

Stakeholder Perspectives: LA County Office of Violence Prevention

Summary of Preliminary Findings - Prepared for the Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health
By Prevention Institute

DAA-AO-18-054

Stakeholder Perspectives: LA County Office of Violence Prevention

The following report summarizes key findings from 14 listening sessions and 15 subject matter expert interviews conducted and analyzed by Prevention Institute between May 2018 and January 2019. This report concludes with key recommendations regarding countywide violence prevention efforts and the creation of a County Office of Violence Prevention.

Background

On March 13, 2018, Los Angeles County Supervisors Sheila Kuehl (Board Chair) and Supervisor Ridley Thomas (Immediate Past Chair) introduced a motion to the full Board entitled, [Addressing the Epidemic of Gun Violence \(see Appendix A\)](#). The motion, which passed unanimously, instructed County Counsel to report back to the Board with a legal analysis of regulatory options available to the County, including, but not limited to, an analysis of the potential to withstand legal challenges of ordinances that would allow the County to impose additional restrictions on the sale or possession of firearms by minors or individuals under 21 years of age, ban .50 caliber handguns, strengthen safe storage requirements, and adopt zoning regulations that would create a buffer zone between gun vendors and sensitive areas like schools and daycare centers. The motion also

- directed the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with County Counsel, to report back to the Board with an overview of current pending State gun control legislation, including any recommendations for support by the County of proposed legislation that would enhance the County's efforts to protect its residents and further strengthen gun control regulations;
- instructed the Director of Public Health and the Chief Executive Officer to propose the infrastructure needed within the County in order to create and support a robust and integrated Countywide Violence Prevention Initiative, with the Director of Public Health and the Chief Executive Officer to work together to create an Office of Violence Prevention within the Department of Public Health that will initially be tasked with coordinating the County's various violence prevention efforts, and lead the County in a violence prevention strategic planning process;
- instructed the Director of Public Health and the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Board with a plan outlining the staffing and resources needed to create the new Office of Violence Prevention, including considering the possibility of expanding the scope and responsibility of the Injury and Violence Prevention Program and transitioning that unit into a Countywide Office of Violence Prevention, and identifying possible funding sources to support the ongoing costs associated with the staffing and operations of the new office; and
 - instructed the Director of Public Health to report back to the Board with an overview of how the

Office of Violence Prevention, working with partner agencies, will develop and roll out a Countywide violence prevention strategic plan, including providing a strategic planning process timeline, identifying resources needed to complete the strategic plan and identifying possible funding sources, including:

- working with a wide variety of partner agencies while developing their strategic plan, including internal County partner agencies, such as the Departments of Health Services, Mental Health, Probation, Sheriff, District Attorney, Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, Los Angeles County Office of Education, Children and Family Services, Office of Child Protection, Office of Diversion and Re-Entry, County Counsel, Coroner and Parks and Recreation, as well as working with countywide initiatives, outside partner agencies and consortia, as well as community stakeholder groups and cities; and
- conducting an assessment of the County's current violence prevention programs, as well as some of the violence prevention initiatives that have been successfully adopted in other jurisdictions, such as Cure Violence, a discussion of the value in developing violence prevention strategies that are specific to certain areas or neighborhoods in the County and the unique dynamics and issues, such as gang violence, that impact those areas and an analysis of gaps in the County's current array of violence prevention programs.

Project Overview

In May 2018, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health engaged Prevention Institute (PI) to plan and host a series of community engagement activities, including; 14 listening sessions in each of the County's eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) with at least 5 that were issue specific (directly tied to issues such as domestic violence, youth violence, etc.), 15 interviews with subject matter experts, and 1 concluding event to share the findings of the report with all stakeholders who participated in the process. Both listening sessions and subject matter expert interviews were designed to invite perspectives on the current state of violence prevention in LA County, insights on what's working here and in other jurisdictions, to explore commonalities and divergences in violence and violence prevention across the County, surface perspectives on gaps and assets and generate input from a broad array of stakeholders on the needs and opportunities for a Countywide Office of Violence Prevention.

Methodology

Subject Matter Expert Interviews

Prevention Institute (PI) worked with Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) leadership and staff at the Injury and Violence Prevention Program to identify a list of 40 potential interviewees during a brainstorming session, ultimately identifying 15 leaders for PI to interview. Individual interviewees were selected for their expertise in violence prevention; their knowledge and understanding of large systems;

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demonstrated experience in funding, developing, or implementing violence prevention strategies; and knowledge concerning multiple forms of violence (see Appendix B: List of Subject Matter Experts). During this same period, LACDPH interviewed another set of subject matter experts (see Appendices C and D for list of interviews and theme summary). PI developed an interview guide designed to elicit interviewee perspectives on violence prevention, challenges and opportunities, and specific guidance pertaining to the formation of the Office of Violence Prevention. Two PI staff participated in each interview, typically one serving as the lead interviewer and the other taking notes. PI staff listened deeply for interviewee perspectives on opportunities and barriers to preventing violence and creating healthy, thriving communities in LA County; critical relationships between violence and the broad determinants of health (e.g. social, economic and physical factors influencing health); needs, opportunities, and challenges pertaining to cross-issue and cross-agency collaboration; potential challenges and barriers to a Countywide Office of Violence Prevention; and lessons-learned from past efforts aimed at preventing violence in LA County, statewide and nationally. PI staff then conducted a comprehensive analysis of interview transcripts and/or notes to a) identify and compile recurring themes; b) surface unique topics and recommendations; c) develop salient descriptions of issues and solutions to violence prevention and recommendations pertaining to the Office of Violence Prevention, including issues related to structure/governance, focus/purview, funding and financing, leadership and communications.

Community-Based Listening Sessions

PI staff contacted 150+ organizational leaders to request partnerships in co-hosting listening sessions throughout the eight Service Planning Areas in LA County, aiming for at least one listening session in each of the County's five Supervisory Districts. Between July and November 2018, fourteen listening sessions involving approximately 333 participants were hosted throughout the County (List of Listening Sessions, Sample Agenda, and Overview of Listening Sessions provided in Appendices B and F). Organizational co-hosts were asked to assist with meeting logistics and outreach to residents, community partners, and service providers interested in sharing perspectives on community assets, challenges, and opportunities related to violence prevention. At each session, PI staff delivered a brief presentation that outlined the Board motion (provided in Appendix A), provided standard definitions for violence prevention, and asked participants to describe the current community efforts to prevent and address violence in this community; identify any opportunities and challenges to violence prevention efforts in this community; describe the impact of trauma on communities/families and needs of survivors in this community; and identify areas of proposed focus for the Office of Violence Prevention.

Analysis

Following the listening sessions and subject matter expert interviews, PI reviewed all notes looking for themes, topical clusters, and unique, relevant perspectives. PI held internal strategic discussion sessions among project staff to further analyze and synthesize input. Various issue areas related to violence came up in both the listening sessions and interviews. The remainder of this report covers findings and recommendations.

Overarching Themes & Key Findings

This section of the report summarizes overarching themes and key findings of subject matter expert interviews and listening sessions, conducted to date.

Overarching Themes

1) Safe and thriving neighborhoods are critical to preventing violence.

Interviewees and listening session attendees alike identified basic community infrastructure – such as clean streets, accessible and reliable transportation, well-lit parks, a clean and healthy environment and stable, affordable housing – as essential to ensuring safety and preventing violence. While the Office of Violence Prevention may not directly influence the quality, availability, and accessibility of neighborhood-level resources, it will be important for the Office to address the quality of neighborhoods in its efforts and in the construction of a meaningful strategic plan. Agencies that are responsible for neighborhood infrastructure—from bus stops and parks to street lighting and large item pick up—need to be engaged as partners in violence prevention efforts countywide including in unincorporated areas.

2) High levels of coordination and accountability are expected from leaders and systems.

Listening session participants and subject matter experts alike expressed the desire to ensure that the proposed office had strong internal leadership as well as strong support from the Board of Supervisors to facilitate coordination across County departments. One subject matter expert talked about “results-based accountability” that would harness the skills and resources of diverse stakeholders to focus in on the following objectives: 1) identifying and monitoring a set of metrics to track whether efforts are preventing youth from entering the system(s) in the first place; 2) taking action to create safe neighborhoods; 3) reducing exposure to risk factors; and, 4) developing a full understanding of existing initiatives and funding streams. One interviewee stated, “this Office should feel as accountable to the community as they do to the Board.” People talked a lot about feeling burned by “outsiders” coming in and doing pilot projects, hosting meetings, extracting information, without staying involved in the community, following through on identified issues, much less seeing initiatives through to fundamentally change community conditions affecting violence. The Office of Violence Prevention can proactively seek to establish a new set of norms and expectations for community engagement and hold the Office and partners accountable to these standards.

