that such work is the concern of only one faith entity.

Steering Committee Roles

- **Operational teams and work groups.** Steering committees form operational teams around the four strategy areas of prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry. Work groups and ad hoc committees are needed to address critical tasks like data collection and analysis.
- **Facilitator.** It is important to ensure that the plan development leader or steering committee chair has meeting facilitation support, if needed. Outstanding

meeting facilitation skills are critical for ensuring that all members have opportunities to fully participate in discussions and decision making, and that all meetings are action-oriented.

- **Advisors.** Steering committees may also benefit from having participants who serve in an advisory capacity. The Forum recommends engaging an expert in data analysis or a research partner. To show that the plan's results are linked to achieving its stated objectives, you will need to be sure your objectives and activities are expressed in measurable terms, and that you have the data you need.

Assessing Levels of Collaboration

Many cities find it valuable to assess the extent to which stakeholders currently collaborate around youth violence prevention issues. This information can be used to better understand local assets, gaps in services, and opportunities. The following tools can be completed by the plan development leader as a quick assessment or by steering committee members individually or as a group.

Step 1.3: Agree on a Common Vision

Agencies, organizations, and individuals in any city will enter this planning effort with different missions and agendas, which can make it challenging to reach agreement on strategies going forward. The entire planning process is essentially a consensus building process, with the completed plan representing a consensus that the planned actions are the right way to proceed.

One technique that can aid in identifying areas of agreement is a structured visioning activity. The products from this activity—in addition to a vision statement—can also give a steering committee a head start on drafting goals and objectives for the city’s youth violence prevention plan.

Structured Visioning Activity Steps

The time needed for this activity will vary with the size of the group, but a realistic estimate is a minimum of two hours.

Introduction

At a steering committee meeting, an experienced facilitator might begin by asking everyone to think ten years ahead and envision a major award ceremony or celebration, or another scenario that indicates great success. Additional prompts from the facilitator would build on the scenario, asking group members to reflect on different aspects of that success, but without defining success for them or suggesting what their responses to any of the prompts should be.

As a brief example, a steering committee might be asked to imagine a speaker at the event who lists the accomplishments that merited recognition, and to envision youth talking about opportunities and residents discussing neighborhood conditions. The group might also be asked to imagine a steering committee spokesperson explaining to the audience how the plan the city developed years ago contributed to the success, or to visualize people who carried out that plan recalling how they were able to accomplish so much. Before participants move on to the next part of the visioning process, they might also be invited to jot down notes about what they saw.

Discuss Individual Visions

For the next steps in the visioning process to end with the group reaching a level of agreement, the facilitator would also assist as group members discuss their individual visions and discover the vision elements they have in common. Identifying, grouping, and recording these common elements can move the planning process along in several ways:

Vision Statements Are:

Statements of what organizations would like to accomplish in the future

Guides for choosing current and future courses of action

- Prepares the steering committee to draft a vision statement. This statement both serve as a touchstone to help the committee stay focused and reminds the broader community—through meetings, articles, and other opportunities—that all involved are working to achieve the same results.
- Leads into developing the plan’s goals. For example, one goal might emerge from a discussion of desired outcomes for youth who have already committed violent acts, another might be suggested by a shared vision of safe neighborhoods and schools, and another goal might emerge from a common vision of a city where all youth have the support and resources they need.
- Provides one way to de-emphasize status and rank among group members by giving all an opportunity to participate equally in expressing their visions and desired outcomes.

Variations in Forum Cities

Approaches for conducting visioning activities vary, and the scenarios and questions that guide the process in any given city should be selected carefully by someone who understands the particular characteristics, needs, and dynamics of the local steering committee and community groups. Initial Forum cities developed vision statements to reflect their own shared visions of success; for example:

- “Youth and families thriving in safe and healthy neighborhoods vibrant with opportunities for personal, spiritual, educational, and economic growth.” (Boston)
- “Detroit envisions a city where youth and education are valued, it is safe to walk the streets, conflicts are resolved nonviolently, and young men and women have real job and career opportunities.”
- “Safe and healthy youth connected to their families, schools, communities, and their futures.” (San Jose)
- “Memphis is a city where all children and youth, valued and nurtured by strong families and communities, are fully prepared for lifelong success.”

