Lessons from the Field

Empowering Students, Schools & Communities through Community Violence Interventions

Wednesday, June 15, 2022 | 3:00 – 4:15 PM ET

Transcript

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to today's webinar, Empowering Students, Schools, and Communities through Community Violence Intervention. I'd like to welcome Ms. Ruth Ryder to speak with us and to provide a welcome and opening comments for our webinar. Ms. Ryder is the deputy assistant secretary in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the US Department of Education. Ruth?

Ruth Ryder: Thank you so much, Cindy. Before I welcome you all to today's webinar, I want to take a moment to acknowledge that we are living during a time of often unpredictable levels of violence that is affecting our schools and our communities. Our country has experienced yet another tragic shooting. This time in Uvalde, Texas where innocent 2nd, 3rd and 4th graders, and their teachers fell victim to senseless gun violence. The secretary of education, Miguel Cardona, called on all of us to unite as a country against this senseless cycle of violence, act immediately to protect our children, and make sure that every child and every educator feels safe in our schools. At the Department of Education, we are offering every available federal resource including through our project, SERV; that's School Emergency Response to Violence Program. We released $1.5 million to Uvalde this week for critical mental health support. We are also providing on the ground support to help the families, educators, staff, and the greater Robb Elementary community to recover from this trauma and the loss.

All of us at the department recognize the increased challenge of creating a safe and supportive school environment in the face of nearly daily reports of mass violence. Given the unprecedented level of violence affecting our young people and communities, the topic of this webinar, Empowering Students, Schools, and
Communities through Community Violence Interventions is especially timely and poignant. All students and all school personnel have the right to learn and work in environments that are safe from violence. We have gathered experts and practitioners together today to share information about the prevalence and impact of violence on our students and communities; resources that can assist you in your community violence prevention efforts; and stories about how several districts are acting now to lessen violence in their communities. We expect this webinar will provide you with tools to intervene in the escalating violence in our communities and the hope to take action to prevent violence and build safer school communities for all students and staff.

This webinar is part of our Lessons from the Field Webinar Series. The Lessons from the Field Webinars highlight the effective tools, techniques, and strategies employed by everyday practitioners to address the challenges of the pandemic; to strengthen the resilience of students; and to provide meaningful support to staff. Throughout the series, we have addressed a variety of high priority topics facing America’s educators in this challenging time. You can access recorded webinars from the series at the website now being shared in the chat.

Thank you for being here to consider community violence intervention strategies. If you have additional strategies to share, please contact us at bestpracticesclearinghouse@ed.gov. We’ll post that address in the chat now. Please make note of it and let us know what you are doing to create safer school environments. Our work is stronger together and we all benefit from the sharing of effective strategies. I hope we hear from many of you following today’s session. Thank you again for your participation today. Welcome to the webinar. For all of you, we appreciate what you do to strengthen our schools for staff and students alike. Now Cindy’s going to provide some logistical information for the webinar and introduce our speakers. Back to you, Cindy.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you, Ruth, for that heartfelt welcome and your kind words in these challenging times. I’d like to begin by talking a little bit about NCSSLE. We are a part of the US Department of Education. We are funded through them and provide training and technical assistance, and a variety of different resources on the website. To be able to give you a taste of what we have on our website, you can see on this slide some resources on the left, which are helpful to create that safe and supportive learning environment; and on the right side, you have the hot topics that are coming up for educators nationwide. We attempt to provide a variety of resources. We encourage you to please visit our website to be able to take advantage of the different resources there.

Please note also that all the materials you see today, including the slides, referenced resources, and the recorded version of this webinar, will also be available on this website. Some of these items, including the slides and the speaker bios, have already been posted to the website. Please note that you can also access previous Lessons from the Field Webinar Series that Ruth mentioned by going to the website and watching those recordings.
The slide that we're looking at now provides us a little snapshot about who all is in the webinar with you. We asked you when you register to tell us your role. What is your role within the schools or your communities that brought you to our webinar today? You can see that our biggest column, 23% of other. That other column includes folks from Juvenile Justice and Residential Treatment; staff who work at district levels; consultants; various, different government employees; local state and national public health staff; national educator professional associations; and others. You can also see that we have 18% of state educational staff and students support personnel. We also have a smattering of folks who are school administrators, several community-based organization folks, and advocates who are participating in on this webinar. We have smaller amounts of folks who are in the local education roles, school-based health centers and families, and parents. We have community board members as well. It's a pretty diverse group that we have on the webinar with us today and we're pleased to have you all here. You can see that we have nearly 700 folks coming into the webinar today.

Now I'd like to go ahead and review the agenda. We've already done most of number 1, the introduction and logistics. We also did number 2; we've heard from Ms. Ruth Ryder. Our next area that we're going to be going to will be into the introduction from the CDC, who's going to provide an overview of community violence intervention strategies, and that will be done by Dr. Elizabeth Parker. We also are going to be hearing about community violence interventions in educational settings from Ms. Loredana Valtierra. Then we're going to move into our panel discussion and then finally into a closing.

Now I'd like to just briefly talk about who's in the room with us. I've already mentioned some of them. You can see from this slide that we have a vast, a broad breadth of professionals here who are experts in the field, experts in community violence interventions, and practitioners who are doing the work on the ground. We tried to have a variety of folks including people at the research levels and school levels, as well as people within the school systems themselves who are doing work with young people. You can see the link at the bottom of the page where you can go and get detailed biographies of all our presenters.

Now I'd like to introduce and welcome Dr. Elizabeth Parker who's a behavioral scientist and senior service fellow from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who will provide an overview of the community violence prevention strategies to provide context for our panel discussion. Dr. Parker?

**Elizabeth Parker:**

Thank you, Cindy. Hi, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name's Elizabeth Parker. As Cindy said, I'm a behavioral scientist in the Division of Violence Prevention at the CDC. Today, I'm going to provide you a brief introduction to community violence prevention strategies. But before I start, like Ruth, I also want to acknowledge the horrific acts of violence and racism that have occurred across our country in the last several weeks. I know you're all aware of this, though it may not receive quite as much attention, but there's the equivalent of a mass shooting when we consider firearm homicides
involving young Black males and firearm suicides involving middle-aged males each and every average day. While there aren't adequate words to capture the recent tragic loss of life, I want to express my deepest sorrow and empathy for the victims, survivors, and their families.