“Violence is associated with the lack of coordinated approaches across organizations and departments – there is not a central coordinated body where violence prevention lives within the County.”

-Interviewee

3) There is a need for better connection and coordination.

LA County is enormous, and every Service Planning Area has a variety of activities, programs, and organizations working across various issues that directly or indirectly affect violence. But there is also a lot of disconnection, fragmentation, and lack of awareness across communities, Service Planning Areas, and organizations, especially

when it comes to engaging residents and ensuring residents are aware of what resources and supports are available. An Office of Violence Prevention could support coordination and collaboration, but experts and listening session participants noted potential challenges, including the risk of the Office becoming bogged down in conducting an inventory of existing efforts; the need to develop criteria to better distinguish “violence prevention” and downstream “interventions,” so as not to lose focus on prevention approaches; and the need to remember that coordination and collaboration take time and resources, often straining the human and financial resources of organizations and communities that are asked to participate in many such dialogues and processes. Pay attention to imbalances in resources among various parties that are asked to “come to the table” and search for equitable solutions to this challenge.

4) The County needs to develop a shared language and broader communication around violence prevention.

Many interviewees and participants mentioned that they hear a lot more about violence than about violence prevention, and much more about what isn’t working than what is working. One subject matter expert suggested that LA County and the Office of Violence Prevention could lift up what is working to prevent violence, contributing hopeful and positive messages. People cautioned that social media, particularly for youth, promulgates negative messages about violence and guns, so any media strategy would need to include social media. Finally, people talked about the value of a media advocacy strategy that would identify and support spokespeople throughout the county who are capable of talking about policies, systems, and environmental solutions to preventing violence. There is still a lot of work to be done in order to build a shared understanding of public health and community-based approaches to violence prevention. Listening session participants expressed the need to frame prevention in a way that resonates with all residents. And one subject matter expert made the point that, from her perspective, the Board Offices and other County Leadership could also benefit from developing a shared understanding and language around violence prevention and effective strategies. She cautioned against assuming that everyone is “on the same page” when it comes to what it means to prevent violence using a public health approach.

Summary of Themes and Key Bullet Points

Theme	Key Points
Safe and thriving neighborhoods are critical to preventing violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic community infrastructure to support health and safety is essential for violence prevention • Entities responsible for neighborhood infrastructure need to be engaged as partners
High levels of coordination and accountability are expected from leaders and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office needs results-based accountability, including outcome metrics and mapping of resources • The Office should seek to set out a new set of norms and expectations around community engagement
Better connection and coordination is needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office should support coordination

	<p>and collaboration, while addressing the challenges of potentially becoming bogged down in inventorying existing efforts; the need to develop to distinguish prevention from intervention; and a recognition that coordination and collaboration take time and resources and that under-resourced communities and organizations may need support to facilitate and recognize their participation</p>
<p>The County needs to change the conversation around violence prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office could contribute to the landscape by communicating hopeful and positive messages • Media strategies need to include social media especially for youth • Incorporate a media advocacy strategy to identify and amplify spokespeople across the county • Frame prevention in a way that resonates with all residents • Ensure that there is a shared understanding of violence prevention and effective strategies among Board Offices and County Leadership as well as with community partners.

Key Findings

This section provides detailed information about 10 major findings. The findings demonstrate the interconnectedness of intimate partner violence, community-level, and systemic violence in the lives of individuals and community residents in Los Angeles County. The findings for each domain demonstrate tremendous opportunity to make timely, impactful, and strategic investments to improve health and safety through a focus on the structural and community-level factors that influence the safety and wellbeing of all residents.

1. To adequately respond to community concerns, county leaders and decision-makers must recognize and address multiple forms of violence and the intersections between multiple forms of violence in communities.

In order to understand how to effectively prevent violence, we need to understand the multiple forms of violence and how they intersect with one another. This will require a multi-city, multi-jurisdiction, multi-department approach that goes beyond law enforcement and the justice system in order to prioritize upstream approaches like reducing or eliminating risk factors for violence at societal, institutional, and systemic levels). The landscape for violence and trauma prevention efforts in Los Angeles County is characterized by a number of effective initiatives and programs. Still, there is a need for investment in larger scale coordination efforts to implement solutions that correspond to the scope of the problem and facilitate collaboration across sectors.

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This work also needs to go beyond trauma-informed care to emphasize healing and resilience. Throughout the listening sessions, it was striking, though not surprising, to hear people discuss the challenges of interpersonal violence as well as systemic violence and trauma that they have experienced in their communities. People want to end the cycles of violence they experience and move toward a place of healing.

Related Findings

- Many organizations address “one type of violence” but residents and families often experience or are exposed to multiple, interrelated forms of violence.
- Among those organizations that do understand and seek to address multiple forms of violence, there are issues of capacity, cultural competency, gender equity, and a greater need to reach “priority populations.”
- People described a need—on the part of organizations and systems representatives—to better understand and address multiple interrelated forms of violence experienced in each Service Planning Area and make it easier for residents to connect to the supports they need.
- Participants resisted the notion that only certain forms of violence happen in certain Service Planning Areas and felt there was a tendency among some people to sweep certain types of violence “under the rug.” For example, SPA’s in South LA are receiving significant attention for gun and gang violence while there are little to no resources for other forms of violence in those SPA’s
- There may be value to community symposiums that are open to the public to promote resource opportunities that encourage multi-sector collaboration and community engagement to prevent multiple forms of violence and provide cross-learning opportunities.
- Resources that are invested in community-based organizations that provide support to low-income communities of color need to be better coordinated.
- Strategies for training, research, and capacity building that define multiple forms of violence, how they are connected, and how to address them with different multi-sector violence prevention models should be developed and shared.
- People reinforced the importance of preventing violence and increasing safety without criminalizing certain communities or marginalizing “minority” groups.

“Violence is associated with the lack of coordinated approaches across organizations and departments – there is not a central coordinated body where violence prevention lives within the County.”

-Interviewee

2. The geographic spread of Los Angeles County presents its own unique challenges to preventing violence in communities.

The geographic spread of Los Angeles County is often seen as a challenge when trying to coordinate efforts and promote community connectedness across Service Planning Areas and the County as a whole. This issue was raised during subject matter expert interviews and listening sessions as one of the most challenging obstacles community-based organizations and service providers face. Many discussed the need for action at the community level, including the notion of local meetings at the Service Planning Area-level to discuss issues like

safety for children, domestic violence, and sex trafficking, among other issues. People also mentioned the need to focus and invest in areas with historical endemic violence as the County widens its focus to prevent violence at a countywide level. The key is to build on existing initiatives and programs and develop networks and avenues for collaboration that can expand these initiatives with ease. This will be discussed further in the recommendations section.

Related Findings

- Participants spoke about prioritizing investments in communities that experience endemic violence, greatest prevalence, or severity while also working on expanding efforts across the county as a whole.
- The notion of a locally grounded infrastructure for violence prevention (e.g., at the Service Planning Area or community-level) that would connect to a countywide effort (e.g., “a convened” table) was floated as a way to address the need to act locally while coordinating for countywide impact.
- Violence happens in every Service Planning Area, though it doesn’t impact every Area equally.
- Residents and community-based organizations expressed a desire to learn about all the assets related to violence prevention that exist in different parts of the county.

“[The Office] has to respond to the whole county. However, if you take an equity lens to this, there should definitely be less resources in places where there isn’t endemic violence.”

-Interviewee

“There is so much great work already happening here in Pasadena but the county may not know about it!”

-Listening session participant

“A challenge is the geographic size. Each region has its own issues. Violence prevention presents itself [as an opportunity] to better understand the landscape; serve as that body to leverage various initiatives. The Office can be a connecting body to make a more cohesive approach to violence prevention in LA County.”

