

INTERVENTION

Too often the crimes we read about in the newspaper seem so predictable. A violent felon with a criminal record is charged with a crime, but the judge lets him out on bond, and he commits a new crime. A young man with mental health challenges that concerned his family, friends, school, and church never received the right mental health treatment, but he did get a gun, and used it.

We all do the same thing when we read stories like that. We wonder why nobody stepped in, why nobody did anything, when all the signs were there.

We all play a role in helping our neighbors and communities. No matter what neighborhood you call home, no matter how long you've lived in the City, or if you serve in a branch of government, we all play a critical part in making our City stronger, safer, and better for everyone.

Together with our many partners, we are leading our community's efforts to intervene when someone is in crisis or headed down the wrong path. We've identified many of the risk factors for violence, and we are working to intervene in those individuals' lives.

Silos, rather than a collaborative team made up of every facet of government and community, can hinder success. So, we are working to break down those silos. For example, we're training our police officers and other first responders to identify at-risk young people and to refer them to the social services they need. We also support our partners such as Children's Hospital and Cardinal Glennon, which are creating and expanding a referral system connecting their emergency rooms with outside social service providers. And, we're working with schools, pediatric hospitals, and medical schools to imbed behavioral health professionals in grade schools and high schools. Whether the referrals come from first responders, emergency room nurses or teachers, the social service providers will be empowered to work more collaboratively thanks to the Ready by 21 initiative, which is building bridges between social service providers and encouraging a consistency in approach across the social services community.

Other times, the problem is that effective mental health care is simply not available. So, the City is funding expanded psychiatric services in neighborhoods underserved by the medical community, including investing in a child psychiatric clinic in North St. Louis. The City also advocates for Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act at the state level, and, until Missouri finally catches up with the mainstream by expanding Medicaid, the City will continue to support the Gateway to Better Health's stopgap efforts.

Finally, we must ensure that at-risk young people have a path to follow that will lead them to a healthy, productive life, rather than to a life of crime. To do that, we'll have to continue building our local economy by supporting small local businesses and recruiting new businesses to come to St. Louis. We're doing that. But, we're also focusing more

closely on at-risk youth, with programs like the City's Blueprint for Youth Recreation, which is preparing a list of safe places where young people can go to avoid the guns and drugs that are often too readily accessible on the street and in their neighborhoods. Two other related programs, Truancy Initiative Project and Juvenile Jail Diversion Project, help divert kids with low-level offenses to supportive, healthier alternatives.

These are just a few of the programs we have implemented and are in the process of implementing in the City to intervene with at-risk residents, but we need more to impact more people. If you have innovative ideas for how we, as a community, can better intervene to keep at-risk individuals away from a life of crime, please reach out. Share your idea. We're listening.

INTERVENTION: Identifying and Supporting Those Most at Risk

Both practice and research experience has shown that identifying individuals who are likely to commit crime and directly connecting them to social services is a smart investment that lowers the crime rate. Intervening in individuals' lives before they engage in crime or delinquency is an effective approach – and a key strategy involves identifying those individuals and groups most likely to commit a crime (see Violence Risk Factors).

Societal and Community Interventions

Improving educational systems are a key strategy as high educational attainment is a key resilience factor to avoid delinquency and crime. At the same time, poor performing schools lead to poor academic performance, which often increases the risk of a youth to engage in antisocial behavior and crime.

Mayor Slay and the City have been strong supporters of both St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) and the robust and innovative charter school movement that has expanded over the past decade in St. Louis. Through partnerships with SLPS and the 22nd Judicial Court, the City has worked to reduce truancy, provide financial support to SLPS, and strengthen and expand the capacity of alternative schools that address the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of challenged youth and young adults.

Finally, a unique partnership between the public school, the court system, and juvenile division in the family courts has allowed for the creation of the Innovative Concept Academy, an alternative school program that strives to keep young people who have been suspended or are at risk of being expelled off of the streets and in a safe environment where they can continue their education, learn better behaviors and life skills, and become successful, contributing members of the community.

Family and Individual Interventions

The City is working to create and distribute an inventory of youth development and intervention services. In 2014, a survey was distributed to key service providers to

identify those organizations providing prevention, intervention, and reentry services to youth in the City. The survey also broke down the results by zip code – the results will be used to prioritize neighborhoods for additional programming as well as guide nonprofits in expansion or reallocation of staff and services. No one should have trouble finding social services. Social services can prevent crime, but only if residents use them. This inventory will connect the people of St. Louis to the programs that prevent crime.

Mental and behavioral health interventions and services have excellent results when delivered in a timely fashion to those in crisis or showing signs of trauma. Even with a robust system of early intervention services, there is still a need to equip first responders and police officers with the skills and support to engage effectively with individuals in crisis. The City is working to develop policies that encourage and facilitate the referral of first responders and other City staff and partners who interact with residents at risk or in crisis. While the City and its partners also are working to establish formal diversion programs for individuals with mental health needs, the immediate interaction of first responders and police with residents can result in referrals instead of arrests.

System-level Interventions

Ready by 21

Ready by 21 St. Louis is a collaborative effort to ensure that all young people in the St. Louis region have the supports they need to be productive, connected, healthy and safe. Key organizations and leaders will join together to improve the quantity, quality and consistency of services and opportunities for children and youth. The City provides data and participation to Ready by 21, a national, cross-sector collaborative effort to increase the odds that every student is ready for college, work, and life by age 21. The United Way of Greater St. Louis is spearheading the collective effort in the region.

