

This report is respectfully submitted to Mayor Linda M. Balzotti by the Street Violence Task Force Committee. The members of the committee are as follows:

Jennifer Barker-Frey, Director of Community Connections, Old Colony YMCA

Koren Capiello, Director of Community & Social Services, Mayor's Office

Sharon Conant, Case Worker, Boys and Girls Club

Anita Monteiro, Executive Director, Cape Verdean Association

Gwen Nauls, Community Member

Heather Shruhan, Program Director, Old Colony YMCA

Joel West, Chief Probation Officer, Plymouth County Juvenile Court

John Williams, Community Member

Other individuals who have observed and/or attended our meetings:

Shaynah Barnes, District Representative to Congressman Lynch

Robert Connolly, Southfield Gardens Community Center

Rev. Filipe Teixeira, St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church of the Americas

Special thanks to the Brockton Police Department, especially: Chief William Conlon and Captain Manuel Gomes for helping retrieve data and Detective George Almeida for speaking to the group.

The Street Violence Task Force was given the responsibility of presenting the Mayor with obstacles, supported by research, that are hindering the decrease of street violence in our community. Each obstacle will be presented below with research and/or data supporting why it is an obstacle. In addition, strategies to address these obstacles will be listed with best practices and/or data supporting the strategies when necessary. Please note that many of these strategies will address multiple obstacles.

Obstacle Number 1: Brockton as a community displays a “culture of violence”

We believe that the City of Brockton displays a culture of violence. Individuals equate Brockton to violence. The good that the city and its residents do is barely publicized, but all the shootings and violence are. According to a survey done with Brockton parents in March of 2010, 79% of the participants believe that our community has a “culture of violence”. The task force has also made a folder that exemplifies the negative press and articles about Brockton for the last 2 years. This folder will be available to review at the Mayor’s Office.

Recommendations for decreasing Brockton’s “culture of violence”:

1. *Nonviolence Campaign* – We need to inundate the City with a new theme of nonviolence and zero tolerance by implementing the following:

Have youth create an innovative nonviolence slogan by holding a competition. The slogan that wins will be spread across the city through every means possible; faith-based community, The Enterprise, different radio stations, signage throughout the city, window clings and stickers displaying the slogan on every business, bar, restaurant, bank, faith-based institution, school, city building, etc. This will show that everyone is partnering together to end the violence. There will be displays of our slogan on Brockton Cable Access (BCA), Billboards throughout the city, bumper stickers on personal, city, fire and police vehicles, as well as signage at the BAT bus terminal and on the buses.

2. A Community Candlelight Vigil should take place, but occur in a slightly different way than usual vigils. A date and time should be planned and people should light candles outside wherever they are, whether it be at their house, a coffee shop, bar, etc. If people are driving we ask that they honk their horns at the exact same time as people are lighting their candles. This would be a good Vigil to have on the first day of summer showing that every neighborhood and house is involved.

Obstacle Number 2: There are too many illegal weapons on the streets

According to the Weed & Seed Data Analysis Firearm Incident Annual Summary created by Kelly Research Associates (KRA):

2005

- 273 violent incidents involved a firearm in the year 2005, an approximate 8% increase over the 2004 total of 254.
- The 273 incidents involved 371 different offenders, 201 (54%) of the offenders were known to the victims and 170 (46%) were unknown.
- Of the 201 known offenders, there were thirteen repeat offenders within the one year time period: 13 were responsible for two incidents each.
- These thirteen repeat offenders were involved in 10% (26 incidents) of the firearms related incidents during this time period.
- 67% of the incidents (182 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 66% of the offenders (130 offenders) were from ages 17 to 24.

2006

- 307 violent incidents involved a firearm in the year 2006, an approximate 13% increase over the 2005 total of 273.
- The 307 incidents involved 485 different offenders, 213 (44%) of the offenders were known to the victims and 272 (56%) were unknown.
- Of the 213 known offenders, there were 24 repeat offenders within the one year time period: 22 were responsible for two incidents each, 2 were responsible for three incidents each.
- These 24 repeat offenders were involved in 16% (50 incidents) of the firearms related incidents during this time period.
- 64 % of these incidents (195 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 72% of these offenders (150 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