- Interviewee

3. Trauma was a significant issue and concern, and people spoke of the need for healing.

Experiencing and witnessing violence and traumatic events adversely affects people’s lives, which was evident in each listening session. People shared how the effects of traumatic events can be passed down through generations and that “intergenerational trauma” prevents individuals and communities alike from realizing their full potential. Participants discussed the impacts of trauma on their communities, both recent and historic, as part of the landscape. One person noted that often newcomers have no knowledge of or understanding about trauma and this lack of understanding creates divisions. Recent shootings, public suicides, and graphic motor vehicle accidents were some of many recent traumatic experiences communities have experienced and shared during listening sessions (especially in Antelope Valley and Santa Monica). Yet there was also widespread acknowledgement of race-based traumatic experiences that have plagued the county for decades. Participants raised “trauma-informed” systems and work as a good start, but shared the need to broaden and build upon this existing knowledge to move toward individual-, community-, and institution-level healing. Due to historical

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traumatic events, certain populations refuse services and expressed mistrust in government, as well as indicating feelings of being stigmatized, shamed, and isolated by government. To counteract this mistrust, interviewees within the Native American community noted the importance of offering non-traditional services that allow for flexibility within traditional county systems. One interviewee and several youth participants also spoke of the need for utilizing art education as an opportunity for creating healing.

Related Findings:

- Trauma is experienced subjectively and should therefore be understood as complex and affecting people and communities differently. The Office of Violence Prevention needs a framework that describes clearly the relationship of trauma, healing, and violence prevention.
- Intergenerational trauma in communities is becoming normalized and impacts the ways in which individuals within a family understand, cope with, and heal from trauma.
- Trauma-informed work of institutions/departments, e.g., hospitals and the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) was recognized, but it was also suggested that more resources—including research and training opportunities—need to be dedicated to community-based organizations who have already built trust within communities—that is, they are already trauma-informed.
- There’s a need for public space for healing after major violent events in communities to help people grieve and heal collectively.
- The issue of vicarious trauma experienced by providers was raised and it was suggested that wellness opportunities as well as greater supports and resources were needed for this population.
- Several listening session attendees, in various Service Planning Areas, view divestment, involuntary displacement, lack of job opportunities, and lack of economic growth as forms of historic, systemic, and institutional trauma meted out on the community and they see these broad factors as directly related to generational cycles of violence in families and communities (gang violence, intimate partner violence, etc.)—whether or not professionals can acknowledge these forms of trauma and their connection to violence, some residents are clear about it.

“Practicing healing and creating opportunities for healing through trauma with other sectors (teachers, police department or anyone who is interacting with families and communities) is important.”

-Interviewee

“Youth of color and their families have less access to arts instruction and the field as a whole; they receive lower quality access or no access at all even though we know the impact of arts on the mental health of communities and individuals.”

-Interviewee

4. Mistrust of government systems by community members is real: “We want accountability!”

Due to widely experienced mistrust of government systems, many community-based organizations had questions about the accountability of the Office. During the listening sessions, some of the resounding questions that surfaced included, “how is this Office going to be accountable to the public as well as to the Board?” and “how will it be different from any other office?” Residents expressed their grief from broken promises and

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limited improvements over the years. One participant stated, “I’ve worked on the same issues all my life and will have to pass on the same issues in my neighborhoods to my children to work on.” While all participants expressed their gratitude toward the County for providing resources for authentic community engagement on the Office of Violence Prevention, some communities shared feeling over-tapped for information without any information and outcomes being shared back in return.

Related Findings:

- Community residents have long memories of broken promises. Residents experience environmental injustices and maltreatment from local elected officials and it fuels their mistrust of government systems and representatives of government.
- There’s much work to be done to build trust between government systems and agencies with communities, primarily with low-income and disadvantaged communities, including the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI), Native American Indian, Latinx, and African American groups we spoke with.
- Residents expect follow-up with them and with local organizations after seeking their input and help with information gathering or interviews. People do not accept extracting of information with nothing in return, and they’ve experienced that on multiple occasions.
- Bad actions by law enforcement, over-policing, and evidence of law enforcement bias in communities of color lead to disproportionality and over-criminalization, creating a cycle of fear and mistrust.
- National anti-immigrant rhetoric is fueling mistrust and pushing immigrant communities into the shadows.
- We must prevent systems from criminalizing poverty and provide resources and opportunities that uplift

“Some people don’t even want to go for county money because there is so much bureaucracy and the processes are challenging.”

-Interviewee

“Our youth don’t want to be further criminalized and don’t want to be in these uncomfortable situations with police.”

- Listening session attendee

“Our communities are done with corruption from the government; we collaborate with each other and help one another as much as we can.”

--Listening session attendee

communities instead.

5. Improving neighborhood conditions is paramount to preventing violence in LA County communities.

Public investments in health and safety that promote infrastructure, improve neighborhood conditions, and the built environment are critical opportunities to prevent violent outcomes that impact quality of life and wellbeing in communities. Parks and recreation facilities were identified as unsafe places in particular Service Planning

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Areas throughout Los Angeles County and there is a clear opportunity for local work and community engagement to create long-lasting impact in neighborhoods. This is not simply a matter of good programming at parks, but also a broader issue of availability of safe places to play, adequate lighting, and operations and maintenance of existing parks. Streets and passages, including bus stops, were also viewed as unsafe, especially for youth around schools where there is concentration of gang activity and violence. Housing also came up as a critical discussion in all Service Planning Areas where gentrification and displacement pressures are mounting for vulnerable communities and more people are facing homelessness. Homelessness puts any person in a vulnerable position and at increased risk of experiencing violence and trauma. Last, but not least, an overconcentration of alcohol and other substance shops, including smoke shops, in low-income communities become known as hubs for violence.

Related Findings:

- Departments, agencies, and systems that are responsible for neighborhood conditions need to be engaged in violence prevention efforts: they need more capacity to understand the assets they bring to violence prevention, and they could be part of a shared cross-county platform for “violence prevention” in all departments.
- People appreciated and valued the efforts of Parks and Recreation to ensure recreational spaces that are safe and clean in communities. Parks after Dark was mentioned in multiple locales.
- Public Works has a role to ensure there are safe streets and passages, especially for youth and elders.
- Listening session attendees see efforts aimed at increasing affordable housing and reducing gentrification pressures through access to affordable housing and efforts to prevent homelessness as violence prevention.
- Job opportunities, career paths, and quality education were also noted as key aspects—that are often missing—in creating healthy and safe neighborhoods. Specifically, youth are seeking entry level job training opportunities and internships.
- Youth are particularly aware of neighborhood conditions and should be part of the process for improving them.

“We are still dealing with the push-out of people from LA who came to places like Lancaster and Palmdale in the 90’s. They are coming for different reasons now and we lack the infrastructure to support their needs.”

-Interviewee

“We cannot police our way out of violence.”

-Listening session attendee

6. People (of all races) recognize racial inequities within the County and (many) view it as a problem that “affects us all” and would like collective solutions.

While violence occurs in every culture regardless of socioeconomic, educational, and religious background, listening session participants reported that there is a need to address the fact that violence disproportionately affects marginalized groups and people of color, especially those who suffer from multiple forms of oppression. Some of the areas where racial inequities were most acutely named and felt were in policing/law enforcement, inequities in school quality and school-discipline practices, and inequities in housing affordability and homelessness. Together, these three issues have compounding and interconnected impacts on safety, violence, and wellbeing. One listening session participant said, “this affects all of us.”

Related Findings

- Authentic community engagement is seen as critical to limiting bias and paternalistic attitudes and practices in communities of color.
- People within governmental systems must acknowledge their biases and those systems must create opportunities for staff training so that those biases are not perpetuated.
- There remains an unmet need for a comprehensive racial justice approach that includes implicit bias training across governmental entities.
- People from historically disadvantaged backgrounds deserve opportunities to be trained, educationally, and professionally, to be eligible for hiring into the pipeline of for working at the intersection of violence prevention and public health.

“Systems are not broken; they are designed to do what they do. We must go in there and change it.”

-Interviewee

“It’s both an obstacle and opportunity to have ongoing equity conversation, and [there is a need] to go beyond a conversation and shifting into action towards policy to inequities that have been going on for decades and generations.”

-Interviewee

“Hiring of Native Americans for job opportunities in the field is incredibly challenging. The lists sometimes remain open for years before anyone is even eligible. How do we sure up the pipeline so that there are providers who are reflective of the communities’ they serve?”

