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Safe Routes  
to School  
National  
Partnership

# Taking Back the Streets & Sidewalks

How Safe Routes to School  
and Community Safety Initiatives  
Can Overcome Violence and Crime



## Acknowledgements

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The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a national nonprofit with a mission to advance safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's children, and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities. Begun in 2005, the National Partnership works not only on Safe Routes to School, but also more broadly to support local efforts to create healthy, equitable communities. A core area of work for the National Partnership is support for health equity for low-income communities and communities of color, identifying and overcoming the barriers to active transportation and physical activity that reduce health for many communities.

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# Introduction

For many in the Safe Routes to School movement, safety means protecting children who are walking or bicycling from the threats posed by motor vehicles. But the dangers encountered by children and teens on the way to school can go beyond injuries from collisions. Children and teens also experience dangers including bullying and sexual harassment. And in some communities, other substantial dangers can make the journey to school a perilous one – the danger of gang recruitment or intimidation, stray bullets and stray dogs, and thefts, fights, or other violence.



Safe Routes to School means safety from all of these threats. When violence occurs, death, injuries, and emotional trauma have an immediate effect on health and well-being of individuals. But violence and even the fear of violence also have much broader effects. They undermine the social fabric of neighborhoods, their economic resiliency, and the overall well-being of a community.



**“All students deserve to feel safe and secure in school, at home and in the communities they belong to.”**

Safe Passages Twitter Town Hall'

## Defining Violence and Crime

What are violence and crime? Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power against another person that is likely to or actually results in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, crime can involve violence, but doesn't necessarily; it comprises actions or omissions that are considered an offense under the law, and which may be prosecuted and punished by the government.<sup>3</sup>

Although crime and violence are different from one another, in many communities they co-exist, and both affect the safety of youth traveling to and from school. This report draws from both crime prevention and violence prevention strategies.

## Introduction

Often, efforts to protect children and teens from community violence are separate from efforts aimed at increasing physical activity, encouraging walking, and preventing youth injuries from motor vehicles. This report is intended to help bring these movements together in areas that are ripe for joint endeavor. Safe Routes to School and built environment advocates need to prioritize all aspects of the safety of children. And violence prevention advocates can benefit from additional allies, strategies, and resources available in the Safe Routes to School world. By working together and coordinating our efforts, we can make sure that children and teens experience streets and communities that are safe in all senses of the word.

Parents report violence and crime as one of the top five factors affecting children's walking or bicycling.<sup>5</sup>



## Safety on the Way to School

The Safe Routes to School movement works to make sure children can safely walk and bicycle to and from school and encourages incorporating healthy physical activity into daily routines. Improving safety for children is integral to Safe Routes to School initiatives. When it comes to interpersonal safety concerns, many Safe Routes to School practitioners have struggled to balance the need to protect children with an overprotective culture that may sometimes restrict children from walking or bicycling at all due to fear of harm. At the same time, in some settings, crime and violence on the streets are great dangers to children. As a result, particularly in urban settings and in low-income communities and communities of color, local Safe Routes to School practitioners and schools have long worked on the twin goals of increasing physical activity while reducing the risk of violence and crime.

*“Going to school I do not feel as safe, but once I get to school I feel ok. On my way to school I always have the feeling that something will happen. On the [public] bus I feel like I need to stay alert and watch out for troublesome people around me.”*

Kahmaria Adams, 15 years<sup>4</sup>

# What Is in this Report ?

This report provides a primer for Safe Routes to School professionals looking to address community safety threats that may discourage or endanger students walking or bicycling to school. In addition, the report is intended to be a reference for those working on violence prevention who are seeking new allies, resources, and approaches in the Safe Routes to School movement. The report examines ways in which Safe Routes to School and community safety efforts overlap and complement each other. The report primarily focuses on approaches to support personal safety for children and teens during the trip to and from school, but broader community strategies are also discussed in the course of providing background and exploring more comprehensive solutions to violence in communities. The report's overall goal is to increase the safety and health of children and youth, and ensure that communities become more equitable places.

**SECTION I** of this report addresses the reasons Safe Routes to School matters for communities experiencing high rates of violence and crime. This section discusses how Safe Routes to School programs work to protect children and youth from violence on the way to school and their potential to do so more effectively and consistently through closer partnerships with violence prevention advocates. Safe Routes to School programs can also play a role in building stronger and more resilient communities, a key aspect of violence prevention; Safe Routes to School programs tend to involve strong elements of community building and interdisciplinary collaboration and can improve absenteeism and academic performance. In addition, the physical activity focus of Safe Routes to School can contribute significantly to overcoming obesity, diabetes, and other health disparities that disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color, improving the health and well-being of these communities.

**SECTION II** delves into the impact that violence and fear of violence have on children, adults, and their communities. This section discusses the causes of violence and the public health approach to violence prevention. In addition, this section takes note of the types of crime and violence that can affect students' trips to school – bullying, street harassment, gang violence, assault and robbery, abduction, and police harassment – and explores the scale of these problems.

**SECTION III**, which discusses strategies to address and prevent violence and crime, is the most substantial portion of the report. This section begins with promising violence prevention strategies that have traditionally been seen as components of Safe Routes to School programs. It then looks at other types of initiatives that are not generally part of Safe Routes to School programs, but where partnerships or opportunities for violence prevention may lie. These initiatives generally have a youth or neighborhood focus, can play a role in reducing or preventing violence, and have

the potential to be incorporated into Safe Routes to School programs. Next, this section examines issues around policing, turns to the role of the built environment in community safety, and closes with primary prevention approaches that can help communities avoid violence in the first place.

**IN SECTION IV**, the report considers how to move from information-gathering to action, providing considerations and suggestions for collaborative efforts to improve community safety; noting research gaps; discussing the roles that various government agencies; community organizations; and other stakeholders play in community safety; and setting out steps for starting a collaborative effort.


**Finally**, the report concludes by emphasizing the benefits for children's health and safety of a strong and powerful collaboration between the Safe Routes to School and violence prevention movements.

# I. Why Safe Routes to School Matters

Why would walking and bicycling to school matter to a parent or community member worried about gang violence or stray bullets? Active transportation can seem like a trivial concern in the face of such problems. But Safe Routes to School initiatives are relevant to communities facing these problems in a number of different ways.



**First**, Safe Routes to School initiatives can be directly tied to preventing violence against children and youth. Safe Routes to School programs such as walking school buses and corner captains can be designed to make sure that children get to school safely, without being bullied, harassed by gangs, or robbed. Because these programs are eligible for funding through a meaningful pot of federal money, Safe Routes to School programs can help address issues of children's safety and can potentially fund staff or provide resources to support related violence prevention efforts. With 17,000 Safe Routes to School initiatives in schools and communities around the country, there are many connections and relationships waiting to be developed.


 **“Does it matter how safe the school is if the path to school isn’t safe?”**

Safe Passages Twitter Town Hall<sup>7</sup>

**Secondly**, Safe Routes to School efforts can strengthen broader community safety initiatives in communities with high need. Violence prevention in a community is not just about protecting individuals from specific threats, but also involves creating a healthy, resilient community where people can be outdoors, engage with other community residents, look out for each other, and are supported by functional systems for education, mobility, housing, and employment. Safe Routes to School initiatives have a role to play in many of these goals.

How? Safe Routes to School projects and programs – and the process of developing them – can build community by bringing together families and other community stakeholders to work side by side in the interest of improving health and safety. Safe Routes to School programs focus on getting children and their parents out of the car and walking and bicycling. This, in turn, serves to increase the amount of time spent outside and adds the human presence that can discourage crime, known as “eyes on the street.”

Infrastructure improvements to address traffic safety can also reduce opportunities for crime.

 **“[S]afe passage to school shouldn’t be a luxury afforded to some children and not others.”**

Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>6</sup>

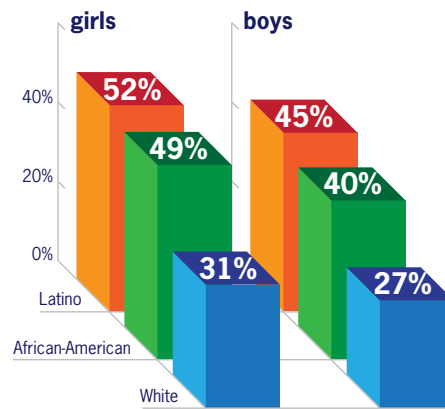
**Third**, and more specifically, Safe Routes to School initiatives can support education systems, providing a transportation approach that can be structured to address and prevent chronic absenteeism while also giving children physical activity that improves academic performance, releases energy, relieves stress, improves on-task behavior, and reduces social and emotional triggers that affect learning. Safe Routes to School proponents share a key goal with those working on community safety efforts: providing a safe environment for youth on the trip to school and beyond in order to allow them educational opportunities that will create long-term benefits for individual health and for the larger community.

## Federal Funding for Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School programs are eligible for funding as part of the Transportation Alternatives Program under the current federal transportation bill, MAP-21. The funding flows through each state Department of Transportation (DOT) to support walking, bicycling, and Safe Routes to School programs and infrastructure. In addition, in larger metropolitan areas (those with a population of 200,000 or more), regional agencies called metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) also receive funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program. MPOs then grant funds to local communities for Safe Routes to School and bicycling and walking projects. Information about MAP-21 and the Transportation Alternatives Program can be found in the Safe Routes to School National Partnership's **MAP-21 Resource Center**.

To ensure underserved communities can access Transportation Alternatives funds, some states have taken proactive steps, such as establishing a minimum amount dedicated for underserved communities, targeting outreach, awarding extra points on applications, assisting with match requirements, and offering engineering assistance. The National Partnership has a **factsheet** with more information on how MPOs and state DOTs can ensure underserved communities effectively compete for these funds.

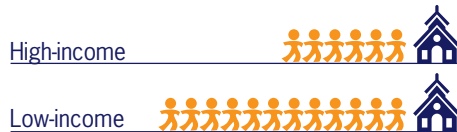
## Lifetime Risk of Diabetes



Leadership for Healthy Communities

**Finally**, Safe Routes to School can help address a broad range of issues that disproportionately affect underserved communities. Crime and violence are not the only threats to low-income children and children of color; chronic disease and injuries from motor vehicle traffic also pose serious risks. Obesity and affiliated health challenges such as diabetes can have deeply detrimental effects on health and well-being. Barriers such as a lack of parks or poorly maintained walking and bicycling environments can lead to physical inactivity, one of the primary contributors to obesity.<sup>9</sup> Obesity disproportionately affects low-income communities and communities of color and has the potential to shorten children's lives and impair their ability to thrive and achieve. More than 38 percent of Latino youth and almost 36 percent of African-American youth are obese or overweight.<sup>10,11</sup> People in low-income communities have lower activity levels and higher body mass indexes,<sup>12</sup> due in part to their greater neighborhood barriers to physical activity.<sup>13</sup>


### Children from low-income families are **twice as likely to walk to school**



2001 National Household Travel Survey

More than half of Latina girls are expected to get diabetes over the course of their lifetime, and the numbers are almost as high for African American girls.

At the same time, children from low-income families are at greater risk of being injured or killed by motor vehicles. Low-income children are twice as likely to walk to school as children from higher-income families,<sup>15</sup> and low-income neighborhoods or communities generally have greater traffic-related risks.<sup>16</sup> Children from low-income households have a higher risk of being injured or killed while walking than upper-income children, which is related to the greater proportion of high-speed, high-traffic roads and poorer pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.<sup>17,18,19</sup>

 **“Every child’s life matters & people of color are disproportionately represented in the number of pedestrian fatalities.”**

**Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>21</sup>**

Safe Routes to School efforts have an important role to play in making sure that low-income children and children of color grow up protected from traffic injuries, maintain a healthy weight, enjoy and regularly get physical activity, avoid preventable chronic diseases such as diabetes, and live in communities without high levels of traffic-related air pollution contributing to asthma and lung disease. Safe Routes to School efforts can support those positive outcomes while being tightly knit into and supportive of community violence prevention efforts.



## II. Crime, Violence, Fear, & Their Lasting Impact



### Why Crime and Violence Prevention Matter

Protecting children – and adults – from the pain, fear, injury, or death that accompanies a violent or criminal act is a basic and crucial function of society. But the damage done by violence goes far beyond the immediate pain and fear inflicted on the victim. There are long-term consequences for communities as well as for victims and their families and friends, with direct and indirect repercussions for health, education, community stability, and many other areas.

Each year, youth homicides and nonfatal assault injuries result in an estimated **\$17.5 billion** in combined medical and lost productivity costs.<sup>31</sup>

### Direct Effects of Exposure to Violence and Crime

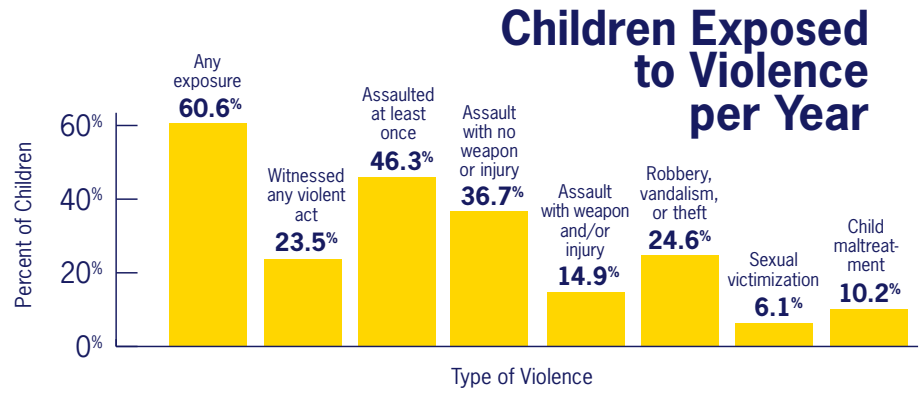
Violence can directly and immediately cause harm through injury or death. Homicide is the third leading cause of death for people ages 15 to 24 years old in the United States.<sup>22</sup> And each year, for every single homicide victim, approximately 142 times as many youth are treated in emergency departments for nonfatal physical assault-related injuries.<sup>23</sup>

In the United States, children are more likely than adults to be exposed to violent crime, and youth are more than twice as likely as the general population to be victims of violent crimes.<sup>24</sup> A 2009 survey found that 60 percent of children had been directly or indirectly exposed to violence within the past year. More than one third were direct victims more than once, and more than 10 percent experienced 5 or more direct victimizations per year.<sup>25</sup>

Other studies have reported that a majority of middle and high school students have either witnessed or been victims of violence, with estimates ranging from 75 percent to 93 percent.<sup>26</sup> In the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, almost 25 percent of high school students reported being in at least one physical fight within the last year.<sup>27</sup>

African-American and Latino youth are especially likely to be exposed to violence. A 2010 study showed that African American youth were more than twice as likely to be victims of serious violence as were white or Latino youth and were at least 30 percent more likely to be victims of assault.<sup>28</sup> The homicide rate for African-American youth was 14 times higher than the rate for white youth,<sup>29</sup> and African-American and Latino high school students are more likely to report being physical fights than other students.<sup>30</sup>

Low-income neighborhoods also suffer disproportionately high rates of crime and violence.<sup>33</sup> Low-income youths and adults are more likely to experience violence or be exposed to it than middle- to upper-income people. Overall, youths from low-income neighborhoods are significantly more likely to witness severe violence, such as murders and stabbings, than youths from middle- and upper-income neighborhoods.<sup>34</sup>



Juvenile Justice Bulletin, October 2009

### Longer Term Health Effects

Beyond immediate physical injuries and death, people who have experienced violence, either directly or as a witness to it, can suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, substance abuse, permanent physical disability, and other long-term health problems.<sup>35,36</sup> The effects on children and adolescents can be especially severe, disrupting normal development and persisting into adulthood with long-term physical and mental health problems.<sup>37</sup>

Biologically, exposure to violence affects children's cortisol release, heart rates, and lung functioning, and causes sleep disruption.<sup>39</sup> Exposure to violence may even change the expression of a gene involved in the regulation of stress responses.<sup>40</sup> Harmful effects may begin before birth; some studies have found an association between neighborhood crime rates, levels of stress, and low birth weight.<sup>41</sup> Stress experienced by children's caregivers may also compromise the security of child-caregiver attachments and limit the support available at home and school.<sup>42,43</sup> Youth who have been exposed to violence show a stronger likelihood of

Although violence poses a real danger for too many children, it's important to remember that for many children in both low-income and affluent communities, motor vehicle collisions and streets that aren't designed to protect people walking and bicycling pose a considerably higher danger of injury and death.<sup>32</sup>

considering or attempting suicide.<sup>44</sup> The negative effects of exposure to violence appear to be cumulative, and repeated instances of different types of violence across multiple settings may compromise children's resilience and ability to adopt positive coping strategies.<sup>45</sup> Mental health effects are also not limited to those who have experienced violence directly; witnessing or even hearing secondhand about violence in the community has been shown to negatively affect community members' mental health.<sup>46,47</sup>

