

The NOLA FOR LIFE PLAYbook: Promoting Life For All Youth 2014 Progress Report



Led by the New Orleans Health Department, the *PLAYbook* is a strategic plan to prevent youth violence in New Orleans. The *PLAYbook* is the Health Department's commitment to deepen the "Invest in Prevention" portfolio of NOLA FOR LIFE, Mayor Mitch Landrieu's comprehensive murder reduction strategy. As a part of NOLA FOR LIFE, the aim of the *PLAYbook* is to improve youth safety by addressing **risk and protective factors** for youth violence.

Risk factors increase the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.

Protective factors serve as a buffer against risk and decrease the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.

Effective violence prevention strategies address risk and protective factors by targeting not only victims and perpetrators, but also the context within which violence occurs.¹

The *PLAYbook* sets a goal that by 2020, 95% of youth will feel safe in schools and neighborhoods. The *PLAYbook* helps advance New Orleans toward that goal in three key ways:

- 1) Designating a structure for youth violence prevention** – The *PLAYbook* ensures that youth violence prevention activities are inclusive of diverse partners, coordinated, and sustainable.
- 2) Coordinating and integrating youth violence prevention activities under a set of shared priorities** – The *PLAYbook* targets resources toward young peoples' most pressing needs.
- 3) Establishing benchmarks and fostering accountability** – The *PLAYbook* sets a benchmark to track the impact of youth violence prevention on young peoples' lives.

Achieving durable reductions in youth violence requires a plan that organizes leadership, strategies, and partnerships under a common agenda: the *NOLA FOR LIFE PLAYbook*.

The Public Health Approach

Public health is central to New Orleans' efforts to reduce youth violence. Youth violence is a public health issue because:

- It is extremely pervasive;
- It negatively affects physical and mental health; and
- It is preventable, just like a multitude of other health issues.

The public health approach is characterized the by the following values:

- **Emphasis on prevention** – Public health strives to find upstream solutions to stop youth violence from happening before it occurs.
- **Driven by data** – Public health relies on data to focus on risk and protective factors – not just individuals – to prioritize interventions to combat violence.
- **Collaboration** – Public health embraces partners and perspectives from a wide range of disciplines – prevention works best when everyone is doing their part to help.
- **Population-based scale** – Public health thinks big, identifying ways that systems, environments, and policies impact risk for violence.

As the City's public health agency, the New Orleans Health Department leads the implementation of the *PLAYbook*. The Health Department works to communicate the value of prevention for long-term, sustainable changes in youth safety; provides dedicated staff to guide the *PLAYbook's* implementation; and identifies and develops resources to support innovative programs and policies to prevent youth violence.

**Violence is Preventable, Not Inevitable:
The Public Health Approach**

Cities with more coordination, communication, and attention to preventing violence have reduced rates of violence. By activating the same skills shown effective in addressing other health threats, public health helps ensure that these conditions are met to promote safety.²

National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention

The *PLAYbook* was developed with the support of the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. The Forum is a network of cities and federal agencies that work together, share information, and build local capacity to reduce youth violence. Established at the direction of President Obama in 2010, the Forum convenes diverse communities to learn from each other about the issue of youth violence and build comprehensive solutions on the local and national levels. For New Orleans, the Forum offers access to resources and support from a range of federal partners, and a connection to peer cities across the country that are working to prevent violence.

The Health Department set three priorities for 2014, the first full year of the *PLAYbook's* implementation. Here are some of the highlights:

Prevent School Violence

A young person's connection to school is an important protective factor for youth violence. Over the past year, activities have focused on promoting positive school climates through Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative approaches in schools.

- Three high schools – Lake Area New Tech Early College High School, Crescent Leadership Academy, and Joseph S. Clark Preparatory High School – are receiving assistance in enhancing the use of **PBIS**. Through an examination of school-wide policies and practices, schools are preparing action plans to promote positive school climates.
- The Health Department worked with the Center for Restorative Approaches and Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools to promote the use of **restorative approaches** at Andrew H. Wilson Charter School. As a product of this collaboration, the Health Department published *Implementing Restorative Approaches: A Start-Up Guide for Schools*, which will support efforts to expand the use of restorative approaches.

Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based framework for promoting positive school climate. PBIS helps make schools safer, more engaging, and higher-achieving places for students.

Restorative approaches are an alternative discipline strategy that emphasize the reparation of harm and relationship-building over punitive discipline. Recognized as a best practice by President Obama's Supportive School Discipline Initiative, restorative approaches have been shown to reduce suspension rates and improve school climate.

Prevent Family Violence

Childhood exposure to violence disrupts healthy youth development. By addressing family violence, we can interrupt the cycle of violence that often begins early in life.

- The Health Department, in collaboration with a range of criminal justice partners, launched the Blueprint for Safety, a model policy for coordinating the criminal justice response to domestic violence. The Blueprint ensures a system of accountability to support victims throughout the criminal justice response to domestic violence.
- Domestic violence screening has been expanded to all three WIC clinics (Central City, New Orleans East, Algiers) that are operated by the Health Department. This initiative offers education and referral to supportive services through the New Orleans Family Justice Center.
- In partnership with the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and Children's Bureau, the Health Department is piloting two parenting education programs – Triple-P and Play Nicely – in WIC clinics. The pilot program is part of a CDC-funded research study that will evaluate if these programs are effective in preventing child maltreatment.

Build public health capacity to address youth violence

Prevention requires a sustained investment; if we are to be successful in reducing youth violence, prevention strategies must be in place for the long haul. Therefore, the Health Department is working to build its own capacity to sustain the *PLAYbook's* implementation, with a focus on staffing, communications, and data.

- The Health Department secured grant funding to hire an additional staff person on its violence prevention team.
- To get a better picture of neighborhood safety for youth, the Health Department worked with the Louisiana Public Health Institute to develop a report on the impact of neighborhood-level factors on youth safety. The report is a tool for community-wide use in allocating prevention resources and tracking progress in improving youth safety.

But the *PLAYbook* isn't just about the Health Department – it's about what we achieve working together. Here are some examples of what others are doing to improve youth safety:

- The NOLA FOR LIFE Services Collaborative, a group of social service providers, has initiated the creation of a continuum of services, spanning the spectrum of prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation. The Collaborative has developed the following core continuum components: common intake and assessment tools; evidence-based program standards; shared performance measures; and universal client tracking systems. In March 2015, the Collaborative will begin evaluating and refining these components, with a core group of providers opting into a data sharing pilot.
- Led by the Mayor's Office, the NOLA FOR LIFE Mentoring initiative has worked with community organizations to provide mentorship for young males in New Orleans at risk of exposure to or involvement in violence. The initiative has established best practices, policies, and tools to support high-quality mentoring for these youth.
- The Recovery School District and Orleans Parish School Board have worked together to pilot the Youth Opportunity Center (YOC), which responds to chronic absenteeism and provides resources for effective intervention. By reconnecting students to school, the YOC provides a critical support to students at risk of dropping out.
- EMPLOY (Employment and Mobility Pathways Linked for Opportunity Youth) is a collaborative led by the Cowen Institute and Partnership for Youth Development that uses a collective impact approach and strengthens several key protective factors against youth violence through its mission to create an environment where all young people in New Orleans are able to access pathways out of poverty and achieve careers with family-sustaining wages.

What's Next

In 2015, the Health Department's priorities for action will remain the same, with a focus on deepening existing activities and expanding to new areas of opportunity.

1) Prevent school violence.

- The Health Department will continue to support partner schools in promoting positive school climates through the use of PBIS.
- The Health Department will work with the Center for Restorative Approaches to support the expansion of restorative approaches in New Orleans schools.
- In partnership with local experts, the Health Department is developing a learning collaborative to support schools in becoming **trauma-sensitive**. Through this initiative, schools will be able to share resources with one another and learn best practices for supporting traumatized students.