-Interviewee

7. Community connectedness and social inclusion are central to preventing violence.

People viewed their capacity to connect with one another as a critical asset. In the NHOPI community, one resident said, “one asset here is that we are a well-knit community and another is that we have a strong culture, we solve problems in ‘family style’ where the community needs to be understood not judged. For us respect is more important than anything. Being connected to our families, ancestors and lineage is important to us.” Additionally, there is a need to include more prevention strategies that address the unique needs of communities that experience significant disadvantage. Immigrants, LGBTQ, women and children who are trafficked, victims of domestic violence, elder abuse victims, and those with different abilities deserve support services that have a justice framework. As it relates to the Office of Violence Prevention,

strategies designed to support and reinforce connectedness and reduce social isolation are important to residents.

Related Findings:

- While government agencies do their best to coordinate safety-net programs intended to catch the most vulnerable, it is important that those entities recognize that certain communities rely on family and friends for support before agencies and some may never connect with government in a traditional way. This is reflective of resilience of those communities.
- Ensure government agencies understand risk and resilience factors for communities and families.
- Increase community connectedness through trust and relationship-building; story-telling and art expression; and intervention and prevention programs.

Limit the displacement of people from Metro LA to other parts of LA County in search of less expensive housing where there is little funding for programs and services (e.g., transportation, safety-net benefits, food security, quality education, etc.). Ensure a justice framework is implemented that provides a justice framework (examples include: Family justice centers, training and mental health providers, youth providers appropriately trained in child development and experiences of trauma; shelters for victims, etc.

“Making sure that community members are at the table as decision makers is important. They need to do more than just tell their stories; they are the ones living it...”

-Interviewee

“Family itself is the ultimate resource!”

-Interviewee

8. Effective Communication about the Office of Violence Prevention and Its Approach to Preventing Violence will help change the Narrative, particularly in Communities where there are Negative Perceptions.

The role of effectively communicating violence prevention efforts across a county as vast and diverse as Los Angeles is challenging yet crucial. In early efforts to arrange listening sessions with LA County residents, many participants asked questions like, “why is the county interested in this now”? While it is common for responses to violence to seem reactive as opposed to prevention-oriented, it is important for the public to be aware of ongoing efforts that are taking place to prevent violence in their communities and irrespective of responses to national or local catastrophic events.

Related Findings:

Stakeholders suggested that the Office of Violence Prevention...

- Ensure messaging (about violence prevention) is accessible to a wider audience by filtering and targeting messages (language, reading level, brevity, etc.);
- Open lines of multi-directional conversation between residents, organizations and institutions;
- Utilize existing self-organized and self-identified communities of people to address gaps or challenges in translating experiences or messaging;
- Build a cohesive communications infrastructure for preventing violence across the county;

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- Avoid messaging that artificially separates different forms of violence;
- Develop the capacity for the Office of Violence Prevention to vigorously share what is working and what is violence prevention is.

“The County has the power to communicate the issues while also standing with the people.”

-Listening Session Attendee

“Supervisors should be outraged by what is happening with violence and it doesn’t sound like they are”

-Interviewee

9. The Office of Violence Prevention Must Be Adequately Resourced to take on the Challenge of Preventing Violence.

With sufficient dedicated resources, the Office has the potential to coordinate and deploy the resources necessary for transformative efforts to prevent violence. In the literature research for this project, PI found that, outside of Los Angeles, there are offices that not only coordinate efforts of violence prevention, but they also fund community-based organizations to lead effective violence prevention initiatives. For example, the Office of Violence Prevention in Nebraska “aids privately funded organizations, local government subdivisions, and other community groups in developing prevention, intervention, and enforcement theories and techniques.”² By providing access to funding for smaller organizations, the County can resource those who are most closely connected to what is happening in neighborhoods while ensuring transparency and generating buy-in from communities, while leveraging community assets to address community issues. While Los Angeles County is unique in size and jurisdictional complexity, it can draw lessons from other municipalities that have embarked on coordinated approaches to violence prevention. Appendix G includes two brief snapshots of violence prevention efforts beyond Los Angeles County.

Related Findings:

- To be successful, resources for the Office of Violence Prevention need to be sufficient to ramp up and to sustain efforts.
- The Office of Violence Prevention could have an important role raising the visibility of violence prevention efforts across the County and attracting outside/private resources and federal investments to secure additional funding for the Office and violence prevention in the county.
- One of the issues raised by local organizations was their challenge with funding. The Office of Violence Prevention could also support collective efforts by streamlining resources for community-based organizations and non-profits and serving as “one stop” for violence prevention resources.
- Look across the County portfolio to identify and leverage funding sources that could fund the Office of Violence Prevention and support violence prevention efforts (e.g., Measure B, Measure M, Measure A, Mental Health Services Act funds, etc.).

“We need to have folks who are aligned and looking at what is happening in each community and be able to look at the data to tell the stories in each [service planning] area. There is opportunity to tie different systems together. Healthcare system, school system, etc.”

-Interviewee

“We must use data to tell stories about our communities.”

-Interviewee

10. Provide and share quantitative and qualitative data and metrics to support community level violence prevention.

Community-based organizations and stakeholders who participated in listening sessions or interviews were well aware of the importance of data collection and metrics in preventing violence. Many participants noted the need for data collected at the community level (or disaggregated to justify the work they do in order to compete for funding at the county level). Other smaller populations, such as the Samoan community in Carson, expressed the need for data that is disaggregated by the health and violence issues they experience so that they could receive the resources and services they need, which are separate from the broad Asian Pacific Islander (API) classification they are often lumped into.

Related Findings:

- Ensure data is collected and shared at a community- and neighborhood-level.
- Acknowledge and make necessary adjustments so that ethnic populations are not lumped under one large ethnic category, which can mask disparities.
- Ensure the community sees that violence prevention and intervention efforts among youth are tracked and evaluated.
- Align mental health and public health Service Planning Areas (for purposes of data collection).
- Identify and use early indicators and develop a shared set of metrics to stimulate cross-agency action.

Recommendations & Next Steps

1. Build on what exists and strengthen what works.

“Every supervisor has discretionary money, it’s never about not having enough money, it’s about making choices from the money that we do have.”

-Interviewee

“Change will not happen in one or five years. You need to be able to devote funding to this type of work for 20 years to see change.”

-Interviewee

Los Angeles County is home to a large number of organizations, institutions, and programs working to prevent violence. Every Service Planning Area has resources, networks, and projects to build upon. When asked, “*what efforts exist to prevent violence in your community?*” participants in each of the listening sessions in all eight Service Planning Areas were able to name programs and efforts ranging from school- and faith-based efforts to community-led associations, non-profit organizations, and institutional approaches. Participants named foundation-funded efforts like Building Healthy Communities and Best Start, supported by the First 5 Commission of Los Angeles. Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD), Summer Night Lights, and Parks after Dark were also frequently mentioned across the County. Many of the listening sessions were in fact co-hosted by entities committed to supporting resident safety and preventing violence, such as St. John’s Well Child and Family Center, Antelope Valley Partners for Health, Peace Over Violence, Strength United, and the Office of Samoan Affairs. Moving forward, a Countywide Violence Prevention Initiative has a good foundation to build upon. Here are some key areas of focus:

Clearly Distinguish Violence Prevention from Intervention and Elevate Effective Efforts

At the same time that there are hundreds of organizations and programs committed to preventing violence, more work is needed to distinguish between what is working, what efforts are not having sufficient impact, and how to distinguish between *prevention* and *intervention*. This will require deeper exploration, engagement, monitoring, and measurement, and more clearly defining what it takes to successfully prevent violence in families, communities, and the county as a whole. One listening session participant said that when people say “violence prevention” most people think of “the police,” but she countered, “we’re not going to police our way out of violence.” While people recognized the importance of a wide range of partnerships between people working to prevent violence and those who intervene after-the-fact, they most often mentioned institutions like Los Angeles Unified School District (or the education system more broadly), childcare organizations, or the Parks and Recreation Department as key institutional partners in preventing violence.

