

safe communities save youth



table of contents



part I

FOUNDATION

- 04 | Introduction – Creating Safe Communities
- 05 | Executive Summary – The Time is Now
- 07 | Progress since 2020
- 11 | Youth Violence Defined
- 12 | Integrating DEI and System Improvements
- 14 | Practice Areas
- 16 | Risk & Resilience Factors



part II

TAKING ACTION

- 19 | Plan Structure
- 19 | Integrated Matrix
- 19 | Strategies & Tactics
- 20 | 1. Center Community
- 22 | 2. Engage Youth Directly
- 24 | 3. Advance Equity
- 26 | 4. Focus on Career Development
- 28 | 5. Embrace Best Practice
- 30 | 6. Evolve Juvenile Justice
- 32 | 7. Integrate Mental Health Support
- 34 | 8. Prioritize Holistic Safety
- 36 | 9. Share Data Across Systems
- 38 | 10. Champion Policy Change



part III

MEASURING PROGRESS

- 41 | Mapping Risk Factors
- 45 | Measures of Success
- 47 | Statistics of Note
- 49 | Next steps
- 50 | Acknowledgements



part I.
foundation

creating safe denver communities

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS

Since 2019, the City and County of Denver has implemented a public health approach to youth violence through a large, multi-sector coalition called the Youth Violence Prevention Action Table (YVPAT).

Taking a public health approach, aligns with the groups two core values. The first is that by tracking trends and understanding the issue, collectively, we can make an impact. The second is that the issue of youth violence has root causes that far precede an incident; rather, it is the nature and structure of communities, the assets and barriers youth experience, and the normalization of violence that also need to be addressed if we are to make a meaningful impact.

The YVPAT presents the 2023 Youth Violence Prevention Plan, which outlines the road map to the action table's public health approach to specific strategies the coalition has taken to address youth violence prevention in Denver. In partnership with YVPAT, The Office of Children's Affairs (OCA) now serves as the anchor organization to convene this multi-disciplinary team of experts on a regular basis to facilitate more collaboration, joint strategic planning, and shared reporting on important data that guides this work.

Youth violence continues to take a toll on our city. In this update, we examine the setbacks our community has had to contend with during the COVID-19 pandemic and an emerging mental health crisis that impact Denver's youth and families.

In our 2023 update we include the progress made since the previous iteration of the 2020 YVPAT comprehensive plan and the new strategies being developed and implemented, including an expansion of the types of youth violence prevention efforts we are addressing.

In understanding that youth violence is a community issue that impacts everyone, I invite you to join our efforts and become an active participant to reduce youth violence.

By working together with a shared vision, youth violence can be prevented, creating safe communities where all children, youth and young people thrive.



Melissa Janiszewski, MSW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Office of Children's Affairs



the time is now

“We lost some momentum due to COVID in 2020, so now we need to go back and revisit how we started - what is our purpose, how has the problem evolved? We need more collaboration and communication, we need a broader scope of collaborators.”

– Nicole Monroe, Director, Office of Community Violence Solutions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth are participating in and experiencing acts of violence, throughout the nation and at home. Increasingly, we hear stories on the news and social media about tragic school shootings, teen suicides, youth human trafficking, and other forms of youth violence. But more importantly, in Denver, we feel the impact on our community and on our residents. Youth violence is a critical community problem and a state and citywide public health problem. But we must be the change we hope to see. That means to save our youth, we must become a safe city where they can grow and thrive.

In 2019, Mayor Michael B. Hancock and the Denver City Attorney convened the Denver Youth Violence Prevention Action Table (YVPAT), a coalition of city departments, independent agencies, and community-based organizations. This multidisciplinary collaboration created the first Denver Youth Violence Prevention Action Plan in 2020. The plan outlined our public health and data-driven approach that included long- and short-term strategies for addressing youth violence.

PANDEMIC IMPACT

At the launch of the 2020 Youth Violence Prevention Action Plan the city was faced with the global COVID-19 pandemic and its far reaching impact statewide. Everything came to a standstill, including how to effectively move forward. The pandemic derailed the youth violence prevention efforts and began dismantling much of the social fabric necessary for communities to thrive. The pandemic exposed our community's vulnerability, the gaps in our system and services, and the negative results of long-term isolation. Across the U.S. and Denver, we saw unprecedented levels of stress for youth and their families.

The outcomes were less contact with vital service providers, fewer opportunities for intervention, and increased self-harm, domestic violence, and other forms of youth violence.

Today, we continue to see and feel the impact of the triple pandemic of COVID-19, a rise in community violence and mental health issues. Combined with social justice instability and a looming economic recession, youth violence has increased to a crisis level. In all, it calls for the much-needed community healing our city deserves. As we continue to emerge from the global pandemic, we see an opportunity to change direction, reprioritize violence prevention, and rethink how we provide youth services. In addition, there is a renewed call for social change with the rise of racial, sexual and hate-based violence that has come to the forefront of our collective consciousness.

Traditional systemic inequities have been exposed in creating divisions, and people are recognizing and working together to change the paradigm. The city of Denver is at the forefront, in which the time is now to create a new path forward to prevent youth violence, and Denver is ready.

OUR PLAN

We move beyond thinking about youth violence as gun violence and take a broader, more comprehensive look at the types of youth violence and key contributing factors. The 2023 Denver Youth Violence Prevention Action Plan will hold everyone accountable to a more expansive set of strategies. The plan is intended to support the work of other city agencies involved in this work and to be an actionable resource guide for our community providers. In addition, it will give the community a transparent insight into our vision, strategy and multi-level plans to address youth violence and create a safer city.

Members of the YVPAT and other organizations across the city are collaboratively creating a comprehensive people-first system. Led by the Office of Children's Affairs, they will guide and grow the work to enable Denver to support youth across a broad spectrum of services that address the root causes of youth violence. But collectively, we are working together to build a safe Denver where youth and their families look forward to the future ahead of them.



a public health approach

In a public health approach, the focus is on improving the health and well-being of the entire population rather than afflicted individuals. A public health approach is based on the belief that violence is preventable and has a negative impact on the entire population's health.



The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) developed a four-step framework for communities across the country to implement youth violence prevention strategies on a local level, using a public health approach.

In Denver, we are applying this public health approach to our efforts, building on the CDC's work and University of Colorado at Denver's Youth Violence Prevention Needs Assessment completed by Dr. Sheila Huss to ensure our strategies are created with a comprehensive local lens.

THE CDC PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO VIOLENCE PREVENTION

1. Define and Monitor the Problem
2. Identify Risk and Protective Factors
3. Develop and Test Prevention Strategies
4. Assure Widespread Adoption

NATIONAL PILLARS OF PRACTICE

The CDC also created a technical package to guide communities across the U.S. in developing youth violence prevention strategies. The package identifies six overarching strategies we are adopting as pillars of practice. We keep these pillars in mind as part of our guiding philosophy on this work. However, we have developed a more tactical strategy outline to help partners implement the work. These pillars include:

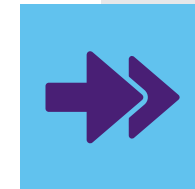
- Promote family environments that support healthy development
- Provide quality education early in life
- Strengthen youth skills
- Connect youth to caring adults and activities
- Create protective community environments
- Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risks



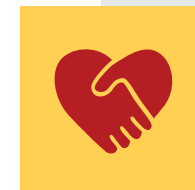
1. Define and Monitor the Problem



2. Identify Risk and Protective Factors



3. Develop and Test Prevention Strategies



4. Assure Widespread Adoption

progress since yvp comprehensive plan 2020

The YVPAT has been working collaboratively to implement the recommended strategies from the 2020 plan. Below is a list of the original strategies, an update on the progress made, and where they are being included in the 2023 update.

In addition, we have highlighted stories of progress from individual partners throughout the plan to spotlight achievements from city and community partners.



COMPLETED



ONGOING / EVOLVED
IN NEW PLAN

ORIGINAL 2020 YVP STRATEGIES



Expand access to parenting resources and family skill development programs.



Expand the Youth Violence Prevention Micro Grant Program.



Increase access to mentoring for young people through the implementation of a city employee mentoring program.

PROGRESS MADE

DDPHE and DHS are working with the state on the Essentials for Early Childhood program to provide family supports.

OCA increased funding by \$250,000 in 2021, maintained for 2022, 2023.

DEDO provides a summer youth employment program, apprenticeships and internships, and incorporates financial empowerment education through OFEP.

FIND DETAILS IN THE 2023 YVP ACTION PLAN

- > Center Community
- > Embrace Best Practice
- > Integrate Mental Health Support
- > Prioritize Holistic Safety

- > Center Community
- > Embrace Best Practice
- > Champion Policy Change

- > Engage Youth Directly
- > Focus on Professional Development

ORIGINAL 2020 YVP STRATEGIES



Create a City Corps program that employs young people between the ages of 18 - 24 to serve as peer mentors for other young people and youth.



Expand the Safe Zone Project to increase the frequency of events in communities where youth violence is more likely to occur.



Create a network of Youth Centers in communities where young people are facing barriers to success.



The city will promote safe storage practices in collaboration with youth, community, public and private partners.



The city will engage local public health agencies to support implementation of strategies focused on supporting youth violence prevention efforts.



The city will invest in community-led youth violence prevention efforts and will work with community-based organizations working to prevent youth violence to enhance communication and collaboration between the city and community.



The city will create a position dedicated to supporting the implementation of the YVP Strategic Plan in conjunction with the YVPAT.

PROGRESS MADE

Long-term planning effort for future implementation.

Renamed to Youth Zones; awarded 16 community-based organizations \$178,200, which supported over 60 events May-June of 2021, continued in 2022, 2023.

The first Youth Empowerment Center is now serving the community in partnership with Life Line Colorado.

OCVS conducts Handgun Intervention Program (HIP) events on a regular basis to reduce incidents of gun violence.

DPHE is an active participant in the YVPAT and is implementing a variety of programs geared toward YVP.

The ReCAST program provides federal funding for community partnership, OCA provides annual community microgrants and various departments integrate community-based organizations into program operations.

A dedicated FTE position in the Office of Children's Affairs coordinates all YVP efforts.

FIND DETAILS IN THE 2023 YVP ACTION PLAN

> Focus on Professional Development

> Engage Youth Directly

> Engage Youth Directly

> Prioritize Holistic Safety

> Integrate Mental Health Support
> Health Practice Area
> Public Health Approach

> Center Community

> DONE

ORIGINAL 2020 YVP STRATEGIES



The city will designate a city agency to serve as the lead agency responsible for supporting and leading the implementation of the YVP plan.



The city will pursue partnerships with local higher education institutions to support essential operations related to research, data collection and analysis, and project evaluation as well as supporting strategies that focus on academic and/or vocational support for young people.



The city will work with existing youth violence prevention programs or initiatives to identify opportunities to align effective strategies that can be expanded or enhanced.



The city will work with Denver Parks and Recreation to support programming and operations that enhance safety in and around recreation centers.



The Denver Department of Public & Environmental Health (DDPHE) will dedicate agency resources to incorporate youth violence prevention strategies into the agency's strategic plan.



The city will engage youth as subject matter experts to ensure YVP strategies are youth informed.

PROGRESS MADE

The Office of Children's Affairs was selected to lead all plan implementation.

The City partnered with CU Denver City Center to complete the needs assessment and analyze crime data.

The city also partnered with the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado, Boulder to collaborate on grant applications.

OCA convenes the DYVPAT on a regular basis to discuss opportunities for collaboration across the city and with the community.

DPR expanded the "Night Moves" program and is now a critical support partner for Youth Zone events.

The 2020 Community Health Assessment is complete, and informs the DDPHE Community Health Improvement Plan and the larger DDPHE Strategic Plan.

Partnered with DPD on the the youth Advisory Council, DDPHE conducts an annual youth survey.

FIND DETAILS IN THE 2023 YVP ACTION PLAN

> DONE

> Share Data Across Systems
> Education Practice Area

> Engage Youth Directly
> Embrace Best Practice

> Engage Youth Directly
> Environment Practice Area

> Integrate Mental Health Support
> Health Practice Area

> Engage Youth Directly

ORIGINAL 2020 YVP STRATEGIES



The DYVPAT will work with the municipal and district juvenile court systems to support strategies that reduce the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system and improve outcomes for youth who have entered the juvenile justice system.



The city will review existing youth services housed within city agencies to identify opportunities to align programs, people, and budgets for the purpose of improving outcomes or expanding services.



The city will promote the Youth Program Locator and encourage community-based organizations and treatment providers to increase the number and type of services included in the database.



Enhance early identification and response protocols for supporting youth at higher risk to experience or perpetrate violence.



The city will engage community partners to develop a marketing strategy to raise awareness about youth violence prevention efforts.



The city will work with community-based organizations to reduce barriers to behavioral health treatment and expand access to services.

PROGRESS MADE

The Denver District Attorney has a dedicated juvenile diversion program and the Denver Juvenile Court offers in-community supervision and more reentry support partnerships.

OCA completed a program inventory in 2020 that provides a directory of programming and contacts across the city.

To be eligible for YVP funding, organizations must be listed in the Denver AfterSchool Alliance (DAA)/OCA developed database.

DPS participates actively in the YVPAT and is setting up systems to identify students that need support and referring them to city and community programs.

OCA is updating the YVP Action Plan for 2023 and including outreach materials to inform community partners and the public.

The cross departmental ReCAST program provides federal grant support for evidence-based intervention and community partnership.

FIND DETAILS IN THE 2023 YVP ACTION PLAN

> Evolve Juvenile Justice

> Embrace Best Practice

> Share Data Across Systems

> Evolve Juvenile Justice
> Prioritize Holistic Safety

> Center Community

> Integrate Mental Health Support

youth violence defined

Early efforts to address youth violence focused primarily on gun violence.