Violence is often the result of a complex set of factors. My intention today is to really start a conversation about how we begin to address those factors and work together to develop and implement strategies that can reduce the impact of these tragic events. This is our roadmap for the next eight to 10 minutes. You can see I’m compressed with time, so let's get moving. As we all know, in the United States, interpersonal violence is a significant public health problem among youth and adolescents. In 2020 alone, 6,751 youth, ages 10 to 24 years, were victims of homicide making it the second leading cause of death among this age group. Black or African American non-Hispanic youth are disproportionately impacted by violence with homicide being the leading cause of death. Most youth homicide victims are killed with the firearm of the 6,700 homicides. Approximately 92% involved firearms as the mechanism of injury. Violence is also a significant cause of morbidity. In 2020, nearly 356,000 youth, ages 10 to 24 years, were treated in an emergency department for an assault-related injury.

To make sure we're all on the same page, I wanted to start out by defining community violence. Community violence happens between unrelated individuals who may or may not know each other and this generally occurs outside the home. Examples include assaults or fights among groups and shootings in public places such as schools and on the streets. While violence affects all of us, some populations experience it more than others. An individual's health outcomes, including their exposure to violence, are influenced by conditions in which they live, work, play, and learn. These conditions are often referred to as the social determinants of health. The social determinants of health, which include things like systemic racism, discrimination, concentrated poverty, limited education, and limited job opportunities to just name a few, are the drivers of many of the health inequities we experience in this country including violence. Black or African American, American Indian, and Alaskan native, and Hispanic or Latino persons are often disproportionately experiencing these negative conditions, which places them at greater risk for poor physical and mental health outcomes.

I want to shift the conversation a little and talk about how to prevent or reduce community violence. That's through creating comprehensive prevention plans that include a range of evidence-based programs, policies, and practices addressing the underlying conditions contributing to violence. By this, I mean prevention plans should consider addressing those social determinants of health. There's a fairly robust body of literature that shows multiple prevention strategies are effective at reducing violence and its associated risk factors. The CDC's Division of Violence Prevention has a resource that we refer to as the Technical Package. In this package are summaries of some of the best available
evidence for preventing youth and community violence, and their associated risk factors.

Now this is just a snapshot or a summary table of some of the evidence that can be found in that Technical Package. This resource highlights seven strategies, which are listed in the left-hand column. They include strategies like strengthening economic supports; providing quality education early in life; connecting youth to caring adults and activities; and intervening to lessen harms and prevent future risk. Then you see in the right-hand column approaches that advance those violence prevention strategies. Now we don't have enough time today, but that Technical Package then goes on to describe examples of programs, policies, and practices that are associated with each approach and strategy.

Today, I did want to highlight three programs from the Technical Package that are school related and may be of interest to you all. The first program is Chicago Safe Passage. This program provides students safe routes to and from school by placing highly visible community members along these routes to monitor and assist students' safe travel. There are research studies that show that this program is associated with improvements with school attendance and significant reductions in overall crime in monitored areas compared to unmonitored areas. Another program I wanted to highlight is called Year Up. This is a national training program that teaches students in urban communities high-demand technical and professional skills. It connects them with employers and it also provides college credits through agreements with local colleges. A study of Europe found associations between participation in the program and protective factors for youth and community violence including increases in employment, higher earnings, and reductions in financial hardships.

Then the last program I wanted to raise up is School Restorative Justice Programs. These programs build relationships to resolve conflict and avoid harm instead of suspending or expelling students. Restorative Justice Programs are usually implemented as an alternative to traditional policies that are more punishment-focused. A systematic review found that restorative practices are associated with a range of benefits when compared to traditional discipline practices including lower rates of aggression and bullying, as well as fewer suspensions and expulsions.

I think we all can acknowledge preventing violence requires the involvement and support of a wide array of partners: public partners, private partners, and community-based organizations, as well as all levels of government. In order to develop partnerships, a few steps should happen. The first is to identify those partners. All sectors have a role in preventing violence. In the Technical Package that I referenced earlier, the CDC has identified sectors that are well positioned to bring leadership and resources for the specific programs and practices being implemented. The second step is to begin developing those partnerships. Once you've established the purpose of your group, go on to identify key stakeholders who are necessary to your efforts and start engaging them in those
conversations. Then lastly, sustaining partnerships. The key to maintaining partnerships is to identify the benefits that the collaboration provides to all of those involved. You also want to make sure to establish clear lines of communication as well as trust and mutual respect.

If you'd like to read more about developing and sustaining partnerships, I know I just scratched the surface today, as well as more information about implementation considerations, I'd recommend visiting the CDC's Violence Prevention and Practice webpage and that's the link at the bottom. I'm sure it'll be dropped in the chat as well.

As we all know almost too well, community violence is a significant and devastating public health problem in this country. Thankfully though, there are several scientifically supported policies, programs, and practices that can be implemented to begin addressing violence and its risk factors. When you start laying out your prevention plans, consider making them comprehensive and think about focusing on improving the social, economic, structural, and physical conditions that really contribute to violence.

I want to thank you all for the opportunity to speak with you today. If you'd like to reach out to me, my contact information is listed on this final slide as well as some links to the resources that I've referenced throughout my brief presentation. Thank you all.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you for your words, Dr. Parker. I think you brought up many valuable resources as well as providing that great context for our panel discussion. Thank you. Now I'd like to introduce Ms. Loredana Valtierra. She is the special assistant in the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development with the US Department of Education. She's going to provide some more context information for us. Loredana?

Loredana Valtierra: Thank you. Good afternoon. First, thank you to the educators and the school support personnel who have joined today's webinar for all of your tireless efforts to meet students' needs as we continue to grapple with the pandemic and significant community violence. Your presence today speaks to your commitment to your students. Like Dr. Parker, I want to acknowledge the tragic loss of life in Uvalde taken too soon, but also acknowledge that this amount of loss is the reality that occurs every day in far too many communities. It just looks differently and is hidden under a different radar. I'm no stranger to experiencing grief for the loss of a beloved student due to community violence. Last year, my hometown of Chicago experienced its deadliest year since the early '90s with more Chicago children dying of gun violence than dying from COVID.