Seek to Address Inconsistencies in Funding, Which Impede Consistent Work to Prevent Violence

One of the recurring issues informants identified as an impediment to existing violence prevention efforts in the County is the lack of consistent funding. Subject matter experts and listening session participants alike recognized and re-affirmed the importance of “moving upstream,” “getting to the roots of violence,” and “breaking cycles of violence,” while also acknowledging fundamental challenges, including the perceptions that resources to prevent violence are limited and inadequate to the scale of the challenges; resources are more often provided after-the-fact for high-risk populations and do not enable or encourage taking action further upstream to address the underlying causes of violence; and organizations often rely on inconsistent grant funding that creates uncertainty and may hamper their ability to do long-term work and planning essential for an approach that addresses the root causes of violence. One participant said that organizations often settle for “short-term corrections to long-term issues.” Supporting violence prevention efforts will require addressing these challenges, which may include coordinating, centralizing, and increasing funding or developing other innovative sources of financing.

Support partnership and collaboration across multiple forms of violence prevention

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Looking across the Service Planning Areas, it becomes clear that each Area has a different montage of groups working on different facets of violence prevention, from domestic violence to human trafficking to gang violence. Yet people spoke to the need to recognize intersections between different forms of violence and address shared “root causes” of multiple forms of violence. Moving forward, a comprehensive countywide violence prevention initiative would seek to support effective partnerships between mutually supportive organizations working on complementary issues. It appears that more work is needed to develop a shared understanding of overlapping forms of violence that goes beyond “we often see the same families”-type of thinking. People working on gang violence prevention and domestic/intimate partner violence prevention, for example, may need additional support to explore and address some of the hard issues that may arise in partnerships like gender balance/imbalance in their respective workforces, “who shows up,” and “how they show up” depending on the population that is being engaged and how issues are defined. The Pasadena Public Health model was elevated as a good example of providing support to non-profits working together with different populations on violence prevention. To effectively prevent violence, it would be valuable to work more intensively to strengthen some of the bridge-building efforts that have already been seen as effective. Groups need tangible resources to engage in this type of partnership and capacity-building.

2. Create a “bigger tent” in any efforts to prevent violence in LA County.

Embrace Affordable Housing, Overcrowding, & Homelessness as Violence Prevention Issues

In every single Service Planning Area, at almost every listening session, participants mentioned issues of housing affordability, involuntary displacement, and their relationship to homelessness. People viewed affordable housing as a key issue with multiple connections to violence prevention. This was particularly profound in the Antelope Valley, where one resident described “many people showing up in the AV because they’ve gotten pushed out from other LA County areas... they can’t afford to live where they used to, so they come to the AV to look for cheap housing.” Participants expanded upon this and said it not only contributes to an inability of non-profits, institutions, and service providers to keep pace with demand for affordable housing and services, but it also contributes to a growing homeless population that puts pressure on all residents and many organizations themselves. The issue of affordable housing and related challenges is in no way limited to Antelope Valley—residents in Santa Monica, Redondo Beach, and Pasadena described similar challenges, referring in one case to “a tale of two cities,” one prosperous and secure, the other pressured and at risk of displacement.

Engage the Issues of Jobs, Workforce and Economic Development in Violence Prevention Efforts

People spoke often about the need for living wages and sufficient resources, and they saw this as tied to violence prevention. Listening session participants spoke about how economic pressures caused family strain that could lead to family, intimate partner, or domestic violence. They also talked about how economic strain and working multiple jobs prevented people from participating in community initiatives and programs. They also spoke about how lack of jobs and economic opportunity could lead to involvement with gangs and human trafficking. People spoke frequently about inadequate pay for people working to prevent violence, despite their difficult jobs and long hours. Finally, people mentioned the opportunities within violence prevention initiatives to serve as catalysts for job creation and workforce development, mentioning the importance of “hiring from the community,” “the *promotora* model,” and reducing barriers to employment post-incarceration. While there

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may be reticence to expand the scope of the work of violence prevention, it cannot be underscored enough that listening session participants and subject matter experts see jobs, economic development, and workforce development as fundamentally linked to any systemic effort to prevent violence.

Include Quality Education and Fair, Just and Inclusive Education Systems in the Violence Prevention “tent”

Schools, and the education system more broadly, were identified by community residents as critical partners in violence prevention efforts. Some also saw the educational system as part of the problem. People described inequities in education quality, distribution of resources and unevenness of programs, and differences in willingness to engage in violence prevention efforts as critical barriers to the success, reach, and sustainability of violence prevention efforts. One listening session participant said, “our schools don’t teach the real history of people, place, and actions against groups.” Another participant said that Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) needs to recognize the importance of the Department of Public Health and a public health approach to preventing violence. In terms of LAUSD’s role in solutions, people spoke about the importance of more programs for youth and the need to prevent bullying on campuses. One person from Santa Monica observed that “early educators don’t make much money and work long hours,” effectively tying together the link between education and jobs as critical to violence prevention efforts. Listening session participants had a fairly deep and complex analysis of the role of schools and the education system as a whole in population-level violence prevention efforts. Despite the challenges of working in and with schools, the input participants strongly suggests that people are not only looking for innovative programs and pilot projects, but are in fact interested in seeing deeper, systemic changes designed to improve outcomes for all children, remove institutional biases, and erase inequities in the educational system across the county. One person who attended Pasadena’s listening session said that “schools and systems fail our children and set them up for the school-to-prison pipeline.”

Encompass a Variety of Neighborhood Conditions as Violence Prevention Issues & Opportunities

Listening session participants and subject matter experts repeatedly identified a long list of neighborhood-level issues that they saw as related to preventing violence, including the following: transportation, housing (as stated above), parks and open space, child care, schools (including access to school grounds and facilities), maintaining a clean environment, unsafe walking routes, high-speed of cars around schools and parks, over-concentration of nuisance businesses like smoke shops and liquor stores, and the need for better lighting. When asked about these issues, people said things like, “it’s hard to get the attention of public works in our community,” “[unclean streets] send the wrong message to kids,” and “we feel unsafe in our neighborhood.” Neighborhood-level issues, often under the purview of cities, were viewed by residents as central to preventing violence and promoting safe and thriving neighborhoods. A comprehensive violence prevention initiative in the county will engage on these issues through partnerships, data collection, and strategic communications.

Encourage opportunities for youth to be active leaders in violence prevention

Though youth leadership in violence prevention did not emerge regularly within the listening sessions conducted, it is important to recognize that the literature suggests highlighting prevention strategies that are directed at peace-building within communities. There is a strong need for youth leadership opportunities; peer to peer conflict mediation in schools, primary prevention strategies that are available before the need for

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restorative justice practices, and internships for young people to build their skills. These strategies create opportunities for building healthy relationships, strengthening social and emotional learning, and engaging parents and caregivers of young children. Two youth specific listening sessions were hosted with a focus on opportunities for young adults to be involved in violence prevention decision making processes throughout the county. Participants (high-school to college age) were enthusiastic about learning more about issues in their communities and developing solutions to solve them. Additionally, youth identified several barriers that might prevent them from being part of any commissions, taskforces, etc. such as; limited finances and travel arrangements to attend meetings, the need for ensuring that youth voice is well represented to feel comfortable speaking up about their concerns to adults, and opportunities to build trust within a large agency like DPH. A recommendation for including youth as part of OVP decision making might include some training and capacity building with stipends for youth at the SPA level.

Embrace Arts and Culture as a form of community connectedness and healing

While involvement in the arts have a critical role to play in the lives of residents throughout Los Angeles, listening session participants expressed limited opportunities to express themselves artistically in public spaces. Community members engaged with organizations such as Koreatown Youth Community Center have used their artistic abilities to take on beautification projects in their local area. The LA County Arts Commission has seen promising results from engaging youth in artistic expression who've experienced trauma and are involved in the juvenile justice system. Using the arts as a form of healing and engagement for youth has even shown a reduction in recidivism and positive mental health reinforcement. The Arts Commission has also partnered with the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Education to embed social learning and trauma-informed teacher trainings. It is important for systems to view the arts as a resource in reinforcing resilience in communities and providing a space for healing, growth and power.

