

San Francisco's Violence Prevention Plan: Year One Process Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

San Francisco's homicide rates have steadily increased over the past decade. After a record low of 54 homicides in 1998, homicide rates nearly reached triple digits in 2007. While some cities reported record low homicide rates in 2007, San Francisco faced a decade high of 98 homicides (BOS Public Safety Committee, 2009). New York City reported the lowest number of homicides since 1983. Los Angeles recorded the lowest number of homicides in 37 years, and Chicago, the lowest in over 40 years. In those cities, violent crimes, which account for homicides, aggravated assaults, robberies and sexual assaults, dropped to their lowest levels in 20 years (Bruzzone, 2008). However, between 2005 and 2007, violent crime in San Francisco increased by 7 percent. Findings for 2008 are equally discouraging. Although homicides decreased by one incident, overall, violent crimes in San Francisco increased by 1.5 percent.

To address the spike in violent crimes, Mayor Gavin Newsome adopted a 5 year Violence Prevention Plan on July 3, 2008. The same year, the Youth Commission adopted an agenda placing youth violence prevention as its number one priority. Despite collective efforts to reduce violence, homicides continue to be the leading cause of death for young people in San Francisco. Given the budget challenges that will dramatically reduce services for youth, families and communities affected by violence, the Youth Commission has requested a an implementation assessment of San Francisco's Violence Prevention Plan (SFVPP). This report evaluates the progress of SFVPP and presents findings from the first year of implementation. The following questions serve as performance indicators:

1. Is SFVPP being implemented as intended?
2. What implementation challenges does SFVPP face?
3. What main achievements have been attained since implementation?
4. Has crime decreased?
5. What are the policy implications?

Background on San Francisco Violence Prevention Plan

In December 2006, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, in collaboration with UCSF, initiated a two-fold violence prevention strategy. The first component aimed to consolidate policy, planning, resource allocation and oversight of city funded agencies and programs. In

2006, conservative estimates suggested that San Francisco invested nearly \$60 million to fund violence prevention programs (Summary of City Funded Violence Prevention Programs, 2007). While many plans exist from various city agencies, there is no unified strategy to ensure coordination and accountability. To address this, SFVPP called for an Interagency Council (IAC) to monitor the City's spending and program planning. Under guidance of the Interagency Council, city agency directors would collaborate to integrate systems of care for vulnerable communities, coordinate inter-departmental policy and programs, strengthen city and community partnership and improve transparency and accountability.

The Plan's second component aimed to create a city-wide strategy to prioritize, incorporate and build upon violence prevention plans developed by city funded agencies and programs. Once data collection and analysis of violence prevention plans was complete, the planning team gathered input from city departments, partner agencies and community members. The final product of the first component resulted in a city-wide strategy that blended 17 existing violence prevention plans created by nine city agencies¹ with input collected during the planning process. A Violence Prevention Advisory Committee was proposed to monitor and support violence prevention efforts. Together the Violence Prevention Advisory Committee, under the guidance of the Interagency Council, would be the two key governing bodies responsible to oversee the Plan's implementation.

Components of the Violence Prevention Plan

Overall, feedback received during the planning process expressed the need to address root causes of violence in order to prevent violence. To address the root causes of violence, the Plan called for the following short, intermediate and long term goals with the overarching intention of preventing violence:

1. Coordinate the work of City agencies so that local government is more capable of achieving violence prevention. (Short-Term)

¹ City and partner agencies include: Communities of Opportunities, Department of Children, Youth, & Their Families, Department of Public Health, Department of the Status of Women, Human Services Agency, San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services, Mayor's Office of Economic Workforce Development, Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, San Francisco Juvenile Probation, and San Francisco Police Department.

2. Invest more strategically to increase the community's capacity to achieve violence prevention in partnership with the City. (Intermediate)
3. Hold the City and community accountable for achieving concrete, short and long-term measurable outcomes in 10 key policy areas – workforce development, housing, education, reentry, family support, youth empowerment, community engagement, trauma reduction, community policing, and access to firearms, alcohol, and drugs. (Long-term)

Methodology

This report serves as a process evaluation to assess if San Francisco's Violence Prevention Plan is being implemented as intended. Information was collected through 20 interviews with agency directors, program managers, staff and a consultant, as well as through a review of source documents and best practices. Although the focus of this report is on implementation, concrete achievements have been attained.

Findings for Implementation of San Francisco's Violence Prevention Plan

San Francisco's Violence Prevention Plan is an informative framework that challenges city and partner agencies to think city-wide about violence prevention priorities and resources. However, a lack of capacity, transparency and a shared vision has undermined the plan.

