

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE NEIGHBORHOODS

Safe Neighborhoods Outcome Team

The Honorable Jeffrey E. Froelich

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Vision

People live in safe, affordable housing. They have access to positive educational and cultural experiences. Recreational centers are conveniently located and staff serve as positive role models, especially for the children. All aspects of the environment – e.g., air, water, soil – are safe and healthy. The community values the unique attributes of each neighborhood, whether rural or urban.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVE TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

In 2010, the Safe Neighborhoods Outcome Team focused its attention on the Community Initiative to Reduce Gun Violence (CIRGV) in Montgomery County, now completing its second year of operation. Two years on, this local collaborative effort is making significant progress. The number of homicides committed by members of violent street groups in Dayton declined by more than 50% from 14 in 2008 to 6 in 2010. Evidence of CIRGV's success can also be seen in the reduction of time that Street Advocates spent on violence interruption in 2010. In 2009, Street Advocates spent 31% of their time de-escalating potentially violent situations between street groups. In 2010 they spent 19% of their time engaged in violence interruption. This allowed them to increase significantly the time that they spent working with individual clients, helping them to address and reduce risk factors that lead to violence.

CIRGV is a targeted deterrence strategy modeled after the 1990's Boston Gun Project. It follows a statewide strategy piloted by the 2007 Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence. This community-based strategy focuses on "reclaiming" those who have become involved in a violent lifestyle. Group violence is generated by small active street groups that are responsible for the most serious street violence. Their activities tear communities apart. The individuals involved are chronic offenders known to law enforcement. Group violence derives from many sources involving issues ranging from historical disputes, interpersonal relationships, and perceived disrespect.

The CIRGV intervention strategy involves local, state and federal law enforcement officials, respected local community leaders who represent the moral voice of the community, and grass roots community-based organizations who provide direct assistance. The intervention strategy used includes direct face-to-face engagement through "call-in" sessions, an explicit focus on violence, and three key components:

- Swift, certain and severe consequences for violent behavior. (This strategy alone has resulted in the arrest of 40 individuals who were involved in group-related violence and were either convicted or are awaiting trial on significant felony and/or federal charges since CIRGV began in November, 2008.)
- The moral voice of the community saying that violence is wrong, and won't be tolerated.
- Offering individual group members an "honorable exit" through supports and services that enable them to leave their violent lifestyle.



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Collaborative partners for 2010 included Montgomery County, the Cities of Dayton and Trotwood, state and federal law enforcement agencies, the Dayton Urban League, Wesley Community Center and Omega Community Development Corporation. FCFC funding, along with grants from the partner jurisdictions and several philanthropic organizations, have provided critical support for the services component of CIRGV during 2009 and 2010. The services provided include:

- 1) outreach to and engagement of the target population;
- 2) case management, including needs and strengths assessments, life plan development, services referrals and client support;
- 3) employment readiness training, employment skills training, Youth Works summer jobs, and transitional jobs;
- 4) spreading the "Stop the Violence" message in neighborhoods impacted by gun violence; and
- 5) violence interruption and conflict mediation.



Employment resources that have been provided to CIRGV participants include the Dayton Urban League's and Wesley Center's Job Readiness Programs, Montgomery County's 2009 and 2010 Summer Youth Works Programs, and East End Community Services' Dayton Works Plus Deconstruction and Pathways Out of Poverty Programs.

The work of the CIRGV Case Managers employed by Dayton Urban League and Wesley Center, and of the Street Outreach Workers employed by Omega Community Development Corp., is focused on the following outcomes:

- Individuals at high risk of gun violence are provided with information about community resources that can help them build pathways out of violence.
- Individuals at high risk of gun violence receive services that address and reduce risk factors related to becoming a victim or perpetrator of gun violence.
- 60% of the individuals actively participating in CIRGV services will not be involved in gun violence.
- The community culture of embracing peaceful conflict resolution and refusing to tolerate violence is indicated by the community's response to violence.
- Conflicts that may have previously resulted in retaliatory shootings are reduced through mediation by Street Advocates.

A Review of the Numbers for 2009 & 2010

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- 57%** Reduction in the number of homicides committed by members of violent street groups in Dayton between 2008 (14) and 2010 (6).
 - 199** Individuals affiliated with violent street groups attended one of eight CIRGV call-ins between November, 2008 and September, 2010.
 - 40** Individuals affiliated with group-related violence have been arrested and either convicted or are awaiting trial on significant felony or federal charges.
 - 140** Completed intake with the Street Advocates and were referred to a CIRGV Case Manager—70 to Dayton Urban League and 70 to Wesley Community Center.
 - 91** Created their Life Plan with their Case Manager. 73 actively followed through with referrals and activities related to their Life Plan.
 - 32** Were employed in the YouthWorks Program.
 - 23** Completed the Dayton Urban League's or the Wesley Center's Job Readiness Training.
 - 9** Are participants in the Pathways Out of Poverty Employment Program.
 - 3** Are employed by the Dayton Works Plus Deconstruction Program.



Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative Policy Team Roster

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Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative

Background

“Help me make my kids smarter!” That was the clear and consistent message that parents in two different Dayton neighborhoods delivered when they were asked about their hopes and dreams for their children and their neighborhoods. Their passion helped shape a proposal to boost kindergarten readiness, a proposal that became a reality in the summer of 2010 when the TOTS Program was launched in the neighborhoods surrounding Edison and Ruskin schools. (Further discussion of the work that went into the development of this proposal can be found in the *2009 Progress Report*.)