3. Grapple with the implications of the County's vast geography in a deep and meaningful way.

When it comes to preventing violence in LA County, neither listening session participants nor subject matter experts could furnish "easy answers" to the challenges presented by the county's size, diversity, finite resources, and disparities in the distribution of violence. In all likelihood, LA County will need a "both/and" approach to preventing violence that focuses resources where challenges are greatest, and provides some supports where violence exists but isn't as persistent, prevalent, systemic, or severe. People raised this issue repeatedly and offered a number of useful insights, including the following:

Violence is everywhere in LA County

In every listening session, participants identified the existence of violence in their community and the need for meaningful prevention. In Santa Monica, one participant said, "there's this idea that 'it' doesn't happen here, it's very hush, hush." Another participant offered, "we just had a shooting at the park, a teen suicide in public, a shooting at Santa Monica College, and a parent that committed suicide in front of a middle school." In the other Service Planning Areas, people expressed the existence of violence and lack of safety, naming recent suicides, shooting, muggings, assaults, and the effects of witnessing recent acts of violence.

Violence is not evenly distributed across LA County

At the same time that violence prevention is needed to address violence in every Service Planning Area, it is also true that some neighborhoods and cities experience higher rates, and greater frequency and severity of various types of violence. Some informants struggled with balancing the need to address violence in every Service Planning Area and the recognition that some communities have been struggling with deep, consistent, and recurrent violence, while others have not. Some people spoke of violence becoming normalized and being desensitized to violence.

Violence impacts everyone, but African Americans, Latinos, LGBTQ, Immigrants, Undocumented Immigrants and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) are among the “priority populations” who would benefit from increasing resources, supports, and opportunities.

Across the listening sessions and through interviews with subject matter experts, it became clear that several key population groups currently benefit the least from the resources, opportunities, and conditions that people see as vital to preventing violence. In the Antelope Valley, one participant said that there “are very few and limited resources for LGBTQ population of all ages—youth, teens, young adults, and seniors.” Moving forward, it will be important for any comprehensive violence prevention initiative in LA County to grapple with inequities demonstrated by “place,” race and ethnicity, and other pertinent dimensions of “community.” People also noted that residents “are afraid because of their undocumented status, they are afraid to lose their visa, and this has led to declines in reports of crimes, increases in hate crimes—the rhetoric, nationally, is making things worse.”

Unincorporated LA County faces great challenges

As with many countywide concerns, people identified the unincorporated portions of LA County as dealing with some of the greatest deficits in terms of resources, opportunities, and access to healthy and healing neighborhood institutions and conditions. People, particularly in the South LA listening session, identified these areas as “non-profit deserts.” One person also mentioned that there is confusion about who to reach out to related to violence prevention and the lack of clarity among residents in navigating jurisdictional issues, as well as the stigma associated with accessing resources.

Consider a distributed model that recognizes universality and the need to focus; that acknowledges historical and present-day differences; and provides an overarching structure that allows people from all over the county to tap into the expertise and innovation that is happening throughout the county.

To overcome some of the challenges inherent in LA County’s vast geography, while also addressing the fragmentation and lack of coordination that impedes existing efforts, it will be important to develop a hybrid model that is both distributed and centralized. To begin with, a countywide violence prevention initiative could provide central “backbone” or anchoring support to more local-level infrastructure that will concurrently exist at the Service Planning Area-level. Service Planning Area-level leadership could serve a catalytic/organizing role to Service Planning Area-level actions while also feeding information (about what’s working, what’s challenging, needs, opportunities, etc.) to a centralized infrastructure. This is not to suggest that the Department of Public Health shoulders all of the work, but to suggest that the Department could play a significant leadership role in

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conceptualizing, stewarding, resourcing, supporting, and stimulating local efforts tied into a countywide organizing body. The forthcoming strategic planning process will engage with issues of structure and governance in a more detailed and deliberate way, and should do so in a way that takes into account the complexities and tensions delineated above.

4. Build towards a comprehensive, countywide violence prevention initiative

Today in LA County, there are numerous effective efforts to prevent violence, working in diverse geographies, with diverse populations, and in a variety of proven and innovative ways. People and agencies who don't even consider themselves to be part of violence prevention efforts, are in fact, integral to preventing violence in LA County. Still, incidents of violence are too frequent and the impacts are devastating to individuals, families, and neighborhoods. Violence causes suffering, sows despair, and costs our county in terms of money, lost productivity, and investment by value-producing local businesses and banking institutions. In addition to the recommendations provided above, here are some concrete ways that a comprehensive violence prevention initiative could fill some of the existing and persistent gaps identified by subject matter experts and listening session participants:

Take decisive action on the overabundance of guns

As previously noted, the Board of Supervisors on March 13, 2018, adopted a motion entitled "Addressing the Epidemic of Gun Violence in Our Communities," which provided specific direction to the CEO and County Counsel regarding both a legal and financial analysis of concrete policy actions that could be taken to restrict the availability of firearms in LA County, recognizing guns as the most lethal vector of violence. Listening session participants and subject matter experts spoke to the issue of guns. One subject matter expert explicitly named the need for bold and decisive action on gun control and one listening session participant also raised the importance of gun control. Others expressed their frustration at the availability of guns and some also noted that while guns get a lot of attention after a high-profile school shooting, some communities experience gun violence as an almost daily occurrence. One Sheriff's Department has a small, multi-disciplinary team that conducts home-based wellness visits to residents with known mental illness; at times, they remove guns from the homes, a program that could be scaled up. Severe restrictions on availability of firearms (to both civilians and law enforcement) would lead to a significant reduction in lethality of suicide and violence, benefitting residents throughout LA County.

Move from trauma-informed approaches to healing

We heard a lot about trauma from listening session participants throughout the county. People spoke about community-level trauma, trauma-informed approaches, vicarious trauma (experienced by providers and clinicians), trauma caused by interactions with institutions (including education, healthcare, and law enforcement), and intergenerational trauma. What began to emerge, however, from a number of residents was this notion of moving beyond "trauma-informed" approaches toward a "healing" mindset. People noted that to prevent violence, communities need healing spaces, healing institutions, and healing interactions with people in government institutions. People are looking for more resources and opportunities at the community-and

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institutional-levels that healing is a key objective of work and interactions. Further, people described that internal trauma can also manifest externally in different ways—hurting others, hurting oneself—and that a prevention approach to violence would help people—including people working to prevent violence—to engage in healing activities to stave off burnout and improve the quality of their efforts. One suggestion was to create healing circles in schools to help students and teachers communicate, connect, and create “safe spaces.”

Determine appropriate and acceptable roles for law enforcement in countywide violence prevention

When asked about the opportunities and challenges to preventing violence in LA County, one of the most frequently identified institutional actors was police/law enforcement. People mentioned some positives, like building on effective community policing, and one person mentioned that “the sheriff’s office has unity compared to the LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department] in Santa Clarita.” However, more often people identified the struggles and challenges they experience with police and law enforcement systems. People described “overzealous patrolling,” “bias leading to higher arrests in communities of color,” “police as perpetrator[s],” “feeling unsafe near the police station,” “not feeling comfortable calling the police [in northwest Pasadena],” “cops are not engaged,” and one subject matter expert lamented that “now we are asking the police to step in and do things that non-profits are better at, like mentoring and after-school programs.” This expert said this was problematic because it starved local non-profits, asked police to do things that do not fall within their expertise, and often led to more disproportionate contact in communities that have had strained relationships with police since at least the 1980s.

Build capacity of government and healthcare institutions to prevent violence

There were a number of issues raised by listening session participants regarding the quality of their interactions with government, healthcare, and social service institutions. Many of the issues raised were in the context of service provision, touching on issues like warm hand-offs and lack of needed services, but others focused their comments on the role that institutions like Department of Children and Family Services, schools/educational institutions, or child care play – or could play – in violence prevention. Some people mentioned the importance of inspiring these institutions to work on violence prevention. One person said, “the system has numbed itself to issues and instances of violence.” And another said, “school systems do not collaborate with others to get supports for their children on campus.” In all, there were numerous specific recommendations offered that could address institutional and administrative barriers, like streamlining applications for affordable housing. Moving forward, a countywide violence prevention initiative would do well to determine the most high-impact, actionable institutional/organizational changes needed to prevent violence and focus on building the knowledge, skills, and capacities of key organizations to engage effectively. One of the most consistent themes – regardless of institution – was around community mistrust of government institutions. People described being “over-tapped for information,” “piloting in communities, but never coming back,” as well as widespread “distrust in government due to broken promises and no change.” One area for a countywide violence prevention initiative to take on could be exploring and identifying principles and practices for building and maintaining trust for individuals and organizations working under the umbrella of violence prevention efforts—and ensuring adherence to this set of guidelines or practices.