We know that summer and the heat only exacerbate this likelihood across cities across the country. It's important to have this conversation at the top of every summer especially. Far too often, when we talk about gun violence and school, we hyper focus on mass school shootings, which only account for a fraction of
child gun deaths in the United States and stop short there because we don't often associate the gun violence that occurs outside of schoolhouse doors as an educational issue. But in 2020, a GAO report found that most school-associated shootings occur on school grounds or at school-related events in predominantly urban and of color communities. At the department, we are conscientious that community violence is an adverse childhood experience. Just because it may occur outside of the schoolhouse, it doesn't mean that schools don't have a responsibility in mitigating and helping students build the resiliency skills necessary to overcome that trauma.

It's not a question of prevention just for our youngest students. It's also about intervening when they've reached adolescence, have had multiple adverse childhood experiences that lead them to look for belonging anywhere if they don't feel that at home or at school. Students don't need to just be somewhere. They need to be excited in the spaces that we're offering and engaged, and being part of the solution like some of our panelists will discuss today. The work discussed in the webinar today doesn't just make a difference in academic or social, emotional trajectories of our students, but it is most importantly having a role of actually protecting their lives.

The Biden Administration encourages all of us to take ownership in a similar manner over the solution. It's about collective action where each part of the community has something to offer, which is why you'll see that reflected in departmental actions mainly through Secretary Cardona's priority for interagency and cross community collaboration priority in our discretionary grant programs such as Project Prevent, which Congress funded at $5 million this year. The Biden Administration also established a cohort of 16 cities that have actually committed to using their American Rescue Plan dollars towards community violence intervention strategies. Our very own NCSSLE provides targeted coaching for ed grantees in those cities. If you're joining us today from one of those cities and have not heard about these efforts, I highly encourage you to reach out to your city officials to cross collaborate and ensure that these efforts are reaching your students as well.

The department has also highlighted that American Rescue Plan funds can be used toward targeting community violence intervention strategies like you'll hear today. We've also released this in a Dear Colleague Letter reiterating the allowable uses like mentorship, targeted counseling, and skills and work-based programming for students available under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grants and Title IV-A that can support community violence interventions. Finally, with new budget increases to our Full-Service Community Schools Discretionary Grant Program and our Promise Neighborhoods Grant Program, we plan to prioritize upcoming new grantees that will work across communities in the manner I've just described to pool resources to tackle the community violence holistically. But really, I want to get to our panelists and be able to do that deep dive, so you can hear from them. I'll turn it back over to Cindy. Thank you.
Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you so much for all of that information, Loredana. There's quite a bit of detail there. I hope that everyone can check out the chat. There's a lot of links that went in there related to what Loredana had shared with us today.

Now I'd like to invite our panelists to turn on their webcams. We have Dr. Denise Davis-Cotton, director of the Florida Center for PAInT at the University of South Florida in Sarasota, Manatee; Josh Peterson, who's the manager in the Office of Violence Prevention at Minneapolis Health Department; Dr. Jackie Vertigan, who is the district program facilitator in Minneapolis Public Schools; Brandon Krona, who is the program coordinator for Building Peaceful Schools in Minneapolis Public Schools; Karlton Harris, who is a youth violence expert and actually works with an organization called the... Oh, my goodness. I'm losing it here. Called The Forgotten Third. Sorry about that. Finally, we have Dr. Jomella Watson-Thompson, who is the director of Service Learning and associate professor for the Department of Applied Behavioral Science at the University of Kansas.

Okay. Welcome all of you. We appreciate you all being here and we're excited to begin our panel discussion. I'd like to begin with you, Dr. Davis-Cotton, with our first question. What community violence intervention approaches are you exploring or implementing right now?

Denise Davis-Cotton: Through professional development, we establish partnerships designed to mitigate racial and ethnic disparities in school discipline and program offerings. Arts integration, as we define it at the PAInT Center, is an integration of programs that we develop through agency. Our students, we make sure that we provide the capacity to provide access and opportunities that build identity and agency through more engagement and events and experiences, and less enforcement of strict security measures that reproduce structural policies that are targeted at minoritized students for their behaviors and neglected social, historical misunderstandings that influence behavior.

For example, when I founded Detroit School of the Arts, I formed relationships with Michigan Opera, Detroit Symphony Orchestra in spaces and places who historically and traditionally were not frequented by students of color or audiences of color. We continue these programs through the PAInT Center. We provide a fluid system that promotes the philosophy that the new mission of school prepares students for work at jobs that do not exist and create ideas and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified, and use technologies that have not yet been invented.

With that, we promote arts integration through the definition of equity and equality. Equality is given everybody a shoe; equity is given everyone a shoe that fits. Through arts integration, we have learned that social, cultural, educational practices across race, class, gender, and disability in classrooms have exasperated racial and ethnic disparities that require the need to reduce the disciplinary divide. We leverage programming that are asset-based and create asset-based mindsets over deficit-based mindsets, focus on equity
commitment outcomes, both academic and developmental. In Sarasota, we work on a program called Sarasota Against Violence because we know that promoting safer school environments is a family affair. Home is a school zone, too. We provide access and opportunity that include breaking the cycle of generational poverty. As Gloria Ladson-Billing states, it's not a culture of poverty, but a poverty of culture, which I hope to talk about later.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Great. Thank you so much for all of that. Now I'd like to invite Josh Peterson. Respond to the same question, please.

Josh Peterson: Thanks, Cindy. Afternoon again, everybody. I'm Josh Peterson and I am the manager of Operations and Programs with the City of Minneapolis Office of Violence Prevention. Of course, I just want to briefly thank you all for spending your time with us today and thank the organizers for having me, and thank my esteemed panelists for letting me tag alongside and ride your coattails here. Thank you all for that.