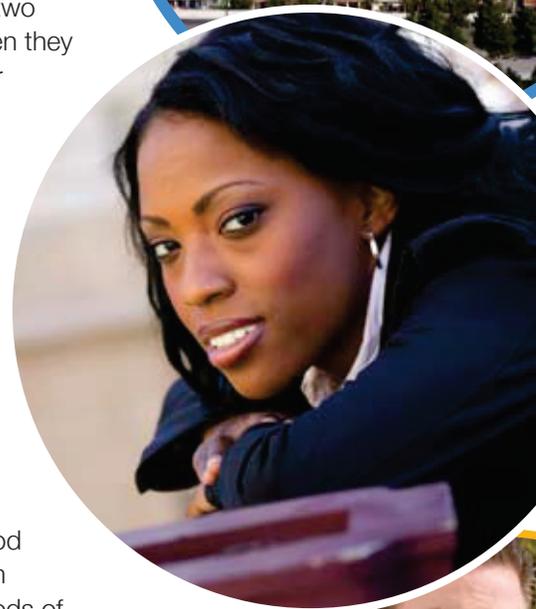
TOTS (“Taking Off To Success”) represents the first phase of the Family and Children First Council’s Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative (CNI), a targeted effort to transform distressed neighborhoods into neighborhoods of choice and connection in which families thrive and young people succeed. The idea of implementing such a place-based effort emerged from the work of the Supportive and Engaged Neighborhoods Outcome Team over the last few years; it gained momentum as the discussion broadened to include other Outcome Teams, the Champions’ Committee, the Executive Committee and the full Council. The ultimate goal is to achieve a positive and sustained impact on all of the community outcomes and indicators (hence the term “Comprehensive”) in these neighborhoods.

Kindergarten readiness was chosen as the first indicator to address for a number of reasons, starting with the fact that children in these neighborhoods are especially vulnerable. Academic difficulties, especially in the early grades, can have long-term consequences for them and their families. As the CNI evolves, other aspects of the “Young People Succeeding Journey” will be embraced.

Current Status

The contracts for implementing TOTS became effective on May 15, 2010 for a one-year period; each contract has a clause permitting two consecutive one-year renewals. The contracts are with Montgomery County and draw on an allocation from the Supported Services Fund that the FCFC set aside for the CNI.

The original contract agencies were East End Community Services (for the Ruskin Neighborhood) and the Dayton Urban League (for the Edison Neighborhood). After the Dayton Urban League suspended operations in early December 2010, the



remaining funding was transferred to Miami Valley Child Development Centers (MVCDC) under a new contract which became effective December 13, 2010. The two full-time employees that had been doing the TOTS-Edison program also “transferred” with the funding and are now MVCDC employees. East End has a mixture of full- and part-time employees working on TOTS-Ruskin for a total of approx. 2.5 FTE. MVCDC will add some staff and TOTS-Edison will also be staffed at that level.

Separately, the county has contracts with the University of Dayton’s Business Research Group and with Wright State University’s Center for Urban and Public Affairs for evaluation and assessment of the TOTS program.

Program-related activities ramped up over the summer of 2010 as employees were hired and they began meeting with each other and with the evaluators. Outreach and recruitment of parents was well underway by Labor Day.

The TOTS program is a combination of group sessions with the parents, home visits, and other group activities. The first major program activity was a nine-week series of Saturday morning sessions with the parents in the fall of 2010.

Topics for the weekly group sessions (most presented by guest speakers) included:

- Understanding young children
- Understanding behavior
- How parents can use assessment information
- Reading to your child
- Communication skills
- Teaching young children to cooperate
- Health and safety

The consultants doing the evaluation and assessment of the TOTS program attend these sessions; their participation provides the opportunity for valuable and timely feedback to the agencies. In the weekly sessions parents also had the opportunity to meet individually with Joni Baldwin, a faculty member from the University of Dayton’s School of Education and Allied Professions, to discuss the results of their child’s developmental assessment.

TOTS staff bring a “resource bag” and books to each home visit. The resource bag includes educational material on lead-based paint precautions, handouts from Children’s

Medical Center and ThinkTV, a video from PNC about math, and other educational materials.

Other group activities have included “Musical TOTS,” an academic musical program that involves both the parents and the children in song and dance.

Between the two neighborhoods, 38 parents and 45 children participated in the first set of sessions. Over 120 parents (total covering both neighborhoods) were recruited during the first months of TOTS. Some were unable to participate during the fall; TOTS staff members remain in contact with them and anticipate that some of them will participate in the second set of weekly sessions scheduled to begin in January 2011. Additional outreach and recruitment will also continue.

Next Steps

The long-term vision for the Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative is to demonstrate the value of designing place-based efforts that have a measurable impact on all of the outcome areas prioritized by the FCFC. As mentioned, the TOTS program represents the first phase of the CNI. As

such it is focused on one particular age group and is being delivered in two specific neighborhoods. It will take some time to determine the effectiveness of the TOTS program, to expand the programming to the entire age range of the “Young People

Succeeding Journey” (see Figure 1), and to engage additional neighborhoods.

It is obvious, therefore, that understanding the dynamics of the current program (TOTS) in the current neighborhoods (Edison and Ruskin) will provide important guidance to the expansion of the CNI. To capture what is being learned in the current phase a Policy Team has begun meeting on a regular basis. The Policy Team is charged with overseeing the CNI and with identifying and resolving systemic barriers to its success.

The CNI is exploring the question “What would it take to mobilize a neighborhood and align a community around supporting the whole young people succeeding journey?” The early successes and failures with the TOTS program will help the community understand the magnitude of this very challenging question.



Figure 1. The TOTS program is focused on the early stage of the “Young People Succeeding Journey,” captured in the vision that every student is ready to learn when entering kindergarten, ready to learn when graduating from high school, and ready to earn when graduating with a post-secondary credential. (A post-secondary credential includes a 2- or 4-year degree, or a career-ready credential.)