



Report to the Community

Two years have passed since a broad coalition of elected and appointed officials, civic and community leaders, clergy, parents and educators first gathered to find a solution to the problem of youth violence in Philadelphia. I believe that we must pause to reflect on what progress we have made in combating senseless youth violence while recognizing how far we have yet to go. In the wake of Faheem Thomas-Child's shooting on February 11, 2004, Philadelphians witnessed an outpouring of anger and activism crying out for a solution to the violence ravaging too many of our neighborhoods. A list of community leaders too numerous to name responded to that cry and promised something different: instead of a few moments of passing grief and fleeting recognition, we would instead respond with a long-term solution and pledge ourselves to its enactment. The result: "A Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia."

Funded by over \$16 million in state resources, our "Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia" provides the City with a roadmap for the prevention of violence. A leadership coalition of over 100 elected officials, community organizations and national experts came together to unveil this far-reaching initiative. The "Ten Year Blueprint" draws on proven, research-based public health methods to break the cycle of violence before it enters the criminal justice system. ***Violence is a learned behavior and the "Blueprint" is our 10-year commitment to "unlearn" the behavior and prevent its disastrous consequences. Its goal is as simple as it is necessary: to end youth homicides in Philadelphia by the year 2016.***

Radio and print ads will begin to appear in the next few months urging Philadelphians to take back control of our neighborhoods and play whatever role they can in making our streets safer. This comprehensive social marketing campaign will be buttressed by a far-reaching network of service providers who will stand ready to assist any parent, child, or community member who either needs help or wants to get involved. We will also be hosting a series of community meetings to lay out the Blueprint and solicit feedback from our partners.

Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve social policies and programs, assumed responsibility for the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia Project in November 2005. P/PV is serving as the fiscal agent for the social marketing campaign and CHOICE Hotline and has responsibility for the general coordination of Blueprint Project activities.

Since November, P/PV's work has focused on the following: P/PV staff met with the community-based organizations identified as providers of direct services for Phase One of the project. The providers include Youth Intervention Project (Mothers in Charge, Men United for A Better Philadelphia, Mt. Airy Church of God In Christ), After School Activities Partnerships (ASAP), Youth Outreach Adolescent Community Awareness Program (YOACAP), Philadelphia Mural Arts Program – All Join Hands, Congresso de Latinos, Inc., Good Shepherd Mediation Program, Keep Kids Safe Summer Camp, and Sultan Jihad Community Foundation. P/PV had developed an overview of the application process, funding guidelines, data collection and reporting requirements to ensure that all Blueprint services are outcome-based.

P/PV has also convened the Blueprint “Think Tank” Advisory Council, composed of a diverse body of experts in public health, research, youth violence programs, education, substance abuse, and delinquency prevention to discuss the project’s current activities and provide insight about its future direction. Lastly, as the Blueprint is envisioned to be a citywide violence prevention and service delivery campaign, P/PV is currently cataloging organizations that provide children and youth services based on established effective practices for reducing youth violence and for addressing the risk factors associated with youth violence.

Motivational Education Entertainment (MEE) Productions, an internationally-recognized communications firm that develops socially-responsible, research-based communication strategies targeting urban and ethnic populations of all ages has conducted 10 “Chat and Chew” information sessions in targeted zip codes across the city to begin to mobilize and make the community aware of the Blueprint for A Safer Philadelphia.

Finally, as many of you are aware, we have begun a series of City Council hearings on the Blueprint with the goal of increasing the coordination and support of Blueprint activities with city programs and services. Under the leadership of Councilwomen Marian Tasco and Donna Reed Miller, the first of these hearings was held on Monday, February 13th. Several Blueprint partners attended and testified before Council about their programs and the need for additional City support. The hearings will continue over the coming months in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia, and we look forward to partnering with you to hear from your constituents about violence and potential solutions.

We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go. Last year’s escalating homicide rates remind us all of the consequences of failure. We need your constant vigilance if we are to reverse this trend, meet our objectives, and fulfill the promises made in the wake of so many young tragic deaths. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me should I be of any assistance or if you need any additional information. Please feel free to share the Blueprint Hotline number 1-888-570-BLUE (2583) with your colleagues and constituents who would like to get involved with the Blueprint