



THE SANTA ROSA VIOLENCE PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP

Funded by Measure H (2022)



2023-2028 Strategic Plan

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PLAN SUMMARY

From January through May 2023, the Santa Rosa Violence Prevention Partnership (The Partnership) undertook an extensive strategic planning process to revisit its mission, vision, values and strategies to identify areas for improvement and change for the period of 2023-2028. In order to help facilitate the process, The Partnership hired the Executive Director of the California Cities Violence Prevention Network as a Consultant. Throughout the planning process, a working group comprised of the City of Santa Rosa's Assistant City Manager, Chief of Police, Deputy Director of Recreation, former Partnership staff, and the Violence Prevention Program Manager met on a weekly basis to provide leadership and guidance on the process.

The strategic planning process included reviewing data collected from recent community engagement efforts including the 2021 Violence Prevention Partnership Community Needs Assessment, the Community Empowerment Plan Listening Sessions Report, and the 2022 Hearn Community Hub Community Engagement Phase. Staff and the Consultant also interviewed several former Violence Prevention Program Managers, members of the Policy and Operational Teams (see Structure section below for a description of both teams), and members of the California Cities Violence Prevention Network. Additionally, both staff and the Consultant conducted extensive research of evidence-informed practices and programming, as well as violence prevention models from other California communities. A series of planning workshops were also held with the Policy and Operational Teams, with a total of 6 workshops taking place beginning in February 2023.

This work culminated in a final community meeting on June 27, 2023 where The Partnership presented the draft strategic plan to attendees and received feedback on the proposed strategic focus areas. At this meeting, community members were provided with the opportunity to prioritize potential program areas for potential future funding. This process, coupled with an analysis of previous strategic plan efforts, informed the development of the new strategic plan for the next five years.



HISTORY

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Santa Rosa experienced an increasing amount of violent criminal street gang activity, leading the Santa Rosa Police Department to acknowledge in 2002 that the City could not “arrest our way out of a gang problem.” Although effective law enforcement efforts are critical, enforcement alone could not adequately address the root causes of youth and gang-related criminal activity. There was a growing acknowledgement that a comprehensive approach was necessary, so in July 2003, then Santa Rosa Mayor Sharon Wright established the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force with the unanimous support of the Santa Rosa City Council. Modeled after the City of San Jose’s Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force, the Task Force was established as a community-based collaborative effort designed to engage multiple stakeholders in reducing youth and gang violence.

In 2015, the Task Force was rebranded as the City of Santa Rosa’s Violence Prevention Partnership. Now simply referred to as “The Partnership,” the program is a model of shared responsibility to strengthen youth and families and create safe neighborhoods through mobilizing and engaging parents, schools, community-based organizations, faith community, businesses, government, and local law enforcement. The current collaborative involves over 50 organizations from across multiple sectors of the community. Coinciding with rebranding, The Partnership broadened its approach of achieving the mission of reduction youth and gang activity by adopting a public health perspective that views violence as a public health issue.



STRUCTURE

Housed within the Recreation and Parks Department and largely funded by the new Public Safety Sales Tax (formerly Measure O), The Partnership is led by a staff of six and administers a portion of the 20% allocation of the Public Safety Sales Tax funding for youth and gang violence prevention and intervention services. This includes the management of the Executive Advisory Board, the Policy and Operational Teams, the Multi-Disciplinary Assessment and Referral Team (MDART), the Community Helping Our Indispensable Children Excel (CHOICE) grant program, the annual violence prevention awareness seminar, and the monthly Violence Prevention Awareness Series (VPAS). The Partnership also administers the Guiding People Successfully (GPS) program and the Green Spaces for All Faces Program, made possible by funding from the Sonoma County Probation Department.