Permanent disabilities can be another consequence of violence. Permanent disability can prevent someone from earning a living, while increasing health care costs. Youth with disabilities are likely to face discrimination, feel isolated from their peers, and face future challenges transitioning into adulthood.<sup>48,49</sup>

*"A lot of people I go to school with know people who've been killed and it affects them... Socially, they don't want to talk about it, or their anger builds up and they want to get revenge."*

Marisa Jolivet, 16 years<sup>38</sup>

*"You only hear about death or jail. You never hear about this disability."*

Joel Irizarry, former gang member, on being shot and paralyzed after a car chase with rival gang members

## Effects on Health Behaviors

Violence and the fear of violence also affect a person's decisions related to health. Often, physical activity and other healthy behaviors become more challenging. In addition, people may lose the motivation to make sacrifices of time or preference for health, and may take on unhealthy practices, such as risky sexual behaviors and substance abuse.<sup>51,52,53</sup> Fear of neighborhood crime may lead to reduced physical activity, and the erosion of social ties and trust in the community causes declines in mental and physical health.<sup>54</sup>




**“Youth who are fearful of crime are less active & engage in less outdoor recreation.”**

Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>67</sup>

According to one study that evaluated obstacles to physical activity, “Feeling safe had the largest potential effect on a population's levels of physical activity.”<sup>56</sup> For youth, concerns about violence and safety affect whether or not parents will allow them to play outside or walk or bicycle to school. Parents who fear for their children's safety are less likely to promote physical activity.<sup>57</sup>

Not having enough physical activity is one of the two main factors leading to obesity (with the other factor being the consumption of too many calories).<sup>59</sup> Obesity affects 17 percent of U.S. youth ages two to 19 years, with an equal number of youth overweight; rates are higher among low-income youth and youth of color.<sup>60</sup>

 **40%** fewer girls than boys walk and bicycle to school

Johnny Walks to School - Does Jane?  
Sex Differences in Children's Active Travel to School,  
*Children, Youth and Environments*, 2006

**23%** of Latino parents reported their neighborhoods were unsafe, compared with **8%** of white parents.<sup>55</sup>

Obesity has immediate negative effects on children and often continues into adulthood, with risks for health conditions including diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, as well as social and psychological problems such as poor self-esteem and discrimination in the workplace and public settings.<sup>61,62</sup> Almost 20 percent of all deaths in the U.S. are associated with obesity.<sup>63</sup> Health care spending due to obesity is estimated to be as high as \$210 billion annually, or 21 percent of total national health care spending.<sup>64</sup>



**“Many children of color don't have access to parks/safe streets, leading to inactivity & poor health.”**

Safe Passages Twitter Town Hall<sup>65</sup>

But in many communities, efforts to address the low levels of physical activity are stymied by the challenge posed by violence. The problem is cyclical. Violence and fear dissuade people from being outdoors and physically active themselves, and lead them to prohibit their children from engaging in outdoor activities. In addition to stifling important healthy behavior, this limitation on outdoor activity reduces opportunities for social interaction and developing social cohesion and leads to underused public spaces such as parks and walking paths. With few people outdoors in public spaces, criminal activity can further flourish. Many of the strategies that are most successful in reducing levels of chronic disease, such as designing neighborhoods that encourage walking and bicycling, are less effective when violence and the fear of violence are pervasive.<sup>66</sup>

## Prevention Institute's Overview of the Linkages between Violence and Health

Violence and fear of violence affect individual behaviors related to healthy eating and active living.

1. Violence and fear of violence cause people to be less physically active and spend less time outdoors.
2. Violence and fear of violence alter people's purchasing patterns, limiting access to healthy food.
3. Experiencing and witnessing violence decrease motivation and capability of eating healthfully and being active. Violence and fear of violence diminish the community environment, reducing support for healthy eating and active living.
4. Violence reduces social interactions that would otherwise contribute to community cohesion.
5. Violence acts as a barrier to investments in community resources and opportunities that support healthy eating and active living.<sup>68</sup>

Teaetta Tisdale regularly hears gunfire near her East Oakland apartment. *“Literally it will be so close that I have to grab my kids and take them inside,”* she said. *“I hate having them out because it makes me paranoid.”*<sup>58</sup>

## Effects on Education

Exposure to violence has direct and indirect negative effects on children's education. Without question, a quality education (where students have the resources, support, and environment conducive to learning) provides children with the tools to become successful adults. A good educational foundation can lead to post-secondary education, more career choices, and financial security, and is strongly associated with long-term health.<sup>69</sup> Studies indicate that exposure to violence can have a negative impact on academic performance.<sup>70</sup> Elementary and middle school students who report witnessing violence have lower academic achievement.<sup>71</sup>



**"[W]e cannot expect for students to concentrate and fully focus in school when worried about safety or safe passage."**

Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>73</sup>



**"Too many absences occur because kids don't have a safe way to get to school. Absences erode achievement."**

Safe Passages Twitter Town Hall<sup>74</sup>

Educational advocates often focus on what is happening in the classroom. But where violence and crime are pervasive, children's ability to get a good education may be determined before they even get to the school. Limitations on the ability to get to and from school safely mean that children may miss large amounts of school. In addition, they may have a reduced ability to concentrate or be open to learning, exploring, and making mistakes, which are crucial for education.<sup>75</sup> Children who miss a significant amount of school fall behind on learning, with long-lasting negative effects on academic achievement, economic success, and health.<sup>76</sup>

Children who are chronically absent are also more likely to drop out of school.<sup>77</sup> Where street violence is prevalent, those families who have the ability are likely to

drive their children to and from school. But for families without a car, with resource limitations that restrict use of a car, or with parental schedules that make drop off and pick up challenging, this may not be an option. And children who are driven or bused due to safety concerns lose the opportunity for physical activity, with its many benefits for social and emotional health, learning, on-task behavior, and academic achievement.<sup>78,79</sup>

**More than 7 percent of high school students reported missing at least one day of school in the past 30 days because they felt unsafe either at school or on their way to or from school.<sup>80</sup>**


## Effects on Community

The effects of violence extend beyond the health and well-being of individuals to harming the community as a whole. The overall social and economic well-being of a community is damaged when its members experience or engage in violence. The effects are often cyclical as many of the detrimental effects of violence are also risk factors that increase the likelihood of violence recurring.

Crime and violence can affect the overall social fabric of a community. Exposure to violence has been shown to negatively impact the relationships that children and teens have with their peers and family. Youth who experience or witness violence report withdrawing from their friends and family, even changing friends or avoiding favorite activities because they are afraid of interacting with others or because being around certain people triggers memories of violence.<sup>81</sup> The effects of violence on mental health described above can also

cause adults to withdraw from community life, friends, and neighbors. When community members cease to interact with one another and participate in civic activities, the social fabric of a community is undermined.

Violence can also have detrimental effects on the economic opportunities in a community. Exposure to violence has been shown to cause people to miss work and lower productivity, even leading people to lose jobs or have difficulty finding employment.<sup>82</sup> To compound the issue, crime and violence can lead to businesses leaving a community or not wanting to enter the community, leading to fewer employment opportunities for residents.<sup>83</sup> Again, this has cyclical effects – fewer jobs for residents further locks low-income families into poverty, creating disparities that are risk factors for violence and making it difficult for individuals to break the cycle.



*"Instead of spending their days enjoying the abundance of riches this city has to offer, [many of our children] are consumed with watching their backs. They're afraid to walk alone, because they might get jumped. They're afraid to walk in groups, because that might identify them as part of a gang and put them at risk."*

Michelle Obama<sup>84</sup>

## What Causes Violence?

What causes violence in a community? The public health perspective is focused on the factors that lead to violence at a population level and how to address them and reduce violence and its effects. This approach focuses on solutions and is often less concerned with exploring psychological or moral questions.

The origins of violence are complex and have no single cause. The roots of violence include individual and community conditions such as poor mental health, oppression, and economic inequity.<sup>85</sup> Social or cultural norms that tolerate or condone violence or the conditions that lead to violence also play a role in further encouraging violence.<sup>86</sup>

Many risk factors can predict the likelihood of violence affecting an individual or community.<sup>87</sup> Risk factors include individual and community level factors, such as history of violent victimization, high emotional stress, low parental education and income, low parental involvement, poverty, community deterioration, gang involvement, low commitment to school, diminished economic opportunities, high rates of absenteeism, high level of transiency, and low levels of community participation.



of children and adolescents were directly or indirectly exposed to violence in the past year

*Juvenile Justice Bulletin, October 2009*

The good news is that individuals and communities can also experience protective or resilience factors, which reduce the likelihood of violence, even in the presence of risk factors.<sup>89</sup> Protective factors include connectedness to family and consistent presence of a parent or parents, economic opportunity, strong

social networks, meaningful opportunities for participation, and a positive school climate.<sup>90</sup> Public health approaches to violence prevention use an interconnected, comprehensive approach to reduce risk factors and strengthen resilience factors through individual, program, systems, and policy level change.

### Chart of Risk Factors and Resilience Factors<sup>91</sup>

#### Risk Factors

##### INDIVIDUAL

- negative family dynamics
- missing school, academic failure
- mental illness
- unemployment
- use of drugs and alcohol
- incarceration and re-entry
- high exposure to media violence
- experiencing or witnessing violence

##### COMMUNITY

- poverty and economic disparity
- discrimination and oppression
- high rates of incarceration
- few economic opportunities; low levels of community participation
- low access to services
- prevalence of firearms
- prevalent sales of alcohol and drugs
- high rates of absenteeism, illiteracy, and academic failure
- unstable and substandard housing conditions
- traditional gender socialization

#### Resilience Factors

##### INDIVIDUAL

- positive attachments and relationships
- economic capital
- positive school climate
- meaningful opportunities for participation
- good physical and mental health
- social capital
- artistic and creative opportunities
- emotional and cognitive competence

##### COMMUNITY

- health-promoting, well-maintained built environment
- stable housing
- strong youth programming
- high-quality services and institutions
- positive ethnic, racial, and intergroup relations
- positive media and marketing
- stable economy
- positive community involvement

*“The problem of violence is deeply interconnected with a wide range of social conditions. Our solutions, however, tend to be isolated from one another. Our solutions need to be as comprehensive and interconnected as the problems they seek to address.”*

Berkeley Media Studies Group,  
Moving from Them to Us<sup>88</sup>

## Violence that Affects Students' School Travel

Threats to children and teens traveling to and from school and being physically active in their neighborhoods take many forms. Dangers include bullying, street harassment, gang activity, robbery, child abductions, and police harassment. This section explores common concerns amongst children and their parents or family members.

In some communities, some of these concerns may be non-existent, while in others, they may pose a significant danger. Overall, low-income neighborhoods suffer disproportionately high rates of street violence.<sup>92</sup> An additional complication is that sometimes families have a fear of dangers that are very unlikely. Both real and perceived safety concerns affect decisions about healthy behaviors, including walking or playing outdoors.

**Thirteen percent of children and youth reported being physically bullied in the past year, and 22 percent reported physical bullying in their lifetime, with boys and younger elementary school children reporting higher levels of physical bullying.<sup>99</sup>**

### Bullying

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, bullying is “unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.”<sup>95</sup> Bullying can take the form of threatening or physically or verbally attacking someone, can involve verbal teasing, or can take subtler forms such as spreading rumors or deliberately excluding someone from a group. In 2013, about 22 percent of students ages 12 through 18 reported being bullied at school at least once during the school year.<sup>96</sup> Cyberbullying, which is more likely to affect girls, has also become prevalent, with more than 16 percent of high school students reporting being bullied via email, chat room, or texting.<sup>97,98</sup>

The effects of bullying are far reaching. Youth who are bullied are more likely to suffer from health issues including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, headaches, sleep problems, abdominal pain, and fatigue, as well as academic issues including poor attendance, low test scores, and increased dropout rates.<sup>100</sup> A recent study also found a link between bullying, homophobic teasing, and subsequent higher rates of engaging in sexual harassment.<sup>101</sup> Bullying is a serious problem for those subjected to it – but bullying also reflects the mental health problems of the bully. Youth who bully others are at increased risk for substance abuse, academic problems, and violence as they mature.

Bullying does not just occur when students are at school. It may be particularly pernicious on the journey to or from school or in public spaces where there is less adult supervision. The prevalence of bullying outside of school has not been studied on a large scale, with the exception of cyberbullying. However, it is likely that students who worry about being bullied on the school campus feel vulnerable when unaccompanied on the way to and from school.

Recent studies explore the significance of rural versus urban location in relation to fear of and danger of crime, concluding that these manifest differently.<sup>93</sup> In rural settings, people may perceive a high danger from sexual predators and criminal activity due to fear of being threatened in an isolated or remote setting.<sup>94</sup>



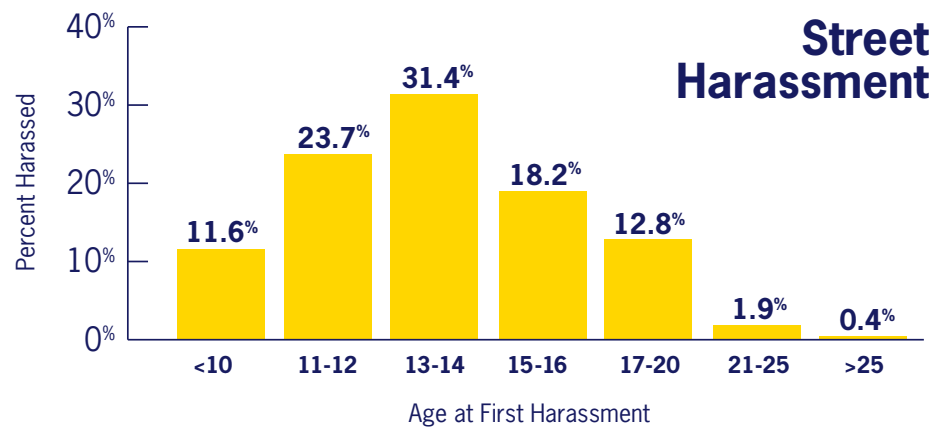
pedbikeimages.org / Laura Sandt

## Street Harassment and Sexual Assault

Street harassment can also affect the trip to school. Street harassment often leads people to avoid certain places or modes of travel, change how they act or look in public, and refrain from being outdoors. Girls and young women are often the targets of street harassment; 50 percent of those harassed reported that such harassment had begun by age 17.<sup>102</sup> In a survey of young women conducted in Chicago in 2003, 86 percent reported having been catcalled on the street, 36 percent said men harassed them daily, and 60 percent said they felt unsafe walking in their neighborhoods.<sup>103</sup>



Boys are more likely to be victims of assaults; girls are more likely to experience sexual victimization.<sup>107</sup>



Hollaback! International Street Harassment Survey Project

**Stop Street Harassment**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to documenting and ending gender-based street harassment, defines street harassment as “unwelcome words and actions by unknown persons in public places which are motivated by gender and invade a person’s physical and emotional space in a disrespectful, creepy, startling, scary, or insulting way.”<sup>104</sup>

A 2014 survey found that 65 percent of all women and 25 percent of all men had experienced street harassment.<sup>105</sup> The most common form of street harassment was verbal harassment, but 41 percent of women reported physically aggressive harassment, including unwanted sexual touching, being followed, and being sexually assaulted. Boys and men who identified as gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer were more likely than heterosexual men to experience street harassment, and the most reported form of harassment was verbal harassment with homophobic or transphobic slurs.<sup>106</sup> Sexual harassment on the street was experienced far more frequently by people of color, low-income individuals, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer-identified people.