Strategic Planning Toolkit: Step 1 Resources

Featured Resources

Examples of other cities' youth violence prevention partnerships

- **Spotlight on Forum Communities.** This section of the Forum website provides youth violence prevention plans and plan summaries from Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Salinas, and San Jose. <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/spotlight-forum-communities>
- **Preventing Gang Violence and Building Communities Where Young People Thrive: A Toolkit for Municipal Leaders.** This publication draws on the experiences of 13 cities that belong to the California Cities Gang Prevention Network (including the Forum communities of Salinas and San Jose). City examples specific to partnership building are in Part 2: Strategic Partnerships, and are grouped by criminal justice, city-county, school, faith community, and neighborhood partnerships. <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/iyef/violence-prevention>

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- **UNITY RoadMap: A Framework for Effectiveness and Sustainability.** Organized by Partnerships, Prevention, and Strategy, each of nine *RoadMap* elements was selected for its importance in affecting and sustaining efforts to prevent violence before it occurs in cities. Produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Urban Network to Increase Thriving Youth (UNITY) project, each section includes approximately 10 brief (one-paragraph) descriptions of youth violence prevention partnerships and successes in cities throughout the nation, including the Forum communities of San Jose, Salinas, and Chicago. <http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-30/127.html>

Guidance for conducting effective steering committee meetings

- **Building Effective Community Partnerships.** This publication is geared to committee leaders charged with bringing together and sustaining a group composed of diverse organizations, agencies, and individuals. It addresses FAQs about this process and offers specific agenda items and tips for facilitating initial meetings to help the group stay focused and action-oriented (pages 5-15). http://www.ccitoolsforfeds.org/doc/Building_Effective_Community_Partnership_s.pdf
- **MAPP: Visioning.** Mapping for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP), a resource developed by the National Association of County and City Health Officials, offers an overview of the purpose and benefits of the visioning process, as well as more in-depth guidance. <http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/mapp/framework/phase2.cfm>
- **The Tension of Turf: Making It Work for the Coalition.** This Prevention Institute publication was developed to help coalitions derive authentic, constructive power from their varying perspectives, skills, and mandates. <http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-103/127.html>

Overviews of youth violence issues and youth violence prevention planning

- **CDC/STRYVE Training Videos.** Three training videos (7 to 20 minutes) are available online from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/STRYVE (Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere): “Understand Youth Violence,” which includes risk and protective factors; “Look for Warning Signs;” and “Protect your Community.” Users may stop the interactive videos at key points and link to in-depth information and resources. <http://www.safeyouth.gov/Training/Pages/Training.aspx>
- **3 Bold Steps for School Community Change: A Toolkit for Community Leaders.** This toolkit is based on the successful Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, a collaboration supported by the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services. It includes resources and tools to help (1) build a broad partnership, (2) create a goal-driven plan, and (3) ensure success. <http://toolkit.promoteprevent.org/>
- **Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight-Step Guide.** This resource from the Prevention Institute was developed to *support all aspects of the partnership building process so partnerships launch and stabilize successfully. The guide can help determine the appropriateness of a coalition, select members, define key elements, maintain vitality, and conduct ongoing evaluations.* <http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-104/127.html>
- **Collaboration Center.** This findyouthinfo.gov resource (<http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/collaboration-profiles>) offers guidance for addressing questions like these:

- How do you identify and build effective partnerships?
- Who can you consider as potential partners?
- How do you engage youth in partnerships?