The organizational structure* of The Partnership includes governance, policy and operational level involvement, which is further described below:

- **Executive Advisory Board:** the Mayor or his/her designee as Chair, the Chief of Police, the Deputy Director of Recreation, and the Violence Prevention Program Manager
- **Steering Committee:** select members of the Policy Team, acts as an advisory committee to provide leadership and guidance towards the implementation of the strategic plan.
- **Policy Team:** a diverse set of stakeholders who all interface with the issue of youth and gang violence from different perspectives, while adding various resources to the discussion. Members represent various community sectors and provides leadership and direction by setting policies and monitoring the effectiveness of the effort.
- **Operational Team:** direct service staff members from the organizations represented on the Policy Team and from the community. This group maps out and implements violence prevention strategies as determined by the Policy Team, while collecting data and monitoring performance measures that align with The Partnership's annual and strategic goals.
- **MDART:** a multi-disciplinary team that provides a monthly opportunity for in-depth case discussion on youth referrals, to check statuses of program enrollment of referrals, to discuss updates on services needed and to collaborate to find support and services for youth and families outside of the CHOICE grant program.

*As a focus area of the strategic plan, this structure is under review to ensure The Partnership is maximizing the effectiveness of our partners to support the implementation of the strategic plan.

INVESTMENT

In 2004, more than two-thirds of voters in Santa Rosa approved Measure O, a quarter-cent Transaction and Use Tax for 20 years. In 2022, with the expiration of Measure O just two-years away, Santa Rosa voters approved Measure H, extending the quarter-cent Transaction and Use Tax for another 20 years. Now known as the Public Safety Sales Tax, the measure provides an estimated in \$7 million in revenue each year, providing critical funding for public safety services with a 40% allocation to Police, 40% allocation to Fire, and the remaining 20% allocated for Youth and Gang Violence Prevention and Intervention programs – services currently provided by the Recreation and Parks Department Neighborhood Services and the Violence Prevention Partnership. The Public Safety Sales Tax provides a reliable and dedicated funding source that reflects the community's commitment to safety and violence prevention, including the successful fulfillment of The Partnership's mission and vision.

The Public Safety Sales Tax Ordinance requires coordination of The Partnership's Policy and Operational Teams as well as the following:

- Enhancing and improving in-school gang prevention and intervention curriculum and programs;
- Providing mental health counseling, wraparound services and programs for at-risk youth and their families in neighborhoods affected by high levels of gang activity which emphasize positive role models, problem solving, and community safety;
- Providing additional after-school and summer programs that stress academic and social success, recreational activities, sports, athletic programs and safe neighborhoods without fear of gangs, drugs, or violence; and
- Providing grants to organizations for youth and parenting programs that focus on gang and anti-violence education, prevention, and intervention, community safety and a comprehensive array of services in high need neighborhoods.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Partnership has also met many milestones since its formation in 2003. Below are some highlights from The Partnership's accomplishments:

- Over \$9 million invested in local community-based organizations and schools, serving nearly 50,000 youth and parents since the inception of the CHOICE Grant Program in 2006.
- Since its inception in January 2015, 556 youth have been referred to the Guiding People Successfully (GPS) Program. The GPS Program provides a coordinated approach to identifying youth who are in need of supportive services and connecting them to a network of services designed to identify alternatives to violence and redirect behavior. This includes approximately 180 referrals for fiscal year 2022-2023.
- In 2021, The Partnership created a life skills curriculum for youth ages 13-15, which offers participating students classes in anger management, conflict resolution, and exposure to various violence prevention strategies and activities. In 2022, the curriculum was piloted at Santa Rosa Middle School with six youth. In 2023, the curriculum was provided to seven youth at Roseland Accelerated Middle School. The Partnership continues to explore ways to expand intervention services at middle and high schools in Santa Rosa.
- In 2022, The Partnership implemented the Green Spaces for All Faces Program, a companion program to Guiding People Successfully. The goal of Green Spaces for All Faces is to engage youth on probation in outdoor, pro-social experiences. In its first year, The Partnership hosted six outings in collaboration with the Sonoma County Probation Department and other community partners, reaching a total of 51 probationary youth.
- The Partnership has been a member of the California Cities Violence Prevention Network (CCVPN) of 14 cities throughout California since its inception in 2007. This membership provides shared learning and growth opportunities for members in the evolving field of violence prevention. In 2015, The Partnership strengthened its presence with the Network by incorporating its Executive Director as a member of the Policy Team.