2007

- 259 violent incidents involved a firearm in the year 2007, an approximate 16% decrease over the 2006 total of 307.
- The 259 incidents involved 364 different offenders, 147 (40%) of the offenders were known to the victims and 217 (60%) were unknown.
- Of the 147 know offenders, there were 2 repeat offenders within the one year time period: these two offenders were responsible for two incidents each.
- 60% of these incidents (157 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 64% of these offenders (93 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

2008

- 235 violent incidents involved a firearm in the year 2008, a 9% decrease over the 2007 total of 259.
- The 235 incidents involved 330 different offenders, 133 (40%) of the offenders were known to the victims and 197 (60%) were unknown.
- Of the 133 known offenders, there were 3 (1%) repeat firearms offenders within the one year time period.
- These 3 repeat offenders were involved in 3% (6 incidents) of the firearms related incidents during this time period.
- 68% of these incidents (160 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 64% of these offenders (84 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

2009

- 278 violent incidents involved a firearm in the year 2009, an 18% decrease over the 2008 total of 235.
- The 278 incidents involved 390 different offenders, 150 (38%) of the offenders were known to the victims and 240 (62%) were unknown.
- Of the 150 known offenders, there were 12 (8%) repeat firearms offenders within the one year time period: 11 were involved in two incidents each, 1 was involved in three incidents.
- These 12 repeat offenders were involved in 9% (25 incidents) of the firearms related incidents during this time period.
- 68% of these incidents (188 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 65% of these offenders (97 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

As reported by the ATF task force (ATF Group for Boston and Brockton Police Department Impact Unit), from 2008-2009, 22 cases involving firearms in the City of Brockton have been moved from State prosecution to Federal prosecution.

As stated in the Weapon-Related Injuries to Massachusetts Residents (WRIMR), 1994-2007, findings from the Weapon Related Injury Surveillance System (WRISS) from the Injury Surveillance Program, Bureau of Health Information, Statistics, Research and Evaluation, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, August 2009: from 2005-2007 there were 146 Assault-related Sharp Instrument Wound Cases in the City of Brockton, with an average annual rate of 51.4; from 2005-2007 there were 114 Assault-related Gunshot Wound Reports in the City of Brockton, with an average annual rate of 35.6; and of the 12 cities and towns with a higher rate of assault-related gunshot wound cases than the statewide annual average of 9.0 per 100,000, Brockton was the highest with 40.3 per 100,000.

Pursuant to the WRISS Data for 2005-2007, the **rate of assault-related weapon injuries to Brockton residents (86.3 per 100,000) was 2.9 times higher than the statewide rate.** The rate of assault-related sharp instrument wounds to Brockton residents decreased by an average of 11.9% per year from 1994 through 2001 and then **increased by an average of 1.0% per year through 2007.** In 2005-2007, Brockton had **1.6% of the state's population, but 6.6% of assault-related gunshot wounds and 4.5% of sharp instrument wounds were to Brockton residents.**

Recommendations to decrease illegal weapons on the streets:

1. The number one recommendation that we are making is to change the way Brockton Police officers respond to calls. We have spoken to numerous police officers who say that this is truly a problem. If someone calls to report a minor crime like a bike was stolen, something was vandalized, etc. the current protocol is that the officers respond to the scene rather than have the person come into the station. This is a waste of time for the officers especially when they should be somewhere else or have a presence somewhere else to decrease crime. Due to the fact that Brockton **only has 180 officers and we**

should have 260 based on our population it is imperative to decrease minor issues that officers report to and ensure that they are on the street taking care of larger issues of public safety.

2. Rename the “Impact Unit” to the “Gang Unit”. The Impact Unit currently works from 7 p.m. to three 3 a.m. and consists of three Detectives that mainly work on gang-related issues. We feel that it is important for the Unit to have the word “Gang” in it so people finally can realize that we have a problem and we are dealing with it. We need to stop hiding and pretending that “gang” problems do not exist. This will also give the Unit more credit on the street and show violent offenders that we are serious about a zero-tolerance policy.
3. School Police need to become more involved, especially in the summer time with the community. We understand that their role is at the school’s, however if they see youth acting up while going from one site to another, we recommend that they become involved. We also feel that School Police should have a more active role in “Brockton After Dark”. They can be instrumental in helping Brockton Police especially because we are understaffed.
4. Although we realize funding is an issue, we recommend more money for overtime hours, most especially in instances where the State, F.B.I., Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are in need of working with local Brockton officers and Detectives to solve cases.
5. ShotSpotter Gunshot Location System provides comprehensive incident awareness and can identify exactly where an incident occurred and what transpired. This state of the art technology is currently in an area of Brockton, but the more coverage the better!
6. Create a Safe Haven for guns and give rewards during the holiday season. This is slightly different than a gun back as it would not be run by the police department, but different faith-based and other agencies would be the safe haven.