Resources specific to community-law enforcement partnerships

- **The Collaboration Toolkit for Community Organizations: Effective Strategies to Partner with Law Enforcement.** This publication from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) explains how police agencies operate and can help community organizations understand how to collaborate with law enforcement.
http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/Publications/e081026301_comm-collab-toolkit_100610.pdf
- **Making the Match: Law Enforcement, the Faith Community and the Value-Based Initiative.** This publication from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) offers success stories and lessons from police-community partnerships that engaged the faith community.
http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/publications/making_the_match.pdf

Overviews of gang problems and research

- **Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs.** This OJJDP publication draws on research to examine how gangs form and how communities may assess and respond to gang problems.
<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231116.pdf>
- **National Gang Center.** The National Gang Center features the latest research about gangs; descriptions of evidence-based, anti-gang programs; and links to tools, databases, and other resources. <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/> For example, see “**Frequently Asked Questions about Gangs**”
<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

Step 2: Gather & Use Data Strategically

After building partnerships and raising community awareness, cities will need to engage in a serious data analysis effort.

Informed decision-making must be data-driven, so this phase is critical to the development of a successful youth violence prevention plan. The more complete the data profile from all of the agencies, organizations, and systems represented in a city's youth violence prevention efforts, the more informed the decisions will be.

To be truly comprehensive, the Forum recommends that a community's strategy for data sharing include 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, and public housing.

Step 2.1: Review Research & Evidence

The data gathering and analysis process includes ensuring that steering committee members are up to date on research findings and evidence-based practices. Note especially:

- Committee members currently responsible for strategies in one concept area (prevention, intervention, enforcement, reentry) may need to become more familiar with research results in another area.
- Members will need to be prepared to share recent, relevant research and evaluation findings with one another, and to identify areas that may merit further study.
- A research partner or advisor should be able to assist with synthesizing research results that have a bearing on selecting strategies for the comprehensive plan.
- Sources of information on evidence-based programs and practices are also included in this Toolkit.

Checklist: Gathering & Using Data Strategically:

Data Collection and Initial Analysis

- ✓ Current youth violence research reviewed.
- ✓ Data analysis work group designated.
- ✓ Recent local data obtained from multiple sources.
- ✓ Data assessed for trends, relevance to plan development.
- ✓ Plan made to address data sharing obstacles.

Data Review and Analysis (Steering Committee)

- ✓ Findings, trends, interpretations discussed.
- ✓ New data needs identified, addressed
- Review and analysis discussions completed.

Step 2.2: Collect & Share Data

Initial data collection and analysis is typically accomplished by a steering committee work group or ad hoc committee. Whoever is assigned to lead this effort should have the skills needed to assess the data's relevance for strategy development, and to analyze and interpret the data.

The first task will be to ensure that the work group identifies what recent data has been collected and by whom, to avoid duplicating data collection efforts that have already been completed.

The work group will also need to make a plan for addressing any current or potential obstacles to system-wide use of data, such as privacy regulations at the Federal, state, and local levels.

After data is collected, the entire steering committee will need to meet to review findings and trends. Analysis and interpretation by the committee ensures a broad understanding of what the data can and cannot convey about the community.

Step 2.3: Analyze Data

Because tragic violent incidents occur while planning continues, analysis of data to establish target zones for responses and to identify violent offenders must be an ongoing priority. Youth violence does not evenly distribute itself across a community. The city's plan must be focused to be effective, and data must drive that focus. Data that describes the magnitude of the problem in the city is a first step, but to inform the plan's strategies, data analysis must dig deeper and address the who, what, where, when, and how questions about the people and places that drive youth violence problems; for example:

- What behaviors are most important to address? Data is needed about illegal carrying of guns, shootings, gang assaults, truancy, and other factors that more precisely describe violent behaviors.
- Where are violent incidents occurring (e.g., along school routes, at crime hot spots such as specific intersections, parks, or apartment complexes)? The geographical focus should be small to plan for enforcement and intervention services in those places, and to target prevention efforts in those areas.
- When is the violence occurring? The more specific the information—for example, after school but before dinner, late at night, Friday or Saturday nights—the more focused and effective the responses can be.
- Who is committing the shootings and other violent acts? Responses must focus on individuals who are most likely to continue the violence, and those who are directly affected by it.

- Youth violence prevention plans are not meant to provide services to every individual in a community. They are not plans to end poverty, although plan components are concerned with providing resources and opportunities for all youth at risk of violence; and they are not anti-crime plans, although effective enforcement responses are clearly another plan component. The graphic that follows indicates areas of focus for Forum youth violence prevention plans.