CURRENT COMMUNITY CLIMATE

Our community has seen an uptick in violence among youth and young adults both in and outside of schools over the last six years. Community partners have shared that they are witnessing a level of unprecedented behavioral issues among youth of all ages from preschool through high school. There have been an increased number of fights at schools and in the community among middle and high school aged students. Staff at the City's Transit Mall have reported that fights among teenagers are becoming increasingly common after school. Additionally, there have been an increased number of students who have been found with weapons at school, leading to arrests and suspensions.

These behavioral issues can be attributed to compounded trauma experienced by all community members in our region. When California's stay-at-home order went into effect in March 2020, Santa Rosa residents were still recovering from the devastating effects of the Tubbs Fire in 2017 and the Kincade Fire in 2019. Community partners had already begun reporting increased needs in 2018 and 2019 and the onset of the pandemic and its effects on employment, schools, childcare, and housing, in addition to isolation and suspension of services, revealed more needs in our community than ever before. At the same time, COVID-19 restrictions limited the scope of some services and even made some services impossible. The 2020 fires and the social unrest prompted by the murder of George Floyd added additional trauma to our community.

The first six months of 2023 have seen six homicides in Santa Rosa, over half involving youth. In January, two 17-year-old brothers were involved in an altercation that resulted in the death of a young adult. On March 1, 2023, a 16-year-old student was killed at Montgomery High School by another student, age 15 years. In the month of June, two 15-year-old youth were killed in gang-involved shootings within eight days of each other. Several young people were arrested in connection to those shootings including two 14-year-olds, a 15-year-old, a 16-year-old, and a 17-year-old. Gang violence continues to be a concern in the community with an increase of visible activity in various neighborhoods throughout Santa Rosa.

While the current community climate seems troubling, it is important to note that The Partnership includes a team of passionate and committed community partners who are dedicated to reversing this violent trend and providing the services and support our youth need. We also have some of the most amazing and resilient youth who came forward after the March 1 incident at Montgomery and told us what they need from us and how we can do better.

Public Health and Trauma Informed Care Approach

The Santa Rosa Violence Prevention Partnership operates under both a public health and trauma informed framework. A public health approach to violence prevention addresses the unique conditions at the root of long-term neighborhood violence. The Partnership requires strategic and collaborative approaches to address the social determinants of health strengthen youth and families and build safe communities.



Meanwhile, a trauma informed approach recognizes that in communities where residents experience complex trauma – which is defined as the exposure to multiple violent or traumatic events – additional negative consequences to society are generated. These consequences can include impaired ability to develop and sustain relationships, increased prevalence of substance abuse and chronic illness, increased likelihood of engagement in unlawful behavior, and difficulty maintaining employment. Research demonstrates that childhood adversity puts children at risk for negative impacts on the brain and body that last throughout an individual's life. Left untreated, this can lead to severe health impacts or a higher likelihood of engaging in or becoming suffering from violence.

Furthermore, over the last two years, The Partnership has incorporated and expanded our understanding of Race-Based Traumatic Stress, which “speaks to the unique psychological and emotional distress that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) suffer as a result of racism and discrimination on a macro, meso and micro level.” (Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies) This race-based traumatic stress is especially impactful on BIPOC communities as research shows that BIPOC communities disproportionately low access to and utilization rates of mental health services. This impact is compounded by a deficit of bilingual and bicultural mental health practitioners.

What Is the Public Health Approach?