Another area that was highlighted was the importance of accountability and follow-through. Some listening session participants described participating in meetings in the past and experiencing that “nothing came out of them,” and asked that a countywide violence prevention effort have accountability and quality staffing. The NHOPI community, for example, urged countywide violence prevention efforts to “hire people from the community, value lived experience on top of education, network with the community, pray with them, be engaged and informed, hire Polynesians and Samoans, collaborate with churches.” Similar sentiments (around local hire and valuing lived experience, in particular) were shared by other groups at other listening sessions as well.

An Office of Violence Prevention, in its role as coordinator, could work across county departments to create a platform or shared set of principles to gain commitments from various departments to make administrative changes or engage in practices known to prevent violence. The Department of Parks and Recreation, Regional Parks and Open Space District, Transportation Agency, arts, and libraries are just a few of the agencies who have a vested interest in violence prevention but may not have a strong sense of the roles that their organizations can play through staffing, programming, and in their role funding partners, building new community infrastructure, and fulfilling other key agency functions. The Office of Violence Prevention can build cross-departmental knowledge and capacity and advocate for a shared countywide set of principles.

Reframe the conversation around violence: Violence Is Preventable

One of the recurring themes from subject matter experts and listening session participants alike was about the need for a “new narrative” around violence prevention, as well as strategic communications support from the County. First, people were really asking for a “new narrative” from media that brings communities together, tells a more realistic story of “what communities actually look and feel like,” shares what’s working, and doesn’t “only show violence and no positive stories.” People also expressed some dismay that media focuses attention on high-visibility shootings but doesn’t provide accurate or sufficient messaging around what it takes to actually prevent violence. This was one area where people felt a countywide effort could be very helpful and strategic—providing language, framing, and messaging around effective violence prevention efforts: *What is violence prevention? Where is it happening? Who is doing this work?* There was a sense that this information could both inform public discourse by helping people to understand violence is preventable, but could also accelerate the spread and uptake of effective efforts across Service Planning Areas and neighborhoods. In addition to mass communications and broad framing and messaging, people did note that there were important nuances with social media, particularly with youth witnessing violence through social media, as well as the need for culturally tailored messages. One person spoke of helping to share messages that reinforce the strength and power of communities demonstrating the capacity to solve their own problems.

Identify and monitor meaningful metrics

If preventing violence is the goal, what data elements and metrics should be measured? Recognizing that many issues and partners that are critical to violence prevention happen “way upstream” from violence – such as ensuring access to good jobs, affordable housing, and quality education – what variables should a violence prevention initiative monitor? Listening session participants and subject matter experts shared a number of

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important issues related to measurement and monitoring. People wanted more information about “what works.” The listening session participants from the NHOPI listening session requested better data broken out from Asian Pacific Islander (API) groups to better characterize violence and violence prevention, and support community-based groups in applying for grants with accurate, local data. People repeatedly spoke to the importance of local data and some noted that “our data is outdated.” One person suggested that data should be a “living document” that communities can update on their own. At this stage, a countywide violence prevention effort may want to develop, through strategic planning, a small set of high value metrics as well as some short- (6-18 months), medium- (2-4 years), and long-term (5-15 year) measures that involve data that can be collected, a range of measures to capture diverse interests and priorities, and a set of measures that really speaks to progress on prevention. Avoid selecting metrics that tell more about service provision and intervention whether or not efforts address the root of the problem as identified by residents.

Support youth and resident leadership

Listening session participants and subject matter experts shared the importance of youth and resident leadership across a wide variety of potential topics and connected this to violence prevention. What is perhaps most important is the notion that youth and resident leadership are seen as essential ingredients in a countywide approach to violence prevention. Ideas to facilitate youth and resident leadership included local hire requirements and recognizing the value of lived experience, providing incentives for residents to be involved in community coalitions and build leadership skills in the process, “know your rights” trainings for youth and residents, and building parents’ skills to communicate with their children about violence prevention. One listening session participant from South LA said that “we need to be ‘code builders,’ which means we need to be able to teach the younger generation how to do things, morally, justly, to develop an internal code and code of ethics.” Several people spoke of the importance of community cleanups to make communities look clean and safe and some suggested the importance and value of paying people to participate in the cleanups to build social connections and provide resources. As a countywide violence prevention initiative gains further momentum, it will be important to recognize that youth and resident participation has a value - -particularly in the context of communities where underemployment and housing affordability have been identified as major impediments to resident wellbeing and community safety. It will be important to re-think some of the traditional expectations that institutions have had about resident and youth participation, and explore mechanisms for building educational and career pathways and educating and paying people along the way. A violence prevention educational and career pathway could align well with a health career pathway, which goes beyond *healthcare and values lived experience*, for example.

Plan for longevity, sustainability, and enduring commitment

No one that PI spoke to was under the illusion that preventing violence would be quick or easy, but many did describe the importance of the County being accountable and being engaged over the long-haul. Subject matter experts and listening session participants called on the Board of Supervisors, in particular, to use their visibility, resources, and policy-making powers to help spur countywide violence prevention efforts “beyond Band-Aid solutions,” “hire good people and pay them well,” and support violence prevention efforts in achieving real systems change, because as one person said — reflecting a recurring theme — “we’ve gained knowledge over

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the years of dealing with systems but getting lack of systems change.” Several subject matter experts warned against violence prevention being “the flavor of the month” and worried that enthusiasm would wane, and then the Department of Public Health would lack the support, champions, resources, and/or commitment it needed from the Board to mobilize resources, and be effective in wielding convening authority or “power to do anything meaningful.”

Summary of Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Build on what exists and strengthen what works
 - Clearly distinguish violence prevention from intervention and elevate effective approaches
 - Address inconsistencies in funding that impede consistent work to prevent violence
 - Support partnership and collaboration across multiple forms of violence prevention
2. Create a bigger tent in any efforts to prevent violence in LA County
 - Embrace affordable housing, displacement, overcrowding, and homelessness as violence prevention issues
 - Engage the issues of jobs, workforce, and economic development in violence prevention efforts
 - Include quality education and fair, just, and inclusive education systems
 - Encompass the built environment and a variety of neighborhood conditions as violence prevention issues and opportunities
 - Identify opportunities for youth to be involved in the OVP process
3. Grapple with the implications of the county’s vast geography in a deep and meaningful way
 - Violence is everywhere in LA county
 - Violence is not evenly distributed across LA county
 - Violence impacts everyone but populations are under benefitting from existing resources, supports, and opportunities.
 - Unincorporated LA County faces great challenges
 - Consider a distributed model that recognizes universality and the need to focus, that acknowledges historical and present-day differences, and provides an overarching structure that allows people from all over the county to tap into the expertise and innovation that is happening throughout the county.
4. Build toward a comprehensive, countywide violence prevention initiative
 - Take decisive action on the epidemic of guns
 - Move from trauma-informed approaches to healing
 - Determine appropriate and acceptable roles for law enforcement in violence prevention
 - Build capacity of government and healthcare institutions to prevent violence
 - Reframe the conversation around violence: Violence is preventable
 - Select and monitor meaningful metrics that correspond to the goals of the OVP
 - Support youth, lived experience and resident leadership
 - Plan for longevity, sustainability, and enduring commitment

Conclusion

Los Angeles County has a proud and robust history of innovative efforts to prevent violence. At one time in this county, “violence prevention is a public health issue” was a well-understood phrase by many outside of the discipline of public health and diverse partners worked together in inter-dependent ways to impact the trajectory of violence. That work attracted private philanthropy, cultivated academic and practical leadership, integrated the efforts of people working to prevent multiple forms of violence, and established an alternative narrative about violence in Los Angeles County. These effective efforts were catalyzed by effective participation of the health department and enjoyed the support of the Board during that era. People who were part of that work expressed a great sense of pride in their efforts, as well as a need to look back to draw lessons from the past and identify what is needed now, to move today’s LA County toward a renewed vision and commitment to preventing violence throughout the county. Through listening sessions and subject matter expert interviews, we see not only a deep frustration and sadness about the persistence of violence and the trauma it leaves in its wake, but also a lot of hope that preventing violence is doable. LA County has an enduring legacy of strong violence prevention, and also numerous components and foundational elements that can be draw upon— leaders who could do so much more with additional resources, active examples of inter-agency collaboration aimed at de-carceration and eliminating domestic violence, and young people and residents mobilized in their local communities. With the Board of Supervisor’s leadership, visibility, and support, the Department of Public Health and numerous partners can develop a robust and impactful violence prevention initiative that will save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the economic burdens associated with violence. *Violence is preventable.*

APPENDIX A

Subject Matter Expert Interviewee List:

ORGANIZATION
Peace Over Violence
Jemmott Rollins Group
The California Wellness Foundation
Community Coalition
City of Long Beach, Health and Human Services
Liberty Hill Foundation
Economic and Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles
Blue Shield of California Foundation
Social Justice Learning Institute
First 5 LA
People for Mobility Justice
Los Angeles County Native American Indian Commission (2)
Los Angeles County Arts Commission
Friends of the Family

APPENDIX B

Listening Session Agenda:

(Our sessions ranged from 1.5-2 hours depending on the nature of the group):

- Networking and Snacks (Provided by PI)
- Welcome and Introductions
- Icebreaker Activity
- Slideshow presentation
- World Cafe Style Activity for listening Session
- Report Back
- Closing Remarks/Adjourn

APPENDIX C

Board Motion Timeline Provided During Listening Sessions:

OVP Strategic Planning Process

Goal: Create a detailed, actionable strategic plan that prioritize the responsibilities of the Office, infrastructure needed (staffing, funding, delegated authority), and potential funding sources.