Data from all available sources aids in identifying specific people who will benefit most from specific services. Among the many data sources are law enforcement, schools, public health agencies, other providers of prevention and intervention services, juvenile corrections and detention programs, the juvenile court, and hospitals. Plan to devote significant amounts of time to reviewing local statistics. As the information is discussed, new data needs will surface, so the analysis may be best accomplished over two steering committee meetings to give team members time to secure any additional information that is needed.

The bottom line is this: To prevent youth violence before it starts, and to respond effectively when it does occur, a strong plan will prioritize individuals and key areas of the community, so that the plan's prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry strategies can have the greatest impact.

Step 2.4: Identify Resources & Assets

Another important task in the data collection and analysis process is determining what resources and assets currently exist that can be coordinated to address priority concerns identified by the steering committee. In addition to political and community will to support the youth violence prevention plan, assets include:

- Existing local programs and strategies that have demonstrated success in addressing similar problems
- Knowledge of the infrastructure of key agencies and organizations; for example:
 - How are decisions made?
 - Which departments and individuals control needed resources?
 - What constraints (e.g., financial, regulatory, staff shortages, training needs) may affect participation at this time or in the longer term?
- Knowledge of community groups and individuals who can be engaged in the effort

Strategic Planning Toolkit: Step 2 Resources

Featured Resources

Safely sharing data across systems

- **National Juvenile Justice Information Sharing Initiative.** In cooperation with the Office of Justice Programs and OJJDP, this initiative was developed to help state and local jurisdictions improve information sharing practices among juvenile justice, child welfare, and other youth serving agencies. <http://www.juvenileis.org/index.html> For an overview, see “**Frequently Asked Questions.**” <http://www.juvenileis.org/faqs.html>

Identifying community resources and assets

- **OJJDP Strategic Planning Tool** includes a “Community Resource Inventory” that allows users to record and categorize information about their community organizations, programs, services, and activities into an online database. <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/Strategic-Planning-Tool>
- **The Community Toolbox**, a service of the **Work Group for Community Health and Development** at the University of Kansas, provides information and a variety of tools for assessing community resources and needs. http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1003.aspx
- **MapYourCommunity.** This interactive mapping tool, available on findyouthinfo.gov, helps users locate Federally supported youth programs in their communities. <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/maps/map-my-community>
- **Business Sector Action Checklist .** Developed by the Prevention Institute, this is a list of concrete ways the business sector can support activities that prevent violence. <http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-140/127.html>

Step 3: Write the Plan

As cities progress through the Forum planning process, one of the most difficult challenges they face is writing the multi-year plan. Collaborative planning is by nature intensive and challenging, and the process must be conducted with deference to all stakeholder opinions.

To demarcate a reasonable time limit to planning discussions, Forum cities have used a six-month planning timeframe for creating their multi-year plans. Consensus among Forum sites is that this timeline was tight but reasonable and kept them on task.

Completing the Document

Forum cities have found it beneficial to designate one person responsible for recording information, taking notes, organizing materials, and managing the timeline throughout the planning process. Since the goal at this stage is to “plan your work and work your plan,” the process of writing the plan should be orderly and take into account all of the mobilization and assessment work already completed, moving forward from there. While some cities may find it easier to hire a consultant to perform this task, the Forum strongly discourages this. For a multi-year plan to address the *local* needs of a given community and its own youth and gang violence problems, it must be written by individuals who are intimately knowledgeable about those problems and have key roles in carrying out the plan.

*The Forum promotes the development and implementation of **locally-tailored** approaches that balance prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry.*

The ultimate goal of this planning phase is to use a data-informed, community profile to create an integrated, comprehensive, system-wide, multi-year plan for filling identified gaps in the continuum of services that address youth violence.

Additionally, this planning should focus on:

- developing objectives with outcomes that are measurable and criteria with which to assess implementation success;
- reviewing the effectiveness of current activities;
- selecting evidenced-based programs and strategies to fill in identified gaps in services;
- and creating action plans for multi-year plan implementation.