Obstacle Number 3: Lack of recognition of a Public Health issue; drugs, alcohol, injury, death, addiction, the spread of violence and gang activity from one person to another

According to the Weed & Seed Data Analysis Narcotics Incident Annual Summary:

2005

- There were 441 incidents involving drug crimes in the year 2005.
- The 441 incidents involved 560 different offenders, 557 (99%) were known offenders and 3 (1%) were unknown.

- Of the 577 known offenders, there were 31 repeat offenders within the one year time period: 27 were responsible for two incidents each, 4 were responsible for three incidents each.
- These 31 repeat offenders were involved in 15% (66) of the drug incidents, which occurred during this time period.
- 70% of these incidents (311 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 53% of offenders (295 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

2006

- There were 478 incidents involving drug crimes in the year 2006. This is approximately an 8% increase over the 2005 annual incident total of 441.
- The 478 incidents involved 683 different offenders, 677 (99%) were known offenders and 6 (1%) were unknown.
- Of the 677 known offenders, there were 58 repeat offenders within the one year time period: 50 were involved in two incidents each, 7 were involved in three incidents each, and 1 was involved in five incidents.
- These 58 repeat offenders were involved in 26% (126) of the drug incidents, which occurred during this time period.
- 66% of these incidents (318 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 56% of these offenders (387 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

2007

- There were 446 incidents involving drug crimes in the year 2007. This is approximately a 7% decrease over the 2006 annual incident total of 478 and is only a slight (1%) increase over the 2005 annual incident total of 441.
- The 446 incidents involved 559 different offenders, 558 (100%) were known offenders and 1 was unknown.
- Of the 559 known offenders, there were 34 repeat offenders within the one year time period: 32 were involved in two incidents each, 1 was involved in three incidents, and 1 was involved in four incidents.
- These 34 repeat offenders were involved in 16% (71) of the drug incidents, which occurred during this time period.
- 71% of these incidents (318 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 50% of these offenders (280 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

2008

- There were 395 incidents involving narcotics related crimes in the year 2008. This is an 11% decrease over the 2007 annual incident total of 446.
- The 395 incidents involved 473 different offenders, all were known.
- Of the 473 known offenders, there were 30 repeat offenders within the one year time period: 26 were involved in two incidents each, 4 were involved in three incidents.
- These 30 repeat offenders were involved in 16% (64) of the drug incidents, which occurred during this time period.
- 75% of these incidents (296 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 54% of these offenders (253 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

2009

- There were 230 incidents involving narcotics related crimes in the year 2009. This is a 42% decrease over the 2008 annual incident total of 395.
- It should be noted that the significant decrease in narcotics related incidents is due to a change in Massachusetts' laws regarding marijuana possession and not a change in law enforcement strategies.
- The 230 incidents involved 283 different offenders, all were known.
- Of the 283 known offenders, there were 10 repeat offenders within the one year time period: 10 were involved in two incidents each.
- These 10 repeat offenders were involved in 9% (20) of the drug incidents, which occurred during this time period.
- 75% of these incidents (173 incidents) occurred between 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
- 45% of these offenders (127 offenders) were from ages 17-24.

Recommendations to increase awareness of the Public Health Issue:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health recognizes violence as a public health issue and some have referred to it as an infectious disease. There is even a study by Bingenheimer et al. that shows that people who witness gun violence are 2 to 3 times more likely to use a gun themselves, no matter what age they are.

1. More collaboration with hospitals, Meadowbrook Campus, Department of Mental Health (DMH), doctors, clinics and psychologists, we need to bring everyone to the table.
2. Peer conflict resolution in schools will not only help the current issue at hand, but will open up the deeper wounds and give help to youth that need it.
3. Have a weapon's wand on hand at the schools and youth serving agencies so that if someone is suspected of having a weapon they can wand them
4. Form a group that addresses violence in the city potentially in collaboration with the Shannon Collaboration. Possibly, a representative assigned to work with city council and report on initiatives and act as a liaison to report on activities. In addition, this group could work to get messages out to families in the city.
4. Hold a city wide community education program for youth and families formalized on gang violence prevention/education.
5. Cross train civilians for gang education specific programs and establish a committee to look at a format for all agencies to work on. Develop a staple curriculum supplement and involve officers in this process.
6. Offer educational programs on drugs and violence bi-monthly in Brockton in places where people feel comfortable going; all inclusive environments rather than pockets of the city.