Sexual assault goes beyond the intimidation of sexual harassment to encompass actual physical contact of a sexual nature that occurs without a person’s consent. Sexual assault includes unwanted touching and molestation as well as rape, attempted rape, and related sexual violations. Sexual assault violates a person’s right to control who touches his or her body and is the most common serious violent crime against youth.<sup>108</sup> How often sexual assault occurs on the journey to and from school is unknown. The vast majority of sexual assaults on youth are by family members, intimate partners, and acquaintances.<sup>109</sup> While the likelihood of a child being sexual assaulted while walking or bicycling to school is low, fear of such assaults can affect individual or family decisions about school travel, particularly for girls.<sup>110</sup>

*“I don’t walk to school, and I don’t walk home from school. I catch a bus around the corner because walking is too much for me in the morning, because I have a lot of registered sex offenders in my neighborhood and they’re creepy, so I stay away from them. So I catch a bus, and if I miss the bus, I catch another bus... Sometimes a car will follow me to the bus stop.”*

Marisa Jolivet, 16 years<sup>111</sup>

## Gang Activity

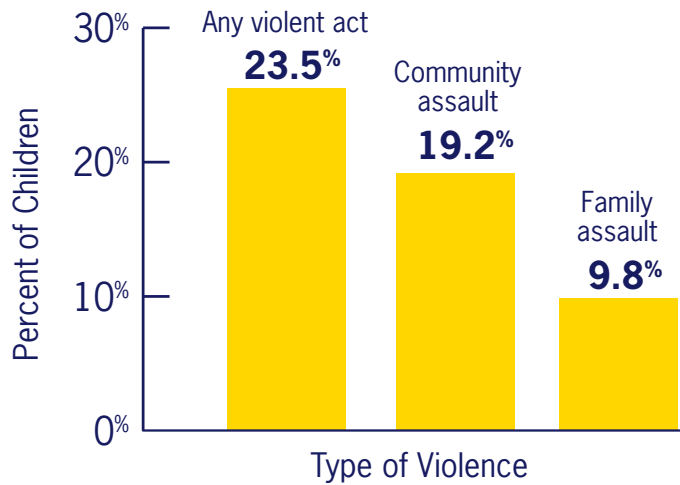
For many youth in urban and disadvantaged communities, gang activity, including gang intimidation and gang recruitment, is a threat as soon as they walk out the door. Nearly 1 in 5 students ages 12 to 18 years old reported that gangs were present in their school in 2011.<sup>112</sup> There are 850,000 children living in gang violence “hot zones” in Los Angeles County alone.<sup>113</sup> Gang territoriality over neighborhoods can require extra travel time and effort for youth, requiring youth to travel out of their way to avoid danger on the journey to and from school. Gang presence in parks and other public spaces leads to diminished use of those spaces. Gang presence not only increases direct threats to safety, but also increases the fear of crime. In a 2005 survey of Washington, DC residents, with each gang present in a neighborhood, the odds of respondents reporting an increased level of fear of crime while walking outdoors increased by 30 percent.

Gangs perpetuate violence for a variety of reasons, including defending and expanding turf, recruiting new members, retaliation, gaining respect amongst peers, and asserting dominance over others.<sup>114</sup> Children and youth traveling to and from school or out in the community are often targets for gang activity, including being intimidated, physically assaulted, or robbed.

*“In the morning, it’s ok. There have been some shootings up there but in the morning I feel OK because my dad walks me up there to the bus stop with me. I don’t have the anxiety in the morning. I’m not saying things can’t happen in the morning, but they usually don’t.”*

Kahmaria Adams, 15 years<sup>128</sup>

## Children Witnessing Violence per Year



Juvenile Justice Bulletin, October 2009

Even if harming children is not intentional, drive-by shootings and other gang violence can result in physical harm to bystanders.<sup>115</sup> In addition, witnessing gang violence can create trauma and have other negative effects on children and youth.

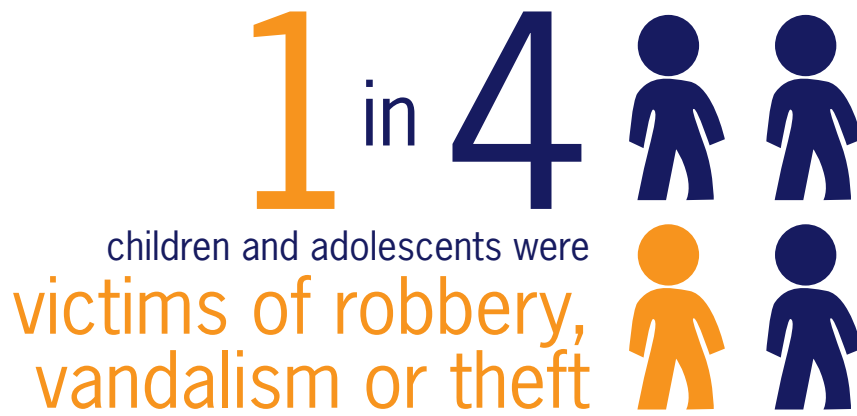
For youth living in areas with gang presence, gang recruitment is a significant threat. Gangs recruit youth who live in local neighborhoods and go to the local schools.<sup>116</sup> New recruits generally range in age from 10 to 24 years, but studies have shown that they are getting younger.<sup>117</sup> The most common reason for joining a gang is safety from other gangs.<sup>118</sup> As with all violence, there are a number of factors that put youth at risk for joining a gang, including low socioeconomic status, lack of parental involvement, and trouble at school.<sup>119</sup>

Like bullying, gang involvement is not only detrimental for others – victims and witnesses – but also for gang members themselves. Estimates vary, but the percentage of youth ever involved in a gang is around 8 percent, and rates of membership for girls are only a little lower than for boys.<sup>120</sup> Among high risk youth in urban areas, gang membership ranges from 15 to 32 percent.<sup>121</sup>

Gang membership appears to cause youth to commit more crimes than they would otherwise, with one study showing that youth committed twice as many crimes against persons while active gang members as they did before or after being in the gang.<sup>122</sup> Gang homicides account for the majority of youth homicide in some large cities, with gang homicides forming 61 percent of youth homicides in Los Angeles and 69 percent in Long Beach.<sup>123</sup>

In addition to the risks of being injured, killed, or arrested while participating in gang activity, gang members and former gang members incur long-term negative behaviors and health effects. In a study of Seattle youth, teens that joined gangs were nearly three times more likely to commit a crime during their late twenties and early thirties and more than three times more likely to receive income from illegal sources. Former gang members also were nearly three times more likely to have drug-abuse issues, were almost twice as likely to be in poor health, and were twice as likely to be receiving public assistance.<sup>124</sup>





Juvenile Justice Bulletin, October 2009

### Physical Assault and Robberies

Physical assaults and robberies also affect children and youth on their way to and from school and other destinations. According to the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, over 46 percent of youth were physically assaulted in the previous year.<sup>125</sup> Rates of assault rise with increasing age, with assaults resulting in injuries occurring to 10 percent of all children and youth in the past year, but affecting almost 20 percent of youth aged 14 to 17.<sup>126</sup> On a positive note, serious violent victimization of youth fell significantly from 1994 to 2010, and these declines were seen for all areas, with the rate of serious violence against youth declining 81 percent in suburban areas, 76 percent in urban areas, and 72 percent in rural areas.<sup>127</sup>

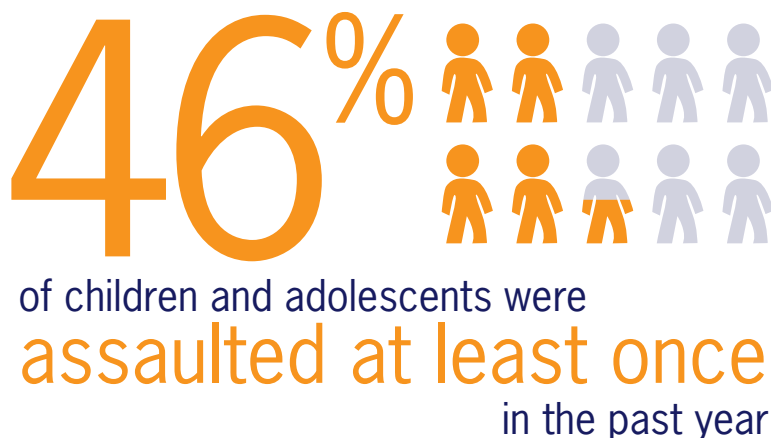
On a yearly basis, 5 percent of children and youth were victims of robbery.<sup>129</sup> Robberies involve a threatened or actual physical assault, so while these crimes may not actually involve physical injury, the threat of assault is part of the harm done to the victim.

As noted above, homicide is the third leading cause of death for teens and young adults ages 15 to 24 years old, after unintentional injuries and suicide.<sup>131</sup> Youth homicide can occur anywhere, in school, in the home, and on the journey to and from school. While walking or bicycling to and from school and in the community, youth may be exposed to guns and gang violence, both of which account for a substantial proportion of youth homicides. Nationwide, 87 percent of teen homicides in 2013 resulted from guns.<sup>132</sup>

Among 14- to 17-year-olds, nearly one in five (18.8%) had been injured in the past year in a physical assault.<sup>130</sup>

### Stray and Loose Dogs

A distinctly different, but also troubling, type of harm comes from the prevalence of stray dogs and loose dogs in some neighborhoods. This concern arises in both rural and urban areas and is commonly mentioned as a deterrent to walking, but it is difficult to quantify the scope of this problem or the scale of actual injuries or physical activity suppression caused by loose dogs.




Juvenile Justice Bulletin, October 2009

## Child Abduction

The fear of having a child abducted by a stranger has had an enormous effect on parents' decisions allowing their children to walk and bicycle to school – or even to be outside without adult accompaniment at all – for the last 30 years. Almost every child learns about “stranger danger” through law enforcement presentations at school and in conversations with parents.

But very few children are ever abducted by strangers. In fact, the number of children kidnapped annually is approximately 100 children across the entire United States. Rather, the vast majority are taken by family members. In 2002, of children reported missing, only two percent were missing due to non-family abductions.<sup>133</sup> The likelihood of stranger abductions has remained consistently low over the past 30 to 40 years, despite the fact parental fear of these occurrences has increased significantly and now drives many decisions about children's activities, especially unsupervised activities.

The fear of child abduction is a significant barrier that prevents parents from allowing their children to walk and bicycle to school. Programs described in this report, such as the walking school bus, can ease fears of child abduction by providing adult supervision on the route to school. Organizations such as the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the National Center for Safe Routes to School also provide guidance for parents wanting to assess when their child is ready to walk alone.<sup>134</sup>

 **“Students of color are routinely at risk of being criminalized to/from school which encourage[s] absenteeism.”**

Safe Passages Twitter Town Hall<sup>140</sup>



## Police Harassment

In some communities – often communities of color – the very police who are supposed to be protectors of a community can increase fear rather than allay it. Problems occur when police overstep the bounds of policing and instead act as an occupying force. This can lead to police interacting with residents through aggression and hostility, profiling innocent individuals, responding with violence to minor infractions, and using unwarranted excessive or deadly force.

Police harassment appears to be more likely to affect people of color. Over 50 percent of African-American respondents said they or someone they know has experienced harassment or violence at the hands of the police, versus 26 percent of white respondents, 28 percent of Latino respondents, and 19 percent of Asian-American respondents.<sup>135</sup> African-American youth report the highest rate of harassment by the police (54.4 percent), nearly twice the rates of other young people.<sup>136</sup> About 44 percent of African-American youth trust the police, compared to about 72 percent of white youth and 60 percent of Latino youth.<sup>137</sup>

In addition, it appears that people of color are at higher risk of getting harassed by law enforcement while biking or walking than their white counterparts, a practice that has been dubbed “biking while black” or “walking while black.”<sup>138</sup> In 2006, a federal appeals court ruled for the plaintiff in a case alleging that police were discriminatorily seizing the bicycles of African-American teens and targeting them for harassment when they rode through the white Detroit suburb of Eastpointe, leading to a settlement of the case.<sup>139</sup>

Unfortunately, whether isolated or not, the misuse of authority by law enforcement officers harms not only the individuals targeted, but has larger negative consequences throughout a community. Negative relationships with law enforcement discourage people from reporting crimes and increases feelings of vulnerability and fear of assault. Contentious relationships between police and community members can lead to violence on the street, further exacerbating the fears that deter people from being physically active outdoors.

# III. Strategies to Improve Safety

Improving community safety is more than simply reducing crime, injury, or violence. A safe community is one that provides an environment free of threats and fear. Creating a safe community also means more than simply locking up criminals. Violence has historically been framed as a criminal justice concern, with the primary solution being the arrest and jailing of criminals.



While this approach can remove individual offenders from the streets, it tends to do little or nothing – and can even be counterproductive – in stopping the cycles that produce crime or in increasing overall feelings of safety. Addressing community safety and preventing violence requires changing the environment where people live and the norms around them.<sup>141</sup>

Although the effects of violence are daunting, there are many successful ways to make children and adults safer and improve community cohesion. The following sections describe various strategies that can enhance community safety, with an emphasis on strategies to address concerns that are barriers to walking, bicycling, and other forms of physical activity. The strategies described in this report seek to address one or more of the types of violence described earlier. In many cases, a strategy may address overall environmental conditions, affecting more than

one of the specific types of safety concern. Naturally, given how multi-faceted the causes of violence are, one strategy alone is unlikely to do much to alter levels of crime and violence within a community. Strategies must complement each other in a comprehensive approach to violence prevention, and must be tailored to the specific community or neighborhood in order to be effective. Community members should be involved early on and throughout the process in order to develop and implement strategies that meet their needs.

## Community Safety as Part of Safe Routes to School Efforts

Many Safe Routes to School practices have been designed to address concerns about children's safety, and practitioners have tailored these practices further to address violence prevention more directly and deeply in communities where violence is a significant problem. For practitioners working on Safe Routes to School in communities where violence is a concern, the first step is to use the basics tools of Safe Routes to School to reduce violence and protect children from its effects. Community safety advocates in communities experiencing high violence will also find these practices useful as they work to improve safety for children during the trip to and from school – a significant and challenging portion of children's daily experience. These tools may also help to build community cohesion and relationships.

The strategies described here include those historically employed by Safe Routes to School practitioners as part of education and encouragement practices but are most tied to violence and crime prevention. For communities where violence is less common and where traffic safety is the primary focus, education about avoiding and dealing with personal safety threats can be woven into existing Safe Routes to School efforts such as bike rodeos and in-classroom instruction.

### Walking School Buses

A walking school bus is an organized group of children who walk together to and from school, usually with the supervision of an adult. It is like a carpool, but without the car and traffic and with the added benefits of increased physical activity and the opportunity to socialize with friends and neighbors. In its simplest form, a walking school bus can involve two families in which the adults take turns walking with the children to school. A more structured approach includes a planned "bus" route with designated stops and a schedule of trained volunteers who lead the walking bus – perhaps parents or guardians, college students or retired individuals.

## Preventing Violence with a Public Health Approach: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Prevention

The public health approach to addressing violence seeks to address the long-term conditions that can lead to violence; to intervene to prevent violence that grows more imminent; and to respond to violence that occurs in a way that reduces the harm and the likelihood of reoccurrence. These strategies are known as primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention.

**Primary prevention** strategies are up front, population- and community-level strategies to create healthy, thriving communities where overall conditions keep violence from arising in the first place. Primary prevention strategies ensure that children and youth experience positive interpersonal interactions, experience a safe and healthy physical environment, receive a high-quality education, and experience opportunities to grow, learn, and have long-term career prospects.

Specific strategies for youth focus on positive early care and education, quality after-school programming, youth leadership, quality education, and opportunities for social interaction and connections. Broader strategies aim for a healthy built environment and community economic development, for example, creating streets that deter injury by motor vehicles and discourage crime, and ensuring parks, plazas, and schools are easily accessible to support physical and mental health.

**Secondary prevention** is aimed at people who may be at increased risk for inflicting or suffering violence. Strategies may include mentoring, mental health services, and street outreach. Safe Routes to School strategies that focus on avoiding chronic absenteeism and getting children and youth to and from school without injury from crime or violence fall into this category.

**Tertiary prevention** deals with the consequences of violence after it occurs, aiming to reduce the chances that it will reoccur. Tertiary prevention strategies include mental health services, both for those who have experienced violence and for those who have inflicted it. Programs that focus on supporting ex-offenders as they re-enter society fall into this category. Most of the strategies discussed in this document do not fall into this category, although these approaches are important too. However, to the extent that Safe Routes to School, mentorship, or other programs support participation by rehabilitated offenders or work with ex-gang members to encourage peace on the streets, there may be a tertiary prevention component.

## The Six E's of Safe Routes to School

As research shows, comprehensive Safe Routes to School programs are more effective at increasing physical activity and reducing injuries. A comprehensive approach requires embedding Safe Routes to School within all aspects of a community. The Six E's of Safe Routes to School describe the key components of a comprehensive, integrated approach. The same applies to violence prevention and the route to school. The Six E's of Safe Routes to School as they relate to violence prevention include:

- **Education** – Teaching students and community members about the broad range of transportation choices and educating them about how to be safe from traffic and crime while using different methods of transportation.
- **Encouragement** – Using events and activities to promote walking, bicycling, public transportation, and being physically active. Many Safe Routes to School activities, such as walking school buses, are designed to reduce the danger of harm from traffic or violence.
- **Engineering** – Making physical improvements to the streetscape and built environment that discourage crime and the risk of injury from motor vehicles or people, increasing street safety.
- **Enforcement** – Partnering with local law enforcement to address traffic and crime concerns in the neighborhood around the school and along school routes, while ensuring that law enforcement does not target students of color or low-income students.
- **Evaluation** – Assessing which approaches are more or less successful; ensuring that a program or initiative is decreasing health disparities and increasing equity; identifying unintended consequences or opportunities to improve the effectiveness of an approach for a given community.
- **Equity** – Creating access and ensuring safe and equitable outcomes for low-income communities, communities of color, and everyone else.