Two important notes: The plan itself does not have to be perfect, and it does not have to be lengthy. It will be routinely reconsidered and revised as implementation occurs, and as results from the implemented strategies begin to change the dynamics of youth and gang violence in the community.

It is possible to write a plan document in as few as 20 pages, as long as strategies are driven by local data and reflect input from multiple, diverse stakeholders; objectives are clearly stated and measurable; and accountability for accomplishing objectives and activities is affixed.

Step 3.1: Develop Strategies & Goals

Forum plan strategies should be based on research, evidence, and results of the local data analysis process in step two, including steering committee priorities and an inventory of resources and assets. The plan should state goals for each key element of the Forum approach: prevention, intervention, enforcement and reentry.

Goals are broad statements that reflect aspects of the plan's overall purpose. For example:

- Respond effectively to gang violence.
- Ensure that youth and families have needed support systems.
- Ensure that schools are safe and free of violence.

The plan will also need a set of clearly stated, realistic strategies related to each goal.

Selecting Strategies

The process of selecting specific strategies involves integrating information from published research and best practices with local experience and lessons learned about reducing youth violence. However, when reviewing evidence-based programs that were successful in other cities, keep in mind that their implementation in *your* city still must be customized to address local problems and resources. The selected strategies also may need periodic modifications, depending on local results and events.

For cities engaging in innovative, new strategies, tracking results is crucial. Because you will not have the benefit of learning from evidence already gathered, you must carefully monitor the results of your strategy or program and build in tracking devices to capture data on its successes, and to identify areas for growth or adjustment. Whether using an evidence-based practice or a strategy based on local experience and practice, tracking results will help communicate to your steering committee whether or not the strategy is successful.

Quick Wins

Finally, remember that achieving “quick wins” in small, specific areas—such as closing a drug market, reopening a park, or providing safe passages to school—often builds toward achieving longer-term objectives. These small, achievable “do while planning” efforts create momentum for the planning process and help build confidence that the plan will achieve positive results.

Resources for Selecting Strategies

See "Step 3: Featured Resources" for a list of useful links organized by the following categories:

- **Online libraries and other resources for identifying evidence-based programs**
<http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/strategic-planning-toolkit/step-3/step-3-resources#01-title>
- **Prevention and intervention strategies**
<http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/strategic-planning-toolkit/step-3/step-3-resources#02-title>
- **Problem-oriented approaches**
<http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/strategic-planning-toolkit/step-3/step-3-resources#03-title>
- **Enforcement strategies**
<http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/strategic-planning-toolkit/step-3/step-3-resources#04-title>
- **Reentry strategies**
<http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/strategic-planning-toolkit/step-3/step-3-resources#05-title>

Step 3.2: Match Resources to Strategies & Goals

The inventory of resources and assets developed earlier represents another critical component of strategy development. Each goal will reflect strategies for prevention, intervention, enforcement, or reentry. Each of those goals will require “how” statements—objectives.

The activities planned for each objective will indicate more specifically what will be done and will require staffing for both implementation and oversight. Forum plans are multi-year plans and include both short- and longer term objectives.

Implementation will involve roles for a range of stakeholders, including community and faith-based groups, and will be revised as conditions change. For each major activity planned, however, responsibility and accountability for completion must be assigned, drawing on the resources and assets identified throughout the planning process.

Step 3.3: Develop Measurable Objectives & Activities

The process of writing the youth violence prevention plan involves linking objectives to goals and strategies, specifying activities that must be carried out to accomplish the objectives, and ensuring that objectives and activities are measurable.

Goals are broad-based statements (e.g., increase school safety, stop gang violence, coordinate city and county prevention strategies) and reflect the plan's purpose or mission. Objectives and activities, however, are more specific and can and should be measured and tracked.

Objectives are statements of how you intend to accomplish each goal. If your goal is to increase school safety, for example, you might have one objective to reduce aggressive classroom behaviors, and another to prevent gang violence near school grounds. Objectives are concerned with both short and long-term achievements.

Activities are the specific tasks that must be completed to accomplish each objective. To prevent gang violence near schools, activities might include increasing police patrols during specified hours. Other activities might be conducted to connect gang-involved students with needed services.

