

Linkages

*Making the Connection Between
Youth Violence and Family Violence*

Phase I: Results of Planning Process

Summary of
Findings and
Recommendations

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We express our appreciation for the contributions of all the agencies and individuals who participated in the planning process and particularly the focus groups for the Linkages planning effort

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Executive Summary

The East Bay Public Safety Corridor Partnership has undertaken a comprehensive planning effort to address youth and family violence within the East Bay Region. Nationally efforts are underway to ensure that public systems that have traditionally addressed these two phenomena separately begin working collaboratively. This planning effort heralds the first attempt in the country to address these co-occurring and related phenomena on a regional level.

The Corridor has undertaken the following activities in order to inform the planning process:

1. We have conducted a data analysis and mapping of police incident reports of occurrences of youth violence and family violence from the cities of Richmond and Oakland. This analysis was utilized to select the neighborhoods within these cities where focus groups were conducted. Other Corridor cities have committed to having their data analyzed and mapped.
2. Through our survey of related efforts in the region we have identified the most promising and best practices nationally that focus on the interconnection of youth and family violence.
3. We conducted focus groups in many of the communities of the Corridor to insure that the voices and experiences of members of the community are heard and taken into account as we move forward in developing strategies and action plans.
4. Perhaps most importantly, we assembled a cadre of committed professionals, public servants and community members who represent a cross section of public institutions and stakeholders to form the basis of this ongoing effort. Together they are involved in reviewing this information, and discussing implications for activities and strategies that will reduce and prevent violence in the East Bay Region.

Summary of Focus Group Findings

- ❑ Focus group participants generally feel that family violence exists in their communities and that it is an extensive problem.
- ❑ People feel that youth violence is tied to family violence for a wide variety of reasons.
- ❑ There is not a consensus regarding whom one should call in the event of family violence, or if one should call anyone at all. There is considerable ambivalence about calling the police or other public agencies such as Child Protective Services.
- ❑ Many participants feel that having guns or other weapons made them safer.

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- ❑ Alcohol and drug abuse was cited repeatedly as contributing to youth and family violence.
- ❑ It was clear from the number of responses that participants felt that youth violence could be prevented. However, it is not clear to those we spoke with what might prevent family violence.
- ❑ While it was clear that many youth do not feel a high degree of safety in their communities or their homes, by and large gay, lesbian, and transgender youth feel the least safe.

Recommendations

- ❑ Extensive community education is needed on how the presence of weapons contributes to violence and how they do not, in fact, foster safety.
- ❑ Efforts need to be made to ensure that the Family Violence Protocols developed and adopted by both the Contra Costa County and Alameda County Police Chief's Associations are being implemented and that they reflect the latest best practices in police protocols and training on handling family violence incidents.
- ❑ Efforts need to be made to ensure that youth feel safe within public institutional settings, particularly public schools.
- ❑ Efforts need to be made to develop a campaign to ensure that young people are exposed to the latest information facts and figures regarding family violence. This campaign should be sensitive to the shame associated with family violence, and should attempt to alleviate the surrounding code of silence.
- ❑ Efforts need to be made to ensure that young people understand that family violence is illegal, so that young people have knowledge about what resources exist to help families break out of cycles of violence.
- ❑ We need to collect and analyze data to determine to what extent alcohol and drug abuse is co-occurring in incidents of family and youth violence. This may require additional record keeping by law enforcement and other public service organizations. It will also require mechanisms for sharing data.
- ❑ Currently there is a wealth of data on the incidents of family and youth violence that needs to be analyzed for us to understand more about the nature of these phenomena and their interconnectedness. Data from police reports, hospital emergency rooms and child protective services can inform our prevention efforts, help us better coordinate and leverage resources.

I. Background

The East Bay Public Safety Corridor Partnership is a collaborative whose membership includes 16 cities, 2 counties, 18 school districts and 23 law enforcement agencies committed to working together to find solutions to the problems of crime, drugs and violence in their communities. With jurisdictions totaling over 1.2 million in population, the Corridor is the largest local public safety partnership in the nation.

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In November of 2000, the EBPSCP made the decision to prioritize the issues of family violence and youth violence and to dedicate resources to developing information and regional strategies to prevent both. With the support of the National Funding Collaborative on Youth Violence Prevention the Corridor provided leadership and other resources to engage in a comprehensive planning effort. There were several key questions and concerns that brought members of the Corridor and others to the table including:

- ❑ Is there a relationship between the phenomena of youth violence and family violence?
- ❑ Of the many individuals, organizations and public jurisdictions that address these issues (e.g., the police, child protective services, community based organizations) are we maximizing our coordination and collaboration in addressing these problems?
- ❑ What types of public policies or programs can we institute or support on a regional bases that will further our efforts to reduce the occurrences of family violence and youth violence?

I. Planning Process

A steering committee composed of members of the East Bay Public Safety Corridor, non-profit organizations, and human service public agencies was established in 2001. The articulated goal of the Steering Committee was to explore the interconnection between youth violence and family violence and to propose strategies that would reduce or prevent the occurrence of such violence.

The Steering Committee agreed to undertake the following activities;

- Develop a comprehensive inventory of efforts currently underway in the region that are focused on youth violence prevention, domestic violence and the interconnectedness among these phenomena;
- Conduct a community listening process through focus groups in neighborhoods where youth and family violence are particularly extensive.
- Conduct best practice research on what is occurring outside of the region in regards to linkages efforts;
- Conduct a data analysis of specific communities within the corridor region that will inform the discussion related to the linkages of these different types of violence, share findings and receive feedback from planning participants.
- Using the cross-system discussions, regional inventory, best practice search and data analysis, select projects that can be implemented on a regional basis that address the prevention of youth violence and family violence through linked and coordinated efforts. .

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Mapping and Data Analysis

The East Bay Public Safety Corridor Partnership has pioneered the practice of mapping archival data for the purpose of identifying and describing social problems and conditions within specific neighborhoods. In 1995 the Corridor undertook a comprehensive needs assessment of each of the 16 member cities within the Corridor. This assessment produced GIS maps articulating hotspots for youth crimes and youth victimization, health outcomes and economic conditions and community resources. In many of the Corridor communities these maps were used to inform planning processes and to develop strategies to reduce youth violence. (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1997) (Bennett & Bennett, 1997) Of particular interest to the Corridor were the maps and analysis of police incident data that indicated that youth were most often the victims of crimes between the hours of 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM as they traveled from school. These findings lead to an effort to develop and sustain after school programs throughout the region.