A walking school bus provides children with physical activity and an outlet for their energy and allows for adult supervision without requiring every family to provide an adult to walk to and from school with his or her own child.

The adult leader of the walking school bus helps children negotiate traffic safely, prevents bullying, and provides protection from other potential threats such as street harassment. Some walking school bus leaders are also tasked with watching out for and reporting safety hazards and maintenance issues along their routes. Walking school buses also increase activity on the street and can facilitate neighbors getting to know one another by encouraging families to meet each other and neighbors along the way.

Walking school buses are usually used for children living within walking distance of the school (typically within half a mile), generally elementary school aged children. A variation on the walking school bus for longer distances or older children is a bicycle train, where the children bicycle to and from school along the planned route with an adult. Another variation on the program that can be used for older children who require more independence is a “corner captain” program – see below. In rural areas, a walking school bus may be used to get children from their homes to the bus stop.

A walking school bus program can be organized in a number of different ways. Adult leaders can be volunteers or receive a small stipend. Some groups are self-organized and others are managed by the local school, parent group, or a community organization. Walking school bus leaders can wear vests or other identifying clothing, or the participants can carry a banner or signs to identify themselves during special events like International Walk to School Day. For additional resources on setting up a walking school bus program, visit [www.walkingschoolbus.org](http://www.walkingschoolbus.org).

### Walking School Bus: Washington Camina Contigo



Washington Camina Contigo (Washington Walks With You) is a parent-led program at Washington Elementary School in San Jose, CA. The program was formed in 2010 by an initial group of 20

Spanish-speaking parents in response to the fatal stabbing of a student in front of the elementary school and the increased presence of gangs in the neighborhood. Washington Camina Contigo functions as a creative walking school bus program, with volunteers who canvas the neighborhood for children walking alone in order to accompany them. Parent volunteers wear bright lime green vests, and walk with students to and from the school. The program was started by parents on their own initiative, and CalWalks and the Washington United Youth Center worked with the parent group to have the program formally recognized by the city's Safe Routes to School program.

In addition to the walking school buses, the group is also looking to make changes to the built environment along the walking routes and in the area around the school. After conducting walk audits, the parents provided recommendations to the city's engineering department, which is studying infrastructure improvements based on the findings of the audits. Parents record and report graffiti, street light outages, and maintenance concerns identified during the morning and afternoon walks to the city. Washington Camina Contigo also coordinates monthly beautification and clean-up events in the neighborhood to remove litter and graffiti, while encouraging the greater community to get involved. The program has received awards from the city in recognition of its success and initiative.

### Walking School Bus at Eastside Promise Neighborhood - San Antonio, TX



The Eastside neighborhood of San Antonio is home to a treasure of children, youth, elders and families, but these assets are overshadowed by challenges facing the neighborhood such as low graduation rates, high poverty rates, aging homes and a highly transient population. In 2011, the Mayor and the Obama Administration announced United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County was one of five organizations selected to provide cradle to career services that improve educational achievement and healthy development of children. The approach has been a multi-sectored and multi-agency approach, including the

metropolitan planning organization, the public housing agency, representatives from the school district, as well as a host of non-profit and community-based organizations. The Eastside Promise Neighborhood is seeking to implement a walking school bus to compliment new housing efforts that occurring in the neighborhood. The walking school bus is designed to increase parental engagement and leadership and shift the culture to one that is amenable to walking. The programmatic component of the walking school bus program hopes to compliment transportation infrastructure improvements and ultimately seeks to translate into a longer term school district policy change that will encourage children in the community to walk to school.




pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden

## Corner Captains

Corner captain programs increase the safety of students walking to and from school without adults by ensuring that there are adults in homes or businesses watching for the safety of children on the street. Corner captains can be parents, grandparents, teachers, retirees, or other volunteers who are stationed at designated locations along school routes during the morning and afternoon school commute. For middle school and high school students, who may be unwilling to walk to school with a family member or in an assigned group with an adult volunteer, corner captain programs (which may also go by other names) can be a crucial way to increase safety from gangs, bullying, and violence. Corner captains add eyes on the street and provide known safe spots for children walking to and from school. In communities where street violence is prevalent, crossing guards may inherently take on a larger role similar to corner captains, providing an extra adult set of eyes and years along the school route. However, the main focus of crossing guards is on traffic safety and helping students cross the street. While there are no universal standards for determining where crossing guards should be located and what their role should be, placements and training are usually based on traffic volumes or crash data.<sup>142</sup>

## Safe Corridors in Philadelphia

 In Philadelphia's Fourth District, Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr. has been leading the charge for the safety of children going to and from school.

The year of 2013 saw challenge after challenge for children's safety in the District: a 17-year-old student gunned down at a playground across the street from Overbrook High School, two cars that hit and injured walking students, insufficient crossing guards and bus routes, and hundreds of new students transferred to the Fourth District because of school consolidations.

In reaction, community members worked with Councilman Jones's office to develop and implement a safety plan to provide safe corridors for students. A school safety summit hosted by the councilman brought together representatives of several schools, the Police Department, the Office of School Safety, the Streets Department, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, and the Roxborough Development Corporation. Designed to trigger a collaborative effort between school officials, law enforcement, community advocates, transportation officials and parents, the result was a large-scale safe passages campaign, which included the integration of community policing efforts with hundreds of established block captains, a weekly teleconference with all district schools and police to coordinate dismissal times and presence around the school along safe passageways, cameras installed at key hubs, a police school district hotline, and the establishment of safe havens for students when violent incidents occur.



The Philadelphia Bicycle Coalition, with support from the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, has been working to increase the funding available for Safe Routes to School initiatives statewide. Working with the Office of Councilman Jones, the Philadelphia Bicycle Coalition brought together a diverse statewide Safe Routes to School Coalition in early 2015. The coalition is now actively campaigning for the release of unspent Safe Routes to School dollars, the re-establishment of the Pennsylvania Safe Routes to School Resource Center, and a focus on projects that are ready to build that will enhance student safety throughout the state of Pennsylvania. The collaboration of active transportation and violence prevention interests make this coalition a powerful one.

## Safe Havens

In areas where students walk past businesses on the way to school, “safe havens” can be established. These businesses sign on to provide a safe place for students to step inside if they are experiencing bullying or harassment. Similar to a corner captain program, safe havens provide adult presence along the school route and can assist youth traveling alone when needed. Students can wait for the safety threat to pass or call someone to pick them up. Businesses are not asked to intervene in dangerous situations, but rather to provide a refuge and to call law enforcement when needed. Community facilities such as community centers, senior centers, and fire departments can also act as safe havens.



**“Establish safe houses – pre-identified locations where youth can go in case of emergencies while going to and from school.”**

Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>143</sup>



### Cedar Rapids, Iowa Safe Spot Program: Partnering with Businesses



The Cedar Rapids Fire Department, in partnership with the Police Department and local neighborhood groups, created the Safe Spot program, which provides a place of refuge for children if they are being threatened, harassed, or otherwise feel unsafe when they are walking or bicycling in the community.<sup>144</sup> Businesses and civic buildings throughout Cedar Rapids can become designated “Safe Spots” that display the Safe Spot logo near the building entrance. Safe Spot participants provide temporary refuge and call for emergency assistance when needed.

The Safe Spot program evolved from an earlier window sticker display program where residents could sign up to provide a safe refuge for children at their homes. Despite the good intentions behind the program, there were numerous concerns about its design, including the lack of an adequate screening process for the resident participants and the failure to remove stickers from houses when the original participants moved on. This sticker program was abandoned for the more structured Safe Spot program.

The Fire Department’s Public Education Division runs the Safe Spot program. The Fire Department works with the schools to disseminate information about program and the Police Department provides information to children during regular educational programs. During the initial phase of the program, approximately 50 businesses signed up to participate. Civic institutions and community organizations with buildings in the city are also able to participate. The program targets businesses along walking routes to schools in order to be most useful to children.



One of the keys to the success of the Safe Spot program is the ease of participation for the businesses. The program does not have an overly detailed guidebook or list of cumbersome procedures and policies. There are only two major criteria that a business must meet in order to become a designated Safe Spot: 1) the business must be open during the week from 7 am to 7 pm (when most children are out and about in the community) and 2) there must be at least two employees present at all times. The requirement of two employees ensures that one can assist the child while the other tends to the business, and also provides a safeguard against the possibility of a child being abused by an employee. The businesses are rechecked annually.

Businesses are given postcards to track and report back to the Fire Department children’s usage of the program. The program has been successful in providing children and families a sense of security as children walk to and from school.



## Safe Passages

In urban areas where community violence is the largest threat to children getting safely to and from school, many cities are implementing programs commonly referred to as Safe Passages. Safe Passages programs have students' safe travel to school as their core goal but go much deeper into the community environment. The focus of a Safe Passages program often includes creating safe and supportive school environments, increasing school attendance, reducing dropout rates, and increasing participation in after school activities – goals that many Safe Routes to School programs, public health organizations, and educators have as well. Safe Passages programs usually include multiple elements of Safe Routes to School programs such as youth and parent safety education, walking school buses, and partnerships with local law enforcement, but have historically been seen as separate initiatives in some communities.

The Safe Passages model grew out of an initiative piloted by AmeriCorps volunteers in Philadelphia in the 1990s. Parents worked alongside the volunteers to reduce threats to students before and after school.<sup>145</sup> Today there are many variations on Safe Passages programs. Per the Advancement Project, a multi-racial civil rights organization,<sup>146</sup> there are four broad categories of Safe Passages programs:

**Professional or Para-Professional Safe Passage Model.** This model is usually led by a school, school district, or community agency that hires professional security or trained community members to monitor the routes to school. A unique aspect of this model is that the professionals are often expected to intervene in potentially violent situations.

### Volunteer Safe Passage Model.

Programs under this model typically focus on elementary schools as well as suburban and rural areas. Schools, community organizations, parents, and other volunteers are stationed along the school route, similar to the corner captain program. Volunteers rarely receive formal training. They provide eyes on the street and are set up to communicate with one another and with law enforcement to report safety concerns, but are discouraged from directly intervening. The adults are from the neighborhoods that they monitor, and their mere presence may deter gang activity and crime.

**Collaborative Model.** This model brings together numerous stakeholders including schools, parents, community groups, and service providers and often focuses on violence in the larger community. These programs can include a combination of volunteer and professional staffing, formal communication protocols, and additional law enforcement.

### School-Based Transformation Model.

Programs using this model include a comprehensive school safety strategy focused on school culture and the environment. Partners similar to those in the other models are included and on-campus as well as off-campus threats to students are addressed.

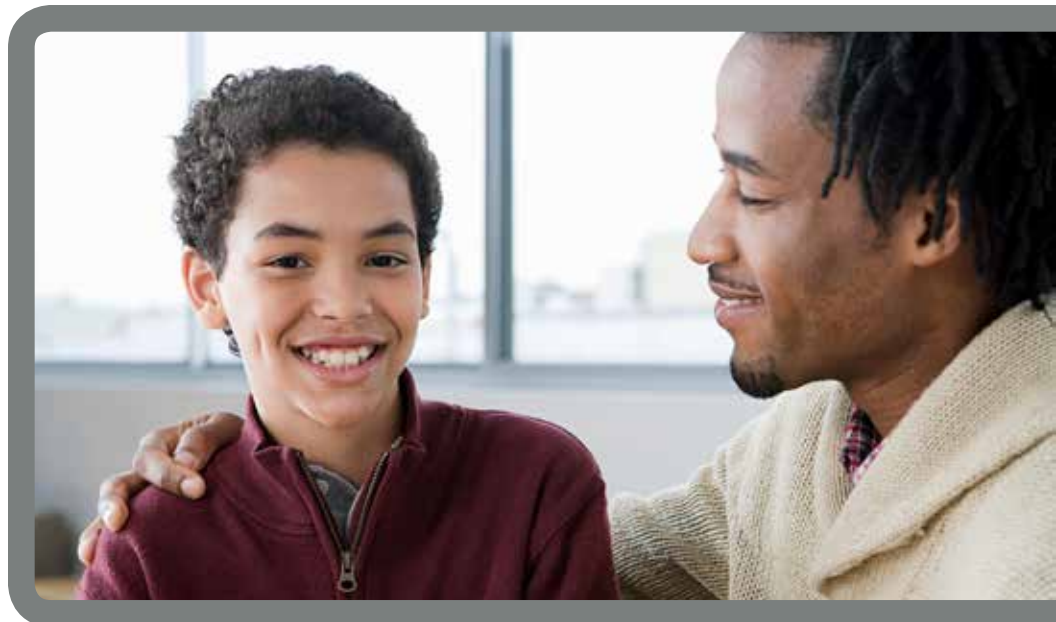
## Chicago's Safe Passage Program



One of the largest Safe Passage programs was launched in 2009 in Chicago. Led by Chicago Public Schools, the program engages community organizations to hire and manage Safe Passage workers.<sup>147</sup>

There are approximately 1,200 workers, including local residents, veterans, college students, and retirees. One of the key components of the program is that the Safe Passage workers are paid (\$10 per hour), compensating them for their crucial work and increasing their ability to commit to an assigned schedule.

One of the largest contractors on the program is an organization called Leave No Veteran Behind. The organization provides transitional jobs to veterans, assisting them in getting back into the civilian workforce while increasing the well-being of their communities.<sup>148</sup> Leave No Veteran Behind also provides educational scholarships for veterans. Their work on the safety of Chicago's children began in 2009, when one of their scholarship veterans indicated his interest in giving back to his community by decreasing violence at Chicago's high schools.<sup>149</sup> Leave No Veteran Behind began organizing Positive Patrols, which aims to engage positively with students after school and discourage violence.



While there has been a decline in crime along the Safe Passage routes, it is not a panacea. In December 2013, a 15-year old girl was beaten and raped just a half block away from a Safe Passage route.<sup>150</sup> The incident occurred 30 minutes before the Safe Passage workers were on duty. Parents and community members continue to feel concern about the dangers to students caused by school consolidations, and some see the program as a “visual Band-Aid.”<sup>151</sup>

Nonetheless, the safety improvements are real. There has been a 20% decline in criminal incidents around Safe Passage schools, a 27% drop in incidents such as bullying among students, and a 7% increase in attendance at high schools in Chicago with a Safe Passage program over a 2-year period.<sup>152</sup>

### **Advancement Project's Best and Promising Practices to Address Violence and Personal Safety in Safe Routes to School Programs**

#### **A 2015 report on Best and Promising Practices to Address Violence and Personal Safety in Safe Routes to School Programs**

by the Advancement Project identifies best practices and potential strategies that can be used in developing Safe Routes to School programs in communities with high violence and crime concerns. The report discusses the importance of collaborative efforts, provides guidance on creating effective collaborations, and identifies activities that have been used in Safe Passage programs that could be integrated into Safe Routes to School programs.

### **Advancement Project's Safe Passages in Los Angeles**



Advancement Project's Urban Peace program is leading collaborative efforts to ensure students can walk to school safely in two Los Angeles neighborhoods: Watts and the Belmont Schools Zone

of Choice. Advancement Project's Safe Passages work began in the Belmont Schools Zone of Choice where more than a third of the families live below the poverty line and 27 different gangs consider the area “their territory.”<sup>153</sup> Advancement Project convened the Belmont School Safety Collaborative, which includes 21 community-based organizations, six agencies, residents and youth, to develop and implement the Safe Passages program. Much of the successes of the Safe Passages work has been attributed to the strong efforts to engage multiple stakeholders and collaborate on community-identified priorities.<sup>154</sup>

The Safe Passages program was also implemented in Watts after the Advancement Project found through their Community Safety Scorecard that the Watts neighborhood topped the list of L.A.'s most dangerous ZIP codes in 2010.<sup>155</sup> One key aspect of the program is working with professionally trained gang violence interventionists.<sup>156</sup>

The work in these two neighborhoods has been complemented by Advancement Project's Community Safety Partnership in Watts. Work has included technical assistance to the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and local law enforcement to implement a joint community safety plan. Through the Community Safety Partnership, Advancement Project has also instructed 45 law enforcement officers stationed in Watts on implementing community policing best practices and conducted trainings for Latino residents to become leaders of the community safety effort.<sup>157</sup>

### **Pasos Seguros – Community Leadership for Safe Passages**



Boyle Heights, a community on the east side of the City of Los Angeles, is very densely populated, with some 14,229 people per square mile, amongst the highest of densities in Los Angeles. In

addition, Boyle Heights is 94 percent Latino. Proyecto Pastoral, a community building organization whose mission is to provide training, education and social services in Pico-Aliso/Boyle Heights, is leading the Pasos Seguros (Safe Passages) efforts to increase community leadership and address challenges of community violence in the neighborhood. The Pasos Seguros strategy is a comprehensive approach to address the dangers to walking and bicycling from lack of infrastructure, traffic congestion, and a variety of external barriers like illegal activities (e.g., drugs, gangs, and theft) that students may encounter on the way to and from school. Pasos Seguros is looking to enhance community cohesion by hosting walk audits, community walks, and bike rides to increase eyes on the street and community pride and ownership over spaces that are occupied by gangs. Boyle Heights has a long history of gang presence and gang violence. Routes to school pass through parks that may be the center of gang activity. Parents are hesitant to allow their children to walk or bicycle to school due to drug sales on the street. Pasos Seguros is honing the community's leadership skills to make it safer for children and adults in the community, including a growing senior population. Pasos Seguros is coupling education with safety to produce positive changes in Boyle Heights.