As we evolve Denver's plan, we are intentionally moving beyond gun violence to a more comprehensive understanding of youth violence encompassing all the types of violence that negatively impact youth, both directly and indirectly.

Bullying - aggressive behavior that is intentional and hurtful, that repeatedly occurs over time, where there is a power imbalance present, be it size, strength or social status.

Child Abuse - physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children or youth, or maltreatment including neglect or other failure to meet children's needs for well-being.

Cyber Bullying/Harassment - the use of mobile phones, the internet, social media, or other technology to intentionally, repeatedly harass, insult, embarrass, or threaten youth.

Intimate Partner Violence - also known as teen dating violence, includes physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse between dating teens, as well as stalking behaviors from partners or acquaintances.

Domestic Violence - for this plan domestic violence refers to IPV that occurs in the home between parents or other adults to which youth are exposed.

Gun Violence - firearm-related deaths and injuries, including homicide, suicide and accidental injury.

Human Trafficking - the use of violence, fraud or coercion to force youth into labor or commercial sex.

Peer-to-Peer Violence - also known as aggression, peer-to-peer violence differs from bullying because it is conflict or fighting between youth of the same or similar size, strength and social status.

Prison Pipeline - known as the school-to-prison pipeline, these are systemic practices and policies in schools, public safety and courts that disproportionately place youth of color into the juvenile justice system.

Runaways - youth who choose to leave home for various reasons, without the permission of a parent or legal guardian, who stay away from home for one or more nights.

Secondary Trauma - single or repeated exposure to traumatic events, including domestic violence, school violence, community violence and other adverse events all known to increase youth violence.

Self-harm - the intentional infliction of self-pain as an emotional outlet, means of expressing overwhelm, or shifting emotional pain to physical pain; may include cutting, burning, or picking at oneself or other behaviors intended to hurt oneself.

Sexual Violence - includes all forms of sexual violence committed against youth, including sexual assault, rape, sexual abuse, and intimate partner sexual assault.

Substance Misuse - this includes the use of illegal drugs, and the inappropriate use of legal substances such as tobacco and alcohol; in addition, this category refers to the practices that disproportionately link substance use to the prison pipeline.

Suicide - for this plan includes suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts, causing one's death intentionally due to extreme emotional distress and usually a desire to end suffering.

Unhoused Youth - youth who have no fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, whether due to running away or being asked to leave the home of their primary parents or legal guardians.

Victim - for this plan, a youth harmed, injured, killed or otherwise hurt by an act of violence, crime, or other actions.

Witness - for this plan, a youth that sees violence occur or other types of crime and traumatic events; also see secondary trauma definition above.

Youth - includes teens, adolescents and young adults ranging in age from 10 to 24.

Youth Violence - all the types of violence listed above, along with the surrounding factors that inhibit a youth's ability to thrive in their environment.

“

“Youth violence is both internal and external. We think about the violence we see externally such as gun violence. But it is just as important to think about the violence we do not see - suicide and self harm are also forms of youth violence. To have a comprehensive plan, we need to address all types of youth violence.”

– Rick Padilla, Suicide Prevention Manager
Denver Public Health & Environment

”

considerations

THE EQUITY EQUATION TO VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The City and County of Denver and our community partners recognize the importance of looking at the pandemic of violence through a lens of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB).

Understanding that EDIB is centered on doing the foundational work necessary to recognize and acknowledge the role racism, discrimination and privilege have in creating current socioeconomic conditions and inequitable systems that contribute to community violence. Integrating EDIB into all aspects of our youth violence prevention work will be essential to evolve our plan and practice.

In doing so, our goal is to create greater opportunities through our programs that address systemic racism and create a more equitable system for marginalized individuals, children, and families.

EDIB is at the forefront of our plan to ensure we are collectively working to deconstruct institutionalized disparities and create citywide community equities where identity factors do not predetermined outcomes. This begins with being aware of the influence race, culture, language, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability and religion have on our youth. But more importantly, how critical those considerations are in developing communities where all youth see equitable growth opportunities, feel safely connected to society and are empowered to make positive decisions. In addition, working collaboratively to ensure our plan is informed by diverse voices, inclusive of the community and produces equitable outcomes that provide a safe city for everyone.



THE FACE OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

State data shows that between 2012 and 2020, less than 7% of Colorado's 10 to 12-year-old population were black but comprised 20% of those detained in the juvenile justice system.

The 2019 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey found 46.3% of students reported being bullied because of their sexual identity in the last 12 months.

The same survey showed 22% of gay and lesbian youth had at least one suicide attempt, along with 16% of youth who identify as bisexual, compared to 5% of youth who identify as heterosexual.





CHANGING BROKEN SYSTEMS TO WORKING NETWORKS

Denver's YVP Action Plan is predicated on the idea that youth violence is a symptom of broken systems. We address systems change in several strategies and tactics throughout the plan, but must first define systems change. Catalyst 2030 offers this definition:

Systems Change is confronting root causes of issues (rather than symptoms) by transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics, policies and rules, by strengthening collective power through the active collaboration of diverse people and organizations.

Systems change is relevant across various industries to address multiple issues. From healthcare to education, legal to public safety, economic to political, these systems impact youth and create environments where youth violence is proliferated. On the next page, we identify five practice areas aligned with the social determinants of health where systemic change is needed and where we focus our tactical efforts moving forward.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

As the work of the YVP Action Plan evolves, it is essential to think long-term about development opportunities in how we prepare our youth to expand their vision, embrace positive options and become a vital economic resource. The goal is that they can establish financial stability and contribute to Denver's economic stability. There is a clear connection between youth violence and our ability to develop the workforce we need for the future of our city. Youth violence impacts the ability of all young people to thrive and become successful participants in a shared economy. Workforce development is more than education and training.

As a city, we are working collaboratively and intentionally to build a workforce pipeline essential for the future - where diverse youth have equal opportunities for professional development, compensation and career growth. This includes expanding community partnerships and the hiring capacity for culturally relevant service providers to sustain an economy worthy of the Mile High City. This means workforce development needs are responsive to employers, candidates and the entire community. As such, we are weaving workforce development efforts into our youth violence prevention efforts as an integral part of improving the outcome of this area within the social determinants of health.

“

“Our youth are literally our future - we need them to become our doctors, our lawyers, our mechanics, our electricians, to play important roles in our future economy. They deserve a bright future not hindered by systemic issues.”

– Councilman Paul Kashmann,
Denver District 6

”

practice areas

The 2023 Denver YVP Action Plan contemplates youth violence prevention across five different areas of practice: health, education, economy, community and environment.

These areas of practice are aligned with the social determinants of health - environmental factors that play a vital role in the overall health of individuals.

Social determinants of health impact morbidity (rates of disease or health conditions), mortality (number of deaths in a population), life expectancy, health expenditures and general quality of life.



HEALTH - Healthcare and Quality includes health coverage, provider availability, provider cultural competency, quality of care and nutrition.



EDUCATION - Education Access and Quality includes literacy, language, early childhood education, vocational training and higher education.



ECONOMY - Economic Stability includes employment, income, expenses, debt, opportunity and support.



COMMUNITY - Community and Social Context includes community engagement, community-based resources, social integration, support systems, discrimination and stress.



ENVIRONMENT - Neighborhoods and Built Environment includes housing, transportation, safety, walkability, geographic location, parks, playgrounds and open space.

INDICATIONS OF CONCERN

The social determinants of health can be used to map areas of concern and focus prevention efforts.

The Denver Office of Children's Affairs has created a Youth Violence Prevention Index made up of 16 Key Indicators, closely aligned to the social determinants of health.

The Youth Violence Prevention Index is composed of 16 Key Indicators:

HEALTH

- > Births to women with no high school diploma
- > Infant mortality rate

EDUCATION

- > Kindergarten Readiness
- > Not Reading at Grade Level in 3rd Grade
- > Adults with less than a high school diploma
- > 9th grade chronic absenteeism

COMMUNITY

- > Households without internet access
- > Children in single-parent families
- > Violent Crime: rate per 1,000
- > Speak a language other than English
- > People of Color
- > Number of people under age 18

ECONOMIC

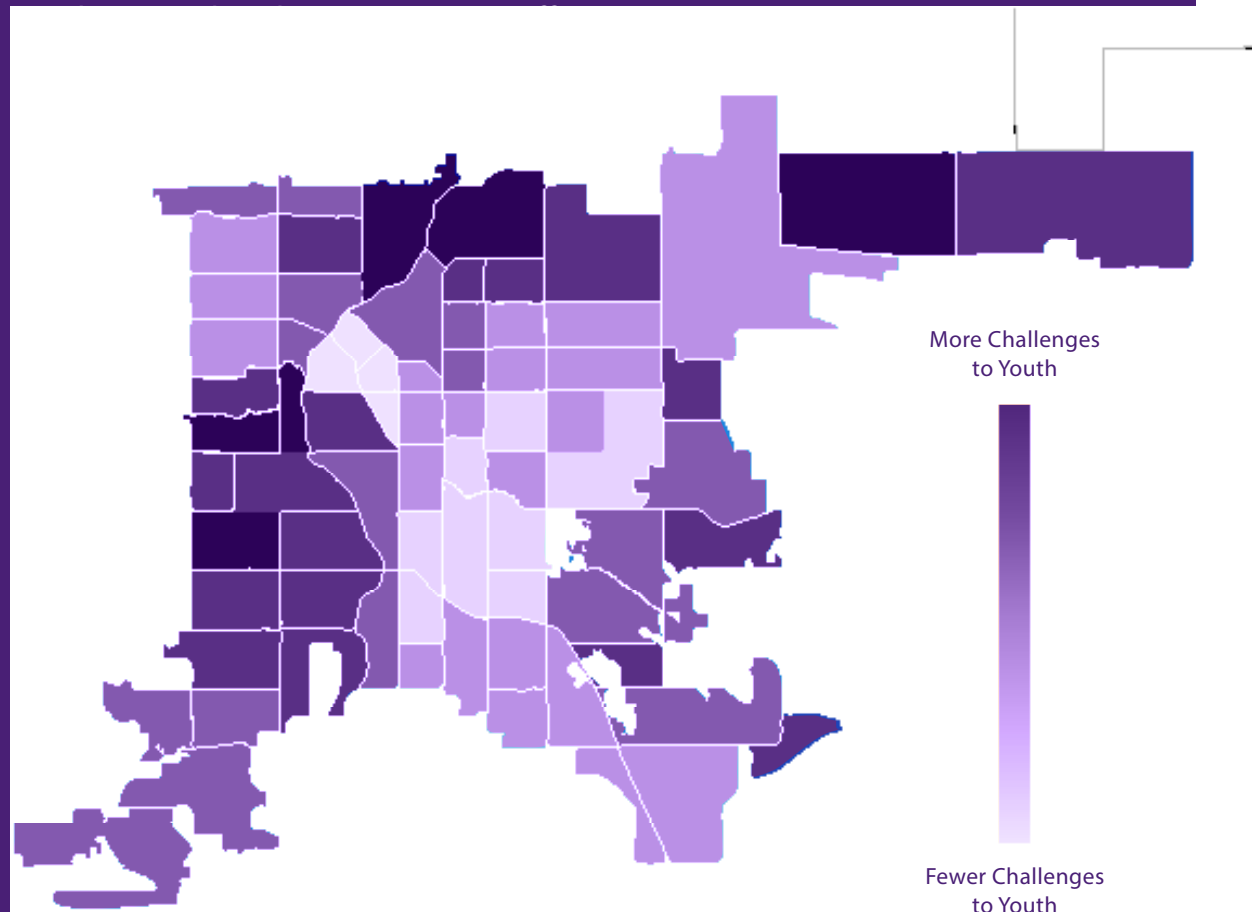
- > Cost burdened housing
- > People in poverty
- > Unemployment

ENVIRONMENT

- > People not within 10 min. walk to grocery store

youth violence prevention index map 2017-2021

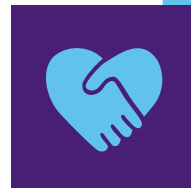
The map below displays the prevalence of these key indicators to reveal geographic locations around the city



risk accelerators

LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES

A person's health is a key determinant to success in most other aspects of their lives – ability to perform well in school, employment, and life. Lack of access to healthcare, hospitals, primary care and behavioral health services can prevent many from getting needed care. When physical and behavioral health conditions go untreated, it deteriorates community health overall and can lead to an increase in community violence.



COMMUNITY ISOLATION AND LIMITED CONNECTIVITY

Negative peer relations, including being bullied, being socially isolated, or having a social circle that engages in delinquent, illegal, or violent activities can heighten one's risk for violence. The resulting social isolation can also result in individuals seeking out negative peer networks, such as gangs. Furthermore, prior contact or involvement in the legal system can prevent many from creating prosocial networks and support.



NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENT EXPOSURE/OPTIONS

High-crime neighborhoods may expose children to violence, which can cause lasting physical, mental, and emotional harm. These youth are also at risk for juvenile delinquency, further victimization including higher mobility rate and disruptive behaviors that may impact academic achievement. Additional contributors are living in neighborhoods that are food deserts with limited healthy options and environments that don't promote health and wellness, including minimum parks and recreation options.



resilience amplifiers

ACCESS TO QUALITY MENTAL AND HEALTHCARE

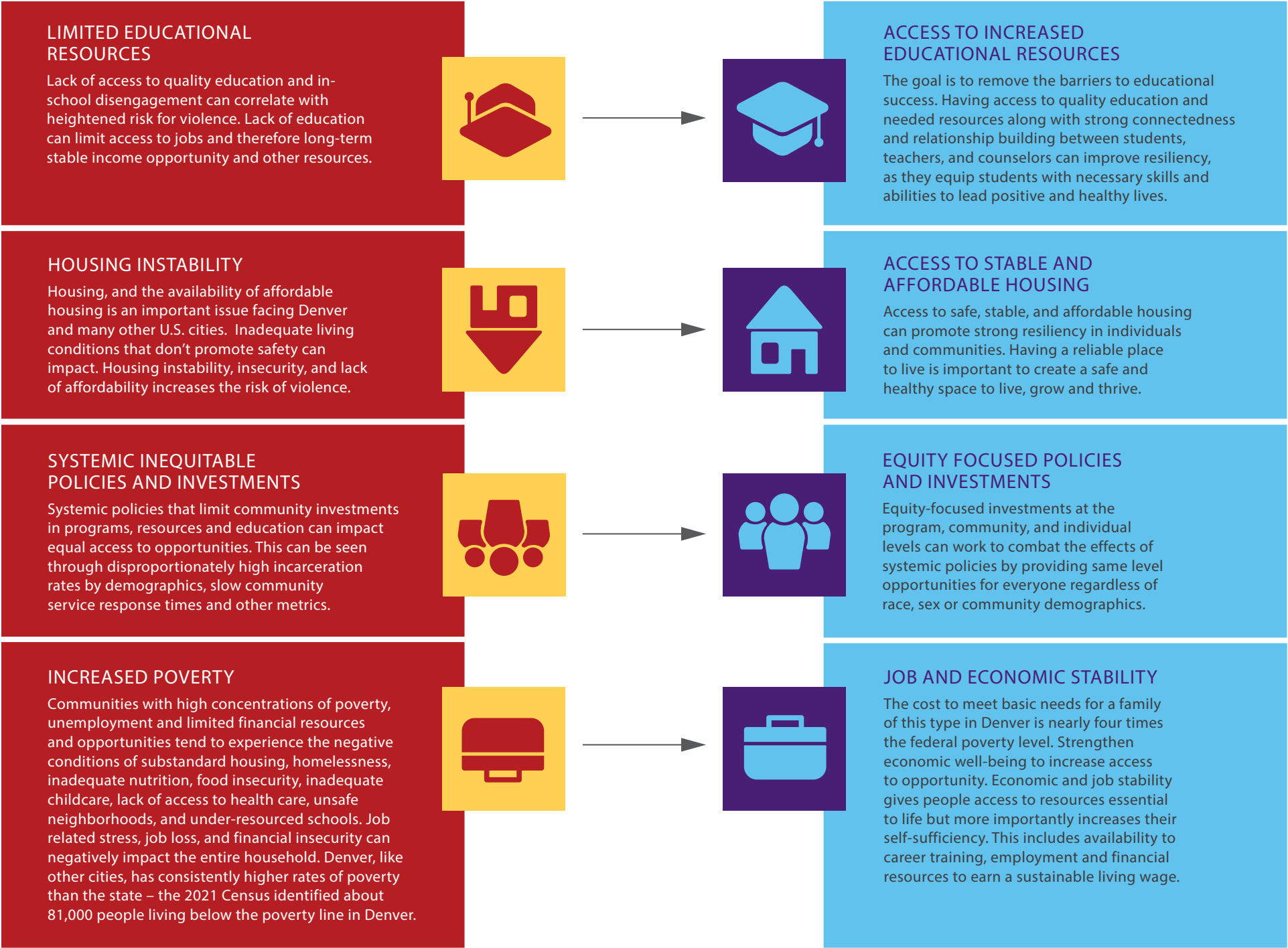
Advance and promote the physical, mental, and social well-being of the community. Access to various quality healthcare services and treatments can promote healthy living and wellness. Furthermore, an increase in hospitals and other medical care treatment centers can promote thriving and robust communities and neighborhoods.

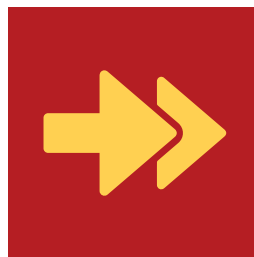
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKS

Positive community connectivity that includes strong social peer groups not involved in and actively avoiding violent acts and disruptive behaviors, which leads to greater resilience. Also, having encouraging adult and youth relationships with mentors, teachers, police and community leaders creates a network of support and positive influence to make better decisions.

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT EXPOSURE/OPTIONS

Data from a nationwide study of 300 metropolitan areas shows that higher income neighborhoods have lower violent crime rates than do high-poverty areas, which may lessen the exposure to direct external violence and its emotional impact. In addition, living in neighborhoods with full-service grocery options as well as parks and recreations promote and encourage overall health and wellness lifestyles.





part II. taking action

integrated strategy matrix

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The primary function of the 2023 Denver YVP Action Plan is to provide actionable strategies and tactics for Denver's provider community to proactively collaborate on serving the needs of our youth.

We have identified ten overarching strategies, each with specific action items relevant across the five practice areas.

Each strategy includes tactics and opportunities that are

1. practice-specific downstream strategies to impact individuals and
2. system-wide upstream strategies to impact communities.

Both types of strategies are critical to youth violence prevention and becoming a safe city. Each strategy section is followed by a description of the strategy, desired outcomes, relevant practice areas, actionable tactics and opportunities, and indicators for measuring progress.



1 center community

2 engage youth directly

3 advance equity

4 focus on career development

5 embrace best practice

6 evolve juvenile justice

7 integrate mental health support

8 prioritize holistic safety

9 share data across systems

10 champion policy change

center community

Centering community means including community voice in the decision-making processes, engaging the community in leading youth violence prevention efforts and listening to their expertise as leaders of their own space.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Communities have the internal resources, knowledge and autonomy to support youth with various preventative services.



TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Empower community ownership - Engage community to drive and realize their own vision for their neighborhoods; provide needed resources to enable community vision.

Focus on inclusive participation - Work with community-based organizations (CBOs) and community members as conduits to understanding community and incorporating the voice of residents in youth violence prevention efforts.

Take a listening first approach - Interactions with the community should focus on listening to residents, learning from community members and leveraging insights to program prevention efforts.

Streamline procurement process - The city process for contracting with CBOs is often cumbersome and can create a disincentive for participation. Simplifying the process will expand the number of CBOs that can participate.

Value local understanding - Develop partnerships with neighborhood specific CBOs that are embedded in the community and have local relationships, insights and ownership.



“Arts programs and youth violence prevention programs save lives. Safe spaces for children, and relationships with caring, trusted adults, are proven to prevent young people from perpetrating violence and from being victims of violence.”

– Lewis Lease, Studio Manager,
Denver Academy of Movement Arts db
United Capoeira Association Colorado



Address cash flow issues - Government funded grants often have long delays for payment, requiring CBOs to provide services upfront without receiving payment for long periods of time. Consider utilizing philanthropy to solve cash flow issues, aligning funding cycles to program needs or developing another upfront form of payment.

Support subculture needs - Invest in understanding subculture values and concerns; help people understand subculture perspectives to foster healing.

Facilitate collaboration between CBOs - Create opportunities for collaboration, partnering on services, and sharing information to help build positive relationships with and within the community.



“We should be able to help families at home, where they need it most, because of life circumstances. We need to dispel misconceptions that receiving support is a weakness of some sort. We all need support, just at different levels.”

– Joey Trujillo, Department of Climate
and Safety, Denver Public Schools





YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Annual youth violence prevention
funding to community-based
organizations (OCA)

American Recovery Plan Act
(ARPA) funds received for
community services (OCA)

Children's Affairs contracts with
community-based organizations (OCA)



“Every dollar and every hour
that we commit to these
approaches saves all of us -
police, medical personnel, social
workers, counselors and the
courts - time, money and misery
spent responding to violence
and dealing with the human
consequences of violence, in
our cities and neighborhoods.
Prevention is everything!”

– Lewis Lease, Studio Manager,
Denver Academy of Movement Arts db
United Capoeira Association Colorado



TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES, Continued

Think beyond CBOs - Focus on creative
ways to engage the community beyond
traditional service providers like churches and
resource centers. For example, working with
barbershops, restaurants or coffee shops
as youth violence prevention partners.

Contract with faith-based community - Engage
with local churchesto provide specific intervention
services, for example the Safe Haven faith-
based initiative to support secondary victims
of violence, specifically children and families
who are repeatedly exposed to community
gang violence such as assaults, shootings,
and homicides. The Office of Community
Violence Solutions brings trauma assessment,
spiritual and emotional support, and service
connection to secondary victims through
contracts with a local faith-based organization
to provide program coordination services.



engage youth directly

Engaging youth directly means violence prevention efforts are youth-informed, incorporating their voice, insights and perceptions.

This strategy calls for embracing youths' "nothing for us, without us" mantra and maintaining the idea "safety starts with me" across all practice areas. But also to ensure that the plan remains community led, youth informed and city supported.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Youth actively participate in community development and design their own successful futures.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Expand youth empowerment centers - Fully realize the vision for creating a network of youth empowerment centers where youth are fully supported with safe spaces, supportive services and unconditional belonging.

Collaborate with youth on program design - Develop youth led, youth designed programming and curriculum where youth can provide input on what safety means to them. Allow youth to be part of the decision-making process and where engagements are proactive and positive.

Encourage leadership opportunities - Continue providing opportunities for youth to engage in the five practice areas with programs such as the Denver Department of Safety Youth Services Leadership Program inclusive of the Youth Advisory Council.

Convene youth for input and action - Continue hosting the annual Youth Summit and Youth Survey to gain valuable perceptions from youth and gather input on how to address youth violence.

Deliver wrap around services - Integrate additional services into all five practice areas, for example, Denver Public Schools Secondary Schools pilot where mental health services, substance use intervention, and therapeutic supports are offered in an after-school setting.

Provide positive alternatives - Ensure youth have safe spaces and activities to keep them engaged, particularly during peak times for potential violence, for example the Parks & Recreation program Night Moves to open rec centers for basketball and other activities in the evenings.

Invest in arts, music and cultural programming - Convene an array of programming partners to engage youth in artistic expression and culturally relevant activities to encourage creativity as a violence prevention effort.



"Youth violence prevention work is about connection more than anything else. Youth need to feel included and connected. We need to change the narrative that these are "bad" kids - kids have many challenges. Our job is to help them navigate those challenges."

– Kris Rollerson, Executive Director,
Sun Valley Youth Center



TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES, Continued

Increase the frequency of youth-friendly events - Continue evolving programs like Youth Zone, formerly Safe Zone, in partnership with Denver Parks & Recreation and community partners to produce events specifically in communities where youth violence is likely to occur based on the prevention index.

Embrace youth as subject matter experts - Conduct listening sessions with youth with the intent to hear, to understand and to integrate input into programming—ensuring YVP strategies are youth informed.

Continue to give youth a seat at the table - As we fund youth programs, hire partners and make decisions on behalf of youth that they have a say and work is informed by them.



YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Visits to Youth Empowerment Center (OCA)

Meetings of the Youth Advisory Council (DOS)

Participants in Night Moves program (DPR)

Number of Youth Zone events (DPR)

Number of responses to annual youth survey (DDPHE)



“We are having conversations with the community to determine response to incidents as they occur. These conversations have led to formal partnerships with local service providers. We are building important relationships with those that are already serving in the community.”

– Seth Howsden, Recreation Director, Denver Parks & Recreation



PROGRESS STORY - NIGHT MOVES - RECREATION AS PREVENTION

Denver Parks & Recreation (DPR) originally began the Night Moves program in the early 90s as a collaboration with the Denver Nuggets.

The program had vans that picked up youth in the community and brought them to special after-hours recreation centers that open to play basketball and other pro-social activities on Friday evenings - at a time and in locations when violence was more likely to occur. The program relaunched in 2022 in response to violence in neighboring cities in the fall of 2021.

DPR and its city partners wanted to be proactive about preventing the violence from moving into Denver and took a collaborative approach to the new program design.

Three program partners from the community operate within six different rec centers during the Night Moves sessions.

Partners for the program are entrenched in each community. For example, the Montbello Recreation Center program is operated in partnership with Struggle of Love Foundation, a local non-profit foundation focused on mentorship, and La Alma Recreation Center is operated in partnership with Youth on Record, a non-profit that offers music-centered programming. Night Moves also operated in St. Charles, Athmar and Aztlán Recreation Centers in 2022 and will have new partners and centers for the program in 2023.

The program had more than 2,300 visits in 2022, helping youth develop relationships with caring adults, offering fun activities and food, and ensuring youth stay safe.



advance equity

Advancing equity means creating inclusive systems and welcoming spaces where youth feel a sense of belonging. Advancing equity notably includes implementing restorative practices that consider past disparities and systemic issues.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Race, culture, language, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability and religion have no bearing on the likeliness of youth experiencing violence.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

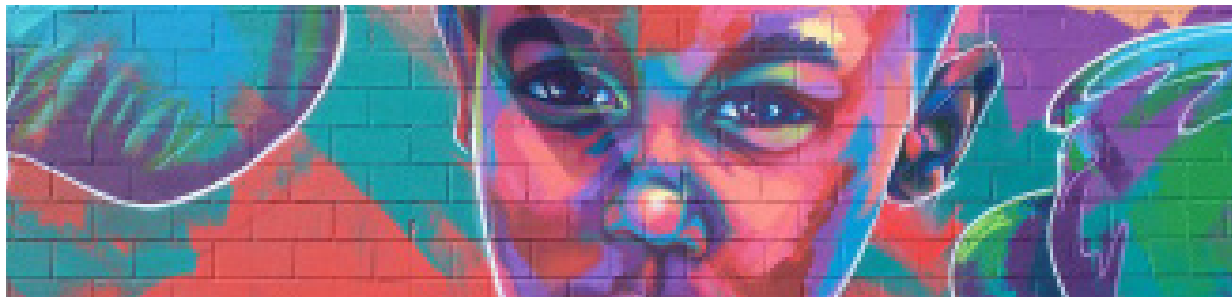
Ensure equitable funding - Re-evaluate the city's funding system, procurement process and distribution strategies to identify ways to allow for cross-agency budget alignment to understand youth programs needs and distribution of monies to support.