The public health approach to solving problems consists of four basic elements:

- **Define and monitor the problem:** The first step in preventing violence is to understand the "who," "what," "when," "where" and "how" associated with it. This involves analyzing data from police reports, medical examiner files, vital records, hospital charts, registries, population-based surveys and other sources.
- **Identify risk and protective factors:** Understanding what factors protect people or put them at risk for experiencing or perpetrating violence is also important. Risk and protective factors help identify where prevention efforts should be focused.
- **Develop and test prevention strategies:** Research data and findings from needs assessments, community surveys, stakeholder interviews and focus groups are useful for designing prevention programs. Once programs are implemented, they are evaluated rigorously to determine their effectiveness.
- **Ensure widespread adoption:** Once prevention programs have been proven effective, they must be implemented and adopted more broadly. Dissemination techniques to promote widespread adoption include training, networking, technical assistance and evaluation.

MISSION, VISION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

During the course of the strategic planning process, The Partnership has updated its mission, vision and strategic focus areas, and developed a set of guiding principles. While violence can happen to any person of any age in our community, the available data shows that youth between the ages of 12 and 24 are disproportionately likely to engage in and become victims of acts of violence. As such, The Partnership will focus the bulk of its work on this age group for the next five years.

Moreover, while violence is such a broad issue, with many different types of violence impacting people of all ages and diverse backgrounds, The Partnership has limited funding and resources to address violence in our community. Using data available to us and what we know about the current climate around violence in the community, we have chosen to focus on reducing gang violence and addressing its root causes. This does not mean we won't address other forms of community violence in the future. We currently partner with many local organizations providing various services that address many types of violence and will continue to maintain these partnerships and build new ones to address the needs of our community. We will also regularly assess our work and community needs to determine if adjustments to our strategic focus areas and target populations are needed.

Mission

We lead, mobilize, and align resources in our communities to create a safe and healthy environment where all youth are empowered to reach their full potential and all community members thrive.

Vision

Santa Rosa emerges as a strong, resilient and interconnected community where all residents are safe, healthy and thrive.

Guiding Principles

- Build Safe Communities – *We commit to building safe communities for all community members. We advocate for place-based programming, enhanced student engagement and collaboration with school districts, parents, and community-based organizations to ensure access to age-appropriate pro-social activities by expanding afterschool, evening, weekend, and summer programs.*
- Commitment to Equity – *We strive for equity for all residents of our community. We are committed to achieving racial and social equity by contributing to a more just society where all community members, including our youth, can realize their full potential.*
- Community Response – *We commit to providing parents, educators, public safety professionals, care providers, and public health professionals with the capacity to engage all our youth in overcoming challenges and reaching their potential through a coordinated community response.*
- Shared Responsibility – *We will align our efforts with other local, county, state, and national initiatives aimed at building safe and healthy communities for youth and families. We do this by*



utilizing a culture of evidence-based practices, trauma-informed approaches, excellence, data sharing, and shared accountability to guide our work.

- *Trusting Relationships – We value trust-based relationships that reflect productivity, accountability, and mutual respect. We will continuously evaluate and assess relationships with internal and external partners and stakeholders, focusing on shared accountability, efficient alignment, leveraged resources, data sharing, and shared measurement.*
- *Value Our Youth – We are committed to ensuring youth have safe and healthy communities, attend safe schools, and are valued as contributing community members. We value the voice of our youth and recognize their contributions to the community today and in the future.*



INDICATORS OF SUCCESS AND STRATEGIES

Our strategic focus areas for the next five years center around Intervention; Prevention; Communications, Outreach, and Education; Investment; and Collaboration.

We are committed to strong partnerships and providing opportunities for all community members to play a role in reducing violence and building a safe and healthy community for everyone. We will provide real-time updates on our progress to improve our ability to respond to our diverse communities. At the end of each plan year, we will make public a comprehensive annual report.

