



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Produced by the Working Group of  
**The Greater Pittsburgh COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE (CAV)**  
Creating Long Term Solutions to Deep Rooted Problems  
*“Moving from Complaint to Possibility...from Planning to Implementation to Mobilization”*  
Third Edition 2015 - 2016

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**Creating Long Term Solutions to Deep Rooted Problems**  
*“Moving from Complaint to Possibility...from Planning to Implementation to Mobilization”*  
Third Edition Published October 6, 2016

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE: CREATING MORE PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES**  
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*The information contained in Strategies for Change: Building More Peaceful Communities was compiled and composed collectively by a broad-based coalition of public and non-profit organizations, community-based groups and individuals with differing viewpoints and opinions. The sole intent of The Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence was to provide strategies, action points, and suggestions that would significantly impact the violence that plagues many communities in the Pittsburgh region and beyond. Every reasonable effort was made to present accurate information.*

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## **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE: Building More Peaceful Communities**

### **The Greater Pittsburgh COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE (CAV)**

#### **Creating Long Term Solutions to Deep Rooted Problems**

### **Executive Summary**

It is *everyone's* responsibility to change the culture of violence. *Strategies for Change: Building More Peaceful Communities* is filled with action points and ideas that could be used by any agency, organization, or individual seeking solutions to the violence that plagues many of the communities in the region. Each section of the booklet is designed to stand alone, and page numbers have been included in this Executive Summary for easy access to any section of interest. We ask that you *act* on those strategies for which you can make a commitment.

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**ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGIES:** Bullying has become a serious problem in our schools, as evidenced in the statistics below. This behavior takes different forms, direct and indirect, which can result in different types of bullying, i.e., physical, psychological/emotional, verbal and cyber bullying. This type of aggression can be carried out by groups or individuals. The three important contributing factors in bullying incidents are that the behavior: 1.) occurs over time; 2.) is usually repeated, and 3.) involves an imbalance of power and control. While more youth violence may occur on school grounds, strategies are needed to assure student safety no matter where it happens. Everyone can play a role in stopping bullying. (pg.21)

**THE ARTS COMMUNITY:** The power of art to move and transform human beings has been demonstrated throughout human history. Art is extremely powerful in that it works on the creator and the beholder alike. Psychologists have long recognized the sublimating effect of art whereby aggressively unacceptable impulses are changed into socially acceptable forms. So much human energy is employed in creating art – be it painting or sculpture or music or drama – that destructive behavior can be re-routed through a powerful communicative tool. Many local organizations are already developing artistic outreach programs to youth. Many of the suggestions supplement existing programs. (pg. 25)

**ATHLETES:** *Professional Athletes* are in a unique position to gain access to people in power at a level not available to the average citizen. They have an extremely powerful opportunity to impact the violence in the communities where they play. Because youth look up to athletes at all levels – high school, college and professional – athletes have the responsibility of being positive role models. Student athletes must embrace the fact that they are role models for their fellow students and the youth of the community that they represent. Because the community supports their team on the playing field, student athletes must return the gracious gift of support to the community and their school. (pg. 26)

**BLACK BUSINESS COMMUNITY:** All sectors of the community are urged to support African American business and business development throughout the region. The goal should include the development, implementation and maintenance of community-based businesses and employment initiatives that will create and establish viable businesses, as well as living wage career and employment opportunities in and around designated African American communities. (pg. 28)

**THE BUSINESS AND CORPORATE COMMUNITY:** The Business and Corporate community has a strong interest in improving the quality of life for everyone in the region. Business leaders have a responsibility to reduce the impact of community violence by providing leadership and creating economic opportunities that will improve the conditions for those who are historically disadvantaged. (pg. 31)

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT -- THE ROLE OF THE CITIZEN:** Civic participation is the foundation of democracy. The culture of civic participation must be brought back to a vibrant and relevant lifestyle if we are to be successful in our efforts to stop the increasing violence in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, cities and the region. Civic education helps prepare people, especially the young, to carry out their roles as citizens and to help them understand that one's vote *does* matter. Therefore, all citizens must be given the tools to fully participate in the democratic process. (pg. 33)

