

Virginia Commonwealth University Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development



YV
PC

YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION CENTERS



“We will work with city residents and community partners to improve our capacity to overcome issues that affect the health of youth. By engaging communities in the work and disseminating the findings back in a way that’s useful for them, we can improve health and safety.”

— Dr. Saba Masho, VCU Clark-Hill Institute

THE TOLL OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

Youth violence is a serious public health problem. Homicide is a leading cause of death for youth aged 10–24 years. Each day, about 13 youth die from homicide and more than 1,300 are treated in emergency departments for nonfatal injuries. Youth violence has lasting harmful effects on young people, their families, and their communities.

Research by National Centers of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (YVPCs) shows prevention is possible. In communities that are experiencing some of the nation’s highest rates of youth violence, YVPCs are:

- Partnering with community organizations, schools, law enforcement and other community stakeholders with the common goal of reducing youth violence
- Rigorously evaluating prevention strategies
- Working to ensure effective strategies can be adapted and used in other communities

THE MISSION

The Virginia Commonwealth University’s (VCU) Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development has brought together researchers, community leaders, schools, residents, and state and local partners



in Richmond for almost two decades. These collaborations have reduced youth violence and promoted the healthy and safe development of youth. VCU Clark-Hill Institute, community partners, and city agencies coordinated and implemented a set of school-based and family-focused programs. They demonstrated that, relative to areas of the community not receiving the intervention, areas receiving the intervention had a 13% lower risk of youth violence based on police reports.

THE COMMUNITY

Richmond's history of racial division and discriminatory housing practices are documented in VCU's Center on Society and Health report on Health Equity. These practices contributed to a disproportionate degree of high-density public housing, segregation, and concentrated poverty in some of Richmond's neighborhoods. These practices have also contributed to Richmond's high rates of youth violence. In 2014, the youth homicide rate in Richmond was nearly five times the national average. In 2015, the poverty rate for youth was more than two times the state average.

Richmond also has many strengths, including residents and organizations working together to improve the lives of its youths. The VCU Clark-Hill Institute and its longstanding partners are collaborating to focus prevention activities on three Richmond communities experiencing high rates of violence: Gilpin, Mosby/Whitcomb, and Hillsider/Bellemeade.

PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE

VCU Clark-Hill Institute and its partners are implementing the *Communities That Care (CTC)* model, which engages the community

to use data to understand youth violence and identify, implement, and rigorously evaluate multiple evidence-based activities. They are adding to the model a Walker Talker and Community Conversation approach and calling the prevention strategy *CTC Plus*. The Walker Talker is a community outreach worker who has conversations to reach community residents to educate and communicate information regarding positive opportunities for youth and ways to reduce youth risk. This enhancement adds community-driven outreach to strengthen awareness, capacity, and collaboration to connect residents to evidence-based programs.

EVALUATING IMPACT

VCU Clark-Hill Institute uses community input to inform research and address multiple influences on youth behavior and developmental outcomes. Its evaluation of *CTC Plus* is the first examination of this enhanced version of *CTC*. Knowledge gained from this research will strengthen Richmond's youth violence prevention approach, and inform how to prevent violence in other communities across the country. VCU Clark-Hill Institute will:



Assess the impact of CTC Plus in an urban environment on community-level youth crime and violence via youth, caregiver, and neighborhood surveys and archival crime records.



Analyze how prevention strategies driven by community partnerships affect youth violence.



Estimate program costs and cost-effectiveness of the intervention.



Assess the impact of community readiness/capacity on youth violence outcomes.

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