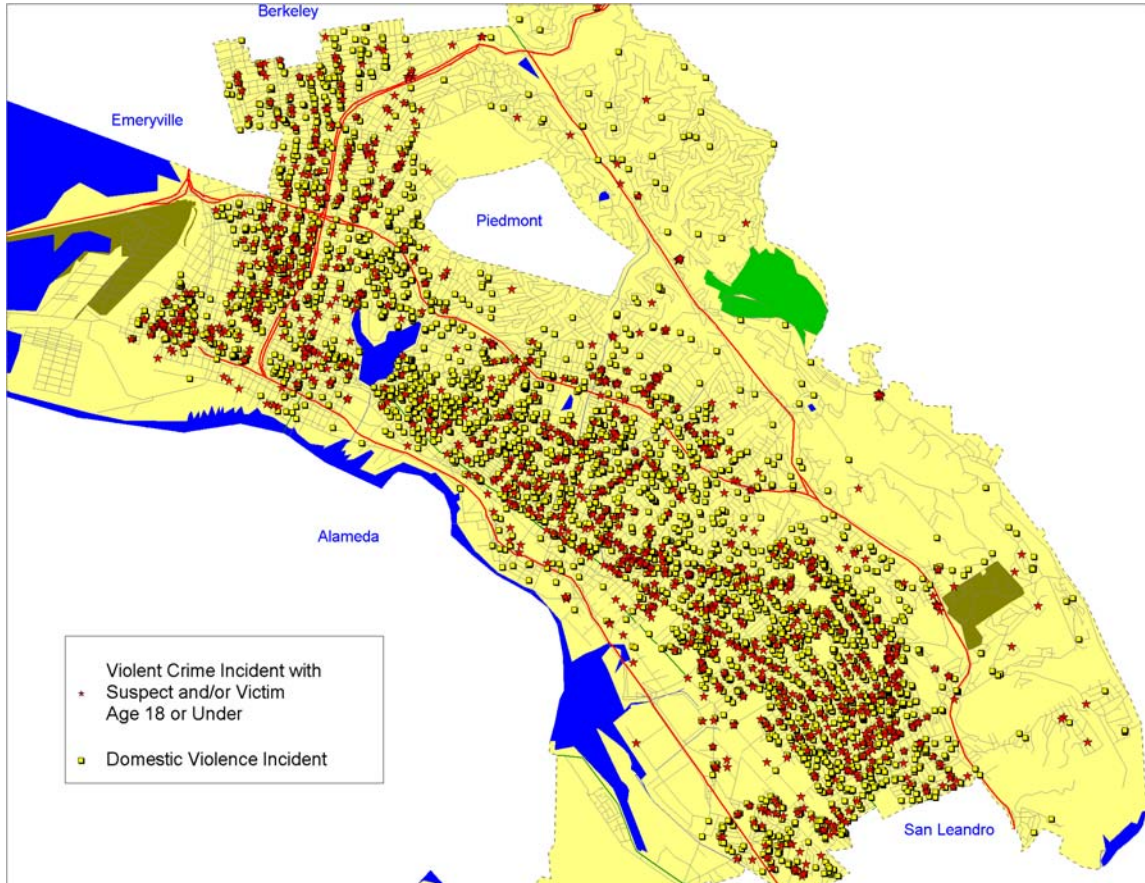
When members of the Steering Committee for the Linkages Planning effort began to meet and discuss the relationship between family and youth violence, they began by reviewing some of the recent research on this topic. Of particular interest were studies that described the often long term trauma that is caused to young children who witness violence within the home (*The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children*, 2001) (Halfon, 2001) (Osofsky, 1999) or within their communities (Margolin, 2000). These studies described the negative impact that violence has on the capacity of children to successfully master normal developmental stages and the often long-term traumatic affect that places these children at risk for being violent. However, these studies all examined and described the impact on the individual level. Because the Corridor was interested in developing strategies that could be implemented at the community and regional levels, we were interested in the impact of family violence on the community level, particularly in relationship to it's implications for fostering youth violence.

With the assistance of the Oakland and the Richmond Police Department, we mapped the incidents of youth violence and family violence for each city to begin to determine if overlapping or concurrent hotspots of family and youth violence could be identified. We then chose to conduct focus groups in those areas of these cities where there were high levels of youth violence and family violence.

The following maps represent the first steps in this analysis.

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**City of Oakland – Police Reported Incidents of Youth Violence and Family Violence
– Year 2000**



Description of the Data

Every time the police are called to the scene of a crime or an incident, they record specific information that is entered into a database. We obtained the following information from police records for the year 2000

- Address of incident
- Code of suspected crime or incident
- Age of victim
- Age of perpetrator

The incidents that we selected for our mapping included all violent crimes committed by or involving youth and all domestic violence incidents.¹

¹ All cities within Alameda and Contra Costa Counties code every domestic violence incident separately and distinctly from all other crimes or incidents. This is not the case in all cities. For example, in San Francisco DV incidents are not coded separately but have a secondary column that describes them as DV incidents.

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The data is then mapped by census tracks. Unlike the subsequent map that will follow from the City of Richmond incidents of family violence appear more dispersed throughout the City of Oakland.

The highest numbers of domestic violence incidents for 2000 were found in the following census tracks and corresponding neighborhoods.

| Census Track Number | Number of DV Police Reports | Neighborhood |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 4087 | 144 | East Oakland |
| 4076 | 121 | East Oakland |
| 4088 | 117 | East Oakland |
| 4010 | 115 | West Oakland |
| 4097 | 108 | East Oakland |
| 4085 | 107 | East Oakland |
| 4054 | 106 | San Antonio |
| 4014 | 104 | West Oakland |
| 4084 | 103 | East Oakland |
| 4096 | 98 | East Oakland |
| 4093 | 98 | East Oakland |

These 11 census tracks represent the highest number of domestic violence incidents that occurred in 2000. However, when adjusted for population, the highest rates of domestic violence occurred in the following census tracks.

| Census Track | Rate per 1000 | Neighborhood |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 4084 | 27.2 | East Oakland |
| 4013 | 27.1 | West Oakland |
| 4057 | 23.2 | |
| 4022 | 22.8 | West Oakland |
| 4088 | 22.7 | East Oakland |
| 4090 | 22.5 | East Oakland |
| 4014 | 21.8 | West Oakland |
| 4101 | 21.6 | East Oakland |
| 4097 | 20.7 | East Oakland |

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| | | |
|------|------|--------------|
| 4094 | 20.4 | East Oakland |
|------|------|--------------|

The highest number of youth violence incidents for 2000 were found in the following census tracks and corresponding neighborhoods:

| Census Track | Number of Incidents | Neighborhood |
|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 4098 | 63 | East Oakland |
| 4097 | 45 | East Oakland |
| 4076 | 40 | |
| 4087 | 39 | East Oakland |
| 4071 | 33 | |
| 4088 | 33 | East Oakland |
| 4067 | 33 | |
| 4013 | 32 | East Oakland |
| 4024 | 31 | West Oakland |
| 4014 | 30 | West Oakland |
| 4012 | 30 | West Oakland |

These census tracks represent the areas in which there were the highest absolute numbers of youth violence incidents in 2000. However, when adjusted for population the following census tracks had the highest rates of youth violence.

| Census Track | Rate per 1000 | Neighborhood |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 4098 | 19.4 | East Oakland |
| 4012 | 12.3 | West Oakland |
| 4024 | 12 | West Oakland |
| 4097 | 8.6 | East Oakland |
| 4103 | 8.6 | East Oakland |
| 4016 | 8.3 | West Oakland |
| 4018 | 7.7 | West Oakland |
| 4090 | 6.9 | East Oakland |
| 4088 | 6.4 | East Oakland |
| 4067 | 6.3 | |
| 4014 | 6.3 | West Oakland |