## Violence and Crime Prevention Programs Beyond the School Trip

While Safe Routes to School has historically focused on the trip to and from school, a number of related strategies and programs are geared towards broader health, safety, and wellness of youth in communities. Some of these programs aim to reduce exposure to crime and violence and support children who have experienced trauma or violence. Other programs focus on the physical and mental development of children. While these programs have traditionally been undertaken by organizations other than those focused on safe walking and bicycling, the goals of these programs are closely aligned with those of Safe Routes to School programs. The strategies in this section are additional tools for Safe Routes to School practitioners to consider when addressing violence, and can be integrated into or complementary to Safe Routes to School initiatives. Safe Routes to School practitioners may find close partners in those already working on these strategies in their community.



### Shared Use

Shared use involves making places in communities that are usually closed to the public after hours – such as school playgrounds or fields – available for community use.<sup>158</sup> For example, in Salt Lake City, Utah, the National Tongan American Society worked with school districts and faith-based institutions to increase access to physical activity opportunities among Samoans, Fijians, and Tongans in the Pacific Islander community. Through shared use agreements that were put in place, local schools opened up their grounds and now allow children and adults from the neighborhood to come after school or on weekends to use a track or playground. While shared use agreements are often centered around schools, they can involve other community institutions, such as libraries, community centers, hospitals, and churches or other places of worship.<sup>159</sup> Shared use makes it easier for children and adults to be healthy by providing them with places to exercise and play that are safe, conveniently located, inviting, and affordable.

Like Safe Routes to School, shared use is often used as a tool to increase spaces available to community members for physical activity in neighborhoods that lack parks or other recreational facilities. But shared use can also play an important role in supporting community safety. First, shared use often generates activity in spaces that would otherwise be deserted at a given time (such as schools in the evenings or on weekends).<sup>160</sup> Instead of functioning as dead space where crimes or disorderly conduct can occur, these spaces are transformed into areas filled with people and activities, reducing the danger to people walking by or in the neighborhood.

Shared use also fosters a broader sense of community ownership of the space. A school becomes not just a place for students, but an asset that all community members use; a church property is cared for not just by the congregation, but also by the neighbors who use the space for exercise classes in the evenings.

Many schools have found that when they open their facilities to shared use, they see less graffiti and vandalism, not more.<sup>161</sup> Finally, shared use can decrease criminal activity by providing a place for youth and others in the community to engage in healthy activities, create social bonds, and stay out of trouble.

How does shared use work? Sometimes it occurs through formal shared use agreements or contracts. Other times it happens informally, through a handshake deal or historical practice. In addition, shared use can happen without a partner through an open use policy. With an open use policy, a school, government entity, or other body adopts a policy that simply sets out the contours of when and how they will allow the community to access their property.<sup>162</sup>

## East Palo Alto, California FIT Zones



The one-time murder capital of the United States, the City of East Palo Alto has seen a large drop in homicides over the past two decades, but has continued to struggle with gangs and violent assaults.<sup>163</sup>

In response, in 2011 the East Palo Alto Police Department teamed up with public health professionals to try out an innovative approach: physical activity programs to address both community health and community safety in some of the city's highest crime areas.

The Fitness Improvement Training (FIT) Zones were launched in two of the most dangerous areas of the city, which were selected based on the local public health department's mapping of areas with the highest concentration of gunshots. Not surprisingly, these bullet-ridden public spaces were often the locations of crime and gang activity, deterring residents from using them. Crime and fear of crime meant that residents were unlikely to be physically active outdoors, with considerable health consequences. Only 14.4 percent of 5th graders in East Palo Alto met state physical fitness standards in 2014.<sup>164</sup> East Palo Alto residents, on average, can expect to live 61.8 years, while the overall life expectancy in the county is 75 years.<sup>165</sup>

To address these challenges, the police department, public health department, and nonprofit partners launched the FIT Zones. The intent of the FIT Zones is to reclaim these dangerous public spaces while providing healthy activities and promoting community ties between and among residents, police, and other stakeholders. The FIT Zones increase public presence in public spaces through almost daily programming, enabling residents to regain ownership of previously off-limits public spaces in their neighborhoods.



Programs include fitness and health-related events, group walks, organized sports, bicycle rides, and presentations. Police officers are assigned to the FIT Zones and participate in and lead many of the physical activity programs. This serves a dual purpose – the police presence increases the sense of security for the community members who are getting physical activity, and improves police and community relations by providing opportunities for positive interaction. According to Ronald Davis, now director of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and former East Palo Alto police chief, "This project reinforces the notion that the greatest deterrent to crime and violence is not a neighborhood saturated with cops. It's a community alive with residents."<sup>166</sup>

One of the unique aspects of the FIT Zones program is the wide range of partners engaged in developing and executing the project. Initial partners included the county health department, a local health clinic, the local school district, legal and policy analysts from the University of California at Berkeley, and the police activities league. An executive committee that includes representatives from faith-based organizations, the school district, local elected bodies, and community organizations continues to guide and monitor progress. Nine months after the zones were launched, shootings in the two FIT zones were down 60 percent and 43 percent, compared to a decrease of 30 percent in other areas of East Palo Alto.<sup>167</sup>

## Afterschool Programs

Organized afterschool activities can increase community safety in two ways: they keep children and youth safe and out of harm's way and decrease the likelihood that youth will now or in the future become sources of trouble. Afterschool programs can be at schools, especially where shared use agreements are in effect, or can be at local community centers, sports facilities, or other locations.

How do afterschool programs protect children? In addition to providing youth with a safe place to go, they also provide value with increased academic support and leadership development that provide alternatives to criminal behavior and gang involvement. Self-care and boredom can increase the likelihood that a young person will experiment with drugs and alcohol by as much as 50 percent.<sup>168</sup>

## Boys and Girls Clubs

Boys and Girls Clubs provide programs ranging from leadership development to health and life skills, sports and arts, and more for young people ages 6 to 18 in over 4,100 locations. These programs outside of school have been shown to positively influence academic success as well as reduce youth violence and conflict. In its 2014 annual report, the Boys and Girls Clubs showed that youth who were highly engaged in the programs were more likely to aspire to go to college, put forth their best effort in school, and skipped school less. They were also more likely to abstain from fighting and had better conflict resolution skills.<sup>173</sup> A study of Boys and Girls Clubs just in California showed that program participation averts approximately 3,539 youth from being arrested annually.<sup>174</sup>



“Afterschool & before-school prog[ram]s thru school-community partnerships help ensure young people are engaged while parents work.”

Safe Passages Twitter Town Hall<sup>172</sup>

Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes at school than teens who do participate.<sup>169</sup> A study of after-school programs in 12 California communities found vandalism and stealing dropped by two-thirds, violent acts and carrying a concealed weapon fell by more than 50 percent, and arrests and being picked up by the police were cut in half.<sup>170</sup> Other studies have also identified decreases in crime due to participation in youth recreation centers and afterschool programs.<sup>171</sup>

## Anti-Street Harassment Initiatives

A number of organizations around the world are addressing the pervasiveness of street harassment. Those working to address safety of youth on the way to and from school may be most interested in the organizations with initiatives specifically focused on ending harassment of girls, young women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. Anti-street harassment initiatives can include campaigns to bring public attention to the issues, online forums to share experiences, technology such as iHollaback and Harassmap to document and map harassers, and education and leadership building for youth to prevent youth from harassing others and to empower youth to take a stance against harassment.

## Anti-Street Harassment Resources

### Helping Our Teen Girls Anti-Street Harassment Campaign

Has conducted summits and developed materials to stop street harassment.

### Stop Street Harassment

A national nonprofit engaging in campaigns and providing research and resources.

**Hollaback!** An international movement to end street harassment through research and innovative strategies.

International Anti-Street Harassment Week brought attention to the prevalence of street harassment through rallies, workshops, advertisements, and social media.<sup>175</sup> Educating students on how to respond and not contribute to street harassment should be routinely addressed in Safe Routes to School programs as part of one of the Six E's, Education. This work can be directly incorporated into Safe Routes to School programs or brought in through partnerships with organizations with existing anti-street harassment programs.

## Gang Interruption Programs: Cure Violence/Ceasefire

Gang interruption programs, most notably the Cure Violence (formerly CeaseFire) program, approach gang violence as an infectious disease. These programs mirror the three-part approach that public health uses to reverse epidemic disease outbreaks – interrupting transmission of the disease, reducing occurrence amongst the highest risk, and changing community norms.<sup>176</sup> Twenty-three U.S. cities are implementing the Cure Violence model. The program makes a difference in violence rates by targeting a small population, usually community members identified as having a high chance of “being shot or being shooters” in the near future.<sup>177</sup>

The three components of the Cure Violence model include:

**Detection and Interruption.** Data (statistical information and local knowledge from those on the ground) help identify risks. Trained violence interrupters and outreach workers work to interrupt conflicts by preventing retaliation,

mediating ongoing conflicts, and following up to ensure conflicts do not become violent.

### Identify and Treat Highest Risk.

Culturally appropriate outreach workers counsel those with the highest risk of committing violence by engaging them on the street and helping them obtain social services such as job training and drug treatment.

**Changing Community Norms:** Cure Violence works with the community as a whole to “convey the message that violence should not be viewed as normal, but as a behavior that can be changed.”<sup>178</sup> Work includes engaging community members, establishing positive community leadership, and hosting community events.

The Cure Violence model has been shown to successfully reduce violence, with an independent Department of Justice evaluation finding the program to lead to a 41 percent to 73 percent reduction in shootings and killings.<sup>179</sup> The SafeStreets program in Baltimore saw a reduction in killings and shootings, as well as a change in norms -- people were much less likely to accept the use of a gun to settle

## Homicide Rate

13.7x  
higher

African American



White



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013

a dispute.<sup>180</sup> In New York, the average monthly shooting rate decreased by 6 percent in the area where the program was implemented while the shooting rate in comparison areas increased between 18 and 28 percent.<sup>181</sup>

## Youth Bicycle Kitchens and Programs

Bicycle co-ops and youth bicycle kitchens, in their many and varied forms, can play a great role in bridging the gap between violence prevention and active transportation. Bicycle co-ops, bicycle kitchens, and community bicycle shops are places for individuals bring in bicycles needing repair or maintenance, or where they can build bicycles from spare parts. These institutions may offer classes, assistance with repairs, and new and used bicycle parts for purchase. They are often non-profit organizations that provide a low-cost way to equip children and adults for bicycling. Many of these programs focus on enabling low-income youth or adults to obtain bicycles, whether abandoned or donated, used or new. Many programs work with youth, who learn to fix bicycles and then earn a bicycle in the process.<sup>182</sup>



Michael Baker International

## Section III: Strategies to Improve Safety

Because the cost of maintenance can be prohibitive for some low-income individuals, bicycle co-ops often teach people the skills to do their own repairs.<sup>183</sup> Youth bicycle kitchens can play a number of violence prevention roles. First, they involve connecting youth to positive programs and relationships and giving them a community. Often, informal or formal mentorship relationships arise as part of this process. Second, bicycle kitchens can function as afterschool programs, with the benefits mentioned above. And finally, bicycle kitchens that teach youth to repair bicycles have a job preparation component, giving youth skills and confidence that can translate into employment.

### Mentorship Programs

Mentorship programs, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, are effective violence reduction approaches that provide at-risk youth with positive adult role models. Mentors can steer protégés away from dangerous behavior and promote healthy development, while also watching out so that the child does not become a victim of violence. Big Brothers Big Sisters focuses on youth who may face a number of risk factors for violence, including growing up in poverty, being exposed to abuse or violence, and coping with parental incarceration. The program matches children and teens (Littles) with adult volunteers (Bigs). The program emphasizes one-on-one interaction and mentoring while the Littles and Bigs enjoy simple activities together such as playing catch, eating out, and going to a museum.<sup>186</sup>

A study of the impact of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program found that Littles who spent about 12 hours monthly with their Big mentor over an 18 month period were 45 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 27 percent less likely to start drinking, and 32 percent less likely to hit someone. The Littles also missed half as many days of school as children and teens who were on the waiting list.<sup>187</sup>

While youth mentorship programs have not traditionally been incorporated into Safe Routes to School, the goals of the two are closely aligned. Big Brothers Big Sisters organizers and mentors can be strong partners in Safe Routes to School and violence prevention efforts.



Street Wise Foundation's RIDE SAFE Bicycle Safety Program



**“We want to build more bridges between community knowledge and expert solutions thru supporting diversity in bike advocacy.”**

**Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>184</sup>**

### Streetwise – Getting Low-income Kids Excited about Bicycling



For many children and youth, owning and learning to ride a bicycle is pivotal in gaining independence from parents, allowing them to get from point A to point B on their own and teaching responsibility by maintaining a prized possession. The Streetwise Ride Safe Community Bicycle Program in Washington, DC, is working to make sure low-income youth have the chance to experience the joys of riding and owning a bicycle. Chris Bryant, Executive Director of Streetwise often tells kids that “a bike is your gateway”—a way to get to a first job, to visit with friends, to explore the community.<sup>185</sup> Bryant recognized that just owning a bicycle was not enough to encourage and allow kids to ride. Bryant’s team makes sure kids have helmets, understand the rules of the road, know how to keep their bicycles secure, and take pride in owning a bicycle.

The Ride Safe Program is made up of four pillars: safety, education, training, and encouragement. Ride Safe provides basic bicycle safety classes (in classroom and on-the-road training), tools for building and repairing bicycles, professional-level training for youth wanting to work in a bicycle shop, and events and activities to get youth and the community excited about bicycling. Visit [streetwise.org](http://streetwise.org) for more information.



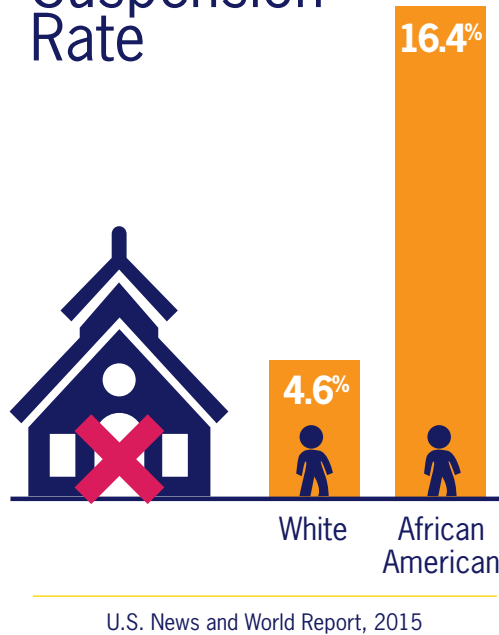
Street Wise Foundation's RIDE SAFE Bicycle Safety Program

## Restorative Justice in Schools

Criminal acts, violent behavior, and general misconduct are often rooted in underlying issues that the traditional system of punishment does not address. Without systemically addressing these issues, the destructive behavior will not change. According to the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, “Restorative justice offers alternatives to our traditional juvenile and criminal justice systems and harsh school discipline processes. Rather than focusing on punishment, restorative justice seeks to repair the harm done.”<sup>188</sup> Numerous school districts across the country are implementing restorative justice practices as an alternative to disciplinary tactics like suspension, expulsion, and referrals to law enforcement.

Restorative justice programs in schools vary, but many involve peer mentoring, peer juries, and mediation with teachers or school administrators.