Major activities should delineate a time for completion and indicate responsible parties. Forum youth violence prevention plans are action plans for multi-year implementation. Mechanisms and entities must also be designated or created to track and monitor plan implementation.

Process measures indicate whether the activities and related objective were implemented as planned, whereas **outcome measures** are concerned with whether implementing an objective achieved the intended results. The Forum strongly recommends developing a logic model to ensure that goals, strategies, objectives, performance measurements, and other plan components are in alignment.

Resources for Setting and Measuring Objectives

- See "Step 3: Featured Resources" for a list of useful links grouped under the following category:
- **Developing Measurable Objectives** <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/strategic-planning-toolkit/step-3/step-3-resources#06-title>

Strategic Planning Toolkit: Step 3 Resources

Featured Resources

Resources for Step 3 are grouped into the following categories. Click any heading to view the resources in that category.

[Online libraries and other resources for identifying evidence-based programs](#)

- **CrimeSolutions.gov**, a resource developed by the Office of Justice Programs, uses rigorous research to determine what works in criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services. The website includes research on program effectiveness and a rating system (effective, promising, no effects) based on the evidence that indicates whether a program achieves its goals.
<http://crimesolutions.gov/>
- **Other Evidence-based Program Libraries.** This page at the CrimeSolutions.gov website links to 10 additional Federal and non-Federal libraries on evidence-based programs. http://crimesolutions.gov/about_otherlibraries.aspx
- **Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practice.** This paper is a product of the Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project (JJSIP) of the [Center for Justice Reform, Georgetown University](http://cjr.georgetown.edu/jjsip/jjsip.html) (<http://cjr.georgetown.edu/jjsip/jjsip.html>). The JJSIP is designed to help states improve outcomes for juvenile offenders by better translating knowledge on “what works” into everyday practice and policy. It takes the vast knowledge gained through Dr. Mark Lipsey’s meta-analysis of effective juvenile justice programs and embeds it within OJJDP’s *Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Defendants* as developed by Dr. James C. Howell and John Wilson.
<http://cjr.georgetown.edu/pdfs/ebp/ebppaper.pdf>
- **NREPP.** This is the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/>
- **The Community Guide: What Works to Promote Health.** This resource for identifying evidence-based programs is provided by the Centers for Disease Control. <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/index.html>
- **Blueprints for Violence Prevention.** The Blueprints mission is to identify outstanding violence and drug prevention programs that meet a high scientific standard of effectiveness. Blueprints is a project of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado.
<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/>

[Prevention and intervention strategies](#)

- **STRYVE**, Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere, is a national initiative, led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which takes a

public health approach to preventing youth violence before it starts. STRYVE provides current research and tools, training and technical assistance, online community workspaces, and information about effective strategies.

<http://www.safeyouth.gov/Pages/Home.aspx>

- **Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center.** This resource is funded by a contract by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education to the American Institutes for Research. The Center's mission is to improve schools' conditions for learning through measurement and program implementation, so that all students have opportunities for academic success in safe and supportive environments. The Center's goal is to assist in creating safe and respectful school environments and to disseminate the latest research findings about school climate's role in improving academic success for all students. For more information, visit the Center's web site or contact SSSTA@air.org <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=01>
- **Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center.** The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) Center for School Preparedness provides support, resources, grants, and training to support emergency management efforts for local educational agencies and institutions of higher education. Many tragic events have made school and university administrators and emergency management officials across the country recognize that school emergency plans must be revised to include a wide variety of threats, including violent incidents on campuses. A strong emergency plan addresses the four phases of emergency management, defines key issues and vulnerabilities, capitalizes on existing resources, and describes the roles and responsibilities of school officials as they integrate with community agencies. <http://rems.ed.gov/>
- **U.S. Department of Education/U.S. Secret Service Safe School Initiative (SSI) Training.** This training session presents the findings from the U.S. Department of Education/U.S. Secret Service Safe School Initiative (SSI), a study that focused on the thinking, planning, and other behaviors engaged in by K-12 students who carried out attacks on schools. The session includes:
 - Strategies for educators, law enforcement officials, and others to identify, intervene and prevent targeted acts of violence
 - Information on the threat assessment process and how to identify students who may pose a risk of targeted violence
 - Suggestions for incorporating the threat assessment process into strategies designed to prevent violence on schools and campuses.