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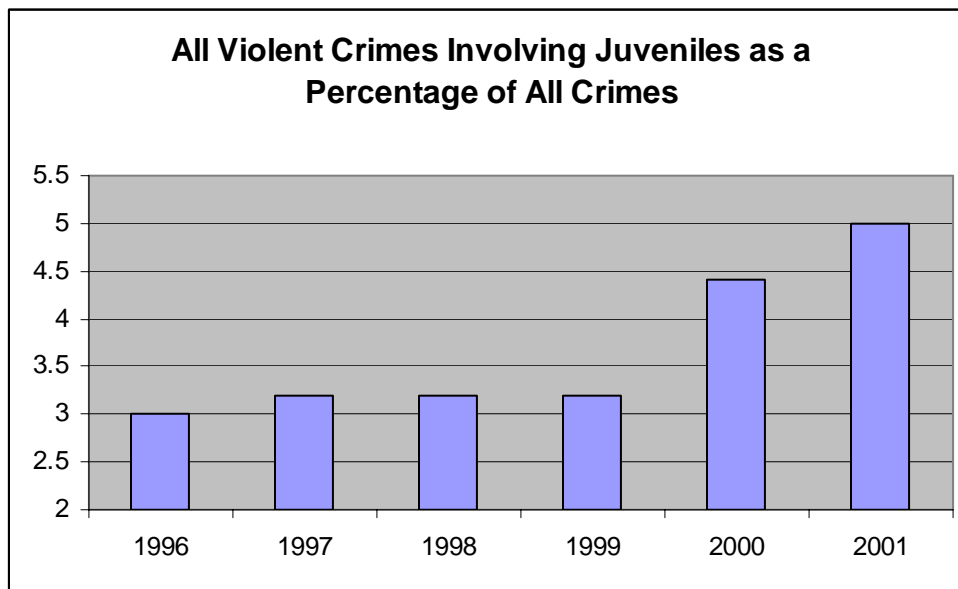
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The following same census tracks had the highest rates of domestic violence and youth violence.

| Census Track | DV Rates per 1000 | Youth Violence Rates per 1000 | Neighborhood |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 4088 | 22.7 | 6.4 | East Oakland |
| 4090 | 22.5 | 6.9 | East Oakland |
| 4014 | 21.8 | 6.3 | West Oakland |
| 4097 | 20.7 | 8.6 | East Oakland |

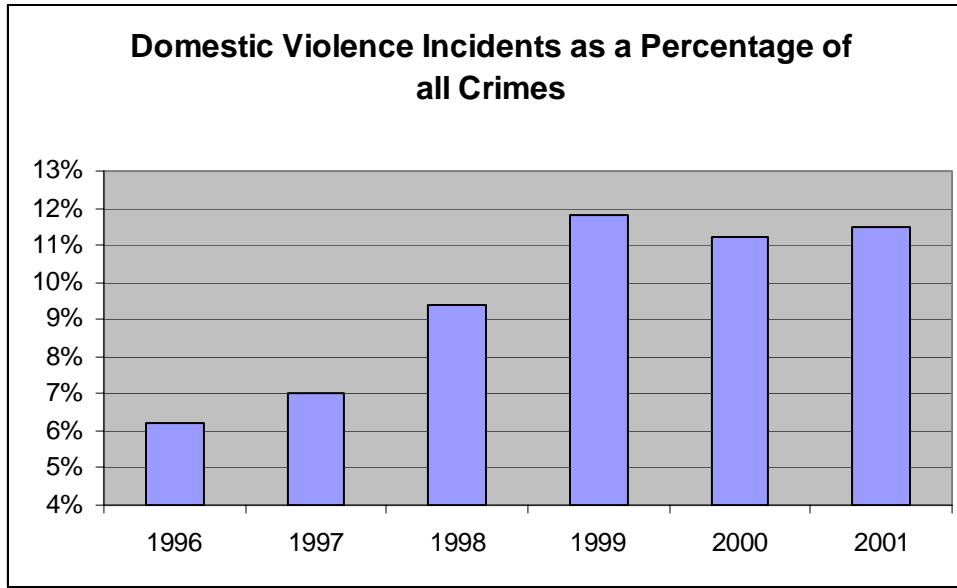
It is important to remember when reviewing this information that a census track is not a measure or a boundary for a neighborhood. Even though only 4 of the census tracks appear to have both the highest rates of youth violence and domestic violence, all of the most impacted census tracks are in the same neighborhoods.

While the above charts and map represent data only from the year 2000, an analysis of police data from 1996 to 2001 revealed the following information.



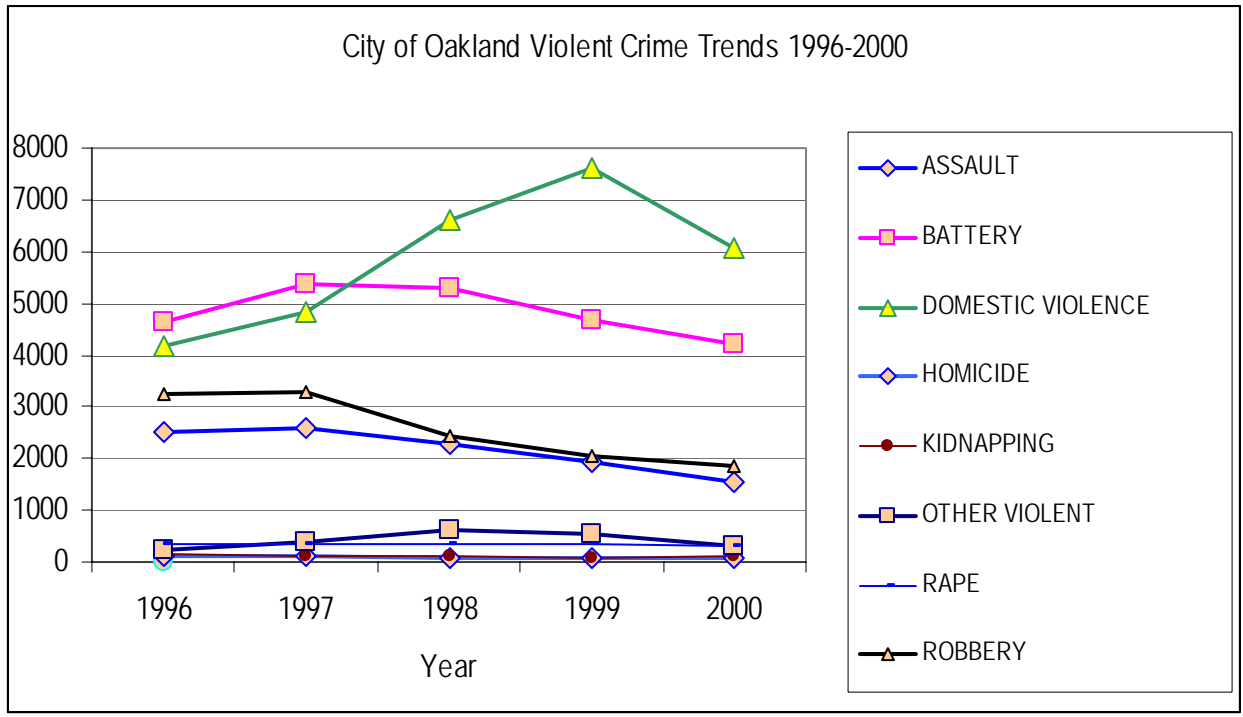
Violent crimes involving juveniles continued to rise from 1996 to 2001. This data represents crimes where juveniles were either suspects or victims.