I just want to start very briefly with an overview of our Office of Violence Prevention. We use a community-focused public health approach to help ensure that everybody in Minneapolis can be free from violence. But we believe that with collaborative public health approaches and responses, we can help prevent violence from happening in the first place. We can intervene in cycles of violence at the first sign of risk. Then finally, we can help individuals and communities heal from violence. When I say that our work use a public health approach, part of what that means to me is that our work is guided really by several core beliefs.

The first of those is that violence is not inevitable. The second is that violence is complex. It's about much more than individual characteristics and choices. Really, violence has roots in social conditions and economic conditions and political conditions, and cultural conditions. The third is that complex problems require complex solutions. As we think about violence prevention and intervention, we really need to think about a balance between immediate strategies that can address pressing urgent needs and also long term upstream approaches. We can think about sustainable solutions. The fourth thing that's really key to understanding this is that, we've talked about this already, violence takes an unequal toll on communities of color and nonspecific neighborhoods. Really, as we think about violence prevention intervention work, we have to think about including work that addresses racism and systemic inequities. Then the last piece for us is really this idea that, again, everybody has a role to play in creating communities that don't include violence.

We have a whole host of programs and initiatives that fall under three primary categories here: the first is Evidence-Informed Strategies; the second is Capacity Building and Innovation; and the third is Youth-Centered Prevention and Intervention. I would love to talk about all of our programs and initiatives, but unfortunately we would run out of time if I did that. Instead, from Minneapolis, we're going to share just a couple of specific partnerships we've had with
schools over the years. For the past few years, we've been fortunate to receive some funding from CDC's Division of Violence Prevention to support a couple of different intervention strategies implemented with our school partners. For the remainder of the webinar, I'm going to talk a little bit about one of those strategies, which is called Coaching Athletes Into Leaders, which is a strategy focused on reducing team dating violence and building healthy relationships. I think relationship violence may feel a little tangential to what we might sometimes define as community violence, but I still think it's relevant for a couple of reasons.

The first is that we know that there are risk and protective factors that are shared between multiple forms of violence and that crosscutting approaches can be really effective. CDC actually has a great tool around that called Connecting the Dots. Then second, we've seen here how relationship conflicts can escalate quickly into other forms of violence as well; so I think it's relevant here. Then also, we're fortunate to have with us today a couple of great partners from Minneapolis Public Schools, Dr. Jackie Vertigan and Mr. Brandon Krona. They're going to talk about some other new work focused on building peaceful and protective environments by improving the school climate and safety and participation, or in partnership with young people.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Great. Thank you. Sounds like you're doing some amazing work. I appreciate that. Then, Mr. Karlton Harris, if you'd like to respond to: What community violence intervention approaches you're exploring or implementing currently?

Karlton Harris: Community violence to the Houston-Harris County area, The Forgotten Third, I am the newly appointed executive director of The Forgotten Third, which is a nonprofit organization focusing on preventing youth violence as well as alternatives to incarceration for our youth in Houston-Harris County. One of our key strategic partnerships is the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department as well as the Houston Independent School District. The work that we're primarily focusing on, as it relates to education, is the implicit biases that happen on educational campuses, as it relates to the policy and their code of conduct. Also, the challenges that our youth have coming out of the juvenile justice system and re-enrolling onto their educational campuses.

Our most recent strategy as the Harris County Re-Entry Work Group, we came together, drafted a letter to the superintendent of Houston Independent School District, and we talked about House Bill 2184, which was a bill that was put in place to really protect the educational rights of our youth who are transitioning out of facilities and back into their homeschool base. In that, it states that within five days of our youth being released from any facility, they need to have a educational plan in place. What we happen to know is that on these educational campuses that, of course, there's a disproportionality of penalties and infractions that are handed out to boys and young men of color. Thus, affecting that school-to-prison pipeline or that school-to-prison nexus, which I like to call it.
During restorative circles, restorative practice, more than being more punitive on educational campuses, allowing for these school districts to look at their code of conduct and their policy, look at their zero tolerance policy and how it affects the education and the wellbeing of our youth. But then also, providing the youth, who are coming out of these transitional facilities, credible messengers and mentors that can help guide them. Using incredible messenger-mentor model, which is that peer-to-peer based on experience, we have come to the realization that our youth are more successful when they have someone that they can identify with to provide them with some strategies on how to overcome the barriers that prevent them from successfully reintegrating back into their homeschool base as well as the community.

We've partnered with school districts. We're going to continue to do that work with the Harris County Re-Entry Work Group. Our main primary focus is number one, preventing our youth from recidivating in the juvenile justice system and looking at how many referrals are coming from the educational campuses; how many of our youth had in-school and out-of-school suspensions; and how that pipeline has been formed to really enable the system to pretty much enable our youth to have these challenges coming out of the facilities that they were placed in from these educational campuses. I look forward to talking more about that and the strategies, and the recommendations that our re-entry work group has come up with and made to the Houston Independent School District. Thank you.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that overview. You, as well as everyone else who's talked so far, have been getting lots of little reactions, I'm seeing. Now I'd like to invite Dr. Watson-Thompson in to tell us a little bit about what you're doing right now around community violence interventions.

Jomella Watson-Thompson: Definitely. Good afternoon. Thanks for the opportunity to share some of our approaches to community violence intervention through the Youth Violence Prevention Center Kansas City, which works as a part of a network of Youth Violence Prevention Centers, in partnership with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Particularly, what I'll touch on now and then share more later is really our approach is supporting comprehensive or multi-component strategies. In this case, we implement an approach called ThrYve, which stands for Together Helping to Reduce Youth Violence for Equity, and ultimately, the youth mobilization and the community mobilization strategy. There are two core components of the ThrYve approach, which integrates both youth engagement and wraparound supports, as well as hospital violence prevention programs. I'll share more about how we do that work within the context of our Youth Violence Prevention Center Kansas City.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so very much. We appreciate you being here and look forward to hearing more details as we move forward. Now we're going to move to our second question. I'd like to start with you, Josh. The second question is:
How are you doing these community violence interventions? If they've shifted over time, how has that shift happened? Does it look good?

