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New Collaboration Aims to Curb Violence and Improve Public Health Access for Minority Youth

Posted on September 30, 2014 by [J. Nadine Gracia](#) and [Ronald L. Davis](#)



Violence is one of the most urgent public health problems we face in America. Its tragic consequences run deep and have an especially profound impact on minority youth and young minority men.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), more than 4,700 young people ages 10 to 24 were victims of homicide in 2011 -- an average of 13 each day. In this age group, homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans, the second leading cause of death for Hispanics, and the third leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Natives.

The CDC also reminds us of the social costs and economic burden of homicides and violent crimes. Youth who are victims of violence also have a higher risk for many other poor physical and mental health problems, including smoking, obesity, high-risk sexual behavior, asthma, depression, academic problems and suicide. Additionally, each year, youth homicides and nonfatal assault injuries result in an estimated \$17.5 billion in combined medical and lost productivity.

A 2014 article in the *Journal for Crime and Delinquency* also reported that half of African American men have been arrested at least once by age 23. Overall, African American men were 6 times and Hispanic men were 2.5 times more likely to be imprisoned than White men in 2012.

In support of efforts across the nation aimed at addressing violence, we are leading a new collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), through the HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH) and the DOJ Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office).

OMH and the COPS Office have come together to announce the Minority Youth Violence Prevention: Integrating Public Health and Community Policing Approaches (MYVP) initiative, to engage public health organizations, law enforcement agencies, and community organizers in a new effort to curb violence and reduce disparities in access to public health for at-risk minority male youth between the ages of 10 and 18. Through MYVP approximately \$3 million has been awarded to nine demonstration sites (a partnership between a public health organization and a law enforcement agency) to help strengthen programs that combine approaches to community policing and violence prevention within a public health framework. Additional funding of \$500,000 is being awarded through the COPS Office to an organization to provide coordination, technical assistance and evaluation across the demonstration sites.

Through this collaboration, OMH and the COPS Office will bring together public health, law enforcement and community groups to address violence as a public health issue. This new integrated approach to public health and community policing will also promote stronger linkages for young men in disadvantaged neighborhoods. It will link them to health and other services that are aimed at addressing social determinants of health - the conditions that impact the environments in which we live, where we work and where our children play.

Because we know that youth violence is not inevitable – it is, in fact, preventable. Everyone can play a role in preventing youth violence. Joint efforts such as the MYVP program bring us a step closer to building safer and healthier communities. And when community policing becomes the norm, when crime goes down and public safety goes up, it is the community that wins.

For additional information about the MYVP initiative and grantees visit: www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov and www.cops.usdoj.gov.

J. Nadine Gracia, MD, MSCE, is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health and the Director of the Office of Minority Health at the Department of Health and Human Services, and Ronald L. Davis is the Director of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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