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Domestic Violence also rose, more dramatically during this same time period with a slight decrease from 1999 to 2000.

In general, domestic violence continued to rise at the same time that most other crimes excluding violent crimes involving juveniles was decreasing.



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City of Richmond, California

1999-1998

The following map was created by geocoding domestic violence incidents from the year 1999 and violent crimes involving juveniles from the year 1998. Each icon represents a separate incident. Unlike the resulting map created from Oakland Police data, the incidents of youth violence and domestic violence appears to be more concentrated in one specific area or neighborhood.

The police data that was used to create this map is problematic in that only 30% of youth violence incidence and 40% of family violence incidents were geocoded.² However, of all of those incidents that were geocoded, the majority is concentrated in the 6 census tracks within the city. The following information is all from the year 1998. Those census track in bold represent areas where family violence, youth violence and violence of all kinds were the highest rates in the city for 1998

| Census Track | Number of all Violent crimes | Rate per 1000 |
|--------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| 3760 | 137 | 22.99 |
| 3790 | 112 | 17.70 |
| 3770 | 105 | 13.82 |
| 3740 | 93 | 20.59 |

| Census Track | Count of Family Violence Incidents | Rate per 1000 |
|--------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| 3760 | 53 | 8.89 |
| 3770 | 44 | 5.79 |
| 3750 | 38 | 8.44 |
| 3790 | 31 | 4.90 |
| 3740 | 25 | 5.53 |
| 3800 | 21 | 3.50 |

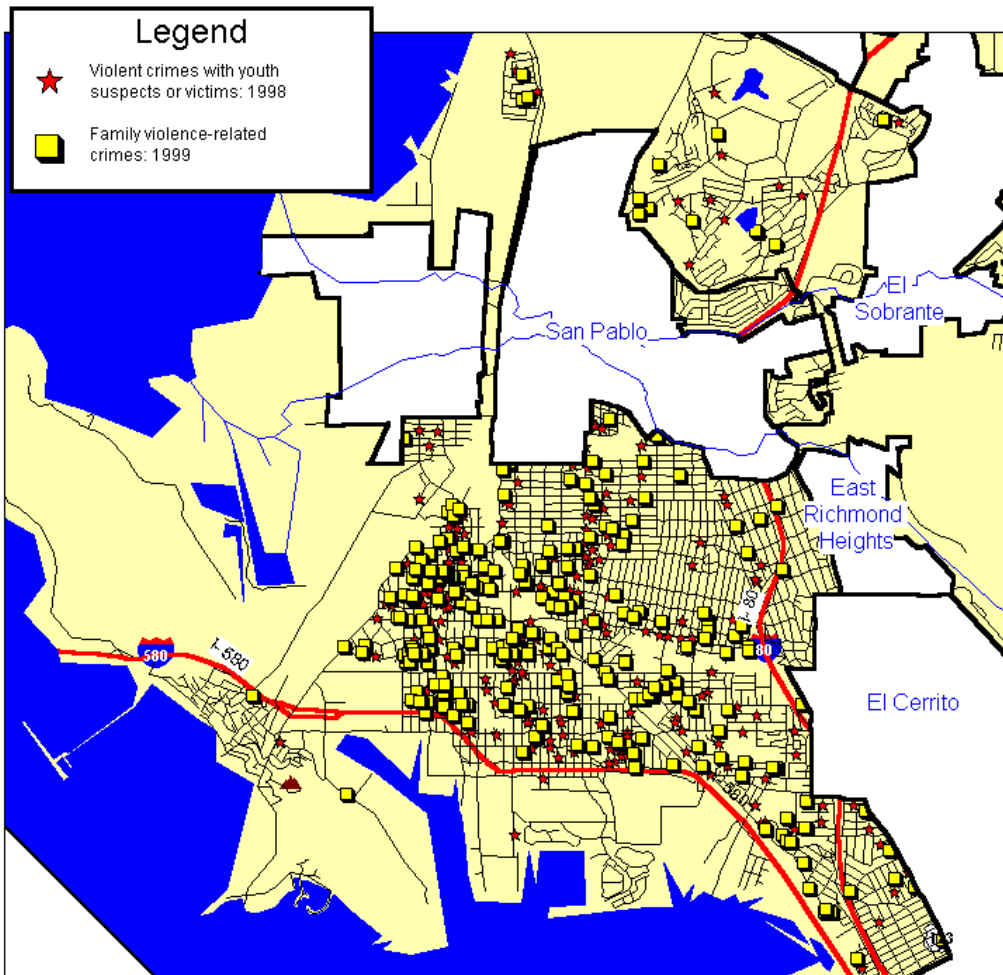
² If addresses are not complete or misspelled the geocoding program excludes them. We are awaiting a fresh run of data from the Richmond police department so that we can create a more accurate map and analysis

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| Census Track | Count of Youth Violence Incidents | Rate per 1000 |
|---------------------|--|----------------------|
| 3770 | 27 | 3.55 |
| 3790 | 23 | 3.63 |
| 3760 | 18 | 3.02 |
| 3750 | 15 | 3.33 |
| 3740 | 14 | 3.10 |
| 3800 | 13 | 2.17 |

The neighborhood known as the Iron Triangle is comprised of census track 3760 and 3770

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Source: Richmond Police Dept. Automated Report Management System

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II. Purpose of Focus Groups and Interviews

The focus groups were held to:

- ❑ Listen to the impressions, insights, and experiences of people living in Corridor neighborhoods regarding youth and family violence. There was an attempt to ensure that we would hear from people living in those neighborhoods where there is a disproportionately high level of youth and family violence.
- ❑ Include communities and populations such as the gay and lesbian community not traditionally surveyed in violence prevention research efforts.
- ❑ Discover what people saw to be the assets or strengths of their community which could be used to reduce youth and family violence;
- ❑ Ascertain what people believed were the causes of these phenomena, what could serve as protective factors and what might help prevent the occurrence of family and youth violence.
- ❑ Determine whether or not people believed that there was a correlation between youth violence and family violence.
- ❑ Discover what people believe is needed to create a safer community for children, youth and families with a particular interest in identifying program needs, resources or activities.
- ❑ Gauge the impressions of people in the community regarding the role of the police and other public organizations in addressing the issues.

In addition, the focus groups were looked upon as a way to invite people into the process of developing and implementing a plan that addresses reduction of violence.

III. Focus Group Methodology

A. Who We Talked With

We talked with a total of 117 people. The following charts break down the demographics of participants.

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| | Totals |
| Males | 52 |
| Females | 65 |
| Total | 117 |

| Race/Ethnicity | Total Number of Participants |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| African American | 65 |
| Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander | 6 |

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| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Latino | 24 |
| White | 15 |
| Multiracial/Unknown | 6 |
| Total | 117 |

B. How Participants Were Selected

The focus groups were organized by a variety of community based non-profit organizations. In that sense, organizations became the gateway to the individuals that we spoke with and from whom we gathered information. The organizations invited the focus group participants. These participants were either recipients of services provided by the organization or in some way related to the organization as a volunteer or member.