**COMMUNITIES OF FAITH:** The recognition and valuing of the sacred breath within each human being is essential to the building of relationships that can ultimately reduce violence, while increasing respect and tolerance for oneself and others. Indeed, practicing spiritual disciplines can help people understand the meaning of the suffering and frustrations of others, while constructively channeling their anger, thus reducing violence. Faith communities have an extremely important role to play in the transformation of communities. (pg. 34)

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:** Domestic violence is a pattern of abuse in a relationship that is characterized by physical, emotional, verbal, sexual or financial control. Domestic violence is a widespread issue, affecting one in four women during their life time. When abuse occurs in a relationship, there is an impact on the whole community. Working together, we can help to lead victims to safety and decrease the prevalence of domestic violence in all communities. (pg. 38)

**EDUCATION: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY:** Education is the foundation for financial success and responsible citizenship. Historically, the lack of education all too frequently leads to the absence of hope, wasted lives, violence, incarceration, and even death. The entire educational system, from pre-school to university, must be held accountable to the community. It must empower students to live creative, effective contributing lives. (pg. 40)

**EDUCATION: COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:** Colleges and universities need to take advantage of the opportunities related to the multicultural diversity of their students by including courses that reflect that diversity. Colleges and universities should be at the forefront of this movement because of their unique position to educate young people from *all* backgrounds. Responsibility for the implementation of this initiative must come from the top. (pg. 44)

**FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC VIOLENCE:** Not all violence is committed with a gun. Violence was used and is still being used to prevent Blacks from fully participating in the economic system of the United States. Government and institutional polices often kill just as effectively as a nine-millimeter semiautomatic. Policies and practices that kill dreams are violent. Policies that kill hopes and aspirations are violent. Policies that allow neighborhoods to die are violent. Therefore, we believe that economic and financial violence is unethical, immoral, and, as such, it must be stopped and eradicated from our communities. (pg. 46)

**FINANCIAL LITERACY AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:** Careful financial management brings peace and stability to families and communities. Many divorces can be traced to quarrels and accusations over money. Some professional counselors indicate that four out of five families are burdened with serious money problems. Proper money management and living within one's means are both essential to live abundantly and happily in today's world. Teaching children by example and by precept to work and to manage their income gives them confidence in their abilities, occupies their time in productive ways, builds habits that will lead to a productive life, protects them from the lure of expensive and unneeded purchases, and helps them to put money in proper perspective. (pg. 47)

**FOUNDATIONS/CHARITABLE TRUSTS:** Foundations have an important role to play in reducing violence, because of their ability to foster initiatives that are holistic, comprehensive, systematic, evidence-based and empowering. Furthermore, foundations can play an important role by providing innovative and non-traditional grants that may have a profound impact within the African American community. (pg. 49)

**GANGS/VIOLENT STREET GROUPS:** Gang-involved youth are impacted by poverty, unemployment, limited educational achievement, and a lack of positive activities and positive influences and role models. These same factors often keep young African American and minority males trapped in the gang lifestyle into their early twenties. Many communities are disproportionately impacted by poverty and social disorganization that places young people at greater risk for gang involvement, which in turn results in ongoing criminal activity. Although some resources and programs are available in many of the affected neighborhoods to address the issue of gangs and their impact, there is often a lack of coordinated resources that target and enroll violent, gang involved individuals. Even though overt gang violence of the '90's had diminished substantially, since that time there has been a rise in drug trafficking offenses, and its subsequent violence turned away from actual gang activity to criminal enterprise pursuits and apparent 'turf' or territorial disputes. The greatest impact on reducing, or eliminating gang-related activity is the collaboration among community and faith-based leaders, dedicated street organizations, parents and families, students, school systems, law enforcement, and political leaders. (pg. 50)

**GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT:** The purpose of government is to engage in activities to promote the "common good," and to regulate and control social, political and economic spheres. Government policy affects the food we eat, the water we drink, where we can park our cars, and what medications we can take. Government policy determines which activities are legal or illegal and what the punishment is for said illegal activity. Government policies, at all levels of government (federal, state and local) should be written in a way that protects the rights of all citizens and to maintain an orderly society. Government entities must collaborate with local communities, businesses, and the philanthropic communities to reduce violence. (pgs. 54 and 55)

**GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION:** A civil society is based on the people and lawful authorities working cooperatively to reduce the violence in our neighborhoods. The irresponsible use of guns, especially handguns, is to blame for a great percentage of the violence and killing that occurs in our neighborhoods. In addition, guns are frequently involved in accidental injuries. (pg. 57)

**THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM:** The health care system has a unique and important role in reducing the physical, emotional, and social problems that contribute to violence in our communities. It includes responsibilities related to partnership with communities and health care clients to provide health-related education and employment opportunities. Members of the health care system are called on to take the specific actions aimed at healing the wounds caused by violence and reducing the incidence of violence in our communities. (pg. 60)

**INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA:** The Internet has opened up a world of opportunities for everyone. Social communication technology/social networking (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) is a part of our everyday lives since we utilize this technology to remain in touch with others. Most of society utilizes social media in the way it is intended. However, when an individual terrorizes another with words and images via the Internet it harms the entire community. Therefore, safeguards must be put into place to keep all members of the community safe and free from violence (i.e. cyber-bullying). Everyone has responsibility for preventing cyber-violence. (pg. 62)

**THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM:** Juvenile justice officials can play a significant role in the number youth impacted by violence in our communities through greater collaboration among parents, families, schools, human service organizations and other law enforcement institutions. (pg. 65)



**LAW ENFORCEMENT:** Strategies and initiatives advocating gun violence reduction must be addressed immediately and will require unprecedented understanding and cooperation between all levels of the criminal justice system and the community. Teamwork is essential in law enforcement, as well as “community policing” environments in which citizens, community groups and the police work together as equal partners to attack and solve this problem. (pg. 66)

**THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA:** The media must understand the role they play in perpetuating negative images of African Americans and other people of color. The media have the ability *and* the responsibility to present a more balanced picture of our youth and our community, instead of solely concentrating on the violence in our community. (pg. 68)

**THE MEDIA, Part 2 -- IMPACT OF RAP MUSIC:** The entire entertainment industry, as well as a few rap stars, has reaped huge financial benefits at the expense of the “hearts and minds” of millions of youth. Everyone: the entertainment media, music artists, parents, and the community must take responsibility for what our children and youth are seeing and hearing. (pg. 70)

**MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS AND UNIVERSITY-BASED PROFESSIONALS:** Healthcare providers and university-based professionals must attend to the full range of interventions that may prevent violence and its mental health consequences. This requires integrating research and treatment with a full understanding of the complex and important interactions between social, community, and family realities. It is critical to consider their impact on individual’s risk for: violence and self-injurious behavior. This behavior includes suicidal/homicidal behavior, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorders and bereavement, difficulties in emotional, cognitive and moral development, as well as impediments to educational and vocational opportunities. (pg. 72)

**IMPACT OF MENTORING ON YOUTH VIOLENCE:** Mentors and mentoring organizations can have an impact in reducing youth violence by creating an environment where our youth are motivated to achieve by empowering them to become self-sufficient shareholders in the economic and social fabric of the communities in which they live. Mentors provide strong and positive role models in the lives of our youth. One-on-one or group mentoring exposes our youth to caring role models who reinforce the adage that says, “What they see is what they can be.” Mentors, through their examples of leadership, dedication, and friendship, can nurture our youth and compel them to carry out the tradition of a continuous quest for educational excellence and to re-invest in our communities. Mentors act as guides for our youth in life experiences, fostering positive self-perception and self-respect, cultural enrichment, and the pursuit of positive life-long goals. (pg. 73)

**REHABILITATIVE AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:** This is a community-strengthening alternative to the current prison-industrial complex that has particularly ruined the lives of too many Black youth and young adults. It is an attempt to reverse the damaging impact of a criminal justice system that traditionally relied on a policy of punitive justice resulting in lengthy incarceration and the lifelong stigma of a criminal record. Restorative justice views crime not only as breaking the law, but also as violating the relationships in the community. The goal of restorative justice is to repair the relationships between the offender and the other members of the community. The role of the community is to create environments of understanding and to work collaboratively with the Justice System support restorative justice efforts. (pg. 75)

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE --THE ROLE OF FORMER OFFENDERS:** Having recognized the devastating effects their behavior has had on the life of the African American community, persons incarcerated and formerly incarcerated in the justice system can provide invaluable service for aiding the prevention of violence within our communities. (pg. 78)