Invest in culturally relevant services - Evaluate the city's RFP system to ensure financial support is distributed equitably to community partners that can and are providing culturally relevant services that effectively meet youth needs.

Partner for cultural reflection - Establish partnerships with community service providers that culturally reflect and are relevant to the communities they serve - education, safety, mental health, health, city staff, and CBOs.

Understand cultural values - Actively engage with and communicate with community members to build stronger relationships that can create a greater understanding of cultural values and lived experiences to help inform solutions.

Address systemic issues - Acknowledge historic systemic disparities in economics, education, and the workplace, and assess city processes and programs to ensure equity practices.



"Equity issues are at the forefront of our work. There is no quick fix to these long-standing challenges that are impacting Black, Indigenous and People of color (BIPOC), but an important first step is to work across sectors to reinvent our existing infrastructure. Building out the local infrastructure cannot be accomplished by city government alone.

It will take a significant community-wide commitment to support and fund a network of providers that reflect and resonate with those we serve, establishing a culture of inclusion that is reflected in our services, programs and the partnerships we form.

When we approach this work with intentional and lasting commitment to enhancing health disparities and overall well-being for all children and youth, they will begin to feel a sense of belonging in this world."

– Melissa Janiszewski, Executive Director
Denver Office of Children's Affairs



TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES, Continued

Align with city's equity efforts - Work in partnership with the Denver Office of Social Equity and Innovation and other EDIB partners to help eliminate racial and economic stigmas in city work and communications. Embrace that there is a place for everyone within this work.

Facilitate spaces of belonging - Continue to create safe-inclusive community spaces that embrace youth and promote an environment of "belonging versus policing" such as the Denver Public Library Welcoming Spaces program.

Ensure proper resource allocation - Fund programs that improve the overall outcomes of youth and gives every child a chance to succeed.

Create pipeline of mental health professionals of color - Address the shortage of mental health professionals in Denver who can deliver culturally responsive services by partnering with local education and community organizations to create both a pathway of job opportunities and equitable access to appropriate credentialing programs.



YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Segmented responses to youth survey by race/ethnicity (DDPHE)

Enrollment of additional professionals of color into mental health credential programs (DPS/DDPHE)

Number of Welcoming Spaces renovations completed in library branches (DPL)

"At the library, we are creating welcoming spaces, shifting libraries to include dedicated spaces for teens where they can simply be teens.

We're also working to ensure every staff member at our libraries has the relevant training to contribute to an inclusive and welcoming environment."

– Allison Barney, Youth Services Manager, Denver Public Library



PROGRESS STORIES - WELCOMING SPACES: INCLUSIVE LIBRARIES

Libraries have historically been open spaces that invite people of all backgrounds in building a sense of community. The Denver Public Library is embracing that history and taking it further with Welcoming Spaces.

Welcoming Spaces are areas within libraries designed for and in partnership with teens. The spaces incorporate comfortable furniture, along with collaborative and self-directed activities. DPL is developing a friendly environment with staff trained to welcome and support youth while they are there.

The library used data to identify where there are areas of concern and where there is the most need. Statistics from the 2020 YVP Plan were used to request funding to build a new teen space at the Central Library, where all youth feel like they belong. Additionally, the Ford Warren, Hadley, and Montbello branches revamped their teen spaces in 2022 based on input from young people in the communities.

Welcoming Spaces are a collaborative effort with community partners who will rotate in different programs and services catered to youth. The library is proactively offering engaging opportunities that empower youth and tap into their extraordinary potential and creativity.



focus on career develop- ment

Focusing on career development means ensuring sustainable economic development efforts rather than funding one-time tactics and building a long-term workforce pipeline that serves the economy and the people.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Youth have a variety of career paths and supportive guidance in reaching the trade or profession of their choice to become active participants in a sustainable economy.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Increase access to job training - Deliver year-round workforce development and financial literacy/empowerment education programs that meet the needs of Denver youth, and provide a pathway to economic stability.

Increase youth employment - Identify ways to expand and engage more youth through the Governor's Summer Job Hunt Program and Denver's Summer Youth Employment program operated by the Denver Office of Economic Development (DEDO), and by recruiting additional Denver-based orgs to support DPS career development programming through city contracting process.

Increase youth access to mentorships - Expand the integration of mentorship and apprenticeship programs within city government agencies through the Careerwise Apprenticeship Program by DEDO, and DPS' full suite of career development programs.

Create a City Corps program - Create a program that will employ young people between the ages of 18 - 24 to serve as peer mentors for other young people and youth, identify a lead agency to implement this program.

Expand program investments - Continue to invest in and evolve the Denver Youth Employment Program that will serve over 300 youth in 2023.

Implement innovative training programs - Continue to create innovative programs such as the city's Certified Youth Employer Program that provides youth with the opportunity to earn an industry-recognized credential that will provide them with value-add professional credentials and experience and the Office of Financial Empowerments integrated training and education on savings, debt and other.

Address financial insecurities and poverty - Create opportunities for families and youth to earn thriving wages rather than simply surviving wages through new and existing programs to amplify outcomes.

Stabilize and empower Families - create a pipeline

of skilled workers and employment opportunities to be self-sufficient and encourage professional growth.

Expand the HYPE program - Support expansion of the Helping Youth Pursue Excellence (HYPE) Program which provides academic, vocational and financial empowerment support to youth who are on diversion, pre-trial release, or probation.

Expand access to certification in industry pathways - Create access to high wage high growth job opportunities straight out of high school.

Expand opportunities for advanced academic coursework - Offer students access to concurrent enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programming, and career technical education (CTE) that allow them to enroll in higher education organizations in pursuit of their career interests.





YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Number of students in Youth
Employment Program (DEDO)

% of students who retain employment at
end of summer employment (DEDO)

Participants in CareerWise
Apprenticeship Program (DEDO)

Number of youth and their
families who receive financial
empowerment education (OFEP)

% of participants who completed
apprenticeship with positive employer
satisfaction rating (DEDO)

Banking accounts opened, saving achieved,
debt reduced outcomes (OFEP)

Number of students that graduate with
certifications in industry pathways (DPS)

Number of students that graduate having
completed advanced coursework (DPS)

Number of city offices participating as hosts
in internship, apprenticeship, mentorship
and other DPS career programming (DPS)



PROGRESS STORIES - STABILIZING FAMILIES: YOUTH FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS

Denver's Office of Financial Empowerment & Protection (OFEP) offers a variety of programs for youth ages 14 to 17, as well as for family members 18 and up. Leaving the door open for parents to receive support is part of a 2gen approach to help empower families in reaching financial stability.

Yannek Smith is a Bilingual Financial Counselor and Coach for OFEP's Youth Programs. He describes how financial empowerment creates pathways for mobility through a variety of youth programming. "Our programs are designed to examine prevention through overlapping lenses of equity and poverty," said Smith. "We recognize these issues are compounded to impact family outcomes, and we are actively working to achieve better outcomes including credit score increases, debt reduction, and increased savings."

These outcomes are improved with a variety of key programs and partnerships such as Homies Unidos, funded through a grant from the Rose Foundation. This summer program provided eight virtual group classes targeting gang-affected youth and young adults.

Sessions covered core financial literacy topics and competency areas for financial security. Participants received a stipend for each session attended upon graduation and were offered no-fee checking accounts and a \$100 account opening bonus to interested participants ages 15 and up through a partnership with Bellco Credit Union.

Another example is OFEP's ongoing partnership with DPS, formed in 2021, to support the Helping Youth Pursue Excellence (HYPE) program for justice involved youth. The program offers both in-person group sessions and individual coaching for youth, who work part-time at The Urban Farm, a non-profit in NW Denver. OFEP offers HYPE participants mentorship, employment and career-building support, educational pathways, and financial empowerment education.

OFEP continues to build partnerships and seek out opportunities to provide core financial competencies, and empower youth and their families to achieve economic mobility.

With a full range of youth serving programs, from financial coaching sessions to parents of young children in the HeadStart program, to providing training to students in CareerWise apprenticeships with the Denver Economic Development & Opportunity, OFEP is a vital partner in Denver's youth violence prevention efforts.



"Financial stress is a major risk factor for families and youth experiencing different types of violence including homelessness, domestic violence and justice system involvement. Stabilizing families through financial training and empowerment is a critical prevention effort."

– Jay Salas, Director of Office of
Financial Empowerment & Protection



embrace best practice

Embracing best practice means implementing evidence-based practice, being willing to invest in promising practice, adopting continuous improvement for innovation, and working collaboratively within and across cities to garner insights from regional and national partners for best practice.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Youth violence prevention is a constantly evolving field, responsive to current youth and community challenges.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Collaborate across regions - Enter into compacts with other cities, similar to the Denver Aurora compact, to ensure youth are served beyond jurisdictional boundaries. Develop relationships with other regional, state and national partners to create reciprocal information and practice sharing processes.

Leverage informed data - Evaluate the city's RFP system to ensure financial support is distributed equitably to community partners that can and are providing culturally relevant services that effectively meet youth needs.

Utilize subject matter experts - Establish partnerships with community service providers that culturally reflect and are relevant to the communities they serve - education, safety, mental health, health, city staff, and CBOs.

Listen to community based organizations - Actively engage with and communicate with community members to build stronger relationships that can create a greater understanding of cultural values and lived experiences to help inform solutions.



“We can’t forget about the secondary trauma and burnout our providers experience as well. There is an assumption that the leaders of this work are whole and healthy. We need intentional engagement to help providers heal as well.”

– Derek McCoy, Co-Executive Director, Programs & Partnerships



Monitor trends and indicator changes - Work in partnership with the Denver Office of Social Equity and Innovation and other EDIB partners to help eliminate racial and economic stigmas in city work and communications. Embrace that there is a place for everyone within this work.

Endorse flexibility and adaptability - Respond to changes in data with changes in practice to ensure youth violence prevention efforts are adapting to the current environment.

Focus on the entire family - When treating children, expand access to parenting resources and family skill development programs to implement a two generation approach.

Support service providers - Expand the Youth Violence Prevention Micro Grant Program to support community based organizations with strategic funding for services aligned with the YVP Action Plan.

Seek opportunities for alignment - Review existing youth services housed within city agencies to identify opportunities to align programs, people, and budgets to improve outcomes or expand services.



PROGRESS STORIES - THE LIFE LINE VISION: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CENTER

The vision for Denver's Youth Empowerment Center (YEC) began in 2019 as part of the original convening of the YVPAT. Inspired by conversations with Denver youth and community, the need for a safe and welcoming space for youth was identified. The Office of Children's Affairs and partners are realizing this vision through a youth informed, community-led and City supported process.

In late 2020, the city secured a 9,600-square-foot space near Alameda Avenue and I-25, using federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Life Line Colorado, a local non-profit focused on supporting at-risk populations, was selected through a competitive process in 2021 to manage operations of the new YEC.

Leo Alirez, Life Line Colorado's Founder and Executive Director, describes the YEC as a safe haven, a place where youth will be able to get out of the day-to-day challenges in their neighborhoods. The space will have everything from homework stations to gaming systems, televisions to pool tables, and even free internet provided by Comcast.

More importantly, the YEC will provide healing opportunities and supportive services for youth and their families. This 2gen approach is designed to work simultaneously with youth, parents and the community to understand and address intergenerational impact. The center will connect young people and their families to a network of supports, serving people who are re-entering the community, living in recovery or transitional homes. Services will include trauma-informed practice, collaboration with therapists of color, group therapy, individual counseling sessions, and medical Accudetox funded by CDPHE.



YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Number of community partners
awarded prevention funding (OCA)

Number of annual YVPAT
meetings held (OCA)

City and community partner
membership in YVPAT (OCA)



"We are creating a space where all youth are invited to come in and be themselves, where they will be treated with respect and genuine love."

– Leo Alirez, Founder/Executive
Director, Life Line Colorado



The YEC also integrates economic development services with financial empowerment support, career training, entrepreneurial opportunities and an on-site culinary station.

The center has already served the community with over 2,000 individual visits to the YEC since opening.

"Our approach is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs," Alirez explains. "We begin with the basics and move toward meeting higher levels of need to help people become the best version of themselves."

The YEC experience will go beyond safe spaces and services - the goal is to help people find their purpose, create communities with intention, and develop youth on a mission to contribute positively to their communities.

evolve juvenile justice

Evolving juvenile justice means shifting to restorative justice, eliminating the school-to-prison pipeline, rewriting policies and rewiring perceptions that have led to vast disparity in incarceration rates for youth of color.



DESIRED OUTCOME

A juvenile justice system that focuses on collaboration and integration, where juveniles of every background are supported in creating new directions for their lives.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Focus on pre-incident diversion - Proactively direct efforts toward diversion and alternative pathways to success through early integration of violence prevention efforts into school curriculum, particularly high risk areas.

Support the DA's pre-file diversion program - Continue funding full time community engagement position as a diversion for youth before charges have been filed. The pre-file program intervenes earlier but offers the same type of process for eligibility, though completion is scaled down and transferred to community support post termination.

Invest in expanding post-incident diversion programs - Continue implementing the Denver DA's juvenile diversion program, with program experts participating in collaborative decision-making on eligibility with the DA.

Targeted interventions for youth - When youth enter the juvenile system, the priority should be on implementing programs and services that reduce criminogenic risk factors while increasing protective factors. This approach coupled with providing wrap-around services to include substance misuse treatment services, mentoring, tutoring, mental health support, peer support, restitution and work programs, may reduce the likelihood of youth returning to the criminal justice system.

Align services to the needs and strengths of youth - Utilize a validated screening instrument to identify individual risks and needs of youth entering the juvenile justice system. Following screening, partnering with clients to develop appropriate case plans that address identified risks while building skills.

Increase restorative justice efforts - Focus on the positive rehabilitation of offenders through a combination of accountability and reconciliation with victims and the community at large. Support organizations working on restorative justice. Support DA's restorative justice program that allows for offenders to interact with victims and to fully understand impact.