## Student Suspension Rate



At a middle school in Duluth, “referral rooms,” where students were formerly sent when asked to leave the classroom for disruptive behavior, have been replaced with “focus walks” where disruptive students go on a walk around campus with a staff member and discuss “welcome actions, showing pride, and focusing on learning.”<sup>189</sup> The assistant principal says, “Walking side by side with a student is more respectful of some cultures and removes much of the stigma of talking with an authority figure... It also helps students build relationships with adults.”<sup>190</sup>

While critics of restorative justice practices in schools say they give students a free pass to misbehave without any consequences, studies of schools with restorative justice-based discipline have shown the practices have improved school environments, built positive relationships between students, and reduced disruptive behavior.<sup>191</sup>

## Working to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline in Colorado

Colorado, like many other places across the country, has a history of harsh school disciplinary practices that were needlessly sending students into the juvenile justice system or removing them from schools when they were in need of educational opportunities. These practices were found to affect students of color, students with disabilities, undocumented students, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth the most.<sup>192</sup> A Denver-based organization, Padres & Jóvenes Unidos, worked with other partners to analyze the problem and develop solutions. Their work led to the passage of the Smart School Discipline Law (SSDL) by the Colorado State Legislature in 2012.<sup>193</sup>

The SSDL includes the following key elements:

1. Recognition that “the use of inflexible ‘zero tolerance’ policies as a means of addressing disciplinary policies in schools has resulted in unnecessary expulsions, out-of-school suspensions, and referrals to law enforcement agencies,” declaring that the “involvement of students in the criminal or juvenile justice systems should be avoided when addressing minor misbehavior that is typical for a student based on his or her developmental stage.”
2. A requirement that every school district in Colorado implement “proportionate” discipline that reduces the number of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement.
3. A requirement that school districts implement prevention strategies, restorative justice, peer mediation, counseling, and other approaches designed to minimize student exposure to the juvenile and criminal justice system.

4. Improvements to the collection of data around school-based arrests, tickets, and court referrals.

5. Increased training of school-based police officers on appropriate approaches to discipline involving students of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and students with disabilities.

Since the SSDL was passed, expulsion and suspension rates across Colorado are down, as are law enforcement referrals from schools overall. But, while racial disparities have lessened in some areas, African-American students are almost four times more likely, and Native American and Latino students about twice as likely, to be suspended, expelled, or referred to law enforcement than white students.<sup>194</sup> Advocates continue to work on these issues.





## Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch is a program sponsored by the National Sheriffs' Association where organized groups of residents act as extra "eyes and ears" by watching out for suspicious behavior and criminal activity and reporting to law enforcement. A Neighborhood Watch program is intended to deter crime by making potential offenders aware that they may be being watched, while promoting cooperation and trust among residents and law enforcement. A Neighborhood Watch is typically established in cooperation with local law enforcement and training is provided that is consistent with the National Neighborhood Watch program. There are more than 22,000 official registered Neighborhood Watch programs around the country, and in 2001, 41 percent of the American population lived in communities covered by Neighborhood Watch.<sup>195,196</sup>

Evaluations of how well Neighborhood Watch programs actually succeed in the main goal of reducing crime have reached different conclusions. A report from the U.S. Department of Justice did a meta-analysis of 18 qualifying evaluations and concluded that Neighborhood Watch programs were associated with decreased

crime, identifying an overall 16 percent reduction in crime in Neighborhood Watch areas compared to control areas.<sup>197</sup> But other evaluations have found much more negative results, finding little effect on crime or even seeing increases in Neighborhood Watch areas versus control areas. One analysis concluded that areas with the highest crime are reluctant to organize Neighborhood Watch programs, while neighborhoods with these programs are unlikely to need them.<sup>198</sup>

While the Neighborhood Watch model is long standing (it was first started in 1972), obstacles to forming a Neighborhood Watch program include resident apathy, civic disengagement, and fear. There is also the potential for displacing crime from one neighborhood to another if many neighborhoods are not involved. Volunteer sustainability can also become an issue if there are not a variety of roles for residents who have varying levels of comfort in being visibly involved in the program.<sup>199</sup>

Another danger of the Neighborhood Watch model is the potential that community residents may be reporting on people who stand out in the neighborhood and "look like they don't belong," rather than identification of actual suspicious behavior. Some neighborhood watch participants may mistakenly use their role to try to intervene with activity instead of reporting it to law enforcement. The National Neighborhood Watch program asks neighborhood watch members to report suspicious activity to law enforcement, not to act as law enforcement officers.

Although most Neighborhood Watch programs have not had an active connection to Safe Routes to School, Neighborhood Watch programs could do so by emphasizing the protection of children and youth in their approaches. Neighborhood Watch programs can potentially function in conjunction with corner captain programs to ensure that the entire community is looking out for the safety of children and youth.

## Clarksdale Neighborhood Watch Association



In 2012, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) embarked on a project in Clarksdale, MS to improve walkability in residential neighborhoods. As the project got under way, conversations with a small group of women in town revealed an interconnected set of concerns about crime, dilapidated buildings, lack of walkable areas, and lack of recreational opportunities in the neighborhood. These conversations quickly became formalized monthly meetings with approximately 50 community members. AARP learned that large barriers to community members walking in their neighborhoods were violence and the fear of violence.<sup>200</sup> The group (now called "Clarksdale Seniors for a More Livable Community") prioritized community safety as the issue that they wanted to tackle first.


After holding a "Meet Your Neighborhood Night" at the city auditorium, the Clarksdale Neighborhood Watch Association was formed. Neighborhood mapping helped determine areas with high crime rates and identify where neighborhood watch members would need to be recruited. The program has helped improve relationships between community members and the police, with the police chief emphasizing confidentiality and building trust within the community. Community members report more police patrolling their neighborhood, a reduction in crime, and a larger voice in community decisions. More than 400 community members attended the group's large celebration and media event during National Night Out in 2014.<sup>201</sup>

The Clarksdale Neighborhood Watch program participants are expanding their work beyond traditional neighborhood watch duties. One subgroup is conducting surveys of each household and is looking to develop a citizen engagement and training program. The program participants are also working with the police department to identify and rehabilitate dilapidated buildings.

## Law Enforcement Beyond the Traffic Safety Role

One of the key stakeholders necessary to address safety concerns alongside Safe Routes to School is law enforcement. Law enforcement has always played a central role in addressing crime and community safety. Historically the primary role of law enforcement has been to respond to crimes, seek those who committed them, and arrest those who break the law. Law enforcement associated with Safe Routes to School programs is most often focused on traffic enforcement. But in communities where crime deters students from walking to school more than car traffic, and where neighborhoods are unsafe because violence is pervasive, the traditional roles of law enforcement do little to address the underlying issues.

In this section, we discuss two alternatives to traditional law enforcement methods – community policing and school-based policing – and explore the opportunities presented for collaborating with law enforcement to address community safety threats that may discourage or endanger students walking or bicycling to school.

 **Q: “How can interested organizations build on community assets to make trips to/from school safer?”**

**A: “[P]artnerships with the police to encourage community policing practices and build relationships. OT scared straight.”**

Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>206</sup>



### Community Policing

Many cities are shifting away from traditional law enforcement methods towards community policing, which focuses on building ties and working closely with community members. The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice, provides the following definition of community policing:

Community policing focuses on crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services that includes aspects of traditional law enforcement, as well as prevention, problem solving, community engagement, and partnerships. The community policing model balances reactive responses to calls for service with proactive problem-solving centered on the causes of crime and disorder. Community policing requires police and citizens to join together as partners in the course of both identifying and effectively addressing these issues.<sup>202</sup>

One key aspect of community policing is that law enforcement officers spend time in the community, understanding the concerns of community members and building rapport with residents.

The officers have a consistent presence in their assigned neighborhood or area so they become known entities, with residents able to identify them and see them as a member of the community, not an outsider. Community policing creates a sense of joint responsibility for creating a safe community and also promotes police accountability to the residents.



**“Overbroad policing like truancy sweeps often target YOC [youth of color] and decrease student attendance.”**

**Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>203</sup>**

There are a number of tools and techniques that community policing programs use, including the following:

**Public education programs.**

Workshops and informational sessions with community members provide information to the public as well as a space for positive, non-confrontational interaction.

**Neighborhood watch programs.**

Neighborhood watch, described earlier, promotes shared responsibility for crime prevention. Neighborhood watch meetings can provide opportunities for residents to discuss feelings and fears and develop solutions alongside law enforcement. Community members may also be recruited to serve on advisory committees or task forces as well.

**Storefront mini-stations.**

Police mini-stations are part of the effort to create decentralized law enforcement, bringing officers closer to the communities they serve. Mini-stations can be staffed by a mix of police officers, paid civilians, and unpaid volunteers. Mini-stations can be used as another avenue for the police to share information with the public.

**Weed and seed programs.**

Weed and seed programs use a two-pronged approach to crime prevention: law enforcement officers “weed out” offenders, while community organizations “seed” human services, including prevention, intervention, treatment, and neighborhood restoration programs. This allows for community participation, leveraging of resources, and effective collaborative partnerships.

## The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing

In 2014, high profile police killings of unarmed African American men and teens led to protests, increased recognition of the toll of racial profiling and police brutality, and demands for a change in policing of communities of color. In response, President Obama established the Task Force on 21st Century Policing, with the goal of developing recommendations on how to overcome the rift between law enforcement and communities of color and create trust and strong relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

The interim report produced by the task force includes recommendations that are deeply relevant to the goals of this report and the challenges of creating truly community based policing. These include the following recommendations:

- create opportunities in schools and communities for positive, non-enforcement interactions with police;
- collaborate with community members to develop policies and strategies in communities and neighborhoods disproportionately affected by crime, including a focus on public health;
- adopt and enforce policies prohibiting law enforcement from profiling and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and other factors;
- work with neighborhood residents to co-produce public safety and implement solutions that produce meaningful results for the community; and
- adopt community policies and programs that address the needs of children and youth most at risk for crime or violence and reduce aggressive law enforcement tactics that stigmatize youth and marginalize their participation in schools and communities.

## School Resource Officers

Another arena of potential opportunity occurs with school resource officers. Although the idea of having police officers in schools was once unheard of, the numbers have grown significantly, peaking in 2003 with 20,000 full-time school resources officers employed by law enforcement agencies. School-based law enforcement officers, sometimes referred to as school resource officers, are intended to serve schools in a manner similar to community policing. School resource officers can be funded in a variety of ways with school district and local law enforcement funds; in the past, federal funds were available under various grant programs. School resource officers provide a consistent presence at their assigned schools and work to prevent juvenile delinquency and promote positive relations between youth and law enforcement. Because school resources officers get to know the students and the local community, they can be key partners in addressing threats to students not only on campus, but in the surrounding neighborhood outside of school hours.

With proper training and standards, school resource officers may be able to function less like cops on campus, and more like counselors who can instead provide education and serve as positive role models. However, there is cause for concern that school resource officers are turning classroom behavioral issues into criminal matters, criminalizing normal misbehavior by children and teens.<sup>207</sup> In the school environment, overbroad enforcement and reactionary measures by onsite law enforcement can create

a hostile environment where students do not feel welcome or safe, and such concerns are exacerbated by the increase in the number of school resource officers carrying guns. Critics say that the presence of law enforcement leads to teachers handing discipline issues off to police officers which often leads to far harsher consequences for students.<sup>208</sup> A study on school discipline in Texas found that 80 percent of school arrests occurred in incidents that did not involve any violence or weapons. As with school discipline overall, statistics indicate that students of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and those with disabilities are disproportionately subject to harsh responses.<sup>209</sup> Additionally, after controlling for the type of misbehavior and other factors, African-American students were nearly twice as likely to be suspended as white students, and Latino students were about one and a half times as likely to be suspended.<sup>210</sup> For school resource officers, there can be additional challenges when they are required by law to arrest students for certain behaviors, or when a fear of liability or negative publicity leads to inappropriately harsh responses.

## School Resource Officers in Denver

In 2013, the **Intergovernmental Agreement** between Denver Public Schools and the Denver Police

Department for school resource officers at the middle and high schools set out expectations for school resource officers with regard to the discipline system. This agreement was put in place with input from youth leaders from Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, a Denver-based parent and youth group working to end the school-to-prison pipeline in Colorado. The agreement contains policy language which clarifies and limits the role of school resource officers. The agreement includes the expectations that school-based incidents be deescalated; that due process protections be provided for both students and parents; and that school resource officers attend training on topics such as cultural competence, age-appropriate responses, and restorative justice techniques.

*“Law enforcement cannot build community trust if it is seen as an occupying force coming in from outside to rule and control the community.”*

Interim Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing<sup>205</sup>



## Crime and Violence Prevention through Physical Design

Outside of programmatic strategies, changing the physical built environment – that is, how our streets, parks, public spaces, and buildings are built and function in relation to one another – has the potential to prevent crime and violence from occurring. Physical design strategies can address violence and crime in communities in two ways: 1) they reduce opportunities for crime and 2) they encourage interaction between people and promote community-building. Physical design strategies are a key part of Safe Routes to School initiatives they are the “engineering” E of the Safe Routes to School Six E’s. However, as part of Safe Routes to School initiatives, physical design strategies are often limited to addressing traffic safety in the school vicinity. Since personal safety is a key component of safe environments for walking, bicycling, and other physical activity, the physical design strategies described below should inform Safe Routes to School infrastructure projects.



**Q: “How can interested organizations build on community assets to make trips to/from school safer?”**

**A: “Community ownership and more intergenerational connections. The elders looking out for the young kids.”**

**Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>211</sup>**

When it comes to the use of physical design strategies to eliminate opportunities for crime, many professionals warn that there are limited benefits for overall community safety. Studies suggest that strategies that rely on addressing disorder by changing the physical environment are ineffective in urban neighborhoods with high levels of violence and gang activity unless the strategies were also designed to address the broader roots of crime.<sup>212</sup> Though physical design strategies can decrease the likelihood of crimes in specific

locations, they have limited ability to influence social norms and should be just one component of an overall effort to prevent and address violence. However, physical aspects of neighborhoods, including maintenance and aesthetic appeal, have been shown to influence the likelihood of community members spending time outdoors and using public space. The increased opportunities for interaction and the development of community ties have the potential to have broader effects on combatting violence.<sup>213</sup>

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### Foundations for the Role of the Built Environment in Crime and Violence

Strategies at the intersection of crime prevention and the built environment are most often rooted into two foundational concepts: “eyes on the street” and the “broken windows theory.”

#### EYES ON THE STREET

The term “eyes on the street” was coined following the 1961 book *Death and Life of American Cities* by Jane Jacobs. Jacobs wrote that, in order for a street to be safe, “There must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street.”<sup>214</sup> Jacobs emphasized that the physical design of the neighborhoods, streets, and buildings adjacent to the street should be designed to promote people watching over the public space.

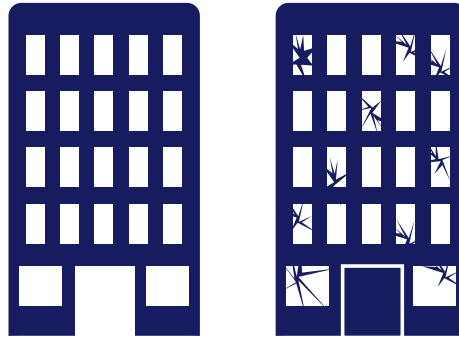
In her words, “The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind.”<sup>215</sup> Jacobs also emphasized that street must be interesting and have human life in order for people to want to watch it, and that the casual observation of the street leads to self-policing by the neighborhood. People are less likely to engage in criminal activity if there is more likelihood of being seen by others. A positive feedback cycle can occur where people are more likely to walk, bicycle, and spend time outdoors because they do not feel isolated and unsafe, thereby contributing even more eyes and oversight on the street, further increasing safety.

Many of the physical design as well as programmatic strategies discussed in this report are based on increasing eyes on the street. Physical design strategies include constructing buildings to include porches, balconies, and windows that face the streets and public spaces. Providing seating areas on the street and encouraging outdoor dining can also assist. Another component includes considering visibility from surrounding activity areas in designing walking paths or other public spaces. Of course, the bystander effect, in which the presence of many bystanders can discourage people from intervening in an emergency situation, may interact with the concept of eyes on the street.

The degree to which the bystander effect may reduce the benefits of eyes on the street is unknown and is worthy of further study.

While the concept of eyes on the street as a way to increase safety and the feeling of safety in neighborhoods is widely accepted, critics warn that some specific strategies promoted by Jacobs are only effective in urban environments.<sup>216</sup> Jacobs' theory is based on her experience in a neighborhood where the density and mix of uses may inherently increase the number of people using the street. Strategies such as permeable streets (with numerous intersections and access points) may be ineffective for suburban environments where there are already fewer people around during the day to watch over the neighborhood.<sup>217</sup>

Programmatic strategies increase eyes on the street by placing more people and more activity in key areas. Walking school buses serve this function by creating a reason and an activity that regularly gets people using the street on foot. Shared use programs can have a similar effect. Other approaches include allowing street vendors to set up in spaces that are otherwise unused, developing a neighborhood watch program, creating an exercise program in a local park or plaza, or otherwise bringing people and activity to the street.