The training is available on a limited basis, via request, to school districts and institutions of higher education. Requests are reviewed and coordinated by the U.S. Department of Education's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center. Details and an application to

request training are accessible here:

http://rems.ed.gov/index.php?page=training_by_request&tbr_id=1

- **StopBullying.gov.** This resource provides information from various government agencies on how children, youth, educators, parents, and other community members can prevent or stop bullying. The website is managed by the Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the Departments of Education and Justice. <http://www.stopbullying.gov>
- **OJJDP Mentoring Resources.** This website links to more than 15 resources that communities can use in developing or expanding youth mentoring programs. <http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/mentoring.html>
- **“Mentoring: An Investment Worth Making.”** This Corporation for National and Community Service website lists multiple resources for developing and enhancing mentoring programs. <http://www.serve.gov/mentor.asp>
- **Using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Problem Solving** This is one of more than 80 tools and guides available from the COPS Office-supported Center for Problem-Oriented Policing. POP-Center guides on youth-specific issues address bullying, placement of police officers in schools, vandalism, and other topics. <http://www.popcenter.org/tools/cpted/>
- **UNITY Urban Agenda** and its summary, the [UNITY Policy Platform](#) delineate organizational practices and policies that are effective along a prevention continuum (strategies everyone needs to be safe; strategies that reduce the impact of risk factors; and strategies to prevent the reoccurrence of violence). <http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-263/127.html>

Problem-oriented approaches

- **Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.** Supported by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) advances the concept and practice of problem-oriented policing by making readily accessible information about ways in which police can more effectively address specific crime and disorder problems. Problem-solving approaches encourage police to identify the underlying contributors to a problem, often in partnership with community members and organizations, rather than respond only to individually reported incidents of crime. <http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-263/127.html>
- The **POP Center’s website** (<http://www.popcenter.org/>) can be searched for specific problem types. POP Center publications related to youth violence and gangs include the following:
 - **“Assigning Police Officers to Schools”**
http://www.popcenter.org/responses/school_police/
 - **“Benefits and Consequences of Police Crackdowns”**
http://www.popcenter.org/responses/police_crackdowns/

- **“Bomb Threats in Schools”**
http://www.popcenter.org/problems/bomb_threats/
- **“Dealing With Crime and Disorder in Urban Parks”**
http://www.popcenter.org/responses/urban_parks/
- **“Disorderly Youth in Public Places”**
http://www.popcenter.org/problems/disorderly_youth/
- **“Drive-By Shootings”**
http://www.popcenter.org/problems/drive_by_shooting/
- **“Gun Violence Among Serious Young Offenders”**
http://www.popcenter.org/problems/gun_violence/
- **“Using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Problem Solving”**
<http://www.popcenter.org/tools/cpted/>
- **“School Vandalism & Break-ins”**
<http://www.popcenter.org/problems/vandalism/>
- **“Student Party Riots”**
http://www.popcenter.org/problems/student_riots/

Enforcement strategies

- **Best Practices to Address Community Gang Problems: OJJDP’s Comprehensive Gang Model.** This resource describes the research behind the Comprehensive Gang model, summarizes best practices, and presents findings from evaluations of several programs that successfully implemented the model in a variety of different environments.
<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231200.pdf>
- **Preventing Gang Violence and Building Communities Where Young People Thrive: A Toolkit for Municipal Leaders.** This publication draws on the experiences of 13 cities that belong to the California Cities Gang Prevention Network (including the Forum communities of Salinas and San Jose). City examples specific to partnership building are in Part 2: Strategic Partnerships, and are grouped by criminal justice, city-county, school, faith community, and neighborhood partnerships. <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/iyef/violence-prevention>
- **National Gang Center.** The National Gang Center features the latest research about gangs; descriptions of evidence-based, anti-gang programs; and links to tools, databases, and other resources. <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/>
- **California Cities Gang Prevention Network.** The CCGPN focuses on identifying and publicizing successful policies and practices that interweave prevention, intervention, and enforcement.
<http://www.ccgpn.org/Publications/Demonstrating%20Return%20on%20Investment.pdf>
- **Project Safe Neighborhoods.** PSN is a nationwide commitment to reduce gun and gang crime by networking existing local programs that address those crimes

and providing additional tools needed to be successful.