“

“Ultimately, we don’t want youth in the justice system, particularly not long term. When they are justice-involved, we want to see aftercare support services where the community picks up right where we leave off. Upon re-entry, youth need mentoring and positive relationships that need to occur in collaboration with the community.”

—Benita A. Martin, Diversion Program Manager,
Denver District Attorney’s Office

”

//

“Every human wants to feel safe, they want their families and children to feel safe. No one wants to worry about walking in their own communities. You can’t incarcerate your way out of this problem. Healing needs to happen. The more resources that are available, the more safe and stable youth will begin to feel, and the more that change can and will happen in our communities.”

—Preston Adams, Co-Founder,
Fully Liberated Youth

//



TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES, Continued

Build support for restorative justice for HIP

court - Support the DA’s restorative justice element of the Handgun Intervention Program (HIP) Court, which coordinates victim impact panels with victims of violence, or people who have lost someone to violence to help youth understand the impact of violence on victims and community.

Provide opportunities for youth offenders to experience Victim Impact Groups -

Ensure more youth offenders can participate in different victim impact modules specific to their offenses, and as often as possible with direct impact victims in a mediated environment.

Focus on in-community supervision - Provide

support for moving supervision of eligible youth offenders into the community rather than detainment as often as possible.

Prioritize positive reintegration - Implement policies and supportive programming for reentry of youth returning from correctional systems with in-community supervision and community-based supervision.

Focus on long-term outcomes - Approach juvenile justice as an effort to mediate risk factors, increase protective factors and develop long-term support and resource for youth, rather than as transactional events.

Eliminate the school to prison pipeline -

Identify and dissolve practices and policies that disproportionately place students of color into the criminal justice system.

Examine the prison industrial complex - Consider implications of corporate sponsorship of Colorado prisons; actively seek a shift in sponsorship toward youth workforce development.

Develop cross-system partnerships - Create avenues for juvenile justice professionals to collaborate closely with professionals in education, public safety, mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, housing support, and other efforts to shift youth outcomes, including reducing the length of stay in detention, reducing the number of youth placed out the home and reducing the disproportionate representation of children of color.

Facilitate collaboration between municipal and district juvenile court systems - Develop city and community-based support strategies that reduce the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system and improve outcomes for involved youth.

Place youth offenders in the least restrictive setting possible - Juvenile justice reform efforts recognize that placement of children in a detention facility can create a negative impact on the mental and physical well-being of the child, and such detention may make it more likely that the child will reoffend. Community-based alternatives to detention should be based on the principle of using the least restrictive setting possible and returning a child to his or her home, family, or other responsible adult whenever possible consistent with public safety.



YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Successful completion rate of regular juvenile probationers (DJP)

Number of youth provided juvenile diversion services (DA)

Percent of youth of color provided juvenile diversion services (DA)

integrate mental health support

Integrating mental health support means working collaboratively with Denver Health, other service providers, and not-for-profit organizations to incorporate daily well-being support into schools and homes. It means recognizing the lack of social workers of color with lived cultural experiences impacts the youth's ability to relate to and receive the support they need.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Youth have access to culturally relevant mental health services and are supported in addressing mental health challenges with positive emotional processing and coping skills.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Develop public health partnerships - Engage local public health agencies to support the implementation of health focused strategies that support youth violence prevention efforts.

Seek to understand root causes - Work with community-based organizations to understand the correlation between mental illness and trauma-based issues to youth violence

Increase access to treatment - Actively work to remove barriers to behavioral health treatment, expand access to services and reduce stigma around mental health challenges with programs like the "What You Say Matters" campaign.

Invest in health services in schools - Increase the integration of wellness, mental health, trauma counseling, drug and alcohol treatment schools.

Expand collaborative Denver Public School programs - Continue to work with DPS on the Secondary Schools pilot now called "community schools" to bring mental health services, gang intervention, therapeutic supports and a pipeline of behavioral health workers to support student needs.

Continue Denver ReCAST program - Maximize the federally funded Resiliency for Communities Affected by Stress and Trauma (ReCAST) grant to implement evidence-based violence prevention, create opportunities for community youth engagement, and link at-risk youth and their families to trauma-informed behavioral health services, in partnership with multiple city agencies and community partners.

Bring services into the community - Expand programs like the Wellness Winnie mobile support team that provides regular peer support in the community where people are rather than expecting them to seek support in traditional institutions.

Increase family wellness - Support whole families by increasing access to parenting resources and family skill development programs.



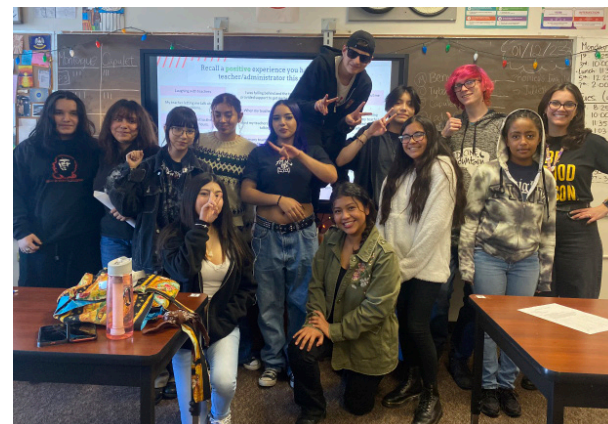
"Living in violence changes the way a person thinks, acts and lives. Our youth violence prevention work lets youth know there are other options - there are a lot of people who care about them, love them and want to support them."

– Seth Howsden, Recreation Director,
Denver Parks & Recreation



Build community mental health awareness through education - Continue the work of Denver Strong to provide behavioral health and trauma-informed care trainings to create a network of trauma sensitive service providers.

Invest in secondary prevention services - Focus on treating trauma early on and providing long-term support so youth trauma doesn't turn into adult trauma. Recognize that preventative strategy is going upstream, providing support and healing opportunities early is better in the long term.





YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Number of participants in annual “We Got This” youth mental health summit (DDPHE)

Percent of youth surveyed responding they have knowledge of mental health issues (DDPHE)

Percent of youth surveyed responding they are motivated to seek help (DDPHE)

Percent of youth surveyed responding they are aware of mental health resource options (DDPHE)

Number of participants in “We Got This” School Seminars (DDPHE)

Number of Denver Strong trainings (DDPHE)

Number of participants in Denver Strong trainings (DDPHE)

Number of individuals who visit Wellness Winnie behavioral health outreach unit (DDPHE)

Number of serviced provided by Denver ReCAST programs (DDPHE)

Number of city staff and city-funded community partners operating out of DPS facilities to deliver mental health services to youth and their families (DPS)



PROGRESS STORIES - WE GOT THIS! YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

The Denver Department of Public Health & Environment brought together more than 300 teens, young adults, and parents from the Denver-metro area to participate in the first We Got This! Youth Mental Health Summit in the spring of 2022.

Youth participated in a day of peer-based interactive workshops and presentations aimed at raising awareness of and garnering insights around the issues that youth face today regarding mental health and suicide.

Programming centered around normalizing conversations around mental health to make it comfortable for youth to articulate their feelings, advocate for themselves, and to get help.

The summit also helps bring the youth voice to the table. The summit was informed by the department’s We Got This Youth Survey, a comprehensive effort to gather input and understand values and perceptions of youth, distributed to over 2,000 annually teens in the metro area.

Rick Padilla, Suicide Prevention Manager for DDPHE shared that the idea for the summit was inspired by friends of his son, who he lost to suicide at the age of 15. “About a dozen of his friends came over and told me they wanted to do something,” said Padilla, “Youth are capable, and caring, and need the opportunity to share, to contribute.”

The summit educates youth about what to look for in themselves, and in their peers, and encourages youth to focus on what’s working instead of what isn’t. The goal is to make sure youth know the value of who they are, and walk away believing “who I am makes a difference.”

A second youth summit is planned for Fall of 2023 and the department plans to make it an annual event.



“Our goals are to give hope and provide a platform for young people to speak their truth. We want to put resources toward addressing mental health issues from a youth perspective to create positive outcomes.”

– Rick Padilla, Suicide Prevention Program Manager, Denver Public Health & Environment



prioritize holistic safety

Prioritizing holistic safety means investing in public safety solutions supported and led by the community, creating community-based crisis response teams and developing comprehensive intervention processes for communities experiencing violence.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Communities have full trust in public safety systems and are confident that youth crisis will be met with compassion, understanding and support.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Work across cities and counties - The city will work with other metro cities and counties to identify opportunities to work collaboratively to prevent youth violence.

Break down community silos - The city will seek to bridge the gaps, break down community silos of work by creating collaborative community networks to achieve results.

Go where people are - Partner with trusted community entities including hospitals, libraries, faith-based organizations, nonprofits and community centers to help facilitate programming, improve neighborhoods and increase public safety.

Identify at-risk youth early for intervention - Conduct outreach to youth identified as at-risk by DPS, understand the dynamics that can deter violence and offer support in advance of potential justice system interaction. Continue secondary gang prevention programs and services directed toward youth who have already displayed early signs of behavior concerns and are at high-risk for gang involvement.

Continue multidisciplinary gang intervention program - Support the evolution of the long-running GRID program, now the Office of Community Violence Solutions, that employs Gang Outreach Workers who have an in-depth knowledge of both gang culture and Denver communities to provide individual and family mentoring and advocacy to high-risk gang members and families and promote gang disengagement.

Provide intervention services tailored to different genders - Expand programs like the Office of Community Violence Solutions that contracted with community based organizations to provide specialized case management services to young women and LGBTQ+ populations with high-risk factors for gang involvement.



Support community-based gang intervention - Continue this two-pronged strategy, integrating gang violence interruption efforts and individualized service provision for both proactive and reactive efforts to reduce gang violence. The program addresses the service needs of those most likely to be involved in violence and identifies the causes of and solutions to conflicts between individuals and groups within the community. A primary focus is on responding to gang involved incidents and confrontations in the community by contracting with community-based organizations to provide the services.

Convene community conversations - Provide ongoing opportunities to hear community concerns, share work and discuss solutions.

Continue the Gang Resistance Education And Training (GREAT) program - Through a partnership with the District Attorney's Office and Denver Public Schools, a Diversion Officer, funded by the Denver Office of Community Violence Solutions, facilitates the GREAT school-based, gang prevention program in elementary and middle school sites in target areas.



“Hope is the best deterrent we have against youth violence. As city collaborators, we are facilitating interventions and guiding work that creates hope. We need our youth to know they have a future that is bright and successful - and within reach.”

– Chief Ron Thomas,
Denver Police Department



TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES, Continued

Dismantle criminal networks - Work with community stakeholders from federal, state local, and grassroots community to focus on gang violence and activity reduction. Continue Denver’s expansive gang violence reduction strategy.

Conduct gun safety education - The city will promote safe storage practices in collaboration with youth, community, public and private partners.

Reimagine the responsibility for public safety - Continue to establish on-going, long-term partnership with community members and advocates, police and other first responders, local government officials, social service providers, and researchers to think critically about, and address safety issues as a collaborative community rather than as a police only responsibility.



Invest in gun buyback events - Allow residents to anonymously turn in firearms for destruction at voluntary events where trained volunteers assist with destroying the firearms. The RAWtools program purchases guns from owners, then melts the metal to produce gardening tools and jewelry. The program was sponsored by City Council members in Denver and Aurora in 2022, and will be housed under Denver Office of Community Violence Solutions moving forward to contract hosted events, and expand the partnership with Denver Health.

Conduct community training for human trafficking warning signs - Host educational opportunities for service providers, community members, schools and the community at large to provide in-depth training on signs to look for and ways to combat human trafficking.

Re-establish community trust and connection - Create opportunities for safety and community to come together for proactive discussions about how to address community concerns about violence.

Build engagement in key geographic locations - Ensure that there is an on-going presence, relationship building and community involvement in areas identified to be hot spots for violence to instead create safe havens.

Invest in the built environment - Increase lighting, playgrounds, parks and open space, to create welcoming neighborhoods as a prevention strategy in neighborhoods.



YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Number of violent crimes committed by youth under 25 (DPD)

Number of violent crimes with victim under 25 (DPD)

Homicides committed by youth under 25 (DPD)

Homicide victims under 25 (DPD)

Youth (under 18) arrested for gun possession (DPD)

Non-fatal shootings with victims under 25 (DPD)

Number of human trafficking trainings offered (DA)

share data across systems

Sharing data across systems means providers can access information from city partners and non-profit organizations to support youth and ensure follow-up on referrals, so no youth are left without the vital services they need.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Integrated cross-system care is made possible by a central database powered by the latest technology that allows continuity of care for youth in need.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Establish regional compacts - Collaborate with metro area cities and counties with formal agreements to share information and data to increase prevention and reduce violence.

Develop central database - Provide a cohesive database sharing system to provide information on MOUs, network partners, schools, and service providers complete with contact information.

Upgrade communication technology - Ensure there is an emergency communication system for schools, healthcare, service providers, city departments, and others to be able to communicate quickly and effectively. Assess and upgrade outdated technology.

Focus on continuous improvement - Maintain a dashboard with updated metrics to evaluate changes in Youth Violence Prevention indicators and solidify partnership collaboration and sharing across the city.

Develop community resource directory - Create a current directory of community-based organizations that highlights everyone doing YVP work and the communities served. Provide inventory that can be used to forge conversations and align efforts.

Update city resource guide - Maintain the city program inventory as a resource guide that lists and informs agencies about programs to facilitate more internal collaboration.

Maintain on-going communications and reporting - Keeping everyone informed on progress, actions and needs on a regular basis with ongoing meetings of the YVPAT.

Create a network chart - Develop a visual representation of how everyone works together that can also be shared with community partners.

Develop universal referral form - Create an online universal referral form that includes all necessary data for multiple partners and programs to access relevant client information and develop an understanding of other services clients are receiving.