### BROKEN WINDOWS THEORY


The “broken windows” theory stems from the work of George Kelling and James Wilson and their article by the same name published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1982.<sup>218</sup> They suggest that signs of deterioration of the physical environment and minor crimes such as vandalism send the signal that a place is not controlled or cared for by the people who live or work there. These signs of deterioration can include graffiti, unmaintained buildings, vacant properties in disrepair, and litter. According to this theory, neglecting these signs of blight and disorder can cause a cascading problem, with initial neglect encouraging more undesirable activity, more serious crime, and contributing to fear felt by users and potential users of the space. Research has shown that signs of neglect can greatly discourage walking, bicycling, and being physically active outdoors and that eliminating blight can lead to significant increases in physical activity.<sup>219</sup> Strategies based on the broken windows theory include graffiti abatement programs, neighborhood cleanups, and “broken windows policing,” which focuses law enforcement efforts on addressing minor crimes and signs of disorder.

### Broken Windows Policing

While it is acknowledged that the quality of the physical environment affects the use of the space, there has been significant criticism of the effectiveness of policing strategies based on the broken windows theory. In broken windows policing, law enforcement focuses on disorder and less serious crime in a neighborhood in hopes that more serious crime will not infiltrate the community. But it is unclear that the strategies are actually effective. One study that looked at the effectiveness of broken windows policing in New York City and the “Moving to Opportunity” program in five large cities found no change in crime rates despite broken windows interventions.<sup>220</sup> The study concluded that broken windows policing was not an optimal use of law enforcement resources. Other challenges with broken windows policing include the potential for targeted policing of lower income communities and communities of color. A follow-up study in New York found that the patterns of arrest disproportionately targeted African Americans and Latinos. The cultural differences between residents and the police patrolling the neighborhood may lead to policing under the false assumption that a low-income community or community of color will inherently have disorder and minor crime.<sup>221</sup>

## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), a term originally coined and formulated by criminologist C. Ray Jeffery, and subsequent variations on the CPTED principles are based on the theory that proper design of the built environment can reduce crime and the fear of crime.<sup>222</sup> While CPTED can be used to guide design of a variety of development types, what is most applicable to this report is the use of CPTED principles in outdoor spaces, including streets and sidewalks, walking paths, and parks. CPTED principles may be explicitly required by communities through zoning regulations or detailed design guidelines. When CPTED principles are required, they may inform designs for routes to school and other public spaces where youth are active.

 **“Street design is not merely about aesthetics & modes—streets affect the health and life outcomes of those who use them.”**

**Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>223</sup>**

CPTED includes eyes on the street as one of the methods for reducing crime, but expands this concept to create three primary principles: natural surveillance, natural access control, and territorial reinforcement.<sup>224</sup>

**Natural surveillance** is another name for eyes on the street. Natural surveillance includes designing spaces and locating activity areas to maximize visibility and minimize isolated and hidden areas.

Natural surveillance allows people to see their surroundings and potential safety threats to themselves or others, while reducing opportunities for criminal activity to occur without being seen. Other components of natural surveillance include adequate lighting and appropriate landscaping.

**Natural access control** directs the flow of people through a space, reducing a potential offender’s sense of being able to get away quickly after committing a crime. Clear entrances and exits in a space, fencing, and signage are components of access control. Another example is designating official access points to pedestrian areas, especially for pathways that are behind buildings, to create clear boundaries. This principle also discourages using cut-through paths unless they are heavily traveled and there are “eyes on the path.”

**Territorial reinforcement** uses physical features to express ownership of a space. When a neighborhood feels a sense of ownership over the space, people are more likely to use it. Potential offenders feel like they will be easily identified as outsiders and watched. Territoriality can be expressed by clearly distinguishing public areas from private areas, providing attractive trees and landscaping, placing amenities in common areas, and designing neighborhoods to encourage interaction between residents.

In addition to the three primary principles, **image and maintenance** are sometimes included as a separate principle, though they are woven into surveillance, access control, and territorial reinforcement. Building off of the broken windows theory, these emphasize well-maintained and aesthetically-pleasing areas to discourage criminal activity.



pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden

## Second Generation CPTED Principles

The CPTED principles outlined previously are often referred to as First Generation CPTED principles and are focused on reducing physical opportunities for crime to occur. As noted before, using physical design to eliminate opportunities for crime has limited benefit on its own. As a result of criticism of the limitations of CPTED, Second Generation CPTED principles were developed to address social motives to crime and renew focus on four areas: social cohesion, connectivity, community culture, and capacity threshold.<sup>225</sup>

**Social cohesion** seeks to establish and strengthen relationships between neighbors or users of an area. Strategies include community events or participation in local organizations. When social ties are developed between residents, they are more likely to take responsibility for their community.

**Connectivity** includes strengthening ties both internally and externally. Encouraging neighborhoods and community groups to work together promotes external connectivity. Internal connectivity is similar to social cohesion and includes networking to build resources and capacity within a group.

**Community culture** includes developing a shared sense of place and history, which promotes a sense of community where people care for one another. Specific activities include collectively designing public spaces to meet the community's needs ("placemaking"), hosting cultural activities, or creating opportunities to express a shared identity as a neighborhood. Other strategies might include holding cultural fairs, conducting community design workshops for public spaces, and incorporating work from local artists into beautification projects.

**Capacity threshold** ensures balanced growth among different land uses (i.e., housing, commercial, community facilities) in a neighborhood. Considerations include the ability of development to properly support the intended use, along with social stabilizers such as safe public spaces.

## Implementing CPTED Principles

CPTED principles are broad, and there are numerous strategies to address them. There is not one defined process to include CPTED in addressing crime in neighborhoods. The principles should be used as overarching guidance for developing strategies tailored to the local context. Some local communities may have CPTED development requirements, design guidelines, or checklists that have been developed to include appropriate strategies for the local context. For other communities where the strategies have not been defined, best practices may be found learned from numerous crime prevention training institutions or through publications from the American Planning Association and other professional organizations.

### Resources:

- **SafeGrowth** is an approach to implementing first and second generation CPTED principles.
- **LISC Community Safety Initiative** provides a number of guides and other CPTED Resources.

## Electronic Eyes and Ears: Crime Cameras and Gunshot Sensor Systems

Surveillance cameras, or crime cameras, are becoming increasingly popular in urban areas and elsewhere. These cameras are aimed at reducing crime by aiding in the arrest and prosecution of criminals as well as acting as electronic eyes on the street that discourage criminal acts and increase the number of people in public spaces. Despite their privacy impacts, crime cameras are favored by many police departments because the initial substantial monetary investment in the equipment

can allow for more surveillance by law enforcement using fewer human resources.

Historically, cameras used in conjunction with Safe Routes to School programs were used for enforcement of traffic safety laws and deterred motorists from speeding or running red lights. Other cameras aimed at reducing crime were used to monitor activity on school grounds. Now, cities have also begun to place crime cameras along streets that are also routes to schools with the intent of reducing violence against students walking to school as well as increasing sense of security. For example, Chicago includes remote-controlled cameras, commonly called "blue light"





## Section III: Strategies to Improve Safety

cameras because of the flashing blue light on each camera box, in its Safe Routes to School Toolbox.<sup>227</sup> Starting in 2007, the Chicago Police Department began installing these cameras in identified crime hot-spots near schools. Video from these cameras is used by officers at each school and school unit officers who patrol the surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>228</sup>

The effectiveness of cameras on actually reducing crime is debatable, with studies reaching different results. In a study of public surveillance systems in Chicago and Washington, DC, the impact on crime was found to be significant, with great cost benefits and no evidence of crime displacement (where criminal activity moves from the areas with cameras to nearby areas without cameras).<sup>229</sup> In contrast, a study of a public surveillance system in San Francisco found that cameras led to a significant decline in property crime, but had no impact on violent crime, potentially had a displacement effect on homicides, and had no effect on drug incidents, prostitution, vandalism, and “suspicious occurrences.”<sup>230</sup>

Gunshot sensor systems, often referred to as ShotSpotter based on the name of a system used in many major cities, use acoustic sensors to pick up the sound waves of a gunshot. These sensors, placed throughout a city, work with a GPS system to quickly tell police when and where a

shot has been fired. There has been an almost 29 percent decrease in gunfire in cities where ShotSpotter has been installed and many police departments have been able to dramatically reduce response time.<sup>231,232</sup>

Public reaction to the installation of crime cameras and gunshot sensor systems is mixed. While these technologies may provide a sense of security for some, many have concerns about privacy and the use of video and audio recordings for unintended purposes. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) identifies susceptibility to abuse and lack of limits or controls as two of its major concerns with crime cameras.<sup>233</sup> While cameras are intended to capture criminal activity on tape, they also capture video that can be used against unsuspecting community members not doing anything illegal. The abuse of surveillance tapes can range from voyeurism to stalking to blackmailing. One study showed that camera operators in Great Britain focused disproportionately on people of color, leading to concerns about discriminatory targeting as well.<sup>234</sup> There are also no clear limits on when and how video from the surveillance cameras can be used. According to the ACLU, there are currently no general, legally enforceable rules to limit privacy invasions and protect against abuse. There are no laws regarding record retention and who has access to video recordings.<sup>235</sup>

## 10 considerations for using crime cameras

1. Assess your needs and budget before investing.
2. Plan ahead for maintenance, infrastructure, and other ongoing costs.
3. Plan camera locations to maximize the view-shed.
4. Consider integration with other technology.
5. Balance privacy protection with system utility.
6. Weigh the costs and benefits to using active monitoring.
7. Integrate camera systems with existing practices and procedures.
8. Set and manage realistic expectations for video footage quality.
9. Use surveillance systems to complement, not replace, routine policing, investigations, and legal proceedings.
10. Incorporate video evidence with witness testimony in court.

From the Urban Institute Justice Policy Center for the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services<sup>226</sup>

## Traffic Calming

Traffic calming – designing streets to reduce or slow down motor vehicle traffic – is often used to increase the safety of people walking and bicycling from cars and has historically been a part of the Safe Routes to School toolbox as part of the engineering “E” of the Safe Routes to School Six E’s. Traffic calming has additional benefits, not only increasing social interaction amongst neighbors, but also reducing crime. Drawing from the concept of eyes on the street, high-speed/high-volume streets, where there is little interaction between car drivers and those walking and bicycling, are more attractive for people wanting to engage in criminal activity.



Lower traffic volumes have also been shown to support residents interacting with their neighbors, leading to social cohesion, sense of ownership over the street, and increasing surveillance that reduces crime.<sup>236</sup> In his often cited study, urban designer Donald Appleyard looked at high-, medium-, and low-volume streets and found that those with lower volumes had more interaction between neighbors and more local ownership: “The contrast between the two streets was striking: on the one hand alienation, on the other friendliness and involvement.”<sup>237</sup> Traffic calming can include a number

of changes to the physical design of the road that reduce the speed or volume of cars. Features can include narrowing the roadway (which results in drivers slowing down) by using curb extensions (also called bulbouts, neckdowns, and chokers) or center islands; landscaping and street furniture that narrow the perceived roadway; raised crosswalks or speed humps/speed tables; and traffic circles, roundabouts, and chicanes, which slow drivers down by diverting them around obstacles. Traffic calming can also include closing the street to motor vehicles, while remaining open to people

walking and bicycling. Crime reduction in Diggs Town, a public housing project in Norfolk, VA, has been attributed in part to traffic calming. By reducing speed on streets, adding front porches to houses, and installing new landscaping, Diggs Town increased feelings of ownership and identity amongst the neighbors. Calls to law enforcement dropped from 25 to 30 per day to 2 to 3 per week. A police officer credited this change to “a renewed sense of pride and self-esteem, which led residents to identify and engage with the community.”<sup>238</sup>

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## Broader Community Change: Addressing Root Causes of Violence

This section discusses approaches that extend beyond strategies for increased safety when walking and bicycling, and beyond programs focused on youth. These strategies promote broader community change. By creating stronger, more resilient, more vibrant communities, we address the root causes of community safety issues. Community building strategies address the risk and resilience factors that influence the likelihood of community violence, getting to the roots of violence and crime. Many of the strategies are intended to directly or indirectly build social cohesion and resilient communities where violence is not an appealing answer to problems, and where the community does not tolerate violence. The strategies discussed address housing, economic opportunities, and education. These strategies often involve many of groups that are already working alongside built environment and Safe Routes to School efforts, and can intersect with Safe Routes to School efforts and initiatives.

### Building Social Cohesion

Social cohesion within a neighborhood is a major protective factor against violence.

Social cohesion within a neighborhood, combined with residents’ willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good, accounts for more than 70 percent of the variation between neighborhoods in levels of violence.<sup>239</sup> Research has shown that strong social networks correspond with significantly lower rates of homicide and alcohol and drug abuse.<sup>240</sup> When people know and interact positively with their neighbors, they foster mutual trust and reciprocity, leading to development of social norms that make community violence unacceptable and reinforce parents’ efforts to teach young children non-violent behavior.<sup>241</sup>

Many of the physical design and programmatic strategies described already work to build social cohesion along with their other objectives.

Engaging the community in efforts to develop policies, plans, and programs also promotes and strengthens social ties by providing opportunities for community members to get to know one another in a positive environment and work together on a common cause. Community engagement also provides opportunities for community members to voice their concerns and engage with local leaders, empowering them to become involved in the decision-making process that affects their own neighborhoods.

For many parents, being a part of developing a Safe Routes to School plan for their local school is the first time they are involved in a community process. Participating in a walking school bus or other encouragement program provides opportunities to get to know other parents and neighbors. Engaging in efforts around safety of their children may be the first foray into broader community participation and spur additional civic engagement.

## Affordable and Healthy Housing

Safe and affordable housing is a basic need for every individual and family. Research has shown that where and how housing is provided has an impact on how communities function as a whole. Segregating housing by type and income level can negatively affect neighborhoods by concentrating poverty, poor housing conditions, and overcrowding, while limiting access to quality health care and other services and institutions.<sup>242</sup> Concentrated disadvantaged communities (i.e., those with high poverty, unemployment, and crime) create physical and social conditions that increase the likelihood that multiple forms of violence will occur.<sup>243</sup>

In addition, homelessness, housing insecurity, and substandard housing are an enormous source of stress for children.<sup>244</sup> Primary effects of homelessness can be the loss of a safe place to rest or sleep. Secondary effects include the division of family; disruption to a child's network of friends and community; and interruptions

to their access to schooling. A full 47 percent of children who are homeless have problems such as anxiety, depression, or withdrawal.<sup>245</sup> Children who are homeless are sick four times as often as middle-class children.<sup>246</sup>

Providing housing opportunities for a wide range of incomes, avoiding concentrations of low-income housing, and providing supportive services in conjunction with housing are ways in which healthy, cohesive neighborhoods can be created and reduce risk of violence. In addition, increasing home ownership provides stability, long-term residents, and increased economic well-being that can make a significant difference in overall community well-being.<sup>247</sup>

Housing and transportation often go hand-in-hand. Both are large, non-discretionary expenses and the household decisions around each affects the other. Often families have to choose between owning and maintaining a car and living in higher

quality housing or a safer neighborhood. Safe Routes to School practitioners, violence prevention advocates, and housing providers can work together to ensure families are able to afford quality housing in safe neighborhoods where healthier and less costly transportation (walking, bicycling, and transit) is available.

ChangeLab Solutions's **Preserving, Protecting, and Expanding Affordable Housing: A Policy Toolkit for Public Health** provides a new resource for public health and active transportation advocates who are concerned with the importance of fighting displacement and supporting affordable housing as part of creating healthy, equitable communities.



### Rockford Walking School Bus – Bringing Housing and Transportation into the Education Equation



For the Rockford Housing Authority in Illinois, housing is not just about putting a roof over one's head. Rather, it is about living in a healthy environment with access to services like quality schools.

That is why it made sense for the Housing Authority to get involved in starting the local walking school bus program. Rockford was the recipient of a Choice Neighborhood Grant that brought together organizations working on housing and neighborhood improvements, with linkages to services, schools, public assets, transportation, and job access.<sup>248</sup> The Rockford Choice Neighborhoods Initiative focused in on the Fairgrounds Valley housing complex, owned and operated by the Rockford Housing Authority.