The organizations were chosen because of their work with people from specific neighborhoods known to have disproportionately high levels of family and youth violence, or because the mission of the organization addressed the issues of youth and/or family violence prevention.

The majority of individuals that we spoke with were youth ages 14-21. This is a significant factor to be considered when reviewing the responses to the focus group questions, which at times appear contradictory. It may be that young people edit their responses less than adults do in order to formulate a more seamless story or picture of their experiences. Alternatively, the experiences of youth may be more contradictory than the experiences of adults.

| Organization | Geographic Area Served | Focus Group Participants | Organizational Information |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Berkeley High School Peer Educators | Berkeley | Youth | This is a domestic violence prevention program that utilizes teen outreach workers to bring awareness to the subject of domestic violence for young people at Berkeley High. |
| 2. Hayward Community-Day School | Hayward, Alameda County | Youth | Serves at risk students from school districts in Alameda County, ages 12-17 who have been expelled from their regular neighborhood public schools. |

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|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 3.Safe Passages, Oakland- Youth Committee | Oakland | Youth | Safe Passages is a partnership between the Oakland Unified School District, the City of Oakland, Alameda County, The East Bay Community Foundation and Children’s Hospital of Oakland working on strategies for youth exposed to violence at an early age, during middle school years and after initial experiences with the juvenile justice system |
| 3. Sexual Minority Alliance of Alameda County (SMAAC) | Oakland, Richmond, Berkeley | Youth | SMACC provides a safe space for youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning and are often subject to harassment or violence in their schools, neighborhoods or homes. |
| 4. Teens on Target | Oakland | High school youth | The goal of this program that is located at Castlemont High School is to train urban youth who are at risk of violence to become advocates for violence prevention. |
| San Leandro Youth Advisory Commission | San Leandro | Youth | Youth Advisory Commission for the City of San Leandro that offers high school and middle school students the opportunity to affect governmental change |
| 5. The Allen Temple Anger Management Group | Oakland, Hayward, Richmond | Adults | This program serves men and women who are court ordered to attend anger management classes. |
| 6. The Amandela Project | Richmond | Youth | This organization works to reduce teen pregnancy and is a multicultural collaborative dedicated to the empowerment of Richmond Youth. |
| 7. The Berkeley Pacific Center | Berkeley, Oakland, Albany | Youth 15-18 year olds | The Center is a lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender, and questioning community service center and is volunteer-based. It offers peer support groups, information and referral, counseling, HIV services and a safe space. |

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|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 8. The Latino Police Advisory Commission for the City of Oakland | Oakland | Adults | The mission of the Latino Advisory Committee on Crime is to enhance relations between and improve safety for the Oakland police Department and the Latino Community |
| 9. The Teen Resource Center | Richmond | Youth | A one-stop multi- purpose service center for teenagers and older youth, which provides a wide variety of services aimed at homeless youth. |
| 10. Youth Together | Richmond, El Cerrito, San Pablo | High School age youth | Provides racial violence prevention and social justice efforts, and is operated by a collaboration of 5 community-based organizations working in five high schools. |

C. Focus Group Tools, Facilitators and Training

For each of the focus groups, the same set of open-ended questions was asked. These questions were developed from input from a variety of people including Corridor staff, Steering Committee members and the facilitators of the focus groups.

Because we realized that the topic of family violence is highly emotional and that talking about it can trigger strong feelings, we took precautions to try and create questions that permitted people to share as much or as little of their own experiences as they felt comfortable doing. At the beginning of each meeting we stated that total confidentiality would be maintained – no one’s name would be associated with any response. We also invited anyone who felt upset after the focus group discussion to contact the organizational group leader who would be provided with the name and number of an organization for counseling and support.

Facilitators for the focus groups were volunteers from several of the communities within the Corridor region. (Please see acknowledgements) Each facilitator was paired with a recorder who took notes during the discussion. Facilitators and recorders attended a two-hour training session prior to attending any focus groups. The training session provided guidelines for conducting focus groups and general discussion on the purpose of the effort. Many of the focus groups were facilitated and/or recorded by Corridor staff members who also participated in the training session.

IV. Responses from the Focus Group Questions

1. What helps keep youth and families safe from violence in your community?

The responses to this question were diverse and often seemed contradictory in nature when taken as a whole. It seemed as though it was difficult for participants to stay focused on the question regarding what keeps families safe. Whenever a protective factor was listed, others in the group quickly suggested factors contributing to violence. Sometimes the same factor was named as contributing to both safety and violence.

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For example, many participants stated that strong family relationships and good communication between children and parents helped to keep youth safe. However other participants were quick to point out that family members were often the perpetrator of violence. In these instances a family system, something traditionally thought of as a protective factor, included members that were often responsible for physically harming children. Other participants talked about the high level of violence that is perpetrated upon family members by teenagers within the family. A few people stated that police presence made them feel safer; others said that the police made them fearful and contributed to creating tense and potentially violent situations.

A substantial minority of respondents stated that having a gun made them safer. A few participants stated that families that kept guns to protect their children were demonstrating a caring protective behavior. One participant stated that what made him feel safe was “a wooden Louisville slugger that I carry with me”. Others stated that putting bars on their windows helped them feel safer. However, not everyone saw taking up arms as a means of enhancing safety. A sizable number cited the availability and ease with which guns could be acquired in the community as contributing to violence of all kinds.

Not everyone saw taking up arms as a means of enhancing safety. A sizable number cited the availability and ease with which guns could be acquired in the community as contributing to violence of all kinds.

Some respondents said that fear of retaliation may prevent some youth from engaging in violent activities. A few people mentioned that staying to yourself, and having a group of friends around to protect you was important to being safe.

Many respondents mentioned participation in particular community organizations and activities as serving as protective factors for youth and families. **Churches, supervised playgrounds, after school programs, sports activities, employment opportunities, job training and other organizational and group activities were listed as helping to help keep youth and families safe from violence.**

Some participants stated that it was necessary to address addiction and its relationship to the cycle of violence in order to make people safer.

2. *Where in your community do you feel that youth are most safe from acts of violence?*

The most frequently listed place was church and second to that was at home. The participants were divided on the degree of safety they feel when in school. Some participants stated that school was not always a safe place and many stated that often they did not feel safe at school. Others stated that sometimes school was a safer place than home. A few youth mentioned that staying with other family members or staying at a group home made them safer than staying with their own family.

More than one respondent stated that they didn't feel safe anywhere.

A few respondents pointed out that many adults are wary and fearful of youth in groups and that such attitudes can lead to violence.

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One group of respondents stated that jail was the safest place for gang members because that person was then removed from the violence in the neighborhoods. Another person stated that there was really no place that was safe if someone wanted to kill you.

3. *Where in your community do you feel that you are least safe?*

Again, responses varied and were not always consistent with answers to other questions. Jail, convenience and liquor stores, poorly lighted back streets were most often cited as being places that were not safe.