Continue adding programs to Youth Program Locator - Continue effort to map available resources in this geographic listing to better point families and youth to critical services and providers.



“We need a common set of clear actionable goals and metrics that we can measure over time. To be a true collaboration, our partners need access to data from DPD, data from DPS, we need all access to be clear about where we are, and where we are going.”

– Lisa Piscopo, Strategic Advisor,
Denver Human Services





PROGRESS STORIES - YOUTH ON RECORD EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MUSIC

Denver-based non-profit Youth on Record taps into the creativity of youth to develop life-long skills for success. The creative coaches at Youth on Record offer music empowerment curriculum in-school and after-school, along with other supportive services like mentoring, resource navigation and trauma-informed sessions. Combined, the programs served over 1,700 students in 2022.

Open Lab is Youth on Record's longest running program, an after-school drop-in opportunity where youth can come to be themselves, build strong relationships with supportive adults. The program operates consistently three days a week to ensure access for youth, who are offered RTD passes to get to the centrally located center near the Osage light rail station.

Youth can mix a beat, record a song, play an instrument, or simply write.

Creative coaches are available to guide youth in creative exploration and artistic expression. Sessions begin with mood checks to level set students on their emotions. Creative coach Jesus Rodriguez describes his process, "We ask, 'on a scale of 1-10, how are you feeling today?' or 'describe your mood in one word,' or perhaps, 'what are you grateful for?' It helps to gauge where youth are."

Youth on Records integrates mental health support with an in-house licensed social worker. Diana was a Youth on Record partner artist in 2016 and was inspired to continue with the program by going to school in New Mexico and returning as service provider.

Youth on Record also provides in-school, for-credit courses in partnership with Denver Public Schools and Aurora Public Schools. Students earn social studies, language or elective credits with a guided curriculum of expression, discussion and exploration.

Creative coach Babah Fly describes a recent experience, "One of the students in our class died of multiple gunshot wounds. When the students told me, we shifted into having a shared session of mourning.



"There is not one way to solve this issue, it has to be a combination of strategies and tactics, it has to be the city and community working together. We need all hands on deck."

- Patrick Hedrick, Director,
Safety Youth Programs



The students needed an outlet to express their emotions. They said, 'no one is talking about this.' Out of this horrible tragedy, the youth had the opportunity to support each other, to talk about what was needed, to bring clarity about what they are feeling. This is how we build community."



"As a collaborative, we are trying to work outside of silos, rather than as individual agencies seeing the issues through our own lens. It helps to hear different perspectives, and most importantly to listen to the youth perspective of 'nothing for us without us.'"

- Matthew Lunn, Director of Strategic
Initiatives, Denver Police Department



YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Updated city program inventory (OCA)

Number of updated indicator maps
made available to team (DHS)

Average monthly visits to the Youth
Program Locator (DAA)

Number of organizations listed in the
Youth Program Locator (DAA)

champion policy change

Championing policy change means aligning new policies with best practice at the legislative, systems and organizational level. Policy change begins with engaging policymakers to become active partners in dissolving outdated policies that inadvertently perpetuate youth violence.



DESIRED OUTCOME

Policies facilitate thriving communities where youth are safe; policies are applied equitably and foster improved environments and opportunities for youth.

TACTICS & OPPORTUNITIES

Host legislative briefings - Develop positions around major policy issues and host meetings with legislators to present them with comprehensive position statements.

Provide legislators with supportive data - Create briefing materials that arm legislators with data, practice updates, and action items for how they can support youth violence prevention efforts.

Ensure program funding - Prioritize youth violence prevention programming during budget process, support strategic increases for initiatives outlined and protect programming dollars during cuts.

Enlist council support - Engage Denver city council members specifically to support streamlining processes, updating procurement, finding creative ways to make grant distributions easier for CBOs.

Engage community in policymaking - Develop responsive policy that incorporates community input into updated policies around each of the five practice areas.

Comprehensive policy assessment - Review policies regularly to determine if they are working as intended, if there are opportunities for improvement or if other areas have similar policies that are more effective in practice.



“We don’t fund education or mental health appropriately, yet we want things to change. We need to have real conversations on the larger issues. We are facing a tsunami with nothing more than an umbrella.”

– Councilman Paul Kashmann,
Denver District 6



Develop positive relationships - Dedicate department resources to building government relationships with local city council members, state legislators, and other policymakers to build trust and collaboration in addressing youth violence.

Sunset outdated policies - Determine which policies are no longer serving community needs, or are inadvertently damaging youth violence prevention efforts and take steps to dismantle policies that do not work.

Articulate programming to support - Provide a comprehensive list of city programs that work together to advance youth violence prevention so legislators are clear on where to focus energy.





PROGRESS STORIES - SIMS-FAYOLA FOUNDATION: IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG MEN AND BOYS OF COLOR

The Sims-Fayola Foundation (SFF) offers a wide variety of programs that integrate youth violence prevention strategies for young men and boys of color. Founded in 2014 by educator Dr. Dedrick Sims, SFF offers programs for youth and professionals across the country.

SFF has directly supported over 6,000 teachers, counselors, principals, school resource officers and other youth-serving professionals increase their capacity to provide their services and programming through an equity lens. The workshops include in-depth DEI education, along with an examination of equity and gender issues that contribute to inequities that young men and boys of color face. They are also launching a teacher development fellowship to build a pipeline of male teachers of color in the Denver metro and Colorado Springs metro areas. currently, male educators of color represent less than 5% of teachers across the country. "There is so much research surrounding the positive effects of having a male educator of color for young men and boys of color," Sims says. Recruiting and retaining employees with lived experience to work with their young men is an important part of SFF's work.

"All of our services and programs are conducted with an equity and gender lens to help address the unique lived experiences of young men of color," said Sims. "The violence ecosystem includes socio-emotional violence, educational violence, all of the system inequities that hurt outcomes. We want to bring about mental, emotional and behavioral wellness for our youth."

The foundation has served over 13,000 young men across the U.S. over the past 9 years with tremendous success. Youth in the program are shown to have a 60% reduction in truancy, suspensions

and negative referrals for violent behavior. However, SFF goes far beyond violence prevention.

The Fayola Man Career Academy is a 15-week academy that provides a variety of skill-building opportunities on everything from positive racial identity to mental wellness, to career development, particularly in industries where people of color are underrepresented. Partnerships with different industries give participants the opportunity to explore careers in oil and gas, STEM, jewelry, radio and television, and even the ski industry. Another program, Dress for Success, provides graduating seniors with resume support, interview skills, and a custom-made suit, because as Sims describes, "when you look good, you feel good."

A key component of SFF is advocacy focused on systems change. Their Boys Are Talking Forum provides the voice of youth with a stage for advocacy, quite literally. The forum includes a panel of 6th-12th grade young men discussing culture and policy in front of 200 to 300 service providers. The youth are able to provide their thoughts on major issues such as disparity in graduations, disproportionate suspensions, and changing definitions of masculinity. Sims explains, "We tell youth that with the best of intentions, we have tried to provide solutions for you, now we are going to develop solutions with you. Then we let them speak their truth."

"We have seen amazing outcomes, not just in the provider perspective, but in the youth as well. They begin to think of themselves as advocates, they gain confidence, join student government - they recognize their own capacity to drive change."

SFF takes a multi-faceted approach to driving change, working with youth, professionals, and



YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR

Council-approved funding requests (OCA)

Number of legislative briefings on YVP issues (OCA)

Materials produced around YVP issues for legislators (OCA)

Legislation passed to support YVP efforts (OCA)

Total amount of YVP funding requests approved by administration and council (ALL YVPAT Departments)



part III. measuring progress

Eradicating youth violence is a long-term effort that will require years of investment, focus and energy. Understanding and addressing the socio-economic factors and inequities in our system allows us to create sustainable change.

With data, we can improve decision making in this space and examine the root causes of youth violence in Denver. This section outlines how we will use data to focus our efforts, how we will measure our progress and how the data can inform our efforts to secure funding, collaboration and support.

mapping risk factors

In addition to the Youth Violence Prevention Index made up of 16 Key Indicators mapped across the city, there are multiple other layers of mapped data that help describe the need for resources and allow YVPAT partners to direct efforts into specific areas of the city.

These maps aggregate data over a single year or five year period as noted.

//

“We know that prevention is difficult to measure, it is hard to understand what didn’t happen. However, we can measure protective and risk factors, we know what they are. I think we need to put our energy there.”

– Nachshon Zohari, Behavior Health Program Manager, Denver Public Health & Environment