Josh Peterson:

Yeah. Thanks, Cindy. I mentioned that I’d be talking about a strategy we call Coaching Athletes Into Leaders. This work is rooted in an evidence-based curriculum called Coaching Boys Into Men. The curriculum is designed to train and motivate high school coaches to teach their athletes about healthy relationships and the idea that violence never equals strength. The key to the intervention really is that partnership with school coaches. It would be one thing for me, as a public health guy or as the guy from the city, to walk into a locker room or onto a field and start having conversations with athletes about healthy relationships. But really, it’s another thing all together for that conversation to come from a coach who’s got that trust and the credibility, and the relationships that they hold with the athletes.

Really it’s, again, predicated on that strength of that relationship between the coach and the athlete. We recognize that there's value in having these conversations with athletes both because athletes are engaged in relationships themselves, but they also often tend to be peer leaders in the school buildings. By setting that tone among athletes, they can really start to change and shift some of the culture in school buildings.

The curriculum is free to use and it's available online. Any of you working in or on behalf of schools right now could go out and start doing it. CBM was, as you may guess, originally designed to be used with male identifying athletes, but there is actually a version out now for female identifying athletes as well called Athletes as Leaders. I personally would say this is what we did here, which is why you hear me saying Coaching Athletes Into Leaders. Because I think it's really important to consider adaptations even further to make it more inclusive, recognizing the wide range of gender identity and gender diversity, and really just make sure that all young people feel comfortable and included. I think that the language can be a little bit limiting. I think it's really important to keep that in mind.

I think also if you're interested in this approach, you could approach your local health department or an organization doing healthy relationship work and violence prevention work to see if they might want to partner as we did with Minneapolis Public Schools. Under our grant from the CDC, we partnered with Minneapolis Public Schools to implement the curriculum through a number of sports at a number of different high schools. When we did it, we had a health department staff, the great Ms. April Graves, who actually became a trainer and then trained the coaches at the high schools. In addition to that, she also co-facilitated some of the lessons because it did bring up some conversations that the coaches maybe didn't always feel equipped to have with their young people. Having someone from our health department there was a really useful tool as a co-facilitator. She also was able to support some of the survey and data capture work there. Really, all of that made things just a bit easier for the coaches,
which meant that we could be more successful then in reaching more players and more teams.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. Thank you. I like that idea of the health department partnering in there with the coaches to facilitate with you. That's a great combo. All right. I'd like to hear from Brandon.

Brandon Krona: Thank you for having me. My name is Brandon Krona. I am the project coordinator for the Building Peaceful Schools Initiative here at the Minneapolis Public School District. I will give a little bit of a scope of the work that I am doing and then my wonderful boss, Dr. Vertigan, will give you a little bit more of an overview of what we have going on through the grants and the grant work. Again, my name is Brandon Krona. I am the project manager for the Building Peaceful Schools. Right now, my scope of work is engaging into high schools in our district, developing student leadership and violence prevention, giving them a voice, and allowing them to tell us how they want the work done.

A lot of people would ask, "How do you do that?" With great partnerships. A big shout-out to the CDC and the City of Minneapolis who are believing in our vision before I had came onto the team about what our vision was for this project. Another way is partnering with our schools that we are working with and the communities that are around them, building those relationships in the building with adults. Also administration staff and community members, giving them an overview of what our vision is. One of our big partners is the Nonviolent Peaceforce. The Nonviolent Peaceforce has been around since 2002, working in conflict resolutions globally and places where conflicts are evident. Their vision is reimagining security, transforming communities, advocating change in areas most impacted by conflict by working alongside communities to interrupt and prevent violence. They have been a huge partner with us as we move forward.

We believe that the Nonviolent Peaceforce's trainings and vision on community mapping, window of tolerance, trigger and anchor points is a right step in a direction in trainings to help our students, community, and staff members build on our vision here at the Minneapolis Public Schools on a student-led initiative. One last point is we really emphasize on creating a group of youth-focused leaders to help engage with our students through this process. We have leaders within their communities and their buildings, and on our staff consistently with them when I'm not around or my boss is not around to help lead them through the process, to help process through the day, and work on some of those trainings that they will get over time in some of their own critical situations that they may deal with on a daily basis. That's my scope of work. I'll pass it off to my wonderful boss, Dr. Vertigan, to give you a little bit more of an overview.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. Thank you, Brandon. Dr. Vertigan?

Jackie Vertigan: Hello. Afternoon, everyone. Brandon has done a wonderful job, I think, outlining our partnerships in the work that we're doing. I think the one thing I want to lift
up a little bit here is the idea that this really is about youth leadership. Right now, our work is really about those groups of youth that Brandon's been able to recruit, our school staff have pointed in our direction, and who are becoming the leaders and helping us to take what Nonviolent Peaceforce, and our other partners have done and say, "All right. What does this really mean for us as students? How can we bring this? What do we want to do when we bring this forward to our peers?" We're in early stages, but we're seeing a lot of really good things with that and it's really about that youth development. I want to just highlight that piece. Otherwise, great job, Brandon.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much for those additional details. We appreciate that. Now I'd like to move over to Karlton.

Karlton Harris: Thank you so much. I love the voices that I hear about incorporating our youth and making sure that they have a seat at the table. I like to start off by saying that any program that we designed for our youth, we need to realize that our youth should not be at the table. We must realize that they are the table, right? They should help us in the designing and the implementing of the programs and making sure that they have a voice. That's one of the key things that we work on, is making sure that our youth have a voice.

Even for those who are experiencing challenges on educational campuses, whatever the administrator may look at a challenge for them, we'll ask the youth, "What do you think the solution may be?" As the youth begin to provide us solutions, we begin to implement those solutions and they get to buy-in from the student who's participating in not only a program, but a program that they help design. I think that that's very important because now they have some ownership and they have some accountability not only to themselves, but also to their peers and the support system that is in place to help them.

I think one of the key things for us is, again, we're looking at justice involved youth. We're looking at youth that are being suspended, whether it's an in-school or out-of-school suspension on educational campuses. The students that are labeled as being "problem children" are those that may be challenging, but I like to also say that they're underserved. Because I believe that in these underserved communities, if our students are served properly, then we help them become more successful. We really strengthen them in the numbers and the partnerships, and the support that we provide for them.