School was mentioned as an unsafe place because it is where youth bring their problems and, as a result, conflicts occur. Schools were noted as being particularly unsafe if there were no teachers or site supervisors around to break up fights or disagreements. Some participants mentioned that they were often scared to report violence at school because they feared retaliation. It was also noted that the lack of counselors for students to talk to about their problems at home contributed to a lack of safety at school.

The participants were divided on the issue of safety in parks. Some youth felt parks in the daytime were safe. Many participants viewed parks as unsafe places because of the presence of guns, drugs and gang activity. They felt that this was especially true at night. Juvenile Hall, jail, the streets, parties and bars were all places named as not being safe.

Gay youth particularly felt that there was no place that was safe for them. They stated that even their homes were not safe. However most agreed that it was better to have a home than to be homeless because being homeless greatly contributed to being unsafe.

4. *What does your family do to help protect your children from violence?*

Many participants stated that parents who make their kids stay at home instead of hanging out on the streets, and parents who insist on curfews and know who their children's friends contribute to keeping their children safe. Others stated that requiring check-in times for children was a way in which families protected their children from violence.

Participants also cited taking children to church and getting them involved in other positive activities such as sports, family outings and otherwise helping them stay busy and out of trouble as ways to keeping them safe.

In order to help children remain safe from violence, participants stated that it is very important for families to be aware of their child's after school activities who their child's friends are. Parents who provide transportation to school, to work or to night events are helping to keep kids safe.

Participants felt that being able to communicate with family members was extremely important to increasing safety for youth. Children need to feel that they can talk to their parents when they feel unsafe, without fear of being blamed or having a parent overreact.

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Participants also said that having the trust of their families helped to keep them safe so they could trust them and make good decisions related to safety. Some youth may not tell their parents when they feel unsafe because they are scared of the negative consequences that might occur. Negative consequences might include having parents get angry and blame young people being in unsafe places. Participants expressed worry that if their parents suspected them of being unsafe at school, their parents might overreact and pull them out of their schools, and away from their friends. Participants stated that they worried that if they talked to their parents about problems of safety they might not be allowed to continue to be with some of their friends.

Some participants stated that it is important for fathers to interact with their daughters and teach them how to handle themselves around boys. They voiced the belief that girls particularly need to learn about street smarts and self-defense as they start becoming independent. It is also important for daughters and young girls to avoid wearing provocative clothing that could cause unwanted attention.

A few respondents stated that families couldn't do anything to protect children from violence. A few respondents stated that vigilantism could be a way parents can protect youth who are being harassed or abused. A few felt that having guns in their home served to help a young person feel safer because they know that their parents can protect them if someone tries to attack them.

A few people mentioned that family could relocate a child who is involved with a gang or who has enemies that might cause violence to them. Participants also stated that jail is a positive option for children who will not comply with a parent's rules.

A few people stated that physically reprimanding kids helps protect children from danger if they are not able to control their own behavior.

5. *Are you aware of family violence in your community? How do you become aware of it?*

Every focus group voiced their experiences and knowledge of family violence in their community and most participants stated that there was a lot of family violence occurring. Youth stated that they were aware of family violence from talking with friends, from seeing bruises on friends or from witnessing family violence in their neighborhoods or in the streets. Others stated that they knew about it because they saw police cars in the neighborhood, or there were reports about it in the newspapers and on the radio. Others stated that kids were showing up to school upset, depressed or with bruises. Others reported listening to screaming at night and hearing gossip.

Some participants blamed the prevalence of family violence on increased alcohol consumption and drug use.

At least a few participants in each focus group had witnessed family violence. Some said that they had tried to break up a fight between family members. Others said they were afraid to try and break up a fight because there was a possibility that they would be hurt in the process. Some respondents stated that they would be more willing to try and break up a fight between friends than to try and break up a fight between family members.

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The issue of intervention into family fights was controversial. Some participants said that they wouldn't call the police because the police wouldn't respond to their request for help. Others said that if you bring in authority figures you could get a reputation as a snitch. Others said that calling in older family members, such as a grandparent, was sometimes a good thing to do. Many African American respondents often said a grandmother or "older person," mediator was the first person they called when they experienced family violence

6. *In your experience, do you think there is a lot or not much of family violence in your neighborhood?*

Most people stated that there was a lot of family violence in their neighborhoods and that they believed that family violence is very pervasive everywhere. They also stated that there is a lot of verbal abuse occurring in families and between friends.

Many people stated that in the African-American community you don't air your dirty laundry and tell people when there is abuse or family violence because you are afraid that they will be talked about in neighborhood gossip. Others stated that kids are afraid to talk about family violence because they fear being placed in foster care more than getting hit by their family.

7. *Are you aware of children or youth in your neighborhoods that have witnessed family violence? What do you think you can do to help them?*

Most respondents stated that they knew of children and youth who had witnessed family violence. Others stated that they themselves had witnessed it and were therefore more sensitive to and aware of someone else who has witnessed abuse.

Participants agreed that it is useful to give those who have experienced violence referrals for services. However, they stated that some people are scared to follow up with referrals because they distrust members of the mental health profession.

A few participants stated that both the abuser and the abused needed mental health services. Some thought it was especially important to provide counseling services to children who had witnessed violence. Some felt that mentors for children who have witnessed or experienced violence should be provided. Others stated that it was important for victims to move out of the situation, and get away from the violence.

There was not a consensus on whether children should be removed from families where there is violence. Some people felt that CPS did more harm than good and that foster care is so bad that it often places children in situations that are more abusive than the situations they were removed from in the first place. Everyone seemed to agree that there needed to be a person that a child who had witnessed or experienced violence could talk to.

Participants stated that is important to talk to families about the consequences and costs of family violence. They also said that emergency shelters and mental health counseling needed to be made available for the community. Some participants said that more mental health services should to be made available for batterers.

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One participant stated that he had grown up in a community where it had been acceptable to beat your wife. He stated that there was a culture of violence in many communities that made family violence OK. Several participants felt young men learned violent behavior from seeing their fathers act violently towards their wives, other family members and others in the community.

Other participants pointed out that adults needed to be better role models for their children regarding violence and their attitudes about violence. For example, parents need to refrain from laughing and making light of fights that occur between little kids.

Many people talked about the unspoken rule of silence that mandates that you don't talk about family violence because it is "family business".

8. *What is the first organization that you call when you encounter a situation of violence? Do organizations respond?*

Some people said that the first people that they call are the police. Many people said that they would definitely not call the police. Instead they said that they would call other family members. Some people said that the police don't respond or respond too late– or that they don't show up at all. Some people stated that 911 doesn't respond to callers with young sounding voices because they assume it is a prank call; those participants said that 911 think that family violence calls are kids playing games on the phone.

Participants stated that friends were often called when there family violence erupted. Friends and family can be most useful if a child needs to be removed. Some participants stated that they called upon teachers for help. Some participants said that a grandmother or a well-respected family member often acts as the intermediate in family disputes.

Most people felt critical of Child Protective Services (CPS) stating that they either overreacted or didn't act at all. Some viewed CPS as invasive and destructive to the family unit.