Review of data and discussions with respondents indicates that implementation was delayed since IAC and VPAC did not have the capacity to appoint chairpersons. The absence of formally appointed chairpersons seems to be the result of additional organizational restructuring and staff changes. Given the foreseen budget deficit, which would effect program planning citywide, the appointment of chairpersons may have been delayed. Shortly after the Mayor's budget instructions in December 2008, the merge of the Mayor's Office of Community Investment with the Mayor's Office of Economic Development was announced. Soon after, the first round of lay offs occurred in January, and the last in February—the Director of Violence Prevention was laid off in February.

In addition, respondents indicate a formal launch of SFVPP has not occurred. As a result, during my interviews only two agency directors and one program director immediately

acknowledged their role in the plan. The remaining program managers and staff I interviewed recalled participating in the information gathering phase of the planning process, but were unaware of their role. Overall, respondents felt the capacity to implement the plan was inadequate; they did not feel supported in implementing the plan; and they lacked a share vision of the plan.

Achievements

While the main purpose of this report is a process evaluation to monitor whether the SFVPP is being implemented as intended, the report also presents achievements that were attained during the first 10 months. The chart below lists objectives from SFVPP with the accompanying strategies that have been implemented. Overall, many strategies have been implemented; the key components missing are baseline measurements and outcome indicators to evaluate success.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: PRIORITIZE VIOLENCE PREVENTION AS A HEALTH CRISIS	
1.1.e: Partner with state and federal officials to craft and support anti violence legislation, advocate for the support of violence prevention efforts, and garner new resources.	Complete
1.2.a: Develop and adopt uniform definitions for prevention, intervention, and response.	In-Progress
OBJECTIVE 1.3: DEVELOP SHARED OUTCOMES TO MEASURE ACCOUNTABILITY	
1.3.a: Establish and adopt baseline uniform performance outcomes.	In-Progress
OBJECTIVE 1.4: ALIGN RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ACHIEVING SHARED OUTCOMES	
1.4.b: Review budget to monitor appropriations for violence prevention, intervention, and response, and guide budget development for the City.	In-Progress
1.4.h: Integrate shared outcomes and minimum standards into City grant-making process.	In-Progress
OBJECTIVE 1.5: EVALUATE THROUGH SHARED DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS	
1.5.b: Complete development and implementation of JUSTIS (Justice Information Tracking System) technology project.	In-Progress
OBJECTIVE 2.2: DEVELOP A COORDINATED, FAMILY-CENTERED, NEIGHBORHOOD-FOCUS SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM	
2.2.c: Develop a coordinated service delivery model to reduce duplication of efforts, and coordinate information sharing that will be responsive to neighborhood needs and serve the whole family.	In-Progress
OBJECTIVE 2.4: STRENGTHEN PUBLIC & PRIVATE INVESTMENTS IN COORDINATED SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM & TRAINING	
2.4.c: Centralize the City’s grant solicitation, review, and procurement under the Mayor’s Office of Community Investment.	In-Progress
2.4.e: Coordinate City grant making and compliance processes so that they are uniform and strategic across City agencies and more efficient and effective for community agencies.	In-Progress
OBJECTIVE 3.2: PROVIDE SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR AT-RISK COMMUNITIES	
3.2.i: Building on existing efforts, enhance police presence in public housing by developing enhanced strategies for police participation, such as continued augmentation of number of dedicated officers, enhanced training on community engagement with public housing residents, and enhanced relationship-building strategies for community service providers and police officers on public housing sites.	In-Progress
3.2.b: Support the San Francisco Housing Authority and City Partnership for Safe and Decent Public Housing and the implementation of HOPE SF.	In-Progress