Insurance Parity for Mental and Behavioral Health

While almost two-thirds of states have expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Missouri has yet to do so. Because of new requirements included in the ACA, all plans offered through the Health Insurance Marketplace include coverage for mental and/or substance abuse disorders. This will allow for both the expansion of health insurance for more residents and the mass expansion of coverage for mental health and substance abuse. As health insurance is the major predictor of usage of health and mental health services, this will greatly impact the number of individuals who access services for mental health and substance abuse – significant predictors of violence.

The City will continue to advocate for Medicaid expansion at the State level, as the Mayor believes that it is fundamentally unfair that poor Americans do not have health insurance. Mayor Slay also continues to support the stopgap efforts of the regional Gateway to Better Health insurance plan.

The City is funding expanded psychiatric services in neighborhoods underserved by health care services, including a \$1,000,000 investment in a child psychiatric clinic in North St. Louis City.

The City will work to support and encourage schools, pediatric hospitals, and medical schools to imbed mental and behavioral health professionals in early childhood, elementary, and secondary education settings. The expansion of existing school health education curriculum should include mental and behavioral health education for all children.

The City is committed to working with schools to place an emphasis on reducing and restricting the use of out of school suspensions, as schools across the nation have struggled to reduce suspensions of students of color at all levels. The City will work to support and build relationships with schools in the City to assist in funding mental and behavioral health programming for students, including students under in-school suspensions and other at-risk students. The City is committed to helping schools develop and implement alternative discipline strategies.

Divert low-risk individuals in crisis to social services and away from arrest and confinement.

Help finding employment, steady housing, or mental health services can often turn a minor offender into a safe citizen. Focused intervention in specific low-risk cases can reduce and support all residents.

The Juvenile Jail Diversion Project provides alternatives to confining juveniles through Juvenile Court division programs.

Getting youth off the streets and into safe, constructive spaces can keep our whole city safe. Youth should be able to easily access a complete list of safe places, so that residents don't feel trapped by the streets. The City will work to implement its Blueprint for Youth Recreation to ensure that all youth have safe places. Also, a project with Washington University in St. Louis is conducting a safety inventory of all playgrounds in order to ensure that there is access to quality facilities for youth and their families.

The City is working with its partners to strengthen the referral system connecting emergency health care providers to youth and family services to ensure youth know of other safe places besides emergency rooms. Currently, both hospitals for children – Children's Hospital and Cardinal Glennon Hospital – connect at-risk youth in the emergency room with social services case managers so that they are empowered to turn their lives around and meet their and their families' basic needs.

Job Opportunities for at-risk youth and adults

As part of the City's Bridge Program, a \$5 million grant will be used to train and employ 3,000 young adults in meaningful, permanent jobs.

St. Louis recently won a \$1 million YouthBuild grant which will be used to partner with Ranken Technical College to train and employ young people to build new, affordable homes for low-income families. The primary target populations for YouthBuild are adjudicated youth, youth aging out of foster care, out-of-school youth, and other at-risk populations ages 16-24. The program focuses on leadership development, financial literacy, and academic enhancement, technical skills training in construction, community service and support from staff and students committed to each other's success.

The CDA and the St. Louis Board of Education fund a Truancy Prevention Program, which works closely with the Truancy Unit of the St. Louis Family Court to replicate "Check and Connect," an exemplary dropout and truancy prevention program recognized as effective by the U.S. Department of Education.

The City and the Regional Health Commission is launching a far-reaching initiative called Alive and Well that approaches community violence responses from the vantage of mental health. Constant exposure to social trauma, including trauma associated with racism, poverty, and violence has toxic consequences to people's health and wellbeing. Alive and Well employs multiple mental health and community action strategies for trauma prevention, reduction, and healing.

A four-year \$3.7 million grant will help the Mental Health Board expand mental health services for children, youth, and families with severe and persistent mental health issues.

Supporting Survivors of Violence

The Homicide Ministers & Community Alliance was founded in 2009 to support grieving family members after a homicide. After a tragedy, the Homicide Division and HCMA ensure that an on-call minister reaches out to the victim's family within 48 hours. The minister and the HCMA support the family through grief and recovery and help build relationships between victims and the SLMPD, which reduces the likelihood of violent retaliation.

Eliminating Problem Properties and Addressing Problem Neighbors

The Problem Properties Task Force brings together police, City prosecutors, building inspectors, and neighborhood stabilization officers to hold property owners responsible for neglect.

The Citizens Service Bureau registers and routes residents' requests for City services to improve quality of life in their neighborhoods.

The CDA also funds Community Health-In Partnership Services, a program which trains teens to be peer health educators and support other youth struggling with proper nutrition, depression, and violence.

Neighborhood Stabilization Officers serve as community liaisons to police, aldermen, City agencies, social service organizations, community groups, and individuals to identify permanent solutions to ongoing problems in order to empower constituents to sustain a quality environment within their neighborhood through assistance, education, intervention and organization.

The City's Building Division targets vacant and condemned buildings for demolition to improve quality of life and surrounding property values. Nearly 10,000 buildings have been demolished since 2001, including targeted demolitions of buildings that have the greatest impact on crime.

The City increased funding to Better Family Life and supports its Neighborhood Alliance model to empower individuals and prevent crime. Under this model, caseworkers go door to door in the city's most challenged neighborhoods to connect individuals and families to resources that can help improve their lives.

We have identified 15,000 young African Americans in North St. Louis and North County who are neither working, nor are in school. We have been awarded a \$5 million grant to find, train, and place 3,000 of them in real, permanent jobs as part of our Bridge Program;

We have increased funding (total = \$115,000 this year) to Better Family Life to support the Neighborhood Alliance model, in which caseworkers go door to door in the City's most challenged neighborhoods to directly connect individuals and families with more than 65 resource providers;

The City won a \$1 million YouthBuild grant, in which we partner with Ranken Technical College to put young people to work building new affordable homes for low-income families throughout the City;