Our main thing is giving our youth the platform, giving them a voice, allowing for them to help create the program, and give us strategy on how to implement the program. What are some alternatives to incarceration? What are some alternatives to in-school, out-school suspensions? We understand restorative circles and restorative justice, but I think the main thing here is allowing for our youth and the students to tell us what are their struggles and their challenges. Because oftentimes, what we found out is that student, they're coming to the school that's acting out may be acting out for some attention. He may have or she may have encountered some type of trauma that has been untreated, right?
When we look at trauma-informed care and working with our students, finding out what's going on at home in their community. Seeing a parent arrested is traumatizing in of itself. Now a youth who has been arrested themselves, now going to a facility, and trying to successfully reintegrate back into the community is even more challenging.

Our main goal is making sure that our youth have a voice and making sure that they realize that we work for them. We are public servants, that they are the table, and we want them to help lead the way. We support them because they’re not our future; they’re our present.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Wonderful. That's a great quote, I think, that the youth are the table. If it wasn’t for them and their participation, we really wouldn’t be doing what we do to help support them. I appreciate that and I also appreciate that all of you have been focusing so much on positive youth development principles. Thank you. Now I’d like to go ahead and move to Dr. Watson-Thompson.

**Jomella Watson-Thompson:** Sure. I'm happy to share about how we support the ThrYve multi-component approach. As a collaborative effort, it's based upon participatory approaches for really how we engage our community and how we also engage our youth in creating sustained change. As we heard earlier, that there definitely is disparities, a disproportionate impact as it relates to particularly youth violence for our Black and our Latinx youth in Kansas City and nationally as well. That's a large part of our focus also. Through our ThrYve approach, we really focus it on bringing together lots of different partners. We have over 40 community partners that come together across 13 sectors of our community and different areas. That include our schools, our youth justice agencies, our social service agencies, and the rest to implement what we call change levers. Those are those program policy and practices that have been identified through looking at our data and determining what we need to do that we need to work collaboratively across our systems to move.

Really, how we work with that is then across our sectors, our schools, our health department, there are champions of change levers. I explain it as we have a puzzle board, but across our sectors or across our initiatives, oftentimes we have a puzzle, but we're not putting it on the same puzzle board. Through our ThrYve approach, which is a comprehensive community intervention or approach, it's about doing just that and making sure that we’re all thinking about the evidence-based strategies or the approaches that we’re taking to address risk and protective factors related to preventing youth violence.

Our approach, we work with young people particularly during those pivotal transition years. We start in 8th grade and go through one year post-high school. In that, we are really focused on, as you just noted, positive youth development approaches; so helping to identify and ensure that as our youth are our assets, that we're also providing opportunities and experiences that match their development, both inside and outside of school. A continuum of
supports and across periods of time, breaks when in school and out of school as a continuum is critical and key. We do this in a lot of ways from leadership activities to out-of-school time supports to college readiness supports to employment prep. A lot of times I say, "For none of us, does life happen one thing at a time?" It's the same when we think about our risk and our protective factors protect against that as well. We have to have these multiple strategies with multiple partners, but doing it in ways that are coordinated. In my opinion, that's how we wrap around our young people.

The youth engagement is part of how we do the work and the other key part is through our Hospital Violence Prevention Programs. In our area, we have multiples so that if a young person ends up into our trauma or our emergency rooms, that there's a network of supports that are getting deployed to help that young person and that family while they're in that critical situation, but maintaining that rapport after that young person and family leaves the hospital setting. Working in partnership with schools, social service agencies and others so that we are buffering from the likelihood that that young person will experience that again, so that we can reduce our hospital admission or re-admissions due to violence related intentional injury. That's how we do it and there's a lot of moving parts and pieces with that that I didn't explain, but change levers are the key in having champions.

How it's changed over time? I think some colleagues have already hit on this earlier. We really identified the importance of thinking about restorative practices and continuum of restorative practices, both within our schools. But then, it doesn't just stop there that we're thinking about our trauma-informed, our restorative practices, our cultural relevant practices across settings, so our young people don't have to be the ones that change how they respond every time they move into a new space. But better, we are thinking as those within systems and across systems how we better integrate our supports. That's a large part of what's changed and hopefully how we're doing some of our work better.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. I love that concept of the systems of the adults and those systems changing so that young people can feel at home and welcomed in those spaces. Wonderful. Thank you so much. I'd like to spend just a brief period of time, maybe about one minute each, to hear a little bit from you about the impact that you've noticed from your community violence intervention initiatives. I'd like to begin with Karlton.

Karlton Harris: Yes. I think the impact when you really look at the success of the students and the population that you work with... I'll mention a young man by the name of Asib that I've worked with for the last six years and I was only supposed to work with him for six months. His situation was a fight on an educational campus due to the school policy. He was arrested and then he got a deferred adjudication, but looking at where he's come in the last six years is very impactful. It's encouraging and it's very motivating. I'm really seeing the success of the work and the fruit of your labor manifests in the lives of our youth. I think it's the
Looking at the success of our youth is my answer in a short period of time. Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. I know you can probably speak a lot more about the impacts that you’ve seen. Thank you.

Karlton Harris: Yes.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: I’d like to go to Dr. Watson Thompson.

Jomella Watson-Thompson: Sure. As a community violence intervention program, probably one of the greatest impacts... I’m talking of we have a lot of youth we serve up. 150 youth we directly serve through our ThrYve KU supports... is that our young people are still alive. With that, all that we do ultimately is to help to provide those protective places and spaces. It’s definitely a blessing and we’re glad that is one, that none of our young people we have directly served have experienced the fatality. We’ve had a couple of nonfatal injuries, but that’s probably our greatest success. That’s shared with all the partners in the community.

Additionally, we have implemented over 40% of our change levers. We have 80 change levers programs, policies, and practices across sectors and systems that we're implementing. The fact that we're implementing and continues to implement those and keep partners at the table, and staying engaged is also a key impact because we need that to support our systems for our youth. There are many others, but I will stop there.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Right. So that having folks still being around, there might be injuries, but there haven't been fatalities. That's a pretty humbling measure, but it's also really important to keep that in mind. That's really what this is about, right? Thank you. I'd like to go to Dr. Davis-Cotton, please.

