

New Community Center to Prevent Youth Violence

How do you convince a community to unite behind youth violence prevention and offer kids and teens a safer future when most residents and businesses believe youth violence will never impact them?

Challenge

Riverside California's crime rate was in line with other surrounding communities, but that was absolutely no solace to the families who lost young people to violence. In addition, Riverside city's leadership was seeing greater strain on the city's juvenile correction systems and other social service centers.

Mayor Loveridge and Supervisor Mullen convened a group of community leaders and city/county representatives to examine the issue and set a new direction for youth violence prevention by identifying and helping high-risk children.



Solution

The group, or "Red Team", was charged with developing a strategic plan for youth violence prevention in the City of Riverside. Integral members of the team included the Southern California Academic Center of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention at University of California Riverside (ACE-UCR).

Along with representatives from a variety of agencies, the ACE-UCR gathered various data from the County Departments of Public Health, Probation, Social Services, and the County Office of Education. Based on their examination of these data, the team decided to focus their efforts in Arlanza, an impoverished neighborhood in Riverside, which receives fewer social services from the city than other similar communities. The team decided to focus on children under 5 because they are at a critical time in development. Focusing prevention efforts on young children helps provide the necessary supports so those children are less likely to engage in violent behavior as adolescents. Of particular concern and interest to the team were family income, availability of child care, and availability of quality preschool experience – all environmental factors that are known to contribute to the healthy development of children. Based on a geographic analysis, the team decided to take a very different approach to reach the children at highest risk of violence in Arlanza. They recommended the establishment of a neighborhood resource center, called the Arlanza Center, to focus on the needs of young children and their families.



Results

Today the Eric M. Solander Arlanza Youth and Family Resource Center -- named for the late hospital administrator who convinced Kaiser to donate the center's modular buildings -- is now providing the community with a "one stop shopping" model of service. The center provides childcare, health and mental health screening, education classes, adult literacy, parenting classes, and WIC (women with infant children) services. In addition, the Center provides referral services for transportation needs, legal services, and information on clothing and food banks.

The ACE-UCR continues to be active in the center's programming and will evaluate the effectiveness of the center. Members of the ACE-UCR team have also been asked to permanently be a part of the Youth Violence Prevention Policy Board, formed to advise and oversee the Arlanza Initiative and to examine youth violence prevention needs in other areas of the city.

Highlights

Riverside, CA – When Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge and County Supervisor Tom Mullen convened a "Red Team" to change how the city deals with youth violence he called upon the Southern California Academic Center of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention at University of California Riverside (ACE-UCR). The center joined a team of community members charged with addressing the multitude of youth violence problems in the city. Based on the team's recommendations and data, the city developed a neighborhood resource center that addresses key factors that contribute to preventing youth violence such as day care, parenting classes, and social services.

"Crime is not prevented and children are not nurtured at the state or city level. The government's role is to support community-based efforts helping children and families who are at risk of inflicting harm or being harmed."

— Riverside City Council Member

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