The Governor’s Summit on Preventing Urban Youth Violence:
Creating Solutions through Innovative Collaborations Statewide

November 18, 2008

Group Recommendations

Policy Recommendations:

1.) Find home visiting for at-risk moms
2.) Bring ex-offenders into schools to be mentors
3.) Put the New Haven Child Development Community Policing and Domestic Violence home visiting programs in more cities.
4.) Support re-entry programs
5.) Have clergy join clinical/law enforcement partnership

Operation Respect Connecticut:

- What does violence mean? Please clarify definition of violence.
- Many available resources overlapping of different groups
- Effective communication system among identity priorities
- Look at data and analyze. Drive decision making on what should be fun. Direction of priorities resources.
- Balancing all interests
- Early childhood/priority
- Community needs to identify their needs
- Consistent communication

Rehabilitation:

- Rehabilitating youth offenders rather than punishing them
- Offer support services
- Offer counseling services
- Offer Mentor services
Peace Builders: (Ivan Nazarro)

Ease the process for non-violent felonies to be pardoned. This will allow for these men and women to strive for reaching this goal. This will make the employment opportunities more available.

School System:

- Curriculum not developmentally aligned with students
- Violence on TV—even kid’s channels
- Immigrants not understanding laws, cultural differences. More money and programs. Language barriers.
- Bringing in more mentors from H.S./College students into elementary schools to mentor.
- More social time for students-recess
- Smaller class sizes for teachers to connect more with students.
- Move to take criminal justice system out of school systems by developing alternative to suspension and expulsion that addresses child’s underlying problems in a caring way that puts him/her back in the classroom and onto a path of learning.
- Ensuring that individualized planning occurs with each youth in any setting. Listen to families and empower to develop goals to achieve their needs.
- Meaningfully involve parents and children in developing services, solutions, and tap into their strengths first. Implement a family bonding program helping families do things as a family.
- Employ parents in schools and CBO’s. Stop expecting them to always volunteer!

Scenario panel:

- Don’t implement “programs”. Implies needing programming. “Services” just implies support.
- 4-10pm, weekends, with people John’s mom wouldn’t want him around, but those are people who will keep him safe, close proximity to his home.
- We can’t make policies for John; make community, family structure target strengths.
- What safety guardrails can we implement that may not be there? (diversion to prevent arrest)
- Lack of connectness within communities/neighborhoods. How can we re-create those indigenous supports?
- John’s personal interests can be used to engage and turn into skills/opportunities.
Plan what we want for them. What do they need to be successful? What are intended outcomes? 3 or 5 things all youth need?

Begin to tell the raw truth, including to John, John’s mom, John’s dad, teacher, pastor (at age 9 nothing is interesting. You need to make me join groups, etc.)

We are all creators of our conditioning

Everyone in community needs to take advantage of their point of leverage to help John.

Violence is in style: our dress, media makes it cool, etc. Address in that way, without trying to change them.

Self-esteem—how people refer to themselves. Need to be valued “cool” or important to their peers. If can’t be valued because of grades, sexual attraction, then fear me.

Need to look at the whole child

Need positive reinforcement

Looking to break years of academic failures. Academically, a teacher recognizes as more to offer than giving. Socially, need someone can talk to at school. Behaviorally, a lot of peer pressure. Cannot answer questions in class because people he looks to protect him, wouldn’t respect doing well in school.

If you do____ then you can get ____

All schools have open door policy. If there’s a not-for-profit that wants to come into the schools to speak with administrators and teachers.

PAL in Waterbury purchased school and gym, hired teachers to teach/tutor. May be first true attempt.

Cannot just approach helping students by just addressing academics without acknowledging and addressing family, community, health, etc.

There is no choice to make between raising good people and educating our students. It takes teachers, administrators, everyone. Kids need to feel safe.

Usually address at the point of physical violence, yet it begins verbally. Address violence with adults. We model behavior and we must treat people appropriately. The biggest challenge is us; it’s not financial

Begin teaching John with basics; stop people from beating him up. Give youth reason to express physically in positive ways. Turn the thugs into positive youth.

Tell the thugs you need to give back to your community. Get them together in room with older men who used to be in their situation and have grown out of it.

Power of transformative literature (Malcolm X transformed from what he read in prison)

Help the teachers understand there’s academic pedagogy

Boredom. First 3 months of school. Every 2 years the curriculum should change. The money is there, but it is just being spent wrong.

Have police officer understand urban communities.
• Everybody needs a friend. John needs that one person he can talk to. He needs to feel comfortable. He needs people around him that will encourage him for doing well in school.
• Find out what these kids are good at. Introduce to new things.

**Audience Comments:**

• Clear realigning of funds. There are good programs at local level without funding.
• People know after school programs work, CT’s good at getting data. Need to fund now.
• Too top-heavy. Top programs have money but are not in touch with community. Social workers working off what was learned in books.
• Dad’s not paying child support. They should have to come to court everyday to look for work until they find it and can pay. Not lock them up.
• Family court should be able to implement programming to prevent domestic violence in John’s home.
• State can change guidelines of who they hire. They check your credit now. Can get denied because of poor credit.
• If you want to stop violence, need to change American culture: violence we’re proud of internationally (War), Africans brought to us through violence, media.