2) Prevent family violence.

- In 2015, the Health Department will continue to infuse violence prevention into WIC services and will steer the implementation of the Blueprint for Safety.

3) Build public health capacity to prevent youth violence.

- In keeping with the principles of public health, prevention must be at the forefront of efforts to address youth violence. In 2015, the Health Department plans to develop a series of tools to communicate the value of prevention and to help partners share successful efforts with one another.
- Youth voice is critical for the long-term success of youth violence prevention efforts. In 2015, the Health Department will explore ways to engage young people as partners in preventing youth violence.
- The Health Department will continue to collect data to inform the implementation of the *PLAYbook*. In 2015, data efforts will focus on improving sources of data on risk and protective factors for youth violence and the collection of data on community capacity to prevent youth violence.

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event such as witnessing a violent act. Although many people who experience a traumatic event will go on with their lives without lasting negative effects, others will have difficulties and experience traumatic stress reactions.³

Traumatic experiences in childhood are linked with mental and physical health conditions later in life. Trauma is also a risk factor for violence, so providing supports for individuals who have experienced trauma can help prevent violence.⁴

PLAYbook Scoreboard

NOLA FOR LIFE PLAYbook Impact Indicators

Measure	Indicator	Source	Baseline (Year)	Update (Year)
Youth safety	Percentage of youth surveyed who feel safe in their school	Caring Communities Youth Survey	Grade 6: 82% Grade 8: 80% Grade 10: 68% Grade 12: 69% (2012)	N/A (CCYS was administered in fall 2014. Survey data will be available in mid-2015.)
Youth safety	Percentage of youth surveyed who feel safe in their neighborhood	Caring Communities Youth Survey	Grade 6: 68% Grade 8: 78% Grade 10: 72% Grade 12: 68% (2012)	N/A (CCYS was administered in fall 2014. Survey data will be available in mid-2015.)
Community safety	Percentage of residents surveyed who report feeling safe around their home during the day	UNO Quality of Life Survey	84% (2012)	84% (2013)
Community safety	Percentage of residents surveyed who report feeling safe around their home at night	UNO Quality of Life Survey	63% (2012)	66% (2013)
Exposure to violence	Percentage of individuals surveyed with exposure to three or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)	Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System	N/A (baseline to be established) ACEs module was first added to BRFSS in Louisiana in 2014.	
Law enforcement coordination	Number of gangs disrupted by indictment	Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Coordination	1 (2012)	4 (2014)
Youth violence	Number of murders with victims under the age of 25	NOPD statistics	70 (2012)	55 (2014)
Community connectedness	Rate of youth under supervision by the Office Juvenile Justice	Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Center (2010)	5.9 per 1,000 youth aged 10 – 20 (2010)	
Community connectedness	Number of opportunity youth in the Greater New Orleans area	The Data Center	12,195 – 15,781 (estimates for 2008-2010)	
Connection to a caring adult	Percentage of youth who report have someone to talk to one-on-one	TBD (plan to add this to a survey at a later date)	N/A (baseline to be established)	
School connectedness	Truancy rate	Louisiana Department of Education	OPSB: 33% RSD: 39% (2010-11)	OPSB: ~16% RSD: ~28% (2013-14)
School connectedness	Student attendance rate	Louisiana Department of Education	OPSB: 95.9% RSD: 93.3% (2011-12)	OPSB: >95% RSD: >90% (2013-14)
Organizational capacity to prevent youth violence	Score on community capacity survey	UNITY Roadmap Gauge	N/A (baseline to be established)	

1 <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/publichealthapproach.html>

2 Prevention Institute. A Public Health Approach to Preventing Violence: FAQ. UNITY, 2009.

3 <http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/> and <http://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>

4 <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/findings.html>,

<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/violence/traumaticevents/index.html>