Working in Partnership towards Equity: Creating Safe and Healthy Communities

Virginia Lee, MPH, CHES, Prevention Institute
“Reality and perception of violence are justifications for people not being outside or letting children outside, and not walking to places that they normally would”

-Community Leader
“We have a wonderful gym in the park, but the kids don’t use it because they are afraid of the park.”

“Turf wars deter people from walking to grocery stores.”
“Community safety is our number one concern. If our employees feel unsafe coming to work, or our patrons are scared to shop in the area, we won’t open a store there.”

– Head of Security at a major retail corporation
Addressing the Intersection:
Preventing Violence and Promoting Healthy Eating and Active Living

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Prevention Institute is a nonprofit, national center dedicated to improving community health and well-being by building momentum for effective primary prevention. Primary prevention means taking action to build resilience and to prevent problems before they occur. The Institute's work is characterized by a strong commitment to community participation and promotion of equitable health outcomes among all social and economic groups. Since its founding in 1997 the organization has focused on injury and violence prevention, traffic safety, health disparities, nutrition and physical activity, and youth development. This, and other Prevention Institute documents, are available at no cost on our website.

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• Violence and fear of violence affect individual behaviors related to healthy eating and active living.

• Violence and fear of violence diminish the community environment, reducing support for healthy eating and active living.
Key Linkages

1. Violence and fear of violence cause people to be less physically active and spend less time outdoors.

2. Violence and fear of violence alter people’s purchasing patterns, limiting access to healthy food.

3. Experiencing and witnessing violence decrease motivation and capability to eat healthfully and be active.

4. Violence reduces social interactions that would otherwise contribute to community cohesion.

5. Violence acts as a barrier to investments in community resources and opportunities that support healthy eating and active living.
Approach to Address the Intersection

• Understanding a **community-wide framework for preventing violence**—especially in highly impacted neighborhoods

• Elevating the **role of practitioners in fostering safer communities** through advocacy and partnerships

• Applying a **violence prevention lens** to environmental and policy change strategies to promote healthy eating and active living efforts
Risk Factors:

- Poverty and economic disparity
- Illiteracy and school failure
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Incarceration/Reentry
- Community deterioration
- Discrimination and oppression
- Experiencing and witnessing violence

Resilience Factors:

- Economic Capital
- Meaningful opportunities for participation
- Positive attachments and relationships
- Good physical and mental health
- Services and institution
- Artistic and creative opportunities
- Ethnic, racial, and intergroup relations
Elevating the role of practitioners in preventing violence

- **Spokesperson**: bring attention to the need for greater action, resources, and policies to prevent violence
- **Catalyst**: identify groups or individuals in community to take on leadership of effective violence prevention in the community
- **Coordinator**: coordinate between chronic disease and violence prevention efforts
- **Integrator**: integrate overlapping strategies into chronic disease prevention efforts
Applying a violence prevention lens to healthy eating and activity strategies

- Creating safe spaces
- Promoting community development and employment
- Fostering social cohesion
Place Matters

Communities of Opportunity

- Parks
- Sidewalks
- Grocery Stores
- Financial Institutions
- Better Performing Schools
- Good Public Transportation

Good Health Status

Poor Health Status contributes to health disparities:
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Infant mortality

Low-Income Communities

- Fast Food Restaurants
- Liquor Stores
- Unsafe/Limited Parks
- Poor Performing Schools
- Increased Pollution and Toxic Waste Sites
- Limited Public Transportation

Good Health Status

Comes from Communities of Opportunity

Poor Health Status

Contributes to health disparities and disparities:

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Infant mortality

Contributes to health disparities and health disparities:

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Asthma
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Safe Routes to School

- Due to safety concerns at the nearby park, parents did not allow children to walk to school
- The Bushmaster Neighborhood committee began a walking school bus
- A “No Sales 40” initiative banned the sale of 40-ounce glass bottles of alcohol around the park to reduce crime.

Flagstaff, AZ
Philadelphia Mural Arts Program

- Created nearly 2,500 murals citywide since the mid 1980’s
- Employs youth and engages community residents in mural design and creation
- Research suggests that public art increases sense of well-being and social connectedness
Liquor Store Closures

South Los Angeles, CA

- Shut down 200 liquor stores in 3 years
- An average 27% reduction in crime within a four-block radius of each closed liquor outlet
Convergence Partnership Pilot Initiative

• Western Chula Vista (Chula Vista, CA)
• Hoover Corridor (Oakland, CA)
• Westwood (Denver, CO)
• Osborn (Detroit, MI)
• Shawnee (Louisville, KY)
• Hunting Park (Philadelphia, PA)
“While I have always known that it is important to address violence while promoting healthy eating active living, the issue has always seemed like something ‘outside of my scope,’ and I have not had the tools or understanding to deal with this issue.”

- Community grantee representing HEAL
Pilot Approach to Address the Intersection

• Elevating the role of practitioners in fostering safer communities through advocacy and partnerships
Pilot Approach to Address the Intersection

• Understanding a **community-wide framework for preventing violence**—especially in highly impacted neighborhoods
Neighborhoods in Action: Applying a Violence Prevention Lens
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Hunting Park Community Garden
Philadelphia, PA
Safe Routes to School
West Oakland, CA
Shawnee Neighborhood
Louisville, KY
Community Bus System
Detroit, MI
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