Others had ideas about how CPS could be more effective. These ideas included making a transition as smooth as possible for children who needed to be removed and trying to place the child if possible with a relative or someone that they knew and trusted. There was a general feeling that group homes were not safe and that foster homes were not helpful or supportive in building a sense of community.

Some felt that talking to friends was therapeutic but that there isn't much they can do to help end the abuse. Some respondents stated that certain groups of people in the community such as immigrants cannot seek out help or resources because of a fear of deportation or because of language barriers.

Some respondents named particular community based organizations such as Teens on Target, Girls Inc., Youth Alive and Youth Together as helpful resources.

9. *What do you think could be done to prevent family violence in your community?*

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Participants stated that there should be more organized activities for young people, more counseling and decreased availability of guns. More people should be more willing to step in and help people in their communities.

Some people stated that families should have more time together – have shorter workweeks and work fewer hours in general.

There was a consensus that:

- Both young people and adults need to be taught to respect and value themselves.
- The community needs to be taught that if you invite harm to yourself you are disrespecting yourself.
- Families need to be educated about how to be healthy and safe and how to respond and act when you see someone being hurt in your community.

Respondent's stated that the media needs to focus more on family violence and the negative impact it has on young children. Some respondents said that parents needed to be sent to jail or boot camp for a week to see what it is like without their kids.

The need to stop police harassment and sexual harassment was cited as a means of reducing family violence, as was the need to create an open environment where youth feel able to reach out to the resources available for them.

10. Do you think that the occurrence of family violence has an impact on the occurrence of youth violence?

Most respondents said that they believed family violence has an impact on the occurrence of youth violence and that the phenomena are interrelated. They said that witnessing family violence made kids have quick tempers. However they pointed out that not everyone who has witnessed family violence or been a victim of family violence is violent. In order to prevent violence in the community it was necessary to start with young children ages 0-12. It was seen as important to have systems and services in places such as good mental health, safe schools, and after school care.

Participants also stated that stricter penalties for individuals who commit hate crimes, promoting awareness of youth rights, and the need for more conflict resolution instruction in school would help prevent violence. The schools need to do a better job of identifying and protecting students.

Participants talked about a cycle of violence that starts with male children manifesting behaviors at school that they have picked up at home. Many males think that violent behavior is OK because they have seen their fathers act violently toward their mothers and they emulate this behavior in their own relationships.

Participants stated that much of the drug abuse, youth homelessness, violence, low self esteem and youth on youth violence were interrelated and could be traced back to problems in the family. People stated that youth are shown that violence is an effective way to handle problems. Some felt that unresolved aggression from abuse in childhood is expressed in the form of violence against peers. People stated that if youth

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are supported emotionally at home they learn to have healthier relationships with their peers and later on in life.

11. What about the police? What do you think they can do?

Respondents expressed the need for police to be more helpful and less racist. They stated that the police must act like they care and are concerned about families that they encounter. They believe that the police often remove children from their families more often than CPS does. The police need to make more informed decisions and use better judgment in family violence situations. They stated that the police need more training about how to deal with family violence.

Some respondents said that often police would like to be more helpful when dealing with and incident of family violence, but legally or procedurally their hands are tied.

Some respondents stated that the police create more violence. They show up when it's too late. Participants expressed the belief that police respond to the calls of white people more readily than from people of color. People expressed the belief that police, and other services such as ambulances treated neighborhoods comprised of people of color differently than white neighborhoods.

Respondents stated that if the police would get out of their cars and get to know the people in the neighborhoods there would be less violence. They stated that many police intimidate and abuse young people, which creates an aura of distrust and makes young people less likely to call upon the police when they need them. They stated that police need more training about how to interact with youth.

Respondents stated that racial profiling had a negative impact on the community and that its practice fosters more distrust and prevent the community and police from working together.

Other respondents stated that police need sensitively training particularly when it comes to gay youth or transgender people. They felt that police were too quick to pull weapons and bully youth. They stated that the police treat gay youth differently than they do straight youth.

Some people felt that the police contribute to the violence including treating people with disrespect, stereotyping youth and people of color and responding to situations with force.

V. Overarching Findings from Focus Groups

- ❑ Almost every participant felt that family violence exists in his or her community and that it is an extensive problem.
- ❑ There is a strong indication that people feel that youth violence is tied to family violence for a wide variety of reasons including:
 - Respondents stated that what you learn in your household affects how you behave outside of the household;
 - Males are learning behaviors based on how their fathers act;

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- Family violence creates stress for youth who then take their troubles to school and may act out on them.
- There is not a consensus regarding who one should call in the event of family violence, or if one should call anyone at all.
- There is confusion regarding what constitutes risk factors and protective factors. Many participants felt that protective factors included having guns or other weapons, staying to oneself and keeping away from the police.
- Alcohol and drug abuse was cited repeatedly as contributing to youth and family violence.
- It was clear from the number of responses that participants felt that youth violence could be prevented and youth and children would be safer from street violence if families exercised more control, participated in the life of their children, and provided children with safe activities and positive role models. However, it is not clear that there is a consensus or many shared opinions regarding what might prevent family violence.
- While it was clear that many youth do not feel a high degree of safety in their communities or their homes, by and large gay, lesbian, and transgender youth feel the least safe.

VI. Implications from Findings

1. A significant number of the youth voiced the idea that the presence of guns and other weapons contributes to their safety. It is obvious that outreach and education regarding this belief needs to be conducted. The belief that guns or weapons make one safer may be contributing to the disproportionately high levels of violence we see in some of these neighborhoods.
2. A disturbingly high number of participants reported not being willing to call upon the police for help in situations involving family violence. The reasons for this ranged from the general mistrust of the police to specific criticisms of the ways in which they have responded to calls for assistance. Efforts need to be made to ensure that the Family Violence Protocols developed and promoted by the Corridor, and that were adopted by both the Contra Costa Police Chiefs Association and the Alameda County Police Chiefs Association are being implemented, and that they reflect the latest best practices in police protocols and training.
3. The majority of youth reported experiencing feeling unsafe in at least one or more places that many of us think of as generally safe - their schools, neighborhoods, and even with their families. Efforts need to be made to insure that—at least within the public institutional settings providing youth services—there are adults present for young people to connect with and talk to about their fears and feelings. Counselors, teachers, school staff and school volunteers all need to receive training regarding the signs and symptoms of family violence, adolescent depression and anger and be able to provide appropriate support and intervention. Schools must be able to insure that

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youth will be safe on campus and around campus and that those adults who witness any threat of violence will have the capacity and willingness to appropriately respond.

4. While a majority of participants saw family violence as wrong, there was a lack of agreement about how to stop it, who to call if it happens or even whose “business” it is if it does occur. While everyone acknowledges that family violence exists, it is not necessarily something that can be talked about. Every opportunity should be made to insure that young people are exposed to the latest information, facts and figures regarding family violence so that the shame associated with it can dissipate and the code of silence be broken. Young people need to understand what is illegal, what protections for family members exist and what resources exist to help families break out of situations of violence.
5. Participants expressed ambivalence, at best, regarding not only the police but other public agencies, particularly Child Protective Services. The Steering Committee should take a closer look at the basis for these objections and negative feelings so that policy can be crafted and adopted to improve services.
6. While many people cited the use of alcohol and drugs as contributing to youth and family violence, we did not hear information from participants regarding actual statistics on the numbers of people that are under the influence at the time of an arrest or intervention. This information would be useful for the community at large and for the service community to know. It may require additional record keeping and information sharing among the police and other public service organizations.

