



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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In Control: Community Health and Equity Committee

DEPARTMENT: Health

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Sandra Guerra, MD, MPH, Interim Deputy Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT: A briefing on the Gun Violence Prevention Program - Stand Up SA

SUMMARY:

Metro Health will provide a presentation on the public health approach to reduce gun violence in San Antonio through the Stand Up SA Program

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

While the public's attention is drawn to mass shootings, the vast majority of gun deaths in the United States are due to interpersonal conflicts. The burden of these deaths falls heavily on communities of color and heaviest on young men of color. In Bexar County, homicide is one of the top 5 causes of death in people ages 15 - 44. A public health prevention approach to violence addresses violence like a contagious disease that can spread from person to person through social networks.

Violence interrupters are well established as an evidence-based strategy to prevent retaliatory murders and break the cycle of gun violence. Violence interrupters focus intervention on the people at the highest risk of shooting or being shot through targeted interventions. There are three models used for violence interrupters: 1) Cure Violence - Stand Up SA, 2) Group Violence Intervention - SAPD, and 3) Hospital-Based Violence Interrupters with Stand Up SA. San Antonio currently hosts all three models. San Antonio has a unique opportunity to explore comparing the different intervention models to determine which is most effective in our community. Cities that have fully implemented the violence interruption model have experienced dramatic declines in retaliatory shootings. For example, Philadelphia experienced a 30% reduction in shootings and a change in attitudes towards violence in neighborhoods with Cure Violence teams. In 2015, Metro Health implemented the Cure Violence model of violence interruption based on Dr. Gary Slutkin's theory of treating violence as a disease. This philosophy is locally applied by Metro Health's Stand Up SA program. In 2018, Stand Up SA modified Dr. Slutkin's model to address the violence problem unique to San Antonio specifically. Stand Up SA is also focused on identifying individuals at an elevated risk of recidivism and attempting to 'break the cycle' of returning to incarceration. All outreach workers are hired from the community as credible messengers who have direct, lived experience with a life of violence. Most of our full-time outreach workers have been previously incarcerated and have dedicated their lives to interrupting the violence that changed the course of their own lives.

The model aims to reduce the occurrence of violence through three key strategic components:

- Interrupting the direct transmission and spread of violence;
- Identifying and changing the mindset of potential perpetrators;
- Changing community norms regarding violence

The goals of Stand Up SA include establishing meaningful, collaborative, and sustainable partnerships within targeted neighborhoods and educating the public regarding methodologies to reduce gun violence. Stand Up SA staff focuses on youth and young adults between the ages of 5-24 at high risk of perpetrating violence and living in Stand Up SA service area neighborhoods, currently the Eastside of San Antonio, but expanding in FY 2021 to include neighborhoods on the Westside. Staff work with local partners to interrupt violent conflicts, change behavior, and then change social norms and expectations regarding violence. Staff members identify and detect potential shooting events and individuals/groups with the highest risk of involvement. Participants are distinguished from all possible entry points, such as calls from the community, schools, and notice from law enforcement to interject into the situation(s) to interrupt the next escalation. Stand Up SA continues to gain confidence within the community to identify problem areas.

ISSUE:

Metro Health's Stand Up SA program would like the opportunity to brief the Community Health and Equity Committee on plans on the public health approach to reduce gun violence.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact at this time.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.