Denise Davis-Cotton: Yes. I'm really glad that we're uplifting the student voice because I think that schools are the heart of the community and students are the heart of schools. Our youth have changed over time and I know that they have experienced a lot, especially in the last couple of years. They are resilient and they take the lead, and the initiative to lead change. One example that I could provide for you of programs that I've worked at... When I was in Detroit, I formed a relationship with Crime Stoppers to create television and radio ads. Now the students have taken on that initiative to create their own programming where they discuss viewpoints related to school violence and other teen issues so that they could provide solutions in the community.

Also, here in Sarasota at the PAInT Center, we have formed a relationship with This Is My Brave to reduce the stigma of mental health; to provide mental health awareness; to ensure that our students have that voice and that they can talk about the mental health issues that they are experiencing. To reduce that...
cycle of poverty at Booker Middle School, a program through our community agencies was a CNA Program where we trained parents to become CNA. They have matriculated from the program and have left from the unemployment realm to the employment arena. We make sure that we look at the whole community from underemployment and unemployment, and poverty to create those institutional structures that could tell the incidences and situations for at risk or underprivileged students that create behaviors that require more informed care.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. It sounds like you've broadened that lens to include that family constellation as well to get the whole community involved. That's wonderful. Thank you. Okay. Now I'd like to go over to Josh.

**Josh Peterson:** Sure. For Coaching Athletes Into Leaders, I have a whole bunch of survey data that I could rattle off. But in the interest of time, I'm going to skip that and just say we've had lots of conversations with young people and coaches about this work. We've consistently heard from the coaches that they understand that they have a responsibility to have these conversations with their athletes, but they don't always have the tools and the skills to do that. They've been just so filled with gratitude around being able to access this resource to be able to be that supportive person for their athletes in those important ways. We've really heard the same from the young people, too. One thing that I want to touch on just for a second is that as we did this work, we really recognize an opportunity to complement some of the work with some positive skill building around emotional awareness and regulation for the young people.

It just so happens that our co-facilitator, Ms. April Graves from our staff, is also a trained yoga instructor. She actually added on to the Coaching Boys Into Men curriculum with yoga and mindfulness for the athletes. We just heard such amazing things from the coaches and the athletes around what it meant and what it felt like to do yoga at practice. April is very active in community. She would see athletes down the street or whatever and she's out, and they'd say, "Hey, Ms. April, when are you coming back to do yoga?" That was really just such a telling bit of the impact that I think that we've seen from that work. It's been really cool and really exciting to see that happen.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Well, that's a great example. As a mindfulness person and Pilates instructor myself, I totally can get behind that. But we know that yoga also is tied to a lot of other great approaches such as trauma, of course, and things like that. Thank you for that example. Okay. I'd like to go ahead and move over to Brandon.

**Brandon Krona:** I would say the impact is the energy from the program, the Building Peaceful Schools Program, so far in the short time we've been together. Making sure we prioritize our student leaders and learning from them, that's going to be key. I think that's one thing that they've learned in the past couple months from us, is that we're actually listening to them and opening up our ears, and hearing what they have to say, and learning from them. Another thing is taking the right steps, not having a big approach. Minneapolis Public Schools is a big school.
district. We could've taken this grant and spread it across the 77 schools that we do have in our district, but what impact are we really making there? Really, making sure that we narrow that scope and moving forward and making sure we know what the kids are looking for. Continuing to listen and really writing down, and taking notes on what they want to see for their future moving forward.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. Thank you. Dr. Vertigan, did you want to jump in?

Jackie Vertigan: I'll just add a little bit to that. I think one of the other pieces that we're seeing come out of that is the development of a model. We had ideas and we had, "Here's what we're going to try and here's a good partnership." But what would a model look like with some place like Nonviolent Peaceforce that has never worked with youth before? How do we bring that in and translate that into materials that the students are responding to? They are. They're responding to it and they're telling us, "And also this." Then we're developing curriculum around that. We're developing next level programming and that then becomes a foundation of what we bring on to the next school. Because Brandon's right, we're going to go deep now and intensive now, but then we're going to take that and we're going to branch that forward into our other schools. Working on some additional grants to also bring that work then down to our middle schools and elementary schools so that we can feed that pipeline of students and develop a whole community of folks who are feeling empowered about taking back their space.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: That's wonderful. I like the idea that you can tell these other schools that the students that you've been working with fed into that curriculum, gave you feedback there. Wonderful. All right. I'd like to hear starting with Karlton again. This question is about: What gives you hope as you move forward in community violence intervention work?

Karlton Harris: I think the main thing that gives us hope here in Houston-Harris County is lives being saved and really seeing lives being changed; and that the work that we're doing is sustainable; and that we have a lot of buy-in from the different sectors in the community, whether it'd be churches, government like the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, the Harris County Juvenile Administration Division, whether it'd be the Commissioner's Court. What gives me hope is that everyone is now listening. They're listening to the voices, not only of the community-based organizations, but also listening to the voices of the youth. I'm very hopeful that since we have a listening ear that the practices and the policies will properly be addressed and the programs we want to implement are financially supported and morally supported to ensure the success of our youth.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. Thank you. Dr. Watson-Thompson?

Jomella Watson-Thompson: Sure. I think actually I'm quite similar what makes me excited as well. Through our ThrYve approach, we have been collaborating with local partners for over
five years and are really excited to see it grow including with our young people. But one thing is that we have had the opportunity to really align it with our Community Health Improvement Plan. Now part of our youth violence prevention strategies are directly part of the CHIP, which such suggests community buy-in and support, integration and sustainability. That excites me. The last thing I would note is just that we are also starting to move upstream with some of our violence prevention interventions and thinking about early literacy and other protective factors. That excites me as well in regards to the possibilities of how our community is aligning and what we may see over time.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you. I like that you and the others have been mentioning that the idea of protective factors is not just about fixing a problem, but it really is about promoting these protective factors that help young people develop. Thank you. Okay. How about Dr. Davis-Cotton? What gives you hope as you work?