Indicators of Success

- Decrease youth violence
- Decrease youth arrests and recidivism
- Decrease gun violence
- Reduce school violence
- Reduce youth justice involvement
- Improve school attendance
- Improve graduation rates
- Improve academic performance



Strategic Focus Area #1: Intervention

We stop violence and provide youth with positive alternatives, opportunities, and environments. Individual services plus neighborhood initiatives are key strategies.

Intervention services are vital to our comprehensive violence prevention strategy and are credited with reducing recidivism and saving lives. Properly designed, these services can help divert youth from arrest and the criminal justice system. Intervention services must also focus on those coming home from incarceration. A key partner in our intervention efforts is the Santa Rosa Police Department which continues to expand its community policing efforts and offer real-time referrals to youth and families. Like prevention efforts, intervention services must take a place-based and trauma-informed approach to be successful.

1. Street Outreach

- 1.1. Develop and implement a comprehensive street outreach strategy, including a Safe School Campus Intervention Program, a Crisis Response Team, and a Hospital Based Intervention Program
- 1.2. Provide services and support systems to connect or re-connect youth to their schools, teachers, friends, families, and communities

2. Mental Health and Substance Use Support

- 2.1. Advocate for and support increased mental health and substance use services for youth and families

3. Workforce Development

- 3.1. Increase opportunities for job training and job placement for youth and young adults
- 3.2. Support local and regional economic development opportunities to address financial uncertainty for youth and adults

4. Diversion, Enforcement, and Reentry

- 4.1. Divert young people ages 12-24 from incarceration and reduce recidivism



Strategic Focus Area #2: Prevention

Through a collaborative community relationship, we will improve youth and community safety by raising awareness, educating, and engaging youth with positive recreational, social, and mental health services to increase protective factors at the individual, family, peer, and community levels. Coordinated community policy and systems changes can yield substantial benefits.

Prevention remains the foundation of our community-wide strategy and is the one area where every community member can participate. While this plan focuses primarily on formal programs and services, by understanding the risk and protective factors of a public health approach to violence prevention, we can all do our part to help stop violence before it starts.

A public health approach to violence is similar to other comprehensive prevention efforts to reduce injuries and fatalities, including using bicycle helmets and safety belts and stopping fatal diseases.

1. Pro-Social Opportunities and Safe Spaces

- 1.1. Expand, increase, and diversify pro-social and recreational opportunities for youth ages 13-17 and young adults that are free/low cost
- 1.2. Assess, create and provide greater access to physical safe places for youth in existing and/or new facilities

2. Youth Engagement

- 2.1. Support the expansion of youth-led community safety initiatives
- 2.2. Include diverse youth input in program development
- 2.3. Improve outreach to youth about program offerings
- 2.4. Foster restorative and positive relationships between communities and law enforcement to open dialogue and collaboration to create safer neighborhoods

3. Offer Preventative Services

- 3.1. Support youth and families with mental health awareness, education, and access
- 3.2. Advocate for the implementation of evidence-based programming, trauma and data-informed approaches, and a commitment to equity
- 3.3. Engage all stakeholders serving youth and families to design and offer prevention and intervention services, activities, and events that support the reduction of crime
- 3.4. Promote the well-being of all community members and support their ability to meet basic needs, reduce blight, eliminate poverty, and overcome distress through place-based initiatives



4. School Readiness and Student Engagement

- 4.1. Promote and support quality programming for early childhood education to increase readiness and success in school
- 4.2. Support TK-12 grade school-based/after-school programs and services

5. Gun Violence Prevention

- 5.1. Support and advocate for gun violence prevention efforts

Strategic Focus Area #3: Communication, Outreach, and Education

Santa Rosa residents understand their role in our violence prevention efforts and actively engage in activities that promote and support our strategic goals.

