

National *Academic Centers of Excellence* on Youth Violence Prevention

Johns Hopkins University *Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence*

History

The Academic Centers of Excellence (ACEs) were established soon after the tragedy at Columbine High School. Each ACE works with the communities it serves to encourage participation and partnership, mobilizing residents and researchers to craft effective solutions for violence prevention tailored to their specific community. The Centers research youth violence prevention approaches, collect and analyze surveillance data, and foster relationships with local community partners to help develop, implement, and evaluate promising prevention efforts.

Established in 2000, the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence is a coalition of researchers, faculty, students, and staff from JHU and partners, including state and local officials, Baltimore- and Maryland-based agencies and organizations, schools, parents, local residents, and youth. The mission of the Center is to prevent youth violence and promote positive youth development by creating academic-community collaborations. The Center conducts research on prevention efforts to reduce youth violence in local communities and schools and improves efforts to detect and monitor youth violence. The Center is committed to working with community partners, institutions, and local leaders to develop inventive approaches and projects to reduce youth violence.

Research

In collaboration with partners in the City of Baltimore and across the state of Maryland, the Center is developing a comprehensive approach to reduce youth violence and promote positive youth development. One of the Center's core projects is a community-based implementation and evaluation of the *Safe Streets* initiative, aiming to reduce the escalation of violence, prevent youth homicide, and decrease other serious forms of violence. The program is modeled after Chicago's *CeaseFire* program that has illustrated some success in reducing shootings. *Safe Streets* is a neighborhood-level longitudinal study to contrast trends in youth violence in intervention communities with non-intervention communities before and after the program is implemented.

The JHU ACE is also involved in other research projects, including

- Evaluations of school-wide approaches for violence prevention and bullying prevention through implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports throughout Maryland and Baltimore City schools.
- An examination of barriers and supports for effective implementation of community-based home visitation programs for families with young children.

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Surveillance

The Center's close relationships with local and state surveillance agencies help to monitor risk and protective factors that impact youth violence. Understanding these factors can help to develop effective youth violence interventions. Several surveillance projects are being implemented by the JHU ACE, including a project to track youth violence trends in Baltimore neighborhoods, identify risk factors for youth involvement in serious acts of violence, and monitor school climate relevant to youth violence and suspensions. Another surveillance project provides insight to the links between violence and exposure to alcohol and other drugs among urban youth. Monitoring and tracking trends in youth violence is instrumental in assessing the needs of the community and planning Center activities.

Training

Center faculty and staff work directly with community leaders, students, and public health professionals to expand the capacity and resources available for the prevention of youth violence. The Center has collaborated with the Maryland State Department of Education and the Sheppard Pratt Health System to train teachers and school staff at more than 60% of Maryland's public schools in the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports program. The Center is continuing collaborations with all of Maryland's local school systems to train, coach, and mentor school staff.

Students at both undergraduate and graduate levels benefit from courses geared toward the violence prevention and community-based participatory research of the Center, and the Center also supports pre- and

postdoctoral research training of researchers and community collaborators on the application of community-based participatory research strategies. Extra efforts have been made to increase the proportion of African-American researchers and clinicians involved in the youth violence prevention field.

Community Mobilization

The JHU ACE is committed to the community and to its partner institutions and agencies. These partnerships have enhanced the work of the Center in providing opportunities for collaboration, infrastructure support, and orientation of future research directives. For example, faculty from the Center participated in a task force for the City of Baltimore to address gang violence and develop the comprehensive Baltimore City Gang Violence Reduction Plan, influencing the dissemination of resources by the Mayor's office, the Maryland U.S. Attorney's Office, and the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention.

Furthermore, the Baltimore Child Development-Community Policing (CD-CP) project is a trauma response program working to reduce consequences of children's exposure to violence and increase community capacity to reduce the risk of violence. A partnership of the Baltimore Police Department, the Johns Hopkins University and Hospital, the Mayor's Office, the Maryland Department of Social Services, and the Communities of Baltimore, CD-CP's multifaceted approach provides education and training for Crisis Response Teams, police, mental health workers, volunteers, and community leaders. The result of the partnership is an increase in the capacity of local providers, policy makers, and academic researchers to collaborate, share resources, coordinate expertise, and maximize impact on youth violence.

For more information, please contact:

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