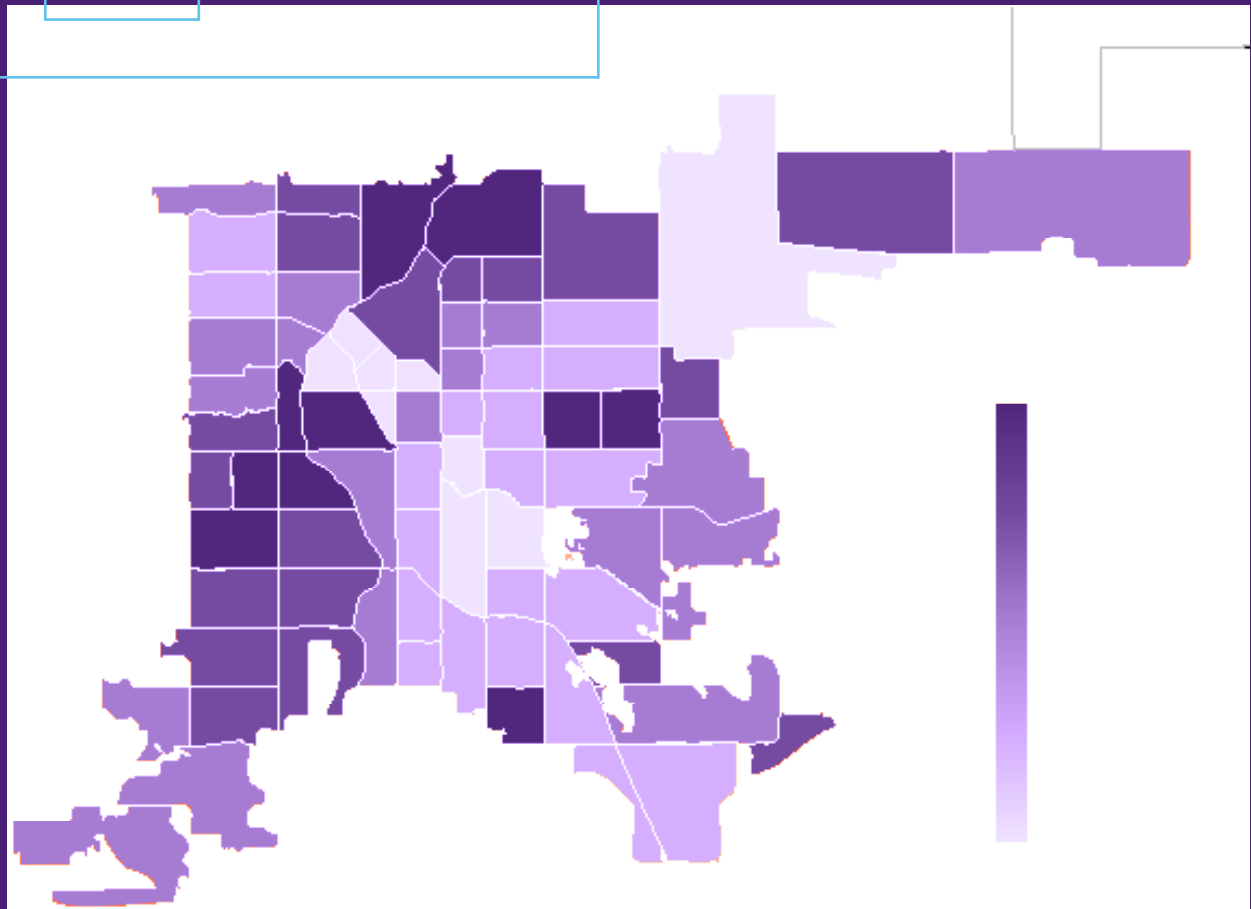
//

child well-being index 2022

MAP A

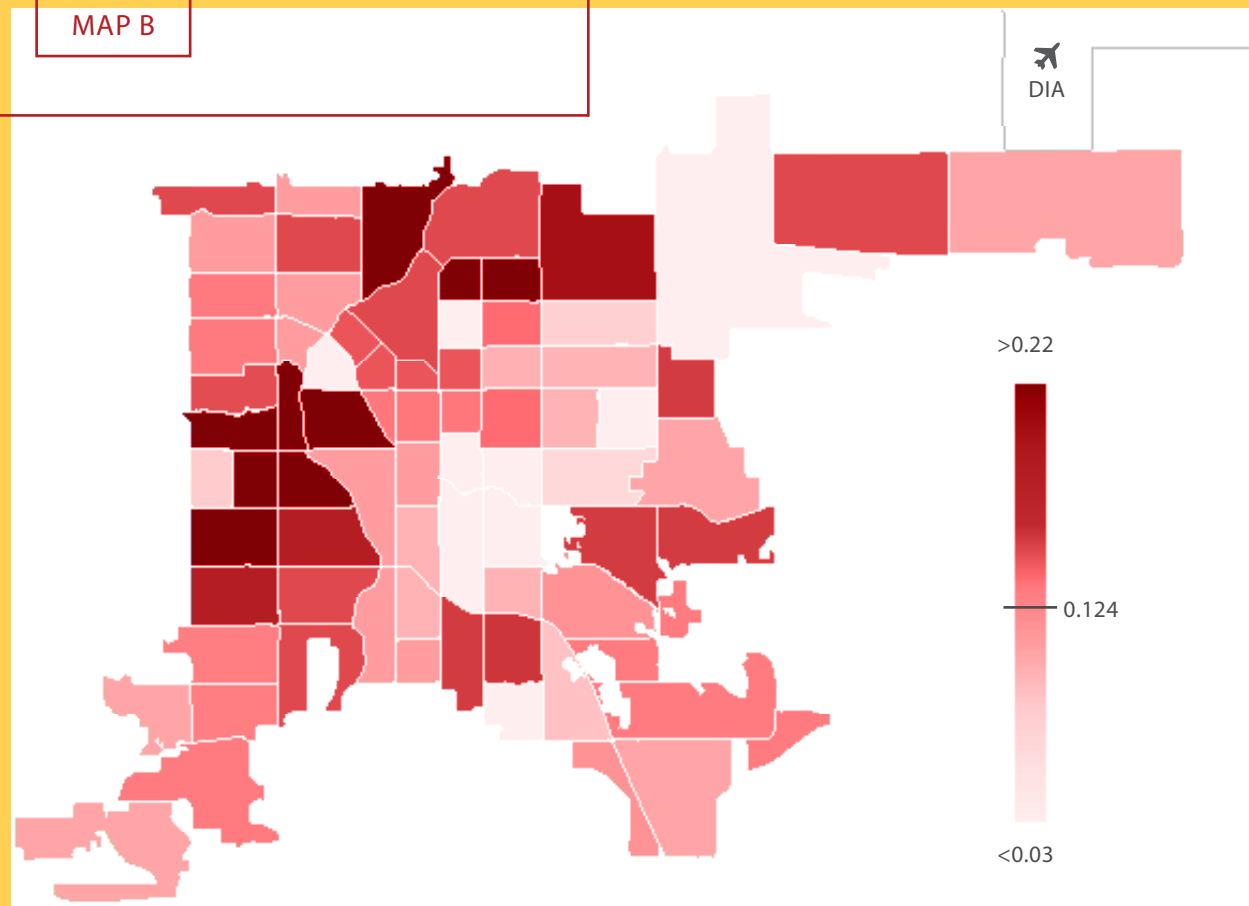
KEY INDICATORS

- > Births to women without a high school diploma
- > Teen Births
- > Overweight or Obese Children
- > Kindergarten Readiness
- > Third Graders Not Reading at Grade Level
- > Ninth Graders
- > Adults without a High School Diploma
- > Children in Single-Parent Families
- > Child Poverty
- > Violent Crime
- > Unemployment



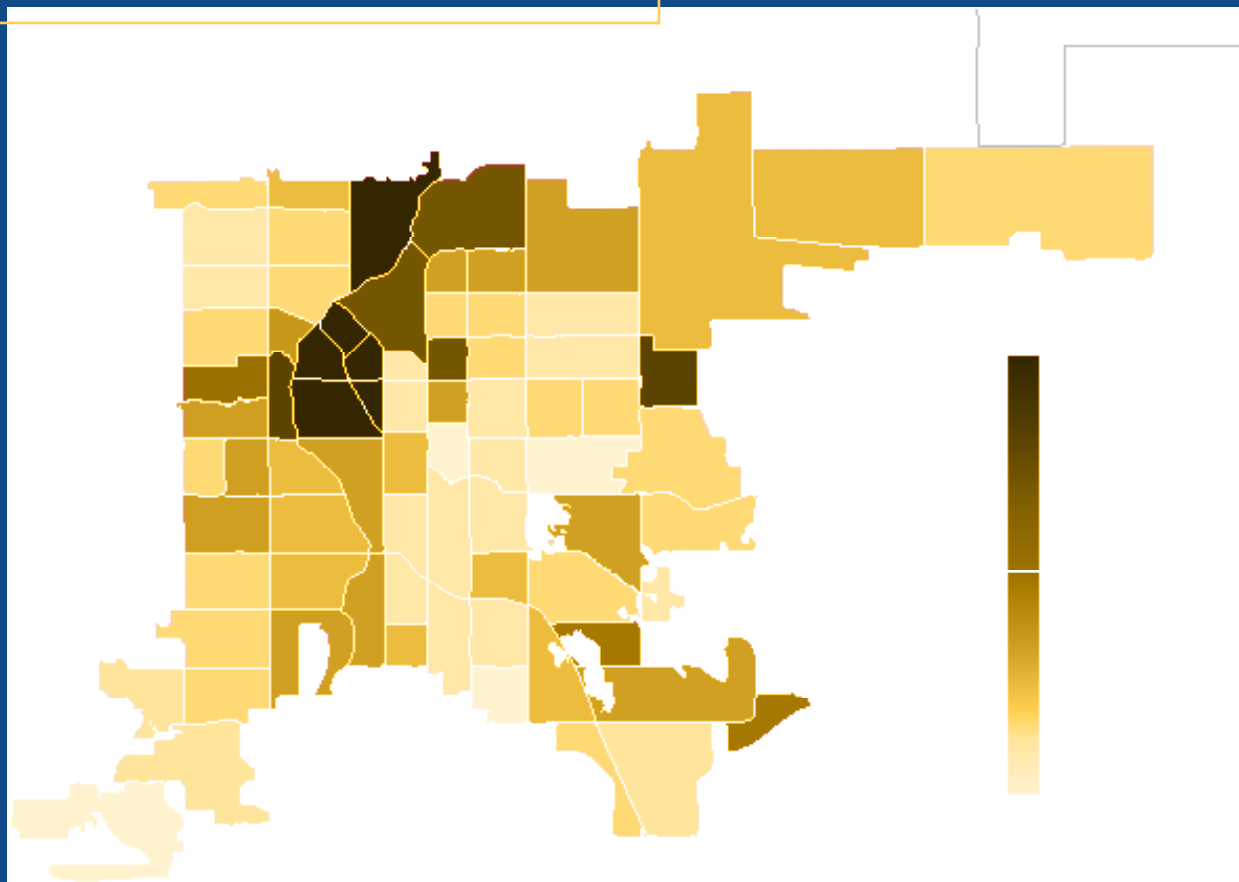
people in poverty 2017-2021

MAP B



violent crime map 2022

MAP C





PROGRESS STORIES - STRUGGLE OF LOVE FOUNDATION

“Violence is like an addiction and should be treated as such. It offers a release for anger, depression, whatever emotions youth are experiencing without relief. We need to offer an alternative.”

– Joel Hodge, Founder,
Struggle of Love Foundation

THE EMOTION OF PREVENTION

Struggle of Love Foundation is a Denver non-profit offering youth and community better ways to deal with difficult emotions since 2000. Joel Hodge, affectionately known as Coach Eye, and his wife and partner LaKeshia Hodge, operated the program out of their garage for over 17 years. They recently opened their dream location,

The Love Center, and are a shining example of the city investing in community-based solutions for youth violence prevention with a variety of strategies and partnerships.

Struggle of Love Foundation partners with Denver Parks & Recreation on the NightMoves program at Montbello Recreation Center. They also have a partnership with the local Denver Police district to respond to violence in the community offering on-site support with their in-house mental health team, made up of two women of color. “We are often the bridge



between community and police, helping to de-escalate tense situations when emotions are high, providing grief support, and working to interrupt violence by combatting retaliation,” said Joel.

Struggle of Love Foundation focuses on the root causes of violence and that usually means going much deeper and farther into the youth’s lives - thinking about the entire environment that leads to violent behavior. It includes working with families and teaching youth to think critically about media. “We need to look at what we are telling our kids. Violence is everywhere - from social media fights to video games to anger and yelling in the home.”

The Love Center offers a variety of support services and programs including mentoring, therapy, acupuncture and even aromatherapy. Through a partnership with Denver Public Health & Environment, the Wellness Winnie mobile RV offers support to youth each Tuesday. The center also encourages personal expression and career exploration with an on-site music studio and t-shirt making art station. Approximately 200 youth are served in the center each week, along with delivering one to two hundred fresh food boxes daily.


In addition, the program focuses on how to include parents in services. Simple things like allowing parents to select and wrap Christmas gifts for their children during the foundation’s annual toy drive that gives away 3,000 gifts each year. “Oftentimes, the parents need just as much support as the youth,” said LaKeshia Hodge. Joel continued, “change begins with changing perspectives. We need to start by admitting something is wrong. It’s okay to say, ‘I don’t know how to...’ or ‘I’m scared.’ Then we can start to work together as a family.”

“
I was raised in a violent environment. I thought it was the answer for a time - until I woke up in the hospital with my eye missing. We need to teach kids a better way.”

– Joel Hodge, Founder,
Struggle of Love Foundation

measures of success

To ensure continued progress on the strategies and tactics outlined in the 2023 Denver Youth Violence Prevention Action Plan, the YVPAT will work from a common dashboard that pulls from metrics across the city and can be compared over time. A framework for this dashboard is included below:

	safe communities save youth					
DENVER YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN METRICS						
YVP INDICATORS TO MONITOR	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
center community						
Annual youth violence prevention funding to community-based organizations (OCA)				\$1,568,948	\$2,448,898	
American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds received for community services (OCA)					\$5,708,000	
Children's Affairs contracts to community-based organizations (OCA)	65	156	133	117		
engage youth directly						
Visits to Youth Empowerment Center (OCA)	-	-	-	1,943		
Number of meetings held annually of the Youth Advisory Council (DOS)						
Participants in Night Moves program (DPS)	-	-	-	2,367		
Number of Youth Zone (formerly Safe Zone) events held annually (DPR)						
Number of responses to annual youth survey (DDPHE)						
advance equity						
Segmented responses to youth survey by race/ethnicity (DDPHE)						
Enrollment of additional professionals of color into mental health credential programs (DPS/DDPHE)						
Number of Welcoming Spaces renovations completed in library branches (CPL)*	-	-	1	3	3	7
focus on career development						
Number of students in Youth Employment Program (DEDO)						
% of students who retain employment at end of summer employment (DEDO)						
Participants in CareerWise Apprenticeship Program (DEDO)						
% of participants who completed apprenticeship with positive employer satisfaction rating (DEDO)						
Number of youth and their families who receive financial empowerment education (DFEP)						
Banking accounts opened, saving achieved, debt reduced outcomes (DFEP)						
Number of students that graduate with certifications in industry pathways (DPS)						
Number of students that graduate having completed advanced coursework (DPS)						
Number of city offices participating as hosts in internship, apprenticeship, mentorship and other DPS career programming (DPS)						

embrace best practice					
Number of community partners awarded YVP prevention funding (OCA)				34	47
Number of annual YVPMT meetings held (OCA)					
City and community partner membership in YVPMT (OCA)					
engage juvenile justice					
Successful completion rate of regular juvenile probationers (DJP)	74%	67%	79%	76%	
Number of youth provided juvenile diversion services (DA)	98	93	31	57	
Percent of youth of color provided juvenile diversion services (DA)	82%	76%	68%	88%	
integrate mental health support					
Number of participants in annual "We Got This" youth mental health summit (DDPHE)	-	-	-	351	
Percent of youth surveyed responding they have knowledge of mental health issues (DDPHE)	-	-	-	51%	
Percent of youth surveyed responding they are motivated to seek help (DDPHE)	-	-	-	58%	
Percent of youth surveyed responding they are aware of mental health resource options (DDPHE)	-	-	-	42%	
Number of participants in "We Got This" School Seminars (DDPHE)	-	-	-	547	
Number of Denver Strong trainings (DDPHE)	-	-	-	67	
Number of participants in Denver Strong trainings (DDPHE)	-	-	-	1,327	
Number of individuals who visit Wellness Wink behavioral health outreach unit (DDPHE)**	-	-	-	3,517	
Number of services provided by Denver ReCAST programs (DDPHE)**	-	-	-	906	
Number of city staff and city-funded community partners operating out of DPS facilities to deliver mental health services to youth and their families (DPS)					
prioritize holistic safety					
Number of violent crimes committed by youth under 25 (DPO)	1,054	1,083	998	992	
Number of violent crimes with victim under 25 (DPO)	1,826	1,906	1,999	2,270	
Homicides committed by youth under 25 (DPO)	15	27	37	31	
Homicide victims under 25 (DPO)	19	30	31	35	
Youth (under 18) arrested for possession of a firearm (DPO)	141	97	116	134	
Non-fatal shootings with victims under 25 (DPO)		106	112	126	
Number of human trafficking trainings offered (DA)					
share data across systems					
Updated city program inventory (OCA)					
Number of updated indicator maps made available to team (DHS)					
Average monthly visits to the Youth Program Locator (DAA)	-	150	823	2,665	
Number of organizations listed in the Youth Program Locator (DAA)	-	170	595	349	
champion policy change					
Council approved funding requests (OCA)					
Number of legislative briefings on YVP issues (OCA)					
Materials produced around YVP issues for legislators (OCA)					
Legislation passed to support YVP efforts (OCA)					
Total amount of YVP funding requests approved by administration and council (ALL YVPMT Departments)					
- Program did not exist, or data is not available					
*Planned resources for 2023 and 2024					
**Fiscal years are on federal fiscal calendar from October 1 - September 30 each year					

statistics of note

YVPAT partners noted the importance of having the Denver YVP Action Plan be a practical resource that supports members in discussing youth violence, illustrating key points, and providing data and statistics for funding requests.

CORRELATION BETWEEN POVERTY AND VIOLENCE

> Denver, like other cities, has consistently higher rates of poverty than the state.

- U.S. Census Bureau data shows 11% of Denver residents have a media household income below the poverty line.

11%
Denver
RESIDENTS



- This is about 81,000 people living in poverty in the city of Denver in 2021.