**Denise Davis-Cotton:** Yeah. What gives me hope are the youth and their families. As I navigate through these spaces of uncertainty, I know that these youth are prepared. They have dreams. They have hopes and they rejoice in the achievements that they come up with when they create programs that are successful. They know that they are the direction for the future to provide hope for humanity. I am very certain that the goals and outcomes of collaborative partners, not only here in Sarasota, but across this country will indeed provide opportunities that ensure the students walk in strength.

I remember when I was a child, well, a 10th grade student, one of my teachers in theater class asked us to be a tree. She said, whispered in my ear because our eyes were closed, "You are the most beautiful tree in the room." That gave me hope. I knew that I was important and valued. What gives me hope is that as we prepare pre-service teachers and practicing professionals through arts integrated pedagogy and strategies that are culturally inclusive that every teacher and every educator will see all children as beautiful trees in the room.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Oh, that's just so beautiful. I'm not sure about the other panelist, I got a little misty there. That's a great quote. Thank you. Okay. How about Dr. Vertigan?

**Jackie Vertigan:** I don't think I can top that. That affected me, too. Thank you for that. It's beautiful. I think that the last couple of years, this was mentioned earlier, has been really hard. I think that there's been a lot of talking about how hard it's been and how tired we are, and how disempowered we feel. To hear and see youth in spaces together who are talking about what we can do, how can we help, what can we do more of. I'm going to stop there because I know Brandon's got a story he wants to share about that. When I get to go in and listen and watch Brandon and the team work, that's what gives me hope. That's why we're all here.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Wonderful. Thank you so much. Brandon, we can't wait to hear this story. Yeah. Please.
Brandon Krona: Yeah. Thank you, Dr. Vertigan. Appreciate that. I think hope is already happening in our program. I think hope happened when the CDC and the City of Minneapolis partners with us through this grant. I believe hope has already happened when I walked through the door when I was hired. I try to tell our kids and our students that, "Well, we hope to do this. Hope is great, but we're looking for results here in this team." We are going to give the results that they need. A lot of stories have a lot of hopeful endings and we want to see the hope come along, but we want to see results. I believe some of the results are coming.

I had a meeting with one of the schools last week. Two of the girls came to me and said, "Hey, what is our purpose? What are we here for? We want to help people." What they don't realize is they're helping themselves, right? The kids that we targeted, the kids that we're going for are those bubble students. The kids that can be the student council president, but may be in in-school detention half the year, right? We look for hope, but we also look for results. That's our goal in this program, is to continue to believe that there's a hope. We know there's hope out there, but we are going to give these kids the results that they need and they are going to teach us what it is that they need, and their voices are heard.

Kids at a young elementary age, we wonder why they can't stop talking, right? But it seems like as they get older, their voices start to shut down for some reason. Well, this project and program is going to let them uplift their voices and tell us what they told us as kindergartners, first graders, and second graders when we told them, "Please be quiet." Right? We're not going to tell them to be quiet anymore. We want you to tell us what it is that you need to make your community safer and better. Thank you for the time, guys.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful, Brandon. I love that tie in to purpose and hope because they do feed one another for sure. Thank you. Coming around to Josh, would you like to add to the conversation?

Josh Peterson: Yeah. First of all, I agree. You all are very difficult to follow with this question. That's for sure. But I just want to highlight maybe a couple things that stand out to me. The first is I'm just so encouraged by the level of investments and attention being paid at the federal level to this work. I think this webinar is a great example. I think the Prevail funding opportunity that we're fortunate to get from CDC is a great example. The civic initiative from the Biden Administration is a great example. I just think that it's really encouraging to see that level of interest and investment in engaging around this conversation in community violence intervention.

I think at a more local level, I really want to point to the work that Brandon and Jackie, and April are doing with young people in Minneapolis Public Schools. I think that the fact that Minneapolis Public Schools is willing to trust themselves and trust us at the Office of Violence Prevention, and trust young people enough to engage in meaningful conversations with young people about what it
means to build a youth inclusive system for a protective environment in the school building is just so inspiring and so hope inspiring. I think really within that, and this has been touched on a number of times by a number of folks, but really the young people provide so much inspiration. I think their willingness to do this work with us despite all of the complications of being a high school student in 2022 and all of the reasons why they have to not trust systems because trust and systems has been shaken over the past few years, the fact that they're willing to show up and do that work with us just gives me so much hope for today, the year, but really the generation to come.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Wonderful. Thank you so much. Well, you all have been saying some extremely powerful things. The icons, as you can see, are still flowing up with hands up and claps, and hearts. I appreciate all of you in the audience for providing that feedback. I think all of you panelists and also, Loredana and Elizabeth, for all of the information that you provided us today.

As we come to a close, I'd like to bring to your attention that we are interested in your thoughts. You can see here the survey monkey link, which is going also into the chat, for you to be able to provide us that feedback and help guide future webinars, and have your voice be heard just like these students' voices are being uplifted. We also want to remind you that today's presentation will be posted. You can listen to an archive of the presentation. All of the resources that have been shared in the chat will also be posted and the links will be posted there as well so that you can download these resources at any time.

We also encourage you to invite colleagues who maybe couldn't make it today to look at this recording and to provide thoughts and feedback to the Department of Ed on other community violence interventions that you may be doing in your schools and in your communities. We're going to be capturing all of the questions that have come into the Q&A. We'll make sure that that information is shared with the US Department of Education to be able to feed the upcoming Lessons from the Field Webinar Series.

A final thank you to all of you for being here. We had about nearly 700 people registered. We had a lot of people who were able to make it live with us today. We appreciate your active engagement and your use of those icons to let our speakers know what your thoughts were. We'd also like to remind everybody or let everyone know that we have another Lessons from Field Webinar coming up that will be taking place on July 20th. We'll focus on aiding and abetting in continued harassment and abuse, and what we can do about that. Watch for the announcement, which will be coming out soon. Again, we greatly appreciate your time today. We are hopeful that you found good ideas that you might take back to your district to help reduce violence in your schools and in your communities. Have a wonderful rest of the day.