OBJECTIVE 3.3: PROVIDE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE EDUCATION TO AT-RISK COMMUNITIES	
3.3.c: Support the launch of The Center for Academic Reentry and Empowerment (CARE) for truancy. Highlight	Complete ¹
OBJECTIVE 3.4: ENSURE SUCCESSFUL REENTRY FOR INDIVIDUALS EXISTING THE CRIMINAL JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM	
3.4.e: Consolidate the San Francisco Reentry Council and Safe Communities Reentry Coordinating Council into San Francisco Reentry Coordinating Council, to streamline reentry policy and planning.	Complete
OBJECTIVE 3.6: TRANSFORM COMMUNITY CONDITIONS AND EMPOWER RESIDENTS	
3.6.c: Strengthen neighborhood association in high violence areas.	In-Progress
OBJECTIVE 3.7: STRENGTHEN FAMILY SUPPORT AND SENIOR SUPPORT	
3.7.c: Support the development and launch of Parent University.	Complete
OBJECTIVE 3.8: REDUCE THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA	
3.8.b: Enhance multi-agency coordination of existing trauma reduction programs (i.e. CRT, CRN, victims services, Teen Trauma Recovery Center, Trauma Recovery Center, Wrap Around Project, SFUSD Wellness Centers).	In-Progress
3.8.c: Develop a strategy to adjust overall deployment of mental health programs to be more geographically and home based.	Complete
3.8.d: Strengthen protocols for identifying children exposed to violence and children with PTSD and enhance steps to connect them to services.	In-Progress
3.8.e: Strengthen trainings for service providers, police, and teachers to respond to trauma related behavior.	In-Progress
3.8.g: Promote the importance of self-care and adequate staff development to address the vicarious trauma experience by service providers working with individuals in crisis.	In-Progress
3.8.i: Support efforts to strengthen and expand Safe Start program.	Complete
OBJECTIVE 3.9: STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY POLICING	
3.9.d: Develop a community policing strategy specific to San Francisco Housing Authority properties.	In-Progress
OBJECTIVE 3.10: REDUCE HARMFUL IMPACT OF FIREARMS, ALCOHOL, AND DRUGS	
3.10.c: Launch public education campaign to send a strong message against gun violence and illegal gun activity emphasizing responsible gun ownership, educate youth about gun safety, increasing awareness of existing laws, and high lighting the danger of replicas.	Complete
3.10.e: Strengthen efforts to stop illegal purchases of firearms and gun trafficking.	Complete
3.10.f: Strengthen law enforcement collaboration to remove guns from the street and respond uniformly to gun violence.	Complete

Recommendations

After careful review of key findings and themes expressed by respondents, this report offers recommendations for implementation based on the process evaluation. To address structural needs it is recommended that the city:

Recommendation 1: Formalize the Violence Prevention Advisory Committee (VPAC) and include one youth representative. VPAC membership will depend on policy priorities identified by IAC.

Recommendation 2: The City must brand a violence prevention campaign to increase awareness among participants and the public that activities they benefit from are part of a coordinated City effort.

1. The current plan is a very comprehensive 5 year strategy. However, many respondents were unclear planning priorities. Thus in order to move implementation forward, policy priorities and short-term goals must be established and assigned outcome measurements.
2. Condense violence prevention plan to 2 to 3 initiatives that are already in place coordinate efforts. Consider incorporating the 13 Cities Gang Initiative. This effort will provide the City with statewide support and expertise regarding gang violence prevention and intervention best practice and will contribute to shaping state and national policy.
2. Create transparency around violence prevention efforts by establishing a VPAC web site to highlight accomplishments and outcomes. See San Bernardino's violence prevention web site – Operation Phoenix.
3. The city should expand its efforts to host periodic seminars, conferences, or roundtable events as network opportunities for violence prevention service providers.

Recommendation 3: Once VPAC solidifies and focuses efforts on violence prevention policy priorities, present the Plan to Board of Supervisors for Adoption and Implementation Authorization. San Francisco leaders must issue a strong political mandate in order to prioritize violence prevention as a citywide goal, establish accountability, and out last the change in leadership.

Recommendation 4: Create public policy to coordinate City-wide of the Mayor's five initiatives. While the SFVPP recognizes the need for coordination across city agencies, a formal public policy strategy at the City government level does not exist to coordinate IAC. To outlast change in leadership:

1. Establish Memorandums of Understanding that stakeholders genuinely support. To ensure stakeholders are on the same page, establish clear memorandums of understanding outlining each responsibility and expectation.

Recommendation 5: Create a data and research analysis process to keep the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, and Commission aware of key violent trends on a monthly basis. San Francisco currently invests in many data systems.

1. JUSTIS Database – links Adult Probation, JPD, SFPD, the D.A. Office, Public Defender's Office and Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. Consider using this database system to report of crime statistics.
2. SFSTAT – reengage efforts to implement SFSTAT to guide policy and planning citywide.

Recommendation 6: VPAC should focus violence prevention resources on targeted areas similar to SFPD's Zone Reduction strategy. San Francisco Police Department has established zone strategies for 5 neighborhoods affected most by violence. Compliment SFPD's efforts by focusing violence prevention programs and services in these neighborhoods.

Recommendation 7: Identify a third party to conduct an annual evaluation. Allocate resources to hire a third party to conduct an annual evaluation of shared outcomes developed by the Interagency Council. Findings will inform future implementation and strategic planning for prevention, intervention, and suppression.