**SENIOR CITIZEN CRIME PREVENTION:** Senior citizens are a rapidly growing population the United States. They are most vulnerable to fraud, burglary, phone solicitation, and various other criminal activities, and we must be vigilant when it comes to preventing crime and violence from happening to them. As a resolution to this problem and to alleviate any fears, senior citizens should adopt life-saving practices. (pg. 80)

**SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:** Service organizations can have a significant effect on reducing violence by offering quality programs that engage youth and adults positively, as well as provide alternatives to violence. They can also provide activities, which discourage other types of destructive behavior. (pg. 82)

**STREET LEVEL OUTREACH:** Anyone who works at the street level helps reduce violence by providing outreach, activities and services. (pg.84)

**TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION:** Each year approximately one in three teens report being the victim of verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual violence. Abusive relationships can impact adolescent development, and teens who experience dating violence may suffer long-term negative behavior and health consequences. Emotional abuse through digital technology, including frequent text messaging, and the circulation of embarrassing messages or photographs without consent can be devastating to young teens. It is imperative that we educate teens about dating violence through primary prevention information. Teachers, parents, and community leaders must be pro-active and understand the challenges today's adolescents face. Students must be empowered through leadership development so they can work with adults in their schools, community and government to eliminate dating violence in all its forms. (pg. 86)

**VIOLENCE AGAINST THE LGBTQAI COMMUNITY:** Violence against people who consider themselves to be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning or Queer, Asexual, or Intersexual (LGBTQAI) is a complex and often quite controversial issue. Yet, this is also a human rights and human dignity issue that must be addressed. This is also a social justice issue, a public health issue, a safety issue, an economic issue, a mental health issue as well an issue of societal mores, cultural values, and deeply ingrained prejudices. There are several forms of violence against people who consider themselves to be part of the LGBTQAI Community, including the following: Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence; Hate Crimes; Violence from law enforcement and the justice system; Violence against LGBTQAI Youth: Bullying and other forms. To prevent violence in the community, we must work to end inequality and homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, etc. By ending inequality, we create spaces where LGBTQAI people are treated equally and reduce the amount of violence they experience, including sexual violence. (pg. 89)

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS:** Women and girls all around the world have been marginalized, belittled, abused, deprived and underestimated all because of their gender. Today in the United States, this gender prejudice plays out in myriad forms, not the least of which is women earning on average 70% of what their male counterparts make for the same work. Other forms of gender discrimination take place in more violent ways such as physical and emotional abuse, rape, trafficking and female genital mutilation. Society will not flourish until women and girls thrive by means of equal treatment. (pg. 96)

**WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION:** Violence in the workplace has received considerable attention in the popular press and among safety and health professionals. Negative behavior encompasses untrustworthy behavior, habitual lying, a chronic bad attitude, verbal threats, history of violence, sexual harassment, domestic disputes which spill into the workplace, and many more unsolicited actions. Moreover, there are different viewpoints to what constitutes a problem in the workplace, and the approach to it may vary when it comes to men and women. However, such differences in perception seem marginal when actual violence occurs. Every employee wants to feel safe, and should, within his or her daily work environment. (pg. 103)

**YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION:** Youth are encouraged to be the change they want to see in the world. They must become leaders themselves in changing the culture of violence, particularly because they are far too often the *victims* of violence. However, it is the responsibility of the *entire* community to nurture, support, educate our youth, and become personally involved in every aspect of their lives. We must also be the change we want to see in our communities and in the world. (pg. 105)

**ZERO TOLERANCE:** The Coalition Against Violence (CAV) document has attempted to provide every part of society with a role to play in impacting violence. The implementation and mobilization of these strategies *will* make a difference in lessening the violence we all abhor. What we seek, however, is a *society-wide* commitment to *zero tolerance* for violence. Over the years, the impact of violence throughout this nation has been far too wide and far too deep. In many of our communities of color the frequent reporting of death by violence has become almost expected and commonplace. That viewpoint is unacceptable. It is our stand that *everyone* must have a personal and ongoing commitment to zero tolerance. (pg. 111)

The Greater Pittsburgh Coalition is an initiative of



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