<http://www.psn.gov/about/index.html>

Reentry strategies

- **Prisoner Reentry Toolkit for Faith-Based and Community Organizations.** This toolkit from the Department of Labor, Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, features innovative practices, job descriptions, and documents from the Ready4Work Prisoner Reentry Demonstration. <http://www.doleta.gov/PRI/PDF/Pritoolkit.pdf>
- **Reducing Gang Violence Through Reentry Services.** This recent article on reentry strategies is published by the California Cities Gang Prevention Network (CCGPN). <http://www.ccgpn.org/Publications/MAC%20Reentry.pdf>
- **Reentry Partnerships: A Guide for States and Faith-Based and Community Organizations.** This guide was developed by the Council of State Governments Justice Center with funding support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, and the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives of the Department of Labor. http://reentrypolicy.org/jc_publications/reentry_partnerships_guide/Reentry_Partnership_Web.pdf

Developing Measurable Objectives

- **OJJDP Performance Measures: Logic Models.** This OJJDP resource illustrates and explains how a project's performance measures relate to specific problems, goals, and objectives. http://www.ojjdp.gov/grantees/pm/logic_models.html
- **Targeted Community Action Planning Toolkit (OJJDP).** This resource provides details on how to create a comprehensive plan, including development of a vision, goals, measurable objectives, and activities. <http://www.ccitoolsforfeds.org/doc/Targeted%20Community%20Action%20Planning%20Toolkit.pdf>
- **Justice Research and Statistics Association.** JRSA is a national nonprofit organization of state Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) directors, researchers, and practitioners working in government, academia, and criminal justice organizations. In addition to conducting and publishing research on criminal justice issues, JRSA's training and technical assistance activities have include free webinars for OJJDP to help practitioners create useful logic models and ensure that objectives and activities are measurable (see JRSA website for upcoming webinars). <http://www.jrsa.org/>
- **Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Logic Model.** This is the logic model created and used by the Forum, presented both visually and in a text-only format. <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/preventing-youth-violence/forum-logic-model>

Step 4: Implement the Plan

Step 4: Implement the Plan

During the implementation phase, the action steps identified in the plan are carried out:

- Putting strategies to work
- Identifying low-cost and no cost activities
- Seeking new and ongoing support and funding
- Monitoring progress toward desired outcomes
- Addressing ongoing obstacles and barriers
- Modifying and redefining existing programs
- Marketing the plan.

The implementation phase is not the end of the process. It is only the beginning of a new way to coordinate community resources. The Forum recommends applying distributed leadership whenever possible, with everyone responsible and accountable for leadership in appropriate areas.

Recruiting and incorporating new resources into a comprehensive system is a priority for most communities. The steering committee should continue the data collection and analysis process to ensure an ongoing, objective view of community needs. Continually planning, monitoring and evaluating community resources—along with regularly consulting stakeholders with regard to their perceptions of community needs—is essential to ensuring that limited resources are targeted effectively.

Strategic Planning Toolkit: Step 4 Resources

Featured Resources

Foundation Center. This resource maintains unique databases on the nearly 100,000 foundations, corporate donors, and grant making public charities in the U.S. and 2.1 million of their recent grants. <http://foundationcenter.org/>

Funding Information Center. This findyouthinfo.gov resource includes a custom search tool that enables searches of the Federal government's Grants.gov website by youth topic or Federal agency. <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/funding-information-center>

Demonstrating Return on Investment through Evaluation: Recommendations from the Field. This California Cities Gang Prevention Network article includes how to select an evaluator, many examples of types of data collected/analyzed, and cities' work with individual programs to build those programs' evaluation capacities. <http://www.ccgpn.org/Publications/Demonstrating%20Return%20on%20Investment.pdf>