

NEWS



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Mayor John F. Street Announces New Initiatives to Prevent Youth Violence

City to expand size and scope of successful youth violence reduction programs

PHILADELPHIA – Mayor John F. Street today announced three significant steps in the city’s ongoing campaign to reduce and prevent youth violence. The city’s Youth Violence Reduction Partnership is expanding into a new police district; a position to coordinate youth violence reduction efforts citywide is being created, and the Adolescent Violence Reduction Partnership – a new initiative to intervene with high-risk younger children and prevent violence – is underway.

“Our young people are at the epicenter of violence in our city,” Mayor Street said. “Over the first nine months of this year, 51 percent of gunshot victims in Philadelphia were between 12 and 24 years old. We cannot allow this to continue. We need to expand upon what we know is working to reduce violence among our young people, and to rethink those strategies that are not working and change the way we attack this problem.”

The first initiative the Mayor announced was the expansion of the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP) into the 19th Police District in West Philadelphia. This multi-agency initiative now operates in the 24th, 25th, and 12th Police Districts. YVRP has been shown to reduce homicides for youth ages 7 to 24 who are at the highest risk of killing or being killed by providing intensive support services. The 19th Police District was identified by the YVRP Steering Committee as part of a careful planning process that analyzes data on homicides and gunshot victims in each police district over the past five years.

YVRP is being expanded with the assistance of a \$3.7 Million state funding grant secured with the assistance of Governor Rendell and the Philadelphia legislative delegation in Harrisburg.

Expanding YVRP into other police districts where the crime data show it is needed was also recommended to the Administration by the 21st Century Review Forum, the committee formed by the Mayor in late 2003 to study policies and programs and make recommendations to the Administration for its second term in office.

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The second initiative announced today is that YVRP will be managed through a new Coordinator position under the Managing Director's Office. The new coordinator will work with the YVRP Steering Committee, which consists of representatives from the YVRP partner agencies, to implement YVRP as it expands today and additional areas of Philadelphia in the future.

YVRP is a collaboration of the Adult Probation and Parole Department Concerned Parents, Inc., Coordinating Office of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs (Behavioral Health), Department of Human Services, District Attorney's Office Juvenile Probation Department, Philadelphia Anti-Drug Anti-Violence Network (PAAN), Philadelphia Housing Authority, Philadelphia Police Department, Philadelphia Safe and Sound, Public/Private Ventures, School District of Philadelphia, and the Youth Homicide Review Team.

The Mayor announced a third initiative today: the Adolescent Violence Reduction Partnership (AVRP). AVRP represents a major expansion of the city's efforts to reach out directly to the highest-risk youth in the 10-15 age range to intervene earlier and more intensively with these youth before more serious involvement with delinquency, crime, and violence. In the first phase, AVRP will target youth in the 12th Police District in Southwest Philadelphia and the 25th Police District in North Philadelphia/Kensington. Both are areas with the highest historical incidence of youth violence, and both are current YVRP areas.

A soon-to-be released *Research and Policy Brief* by the non-profit group Philadelphia Safe and Sound examines young offenders in Philadelphia and finds that early delinquent behavior is perhaps the best predictor of later serious, violent and repeat criminal behavior. The study also found that last year in Philadelphia, more than 1,000 arrests were made of youth from 10 to 12 years of age.

"We must improve our interventions with this population of youth whom we can identify as headed for serious trouble," Mayor Street said. AVRP will help those youth who have the highest risk of chronic violence as they grow older. This will include youth already arrested at a young age for serious offenses, youth who are siblings of young people participating in YVRP, children of incarcerated parents, and others who those in law enforcement, the schools, and in the community recognize as at most risk of behaving violently as they grow older.

"Our city is prospering on many fronts," Mayor Street concluded. "Our neighborhoods are revitalizing, Center City is vibrant and our economy is robust and growing. But we cannot be a truly world-class city unless we are a safe city, and our children and young people are safe in their schools, their communities and their homes. There is no more important issue for this Administration, or our City."

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YVRP & AVRVP Service Areas

by Police District Boundaries