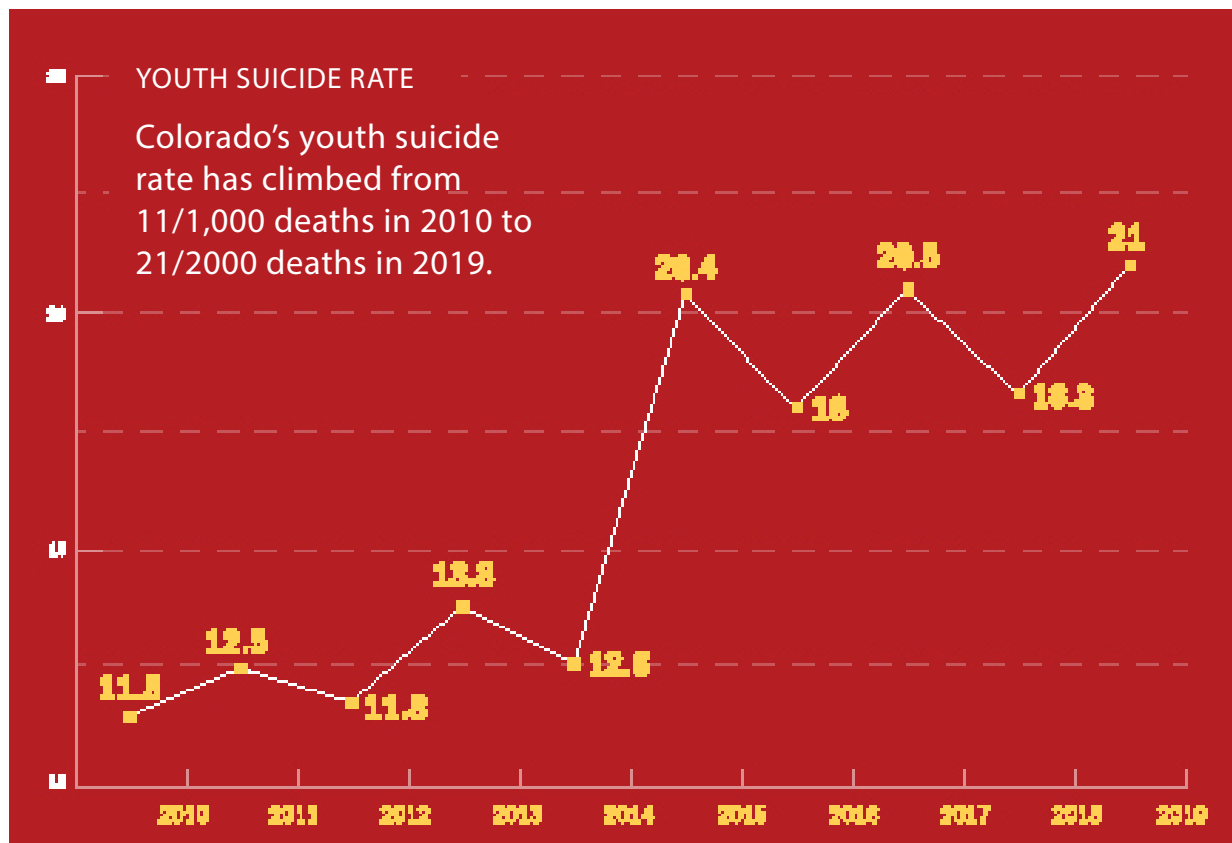
> A nationwide study of 300 metropolitan areas shows that higher income neighborhoods have lower violent crime rates than do high-poverty area.

> According to The Trevor Project's national survey of youth in 2021:

- LGBTQ+ youth are almost five times (5x) as likely to have attempted suicide as heterosexual youth
- 19% of LGBTQ+ youth ages 13–18 reported attempting suicide in the past year.
- LGBTQ+ youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times (3x) the rate of heterosexual youth

> The We Got This Youth Survey in 2020 showed 11% of Colorado youth identify as LGBTQ+ and 4.9% as unsure, in line with national data (10.5% LGBTQ+ and 5% unsure in Trevor Project's national survey of youth in 2021)

> The 2019 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey found that 42.0% of students who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual reported seriously considering attempting suicide during the past year, compared to 13.4% of students who identify as heterosexual.



VIOLENT CRIME IN DENVER

- > 40% of all Denver's homicide victims were under 25 in 2022, according to Denver Police Department records.

40% HOMICIDE VICTIMS

under

→ 25 YEARS OLD

- 16% of homicide victims in Denver in 2022 were under age 18.
- 43% of homicides in Denver in 2022 were by firearm.

- > 43% of non-fatal shooting victims in Denver were under 25 in 2022, according to Denver Police Department records.
- > Denver Health reports an average of 700 young people age 25 and under are directly affected by gun violence in Denver annually, according to death records, emergency department and hospital discharge data and crime reports.
- > Between 2012 and 2018, Denver youth experienced 311 gun-related emergency department visits and 175 hospitalizations for gun-related injuries according to Denver Health data presented in the 2019 report: How Gun Violence Affects Denver Youth.
- Access to firearms is the most important factor influencing youth suicide and homicide; approximately 90% of youth who complete suicide use a gun found in the home.

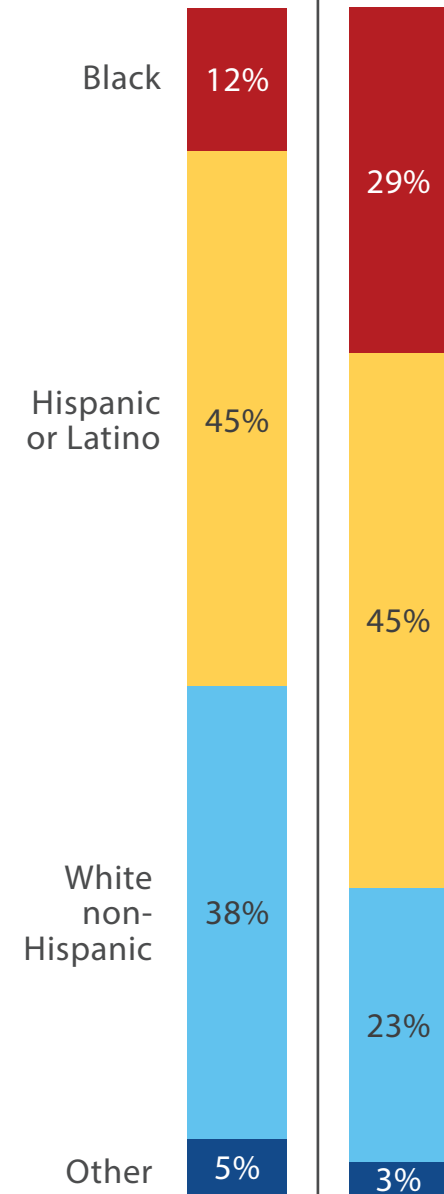
DISPARITY CONCERNS

- > Denver Health reports that over a six year period from 2012-2018, Denver Black or African American youth made-up 29% of victims of gun-related crimes but made up only 12% of the population.
- Hispanic youth made up 45% of victims of gun related crimes and made up 45% of the population.
- White youth made up 23% of victims of gun related crimes but made up 38% of the population.

- > 40% of all high school students surveyed in the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey in 2021 reported experiencing feelings of depression in the past year.
- The number was 46% for Native American or Alaska Native students
- and 74% for transgender students.
- > 12% of all high school students reported recent food insecurity.
- 24% of Black/African American students reported this experience.

POPULATION OF DENVER

VICTIMS OF GUN-RELATED CRIME





next steps

- The YVPAT will meet bi-monthly to discuss continued opportunities for collaboration, progress made, areas of concern and joint response to incidents.
- The YVPAT will become a working group meeting to allow for collaboration at the practice level. In addition, the YVPAT will report to the Denver Children's Cabinet at the executive level, which will meet quarterly.
- Each metric in the dashboard will be assigned ownership to a department and staff member who will pull from existing metrics in their department to update the joint dashboard.
- OCA will implement dashboard updates at YVPAT meetings as a standing agenda item so assigned owners are able to provide progress reports and share concerns at meetings.
- OCA will develop a community reporting mechanism to share metrics and analyze findings to keep the public informed about YVPAT progress.

acknowledgements

CITY STAFF & PARTNERS

Allison Barney, Youth Service Manager,
Denver Public Library

Amy Beery, Deputy Director,
Denver Human Services

Armando Saldate, Executive Director,
Denver Department of Safety

Benita A. Martin, Diversion Program Manager,
Denver District Attorney's Office

Beth McCann, Denver District Attorney,
Denver District Attorney's Office

Brooke Byrd, Human Trafficking Division,
Denver District Attorney

Chief Ron Thomas, Chief of Police,
Denver Police Department

Dr. Lisa Piscopo, Executive Strategist,
Denver Human Services

Dr. Matthew Lunn, Director of Strategic
Initiatives, Denver Police Department

Ernest Daniels, Diversion and Criminal
Justice Office, Denver Department of Safety

Felicia Rodriguez, Youth Violence Prevention
Manager, Denver Office of Children's Affairs

Jay Salas, Director of Office of Financial
Empowerment & Protection, Denver Office of
Human Rights & Community Partnerships

Joel Pace, Youth & Community Engagement
Director, Denver Office of Children's Affairs

Joey Trujillo, Department of Climate and
Safety, Denver Public Schools

June Marcel, Chief of Staff,
Community Hubs Strategy,
Denver Public Schools

Kevin Lwango, Program Administrator,
Youth Empowerment Programs,
Denver Human Services

Kerry Tipper, City Attorney,
Denver City Attorney's Office

Kimberly Howard, Chief Probation Officer,
Denver Juvenile Probation

Melissa Janiszewski, MSW, Executive Director,
Denver Office of Children's Affairs

Nachshon Zohari, Program Manager Behavioral
Health, Denver Public Health & Environment

Nicole Monroe, Director, Office of
Violence Solutions, Denver Department of Safety

Patrick Hedrick, Director,
Safety Youth Programs,
Denver Department of Safety

Paul Kashmann, Councilman, District 6,
Denver City Council

Paul Rosenthal, Public Affairs
Community Liaison, Mayors Office

Rick Padilla, Suicide Prevention,
Denver Public Health & Environment

Seth Howsden, Director of Recreation,
Denver Parks and Recreation

Tony Anderson, Director, Denver Department of
Economic Development & Opportunity

Tracy Winchester, Deputy Chief of Staff/Chief
Operations Officer, Mayors Office

Valerie Gonzales, Interim Senior Policy
Advisor, Denver Office of Children's Affairs

DENVER YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Denver Department of Safety Youth
Services Leadership Program

Denver Public Schools Student Voice
& Leadership Program - Photography

Denver Youth Advisory Council

Mayor's Youth Commission

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Dedrick Sims, Chief Executive Officer,
Sims Fayola Foundation

Derek McCoy, Co-Executive Director,
Programs & Partnerships, Project PAVE Inc.

Andrea Viarrial-Murphy, Director of
Giving and Growing, Youth on Record

Kris Rollerson, Executive Director,
Sun Valley Youth Center

LaKeshia Hodge, Founder and Executive
Director, Struggle of Love Foundation

Leo Alirez, Founder and CEO,
Life-Line Colorado & Program Director,
Denver Youth Empowerment Center

Lewis Lease, Studio Manager, Youth Programs
Coordinator, Denver Academy of Movement Arts
dba United Capoeira Association Colorado

Preston Adams, Co-Founder,
Fully Liberated Youth

youth violence prevention across the u.s.

As part of the Denver Youth Violence Prevention Action Plan development process, our team conducted a landscape analysis to look at other youth violence prevention plans and resources being implemented in different areas across the country.

We are providing links to all the plans reviewed in our landscape analysis as both a reference for providers and acknowledgment of the innovative work being done in other communities.

REVIEWED PLANS

A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, 2016

Aurora Youth Violence Prevention Program Strategic Plan, CITY OF AURORA, 2022

Baltimore City Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan, CITY OF BALTIMORE, 2021

Baltimore City Gang Violence Prevention Plan, JOHNS HOPKINS CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF YOUTH VIOLENCE, 2006

Our City, Our Safety: A Comprehensive Plan to Reduce Violence in Chicago, CITY OF CHICAGO, 2020

Prevention: A Strategy for Safe Streets & Neighborhoods, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, 2007

Primary Violence Prevention through Positive Youth Development, MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, 2016

Reimagining Public Safety: Moving Towards Safe, Healthy & Hopeful Communities, CITIES UNITED, 2020

The Philadelphia Roadmap to Safer Communities, CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, 2019

SOURCES

2020 Community Health Assessment, DENVER DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT/DENVER HEALTH, 2020

Children's Exposure to Violence: A National Survey, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, 2009

Colorado legislature on rising youth violence: "We're at a crisis", COLORADO POLITICS, 2022

Denver Aurora Youth Empowerment Compact, DENVERMAYOR'SOFFICE/AURORAMAYOR'SOFFICE, 2020

Denver Human Services Data Library, DENVER HUMAN SERVICES, 2023

Denver Youth Violence Prevention Action Table: Comprehensive Plan, DENVER OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS, 2020

Denver Youth Violence Prevention Action Table Strategic Planning Presentation, DENVER OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS, 2021

Denver Youth Violence Prevention COVID-19 Short-Term Action Plan, DENVER OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS, 2020

Denver Youth Violence Prevention Needs Assessment, CU DENVER SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, 2020

Empower Denver Behavioral Health Strategic Plan, DENVER DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT, 2021

Healthy Kids Colorado Survey Results, COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT, 2021

How gun violence affects youth in Denver, DENVER HEALTH, 2019

Reducing Youth Violence: A Comprehensive Community Approach, DENVER OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS, 2020

Road to Wellness Framework, DENVER DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT, 2020

We got this Survey Analysis Presentation, DENVER DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT, 2022

Youth Program Partner Data: Site, Services & Outcomes, DENVER OFFICE OF FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT & PROTECTION, 2022

Youth Violence Prevention Program Inventory, DENVER OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS, 2020

Together, may we build a
better world for our youth
to grow, thrive and live.

thank
you.



CONTACT

Melissa Janiszewski, MSW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
melissa.janiszewski@denvergov.org

Felicia Rodriguez
YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION
PROGRAM MANAGER
felicia.rodriquez@denvergov.org