Violence prevention is not the sole responsibility of one government agency, organization, or other entity. Youth and gang violence is a community-wide issue that requires a community-wide response. Over the past 20 years, we built a strong culture of relationship building and interagency collaboration to reduce violence in Santa Rosa. This collaboration is grounded on a foundation of shared responsibility and shared accountability. Partner organizations have broken out of their silos and taken ownership of the issue. As we move into this new strategic plan, we will continue strengthening these trusting relations while increasing the opportunity for residents to participate, including youth. By expanding our outreach and education efforts, more residents will learn how they can help and, more importantly, how they can access services for their children and families.

1. Communications and Outreach Plan

- 1.1. Build community awareness of The Partnership through outreach, training, and engagement using a targeted and actionable communications and outreach plan
- 1.2. Leverage existing neighborhood networks to expand the reach of The Partnership

2. Education and Training Opportunities

- 2.1. Maintain and expand an annual community safety seminar or conference
- 2.2. Identify and implement training for our partners to help improve their capacity to provide services

Strategic Focus Area #4: Investment

The Violence Prevention Partnership maintains a balanced and diverse investment portfolio to sustain ongoing strategic goals.

Santa Rosa is fortunate to have a community that understands the issue of youth and gang violence and how we cannot rely solely on enforcement efforts to address it. Twice now, Santa Rosa voters passed a special ¼ cent sales tax to help build a safe and healthy community for everyone. They understand this is an investment in our youth, families, and futures. Our investment portfolio includes general funds and grant awards from federal, state, and institutional funding sources. Likewise, we invest a portion of the special tax in community-based organizations and programs to support our efforts. These investments help organizations provide and expand services and can use these tax dollars as matching funds when applying for state and federal violence prevention and youth safety grants.

When considering the overall cost of violence to a community, dedicated funding for these critical services is a sound investment.



1. Pursue Funding

- 1.1. Pursue and maintain federal, state, and institutional funding opportunities for VPP programs and services

2. Community Outcomes

- 2.1. Identify and compile community outcome indicators to be shared and analyzed for key data that support and fund strategic decisions and placement of resources.

3. Fiscal Responsibility

- 3.1. Continue to be a responsible steward of public funds by evaluating and monitoring programs funded through the Public Safety Sales Tax and federal, state, and other grants

Strategic Focus Area #5: Collaboration

The Violence Prevention Partnership sustains an effective organizational structure that supports the implementation of the violence prevention strategic goals.

The partnership's strong and ongoing relationship-building and interagency collaboration have helped sustain our efforts and identify partner agency policy changes to support our shared goals. The transition to the new strategic plan provides an opportunity to assess and strengthen The Partnership's structure to ensure ongoing success and inclusion of other Sonoma County communities.

Strategies

1. Sustainable Organizational Structure

- 1.1. Develop an annual work plan that aligns with The Partnership's mission, vision, and 2023-2028 Strategic Plan and align the work plan with Policy Team meeting agendas
- 1.2. Provide direction to the Operational Team, support and monitor their work, and respond to trends and challenges elevated by the Operational Team
- 1.3. Obtain appropriate staffing level support The Partnership programming, services, and evaluation successfully
- 1.4. Hire and retain culturally competent staff with a preference for those who are bilingual, bicultural, and/or those with lived experience
- 1.5. Increase the number of community voices and those with lived experience on the Policy Team.
- 1.6. Broaden stakeholder engagement by creating an advisory council comprised of youth and those with lived experience

2. Regional Collaboration

- 2.1. Mobilize and align the efforts of The Partnership with other local and county initiatives
- 2.2. Build relationships with the County of Sonoma and local cities and invite them to the Policy Team

3. Shared Measurement

- 3.1. Build The Partnership's capacity to gather, share and analyze relevant data to direct VPP resources



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our partners on the Policy and Operational Teams for their contributions towards the development of the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. Their commitment allowed for a thoughtful, comprehensive, and strategic process to ensure our youth, families, and community are receiving the support they need for success.

We would also like to thank all of the community members, including youth and parents, who provided input on the strategic plan as well as program ideas for violence prevention. We value your input and will continue to partner with the community as we move forward in implementing this plan.

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