VII. Summary of Related Efforts within the Region

Throughout the Corridor region there are many efforts underway to prevent and reduce the instance of violence in our communities. The following chart represents some of these efforts.

| Program Title | Location | Description |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Contra Costa County Zero Tolerance for Domestic Violence | Contra Costa County | The Contra Costa County adopted a zero tolerance for domestic violence and has dedicated millions of dollars over the past years to addressing the issues through education, intervention and fostering collaboration among community partners and institutions. |
| Safe from the Start | Contra Costa and Alameda County | Technical assistance from the State of California Attorney General’s Office |

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| Program Title | Location | Description |
|---|---|--|
| Contra Costa County Sheriff's Domestic Violence Tracking System | All cities within Contra Costa County have been submitting all of their domestic violence police incident data to the County Sherriff's department, which is maintained in a data system. | |
| Contra Costa County Advisory Council Against Domestic Violence | Contra Costa County | Provides training and education throughout the community |
| Safe Passages, Oakland | Safe Passages serves as the vehicle for the City of Oakland, Oakland Unified School District, Alameda County and the East Bay Community Foundation to work together, and with the broader community, to improve the quality of life for children and families in Oakland. | . To achieve this goal, the partners commit themselves to the principles which guide Safe Passages, including the use if data and <i>best</i> practices to guide our work, holding ourselves accountable for results, committing to work together on issues that cut across agency boundaries, and building the capacity of both public and nonprofit partners to do what works for children <i>and families</i> . |
| Caught In the Cross fire | Oakland | A youth violence prevention program that works to close the revolving door of violence. The program provides emotional and practical support and mentoring to young people living in Oakland who are involved in violence either as victims or perpetrators. |
| Hayward Coalition for Youth | Members include the Hayward youth Commission, Hayward Police Department city officials, parents, | Based upon the results of a youth survey, this coalition is addressing some of the community conditions that contribute to youth feeling that their community is not safe. Strategies include addressing youth gangs drug dealing, creation of programs |

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| | school district staff CBOs and members of the faith communities | and safe recreational places, and improving police/teen relations. |
|--|--|---|



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Summary of Best and Promising Practices Nationally

Rationale for Selection

During the past ten years, the United States has been dedicated resourced to addressing youth violence as well as other forms of violence. The U.S Department of Justice and dedicated millions of dollars to research to determine promising strategies for violence prevention and has funded efforts nationally to duplicate such practices. At State and local levels of government, resources both from local funds as well as Federal dollars has been spent on programs, services both consisting of prevention and intervention activities. Private sector dollars, particularly from foundations, have also been dedicated to the task.

In seeking out models and information regarding best and promising practices for the Linkages effort, the Steering Committee narrowed its search by trying to find efforts that were directed at addressing more than one type of violence. We were particularly looking for efforts where public and private institutions and jurisdictions were collaborating and attempting to redirect the silo methodology that has been up until now the standard way of operations.

For example, in many jurisdictions, separate insitionsions may be addressing the occurrence of family violence for the same family. We know that it is not an uncommon occurrence to have child protective services working towards reunification of family members while the district attorney's office may be filing charges to have a father convicted and sent to prison. A family may be forced to work with case managers from several different public systems and these case managers may all have separate and often conflicting case plans for family members.

The Steering Committee adapted the following criteria best and Promising Practices.

- Selected efforts must be based on research
- They must address at least two of the following types of violence:
 - 1. Child abuse – A minor child is intentionally physically harmed by members or a member of their family.**
 - 2. Domestic violence –Violence between cohabitating adults who are either married or who otherwise constitute a family unit.**
 - 3. Youth violence – Violence that is either perpetrated by or experienced by youth 18 years of age or younger**
 - 4. Community violence- Violence that occurs outside of the home, within a community or community setting other than violence involving youth**

We were also looking for efforts that had the following component characteristics;

- **Cross Systems Collaboration**
- **Cross Systems Training**

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- **Multidisciplinary**
- **Starts early**
- **Addresses more than one type of violence**

| <i>Name of Program</i> | <i>Activity or Strategy</i> | <i>Targeted Population/types of violence</i> | <i>Where</i> | <i>Funded by:</i> |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| SafeStart | A multidisciplinary continuum of prevention and intervention activities to prevent and reduce the harm created by the incidence of children being exposed to violence, particularly within the family setting. Emphasizes cross jurisdictional collaboration and training among CPS, the courts, the police, health care professionals, and community-based service providing organizations. | Children ages 0-6 1,2 | San Francisco, Kansas City, plus other sites | U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention |
| Child Witness to Violence Project | Direct services of counseling, advocacy, and outreach for children age 8 or younger that witness violence. | Children 8 and younger 1,2,3,4 | Boston Medical Center, Boston Mass. | Department of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics |
| Child Victims Model Courts Project | Utilizing a single magistrate and prosecutor for the life of each case these alternative courts emphasis increased representation for children and families, more substantive preliminary hearings, court calendar improvements, multidisciplinary, court-led meetings and trainings and utilization of community-based services | Children and families 1,2 | 18 courts around the country. | National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges & U.S. Department of Justice |

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| In Touch with Teens | Educational program to expose teenagers to the myths and realities of teen relationship violence and inform them about alternatives and resources for assistance | Teenagers 2,3 | Los Angeles, CA | LA Commission on Assaults Against Women |
| Community Intervention Program | Youth who are arrested or cited by law enforcement are screened and provided with specific services when it is found that their families have been investigated at least once for child abuse and/or neglect. | Youth ages 9-12 2,3,4 | Sacramento, CA | |
| Dade County Dependency Court Intervention Program for Family Violence | This court is designed to address the co-occurrence of child maltreatment and other forms of family violence and to deal with domestic violence in the context of the child protection system. It seeks to raise awareness in the child welfare system that children are at increased risk for additional harm when domestic violence and child maltreatment co-occur. It provides advocacy for battered mothers and coordinates community collaborative responses. For | Families, battered women and their children 1,2 | Miami Florida | |
| DOJ/HHS Demonstration Project. Effective intervention in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment Guidelines for policy and Practice. | This initiative seeks to facilitate more effective interventions for battered women and their children who are involved with 3 systems, child welfare agencies, domestic violence service provider and dependency courts. Strategies include increasing collaboration between systems, developing and implementing cross-system policy and staff development, improving procedures with each system, holding batterers accountable and seeking greater community resources for serving affected families. | 1,2 | | U.S. Government |
| Boston's | In response to the problems of youth, gangs and firearm | Youth, | Boston | National |

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|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Problem-Solving Project | violence developed a team approach to disrupt firearms markets and deter youth violence. Gang members in Boston are presented with a choice "stop the flow of guns and stop the violence-or face rapid, focused and comprehensive enforcement and corrections." | community violence 3,4 | Mass. | Institute of Justice |
| | | | | Federal government Department of Justice |
| | | | | |

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