The Choice Neighborhoods initiative places a strong emphasis on access to high-quality educational opportunities, including early childhood education.<sup>249</sup> As part of the requirements for living in the housing complex, parents are required to make sure their children are attending school.<sup>250</sup> However, transportation to and from school is an issue because many of the children are in single-parent households with a parent who has to leave early to go to work or look for work. The Housing Authority led and funded the initiation of the walking school bus to Lewis Lemon, the local elementary school, to address this challenge and help students get to school safely and on time. In the first year, tardiness was reduced by more than 50 percent for the students participating in the walking school bus.<sup>251</sup> The Housing Authority continues to fund a portion of the walking school bus, partnering with other community partners including United Way.<sup>252</sup>

## Economic and Employment Opportunities

Economic opportunities for both youth and adults help address inequities stemming from differences in financial means that increase the likelihood of crime and violence. Neighborhoods without employment opportunities deny residents the means to earn a living wage as part of the mainstream economy, and people without access to job training, support services, and loans and investment capital may turn toward drug-dealing or other illegal activities for income.<sup>253</sup> Poverty is a major risk factor for violence, especially when there are high concentrations of disadvantage.<sup>254</sup> Diminished economic opportunities and unemployment are also associated with youth violence.<sup>255</sup>

Strategies to increase economic opportunities for youth and adults include youth workforce development programs/training, career counseling in schools, partnerships with local vocational schools and colleges to place graduates in local jobs and retain skilled workers, small business startup assistance, and programs to employ “hard-to-hire” workers, including formerly incarcerated people, people with disabilities, youth coming out of the foster system, etc. As described earlier in this report, youth bicycle kitchens bridge the gap between violence prevention and active transportation. They can help increase economic and employment opportunities as well provide youth with job training and career-building skills. Some earn-a-bike programs directly assist young people in keeping jobs by providing a means of transportation. Youth service or conservation corps can also be used to help build new walking and bicycling infrastructure. Conservation corps provide youth volunteers with on-the-job training and teach responsibility and teamwork. The MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives program encourages transportation agencies to use conservation corps for active transportation projects.



**“Schools are part of their communities; healthy school environments can’t exist in unhealthy communities.”**

Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>256</sup>

The structure of the educational system and local schools can affect the neighborhood. Schools and their teachers and staff can provide positive, supportive environments for youth that protect against violence. Universal school-based violence prevention programs have been shown to reduce violence and aggression amongst students<sup>257</sup> and can help improve students’ social skills and problem-solving abilities, resulting in positive peer and student-teacher relationships. Universal school-based programs are delivered to all students in a specific grade or school. The content and structure of these programs can vary. Some focus on social skills, some on building self-esteem, some include peer mediation, and some are complemented by support groups.<sup>258</sup> School curriculum can reinforce messages of tolerance and respect for all groups. Schools can also provide diverse coursework and accommodate non-traditional learners, increasing opportunities for all students to receive an education.

### Educational Opportunities

Educational opportunities for youths and adults support their ability to get quality jobs and to be positive participants in their communities. High-quality education for children and youth engages them, providing them with a safe, stimulating, and enriching daily experience. In addition, quality education helps youths to think about their place in the community, their ability to contribute and their goals, and prepares them to enter the workforce. Educational programs for adults help them learn new skills to re-enter the workforce or move up in their careers.

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### Walking School Bus and the Good Behavior Game: Potential to Influence Student Safety and Well-being



Little or no research has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of basic Safe Routes to School tools, such as the walking school bus, coupled with violence

prevention programs. An upcoming study in Cincinnati schools will combine a walking school bus program with the “Good Behavior Game” and will hopefully provide some insight into this issue. The Cincinnati Public School District is implementing a walking school bus program at 15 elementary schools to address concerns about both community violence and bullying.<sup>259</sup> The walking school bus will not only encourage more students to walk to school, but will also have a social development component. The Good Behavior Game, a behavioral classroom management strategy that rewards student teams for complying with rules for appropriate behavior, such as following directions or being polite to each other, will be tailored for use on the walking school bus. The Good Behavior Game has been proven to reduce aggressive, disruptive behavior and increase on-task behavior for students by the end of first grade, raise the age of first-time smoking for students, and reduce long-term use of student behavioral services.<sup>260</sup> In 2014, the National Institute of Justice awarded a three-year grant to the Cincinnati Public School District to test if the combined programs will improve safety and well-being of the students and have a positive impact on the overall climate and safety of schools.<sup>261</sup>

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Connection to Six E's*</b>	<b>Level of Prevention</b>	<b>Key Implementation Partner(s) along with Safe Routes to School and Public Health</b>
<b>Safe Routes to School Basics</b>			
Walking School Bus	Encouragement	Secondary	Schools, Parents
Corner Captains	Encouragement	Secondary	Schools, Parents, Community Organizations, Businesses
Safe Havens	Encouragement	Secondary	Businesses, Community Organizations
Safe Passages	Encouragement, Education, Enforcement	Secondary	Schools, Parents, Community Organizations, Businesses, Law Enforcement
<b>Programs Beyond the School Trip</b>			
Shared Use	Encouragement	Primary	Schools, Community Organizations
Afterschool Programs	Encouragement, Education	Primary	Schools, Community Organizations
Anti-Street Harassment Initiatives	Encouragement, Enforcement	Secondary	Community Organizations
Gang Interruption Programs	Education, Enforcement	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	Law Enforcement, Community Organizations
Youth Bike Kitchens and Programs	Encouragement, Education	Primary, Secondary	Community Organizations
Mentorship Programs	Encouragement, Education	Secondary	Community Organizations
Restorative Justice in Schools	Education, Enforcement	Tertiary	Schools, Law Enforcement
Neighborhood Watch	Enforcement	Secondary	Law Enforcement, Neighborhood Residents
<b>Law Enforcement</b>			
Community Policing	Enforcement, Education	Secondary, Tertiary	Law Enforcement, Neighborhood Residents, Community Organizations
School Resource Officers	Enforcement, Education	Secondary, Tertiary	Law Enforcement, Schools, Community Organizations
<b>Physical Design</b>			
CPTED	Engineering	Primary	Municipal Planning/Community Development Department
Crime Cameras and Gunshot Detection Systems	Enforcement	Secondary	Law Enforcement
Traffic Calming	Engineering	Primary	Municipal Public Works/Transportation Department
<b>Broader Community Change</b>			
Affordable and Healthy Housing	Engineering	Primary, Tertiary	Municipal Planning/Community Development Department, Housing Providers
Economic and Employment Opportunities	Equity	Primary, Tertiary	Local Economic Development Department, Schools, Businesses
Educational Opportunities	Education, Encouragement	Primary, Tertiary	Schools Local Economic Development Department

\*Equity should be a consideration in all strategies. Evaluation should be a part of all strategies.

# IV. Moving into Action



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## Initiatives Grounded in a Commitment to Equity

For Safe Routes to School and violence prevention initiatives to succeed in creating environments where all children and youth can travel to school without injury from violence or motor vehicles, programs must be designed from the start to equitably benefit children, youth, and adults of all races and income levels. In addition, stakeholders must return repeatedly to that goal to see whether the intervention is having the desired result.

When determining where to invest resources at the state or regional level, stakeholders need to make sure that efforts are focused on communities that have the highest need, despite the great challenges those areas may face. Initiatives need to begin with community engagement and deep consultation, to ensure that the overall approach is desired and likely to work, and to avoid unforeseen impediments. And we need to make sure that we do not focus on those measures that indicate success and improvement, while ignoring data that shows negative consequences on other axes of community experience.

*“In study after study, evidence emerges that crime prevention programs are more likely to take root, and more likely to work, in communities that need them the least.”<sup>262</sup>*

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership has developed a report that explores some of the challenges and opportunities for understanding and increasing equity in the field of active transportation. The report, **At the Intersection of Active Transportation and Equity: Joining Forces to Make Communities Healthier and Fairer**, delves into the statistics and realities regarding transportation inequities, summarizes how the active transportation movement is working to increase its understanding of equity, and assesses a wide range of issues and initiatives where equity and active transportation intersect.

## Addressing Research Gaps

While the fields of public health and violence prevention both have a commitment to evidence-based work, the fact remains there are considerable gaps in our knowledge about what really works. Substantial questions exist about how we can transform environments to make communities safe; what approaches ensure students can walk, bike or bus to school without fear; and how to help children thrive when they have been exposed to trauma. Investing in research around walking, bicycling, and violence prevention initiatives and ensuring rigorous evaluation and strong study design will help improve our understanding. Also important is the need to explore students' different experiences, looking beyond the summarized data to understand the diverse experiences of the many different children and youths in our country: Vietnamese immigrant youth in the South, Latino children in the Pacific Northwest, rural African American youth in the Midwest, Native American boys in Oklahoma, Pacific Islander girls in Southern California, and many more. In addition to ensuring that national and state surveys oversample in these populations to ensure meaningful disaggregated data, we should also commit to qualitative research into students' experiences to explore themes, concerns, and solutions that may not emerge with preselected questions and answers.

 **“Effective #SafePassage models in high violence communities must be multisectorial. That means schools, police, & community.”**

Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>264</sup>

### The Importance of Collaborative Efforts

Violence and crime are complex issues to grapple with and it takes the efforts and expertise of many different stakeholders to make a difference. People working on built environment improvements and transportation safety historically have not partnered with those working on violence prevention. However, research has shown that cities with more coordination, communication, and attention to preventing violence have achieved lower violence rates. As strategies are developed and implemented, it is important to consider and include many kinds of participants – schools, families, local government, law enforcement, families, businesses, faith and community organizations, and youth themselves.

### Prevention Institute Collaboration Multiplier

To encourage thoughtful and effective collaboration, the Prevention Institute has developed a collaboration multiplier.<sup>265</sup> This tool helps organizations to understand which partners are necessary to achieve goals and how best to work with partners collaboratively despite differences in perspective. The Prevention Institute has developed a related guide that explains how multi-sector partnerships can work together to prevent violence.<sup>266</sup>



## Partners in Community Safety

Who should be involved in developing and implementing community safety initiatives? There is a role for everyone. It takes the whole community to address violence and safety concerns. Key groups that should be engaged in addressing community safety include the following:

**Local government staff.** Staff from a wide range of departments, including planning, engineering/public works, and community services/parks and recreation are responsible for much of the physical design and maintenance of communities, as well as operations of municipal programs that serve neighborhoods. Local government staff can also develop and propose policies to local decision-making bodies.

**Local government leaders.** Appointed and elected officials are the decision-makers that can adopt local policies and direct municipal resources to addressing community safety concerns.

**Public health.** The public health community has historically been involved in both Safe Routes to School and violence prevention efforts, though few public health practitioners are likely to have expertise in both topics. Obesity and low levels of physical activity are some of the main motivators for the public health community's substantial commitment to Safe Routes to School. Public health can assist with convening partners, providing data, implementing strategies, and conducting evaluation.

**Schools.** Teachers and school staff interact with youth on a daily basis. They not only provide formal education, but can act as the eyes and ears to hear the concerns of youth and provide a positive environment outside of the home.

**Law enforcement.** Law enforcement has historically been responsible for addressing crime and violence in

the aftermath. However, bringing sheriffs, highway patrol officers, police chiefs, and school resource officers into conversation about prevention is important in creating effective partnerships and initiatives, especially in communities of color where there is a long way to go to build and maintain trust in law enforcement.

**Community and faith-based organizations.** Community and faith-based organizations, like schools, provide support and networks for children and teens outside the home. Many of these organizations have objectives that are complementary to violence prevention and can help develop and implement programs in their neighborhoods.

**Businesses.** Local businesses are a part of the community alongside residents and will also benefit from violence and crime prevention. Businesses can provide financial or other resources to help support initiatives.

**Families.** Parents, grandparents, and other family caregivers make key decisions about their children's ability to spend time outside the home. They also help develop the social expectations for children and youth and the community-at-large, by supporting or deterring behaviors inside and outside the home.

**Youth.** Engaging youth in the community can create alternatives to crime, identify problems and barriers that youth are experiencing, and can ensure that strategies proposed will be effective for them and their peers.

## National Action Plan for Child Injury Prevention

The CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control's (NCIPC) Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention (DUIP) put forth the **National Action Plan for Child Injury Prevention** in 2012 to provide national guidance on actions to reduce the burden of child injury (including those resulting from violence) and accelerate child injury prevention efforts. The plan is organized around six domains: strengthening the collection and interpretation of data and surveillance; promoting research; enhancing communications; improving education and training; advancing health systems and health care; and strengthening policy. The plan provides guidance to numerous partners spanning across multiple sectors including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, not-for-profit organizations, health care providers, and others to facilitate, support, and advance child injury prevention efforts.



## Getting Started

In this report, we have provided background information useful in understanding violence and its impacts on children and youth and have described a number of strategies that can be tailored to fit your local community's needs. But how do you go about moving from thinking about these problems to developing and implementing a plan for action? Here are some basic steps to consider:

### Step 1

#### Identify Partners and Explore Collaboration

Just as one strategy cannot address violence and community safety concerns on its own, one group or person cannot successfully implement strategies without working in collaboration with others. The importance of collaborative efforts and who you might consider as partners are addressed above. The Prevention Institute's Multi-Sector Partnerships for Preventing Violence: A Guide for Using Collaboration Multiplier to Improve Safety Outcomes for Young People, Communities and Cities provides tools to engage multiple partners in working together to prevent violence.<sup>267</sup> Beyond partners representing organizations and agencies, the general public should be engaged in the process from the beginning in order to understand the issues and develop the most effective strategies.

### Step 4

#### Implement Strategies

Once a plan of action has been developed, clear responsibilities should be outlined for each of the partners in implementing strategies. Some of the challenges with implementing strategies can include securing funding and commitment and follow through by the various partners. As described earlier, violence prevention has intersections with public health, Safe Routes to School, and other community goals. Creatively seek funds from these other domains.

### Step 2

#### Understand the Issues

An important step before undertaking any plan is building a foundational understanding of the issues. When working with communities at the intersection of violence prevention and Safe Routes to School, this includes gathering and analyzing local data on crime and violence as well as understanding community perceptions of crime and violence. As described earlier in this report, parent perceptions of dangers play a large role in determining whether a child is allowed to walk or bicycle to school. Quantitative data provides evidence of the reported crime and violence that occurs. Qualitative data may reveal issues that go unreported in a community, or unsubstantiated fears that still contribute to decisions about being active. Data can be gathered from law enforcement records, public health research, and community engagement activities such as surveys.

### Step 5

#### Evaluate and Improve

An often forgotten, but important step is evaluating the success of the program. Periodic evaluation of efforts can help identify what is working and what is not. And for those things that are not working, here is the time to revisit the strategy and make changes or identify new strategies. Formal evaluation will also assist other communities in their future violence prevention efforts. Data on the effectiveness of violence prevention programs is limited, and even more so for programs aimed at addressing threats to youth on the route to school.

### Step 3

#### Work with Community Members to Identify Priorities and Develop Strategies

Many failed community planning projects, as well as violence prevention efforts, are doomed from the beginning because they were based on a preconceived notion of how to fix the problem without understanding the community's priorities. Engaging local residents and businesses in identifying priorities and developing strategies is critical to developing local ownership of whatever action plan is put in place. Local ownership increases the likelihood of successfully implementing and sustaining programs. Community workshops and neighborhood meetings provide opportunities for community members to work alongside their neighbors and project leaders to collectively select and tailor strategies to the local needs. Children and teens should also be engaged to get their perspective on the issues as well as the effect strategies will have on their peers.


# Conclusion

Violence and crime – and the fear of those events – restrict people’s access to physical activity. Both the immediate effects of crime and violence, and the restrictions they impose on walking, bicycling, participation in outdoor activities, and connections with neighbors, can have grave effects on the physical and mental health of individuals and whole communities. While there is no panacea to address the challenges faced by communities with high crime, Safe Routes to

School efforts can make one time of day tangibly safer, protecting children and youth from violence on their way to and from school. At the same time, Safe Routes to School proponents can become key conveners, contribute to comprehensive violence prevention approaches in communities, and assist in work on primary and secondary violence prevention approaches.

Communities can strengthen violence prevention efforts by including Safe Routes to School approaches, with new tools, financial resources, discrete yet meaningful volunteer opportunities with children, and the social cohesion, health, and safety benefits of neighbors looking out for children. In turn, Safe Routes to School efforts benefit by acquiring knowledgeable and connected partners from violence prevention initiatives. A joint focus on Safe Routes to School and violence prevention can help reduce children’s exposure to violence and trauma and bring us closer to achieving a vision of healthy, equitable communities, where children and youth thrive on their journey to school and beyond.



 **“Safe passage is a great way to engage parents. We can’t all help with algebra, but we can help get kids to #schooleveryday.”**

Safe Passage Twitter Town Hall<sup>268</sup>

## Endnotes

Many of these resources can be found in our library of resources on the Safe Routes to School National Partnership's website at [www.saferoutespartnership.org](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org)

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