Timeframe	Component
Mar 2018	Board Motion Passed
Apr – Jun 2018	Initial scoping: key stakeholders, best practices, other jurisdictions, local data (DPH)
May – Oct 2018	Stakeholder interviews and listening tours (Prevention Institute)
Jun 2018	Proposed plan for initial infrastructure and strategic planning to Board
Jul – Dec 2018	Strategic Planning for initial roles/focus areas (Consultant TBD)
Dec 2018 / Mar 2019	Office strategic plan submitted to Board

APPENDIX D

Prevention Institute (Organizational Background):

PI is a national non-profit organization, founded in 1997. Prevention Institute's California offices are located in Leimert Park in Los Angeles, and Oakland, the site of its national headquarters. PI also has offices in Houston, Texas and Washington, D.C. Prevention Institute brings cutting-edge research, practice, and analysis to today's pressing health and safety concerns. Determined to achieve health and safety for all, to improve community environments equitably, and to serve as a focal point for primary prevention practice, Prevention Institute asks what can be done *in the first place*, before people get sick or injured. We build momentum for effective policies, organizational practices, and collaborative efforts by synthesizing research and practice; developing prevention tools and frameworks; designing and guiding interdisciplinary partnerships; and conducting training and strategic consultation with government, foundations, and community-based organizations. Our work recognizes that violence prevention, at a community level, has a powerful role to play in shaping the health and wellbeing of communities, and that effectively integrating community violence prevention through a multi-sector collaborative approach is critical to overall efforts to expand youth development, improve community connectedness, and reduce injury, violence and trauma. PI has worked with several networks and initiatives towards building support for effective, scalable, sustainable efforts to prevent violence before it occurs so that communities can thrive.

about our engagement efforts across Los Angeles County over the past six months where we have worked in partnership with community-based organizations to engage residents and service providers to identify and prioritize strategic actions based on the identified assets in their communities, challenges and opportunities with a long-term goal of building community leadership, understanding and capacity to address violence prevention in communities and recommend a sense of direction for the proposed OVP. PI provided planning support for, participated in and facilitated a range of community outreach and engagement activities across Los Angeles County. Below, we outline key recommendations that influence and shape opportunities to lead collaboration efforts within violence prevention efforts.

The broader public health field, along with other intersecting fields, increasingly recognize the strong evidence that community environments and underlying determinants of health play an important role in shaping health and safety outcomes for communities, which provides an important impetus for the potential OVP in Los Angeles County to address the fundamental conditions that drive violence, injury and trauma in our communities. This public health approach to violence prevention moves upstream to address the root-cause issues related to violence (which is an outcome) towards addressing the conditions that produce and perpetuate violence.

This report highlights findings from the listening sessions we have conducted to date across the 8 SPA's, which are unique to the public health department and correlate with the supervisory districts. Additionally, it provides a landscape analysis conducted through subject matter interviews with LA County community-based organizations, foundations, consulting firms, community leaders and other institutions.

APPENDIX E: Cities Preventing Violence, Select Examples

Below are examples of highlights from cities that have had significant impact and beneficial outcomes in their communities related to violence prevention:

Minneapolis Blueprint for Action ³

In **Minneapolis**, after a decade-long trend that put homicide as the leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24, the city expanded beyond its focus on criminal justice and law enforcement strategies to adopt a multidisciplinary, public health approach to preventing youth violence. This new direction included the Minneapolis City Council supporting the development of a comprehensive, coordinated strategic plan, *The Minneapolis Blueprint for Action to Prevent Youth Violence* that prioritized prevention and upstream strategies. This citywide prevention approach has shown promising results and demonstrated that multi-sector, prevention efforts can be sustained and successful. From 2017-2015, there was a 62% reduction in youth gunshot victims, a 34% reduction in youth victims of crime, and a 76% reduction in youth arrests with a gun. With sustained 40-60% reductions in juvenile crime and violence, the Minneapolis model has been recognized by the National League of Cities, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine and others as a proven comprehensive model for reducing violence affecting youth.

NOLA FOR LIFE: Comprehensive Murder Reduction Strategy ⁴

In **New Orleans**, with a heavy emphasis on helping young people and families succeed, the *NOLA for Life Playbook: A Strategic Plan to Prevent Youth Violence in New Orleans* identifies increasing economic opportunity, including youth employment, as a critical prevention strategy and protective factor against violence. Recognizing the need to address economic inequities, the city has given particular focus to improving the greater than 50% unemployment rate among African American men. Integrated citywide efforts have included: 1) engaging anchor institutions to prioritize hiring jobseekers impacted by economic inequities; 2) implementing a summer youth jobs program that has provided more than 5,900 youth ages 14-21 with summer employment opportunities since its inception in 2013; and 3) piloting employment efforts for people reentering the community from incarceration. In 2016, three years after the NOLA for Life Playbook, the city had the highest murder reduction rate in the country and reported an 8% reduction in the 6-month recidivism rate for formerly incarcerated individuals participating in the NOLA for Life reentry program. [\[iii\]](#)

APPENDIX F: Overview of Listening Sessions

The table below summarizes the listening sessions. **Bolded sessions represent sector specific listening sessions that were pre-identified by the co-host organization prior to the session.** A total of 333 attendees participated in 14 sessions.

SPA	City	Issue Area(s)	Co-host Organization	Date	# of Participants (based on sign in sheet)
1 - Antelope Valley	Lancaster	General Issues of Violence	Antelope Valley Partners for Health	6/11/2018	20
	Lancaster	Mental Health & Trauma/ Child Abuse and Neglect	Tarzana Treatment Centers	7/12/2018	18
2 - San Fernando Valley	Canoga Park	Community (Street) Violence	Tarzana Treatment Centers	7/26/2018	15
	Van Nuys	Domestic Violence Youth Violence Sexual Assault	Strength United	8/27/18	25
3 - San Gabriel Valley	Pasadena	Foster Youth Abuse and Child Abuse	Day One	6/19/2018	20
4 - Metro LA	Downtown LA	Immigration Homelessness Systemic Violence	Peace Over Violence	8/6/2018	20
5 - West LA	Santa Monica	Child Abuse and Neglect	Ocean Park Library	8/10/2018	5
6 - South LA	Greater Los Angeles	Youth Violence Bullying Teen Dating Systemic Issues of Violence	St. Johns Well Child and Family Center	7/31/2018	50
	Koreatown	Youth Violence Youth Involvement in OVP Process	Koreatown Youth and Community Center	11/29/2018	25
7 - East LA	South Gate	Trauma Survivors Gun Violence	Semillas Wellness Center	7/28/2018	10
	Huntington Park	Domestic Violence survivors / Prostitution/Suicide	Women's Club of Huntington Park	7/10/2018	35

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Submitted January 31, 2019

8 - South Bay	Long Beach	Systemic Violence	Safe Long Beach	5/8/2018	50
	Redondo Beach	General Issues of Violence	Blue Zones Project at Beach Cities Health District	7/10/2018	20
	Carson	Faith-based/ Root Cause Issues Related to Violence	Office of Samoan Affairs/ Faith Based	9/4/18	20

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