

National *Academic Centers of Excellence* on Youth Violence Prevention

Nashville Urban Partnership Academic Center of Excellence

History

The Academic Centers of Excellence (ACEs) were established soon after the tragedy at Columbine High School. Each ACE works with the communities it serves to encourage participation and partnership, mobilizing residents and researchers to craft effective solutions for violence prevention tailored to their specific community. The Centers research youth violence prevention approaches, collect and analyze surveillance data, and foster relationships with local community partners to help develop, implement, and evaluate promising prevention efforts. In 2006, funding was provided to establish two additional Centers in urban locations at high risk for youth homicide. These sites would be known as the Urban Partnership Academic Centers of Excellence (U-PACEs).

Established in 2006, the mission of the Nashville Urban Partnership Academic Center of Excellence (NUPACE) is to promote a partnership between academic institutions and communities to integrate prevention science and community action to reduce violence among youth in Nashville, Tennessee. The Center is led by researchers at Meharry Medical College, with collaborators at Vanderbilt University and Tennessee State University. NUPACE's activities bring together researchers, practitioners, community representatives, youths, and policy makers to address youth violence prevention in Nashville/Davidson County.

Research

Prevention research activities at NUPACE involve investigating the contexts and consequences of youth violence while integrating feedback from community members to increase the relevance of research findings and activities. The core research project at NUPACE is using community participatory research strategies to evaluate two school-based strategies to reduce school bullying and aggression in public middle schools in Nashville. This project was designed to compare the effectiveness of Olweus' Bullying Prevention Program and Alignment Enhanced Services (AES) to promote positive behavioral outcomes for students and develop a positive and supportive school climate. The Olweus Program is a comprehensive, school-wide program designed to reduce and prevent bullying among students, to improve the social climate of classrooms, and to reduce bullying-related antisocial behaviors in elementary, middle, or junior high schools. The AES intervention works with principals to develop professional development services for teachers and staff, interventions for students, as well as working with community-based service providers to provide specialized services for students who require intervention beyond those traditionally provided by the school's counseling department. This program tailors the prevention approach to the goals and objectives of the principal and teachers relative to the school's climate; it then works with them to discover and implement the best practices to accomplish those objectives.

National Academic Centers of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention

NUPACE is also involved in other research projects, including

- Examining the way community organizations interact with each other and form organizational networks. This work involves evaluating the change in community organization networks over time. This line of research will shed light on how local public agencies and nonprofit organizations are working to prevent youth violence and what their perspectives of prevention include; and
- Examining the role of neighborhood assets and social networks as protective factors in preventing youth violence. In this study, youth are involved in mapping the assets in their communities as a way of understanding the community contexts for youth. Because youth empowerment is central to the Center's efforts, this research project engages youth in all components of the research process, from concept to implementation and analyses.

Surveillance

Continuous surveillance of youth violence indicators is important for understanding youth violence in Nashville communities and for guiding future prevention efforts. The Center is currently compiling data from several local sources, including hospital discharge data, police arrest files, death certificates, and Youth Risk Behavior Surveys. These data sources are being compiled to create a multi-dimensional surveillance system capable of describing and tracking trends in youth violence in Nashville/Davidson County. Reports generated by use of the database will be available to partners, local leaders, and neighborhood residents.

In addition to these surveillance activities, NUPACE is developing a local database of community assets avail-

able to youth, including youth-serving agencies, youth-friendly employers, mentoring programs, and a summer activities directory. Youth participate in this project by using pre-programmed GPS devices to identify and record community assets. Youth-led Community Conversations engage neighborhood residents in discussions about ways to prevent youth violence. Combining community asset information with data on violent incidents enhances the understanding of surveillance reporting and promotes community engagement by providing geo-spatial resource maps and informative data to neighborhood organizations.

Communication and Dissemination

NUPACE is committed to community-based participatory research, an approach that actively involves community members at all levels of research development, implementation, evaluation, and results dissemination. NUPACE engages individuals and communities through a collaborative process involving research scientists, policy makers, health providers, public service entities, and key stakeholders from the community.

NUPACE keeps partners engaged through quarterly scheduled meetings of the Nashville Community Coalition for Youth Safety (NCCYS). The Coalition serves as the steering committee for the Center. Information is regularly disseminated to the NCCYS membership through outreach activities, a listserv, online resources, and published media. The Coalition has established work groups to address three priority areas for promoting youth safety: Safe Places, Caring Adults, and Jobs and Job Training. The Center works hand-in-hand with the Coalition to bring together academia, public health agencies, the faith community, and community based organizations to work with residents of neighborhoods, cultivating a collaborative relationship sensitive to the needs of impacted communities.

For more information, please contact:

Nashville Urban Partnership Academic Center of Excellence
615-327-5506 • <http://nupace.mmc.edu/index.html> • pjuarez@mmc.edu

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1-800-CDC-INFO • www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention • cdcinfo@cdc.gov