7. Hold a Public Hearing addressing violence at a School Committee meeting – this was done for substance abuse, it's important to do it for violence as well

Obstacle Number 4: There is a disconnect between different services in the community and the community in unaware of all the city has to offer

Brockton is a very diverse community and often language barriers can affect the services that are provided to the public. We need to stop assuming that everyone understands English and provide appropriate translations for the diverse people of Brockton. Flyers and services need to always be advertised in other languages and translators should be on hand at different events and for all services in the community. Very often there are multiple events held on the same night, which clearly shows that agencies aren't communicating, which makes it difficult for the public to utilize services; in addition no one knows all the services that the community has to provide.

Recommendations to increase/collaborate services better in the community:

To reduce the disconnect between services that are available to the community we need to encourage active participation by senior staff in Community Services of Greater Brockton and The Community Health Network Area 23 with the goal of moving beyond simple outreach and announcing services to actual **service coordination in the community**. In addition, resist meeting with each group separately on service coordination issues.

1. Have an Executive Director's summit at which this is addressed. Make cooperation in service coordination a component of receiving any city funding or city support for funding on youth services and family services. Have each agency list their current violence prevention programs and assigned lead staff person.
2. Move beyond token representation to get representatives of the various ethnic groups at the table with decision making authority.
3. Bring staff from the school system to the same table to enlist their buy-in in the development of resolutions.
4. Include church officials so that they can assist in spreading the word to their congregations and recruit folks who are interested in being a part of developing peaceful resolutions.
5. Create a calendar on the City Website so that everyone in the community knows what is going on and people do not schedule meetings and activities for the same day and time. Agencies will be able to submit their events themselves.

6. Invite service providers to a forum, prior to the forum have service providers include on their registration forms their services and the population served including the age groups. Providers can then be pre - assigned to groups based on similarity of services and or services that can be tied to the each other. At the opening of the forum state the intended purpose of the forum with emphasis on collaboration and pooling of resources. One of the group assignments would be that providers identify projects and strategies that they can collaborate on to achieve the common goal. Make sure more time is spent discussing service collaboration than on introductions or service description. Have a set date to evaluate the progress of the stated collaboration (1 month – 6 weeks for follow up) and assign specific responsibility for follow-up.
7. Make sure all agencies get together to work on information being distributed in other languages, whether it be volunteers or staff that help with the translation.

Obstacle number 5: There is limited outreach work being done in the community.

There needs to be street intervention outreach for the gang involved youth or the hard to engage youth who will not come into an agency for services until he/she has developed a relationship with a street outreach worker. The Comprehensive Gang Model is the product of a national gang research and development program that OJJDP initiated in the mid-80's. In 2003 OJJDP began an intensive pilot program to test the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Gang Model. The pilot cities were Richmond, VA; Los Angeles, CA; North Miami Beach, FL; and Milwaukee, WI. This model fits well within the Brockton community as it emphasizes the importance of collaboration and the role of the faith based community. In addition, the model focuses on the broader importance of ensuring that youth are connected to appropriate services, especially employment and educational supports. The model recognizes that street outreach is only one tool in the effort. Communities must embrace a systemic approach to address what is usually a myriad of problems facing youth and young adults including poverty, housing, employment, mental health, and substance abuse.

Street outreach is specifically identified within the core strategy of Social Intervention, as the primary intervention strategy for effectively lessening gang activity.¹ The Shannon collaborative has already initiated a community steering committee, as well as a research and evaluation partner—both critical process components of the Comprehensive Gang Model. .

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model Implementation Guide states the “worker’s role is to reach out to youth in their environment at community events, on street corners, in parks, in homes of youth, and in other places where youth hang out.”

¹ Ibid.

1. Use the Annual Mayor's Youth Summit geared to finding peaceful solutions to address the violence in the city (instead of having a separate event – consolidate resources).

Utilize the registration form for the Summit by adding a questionnaire section that includes the following:

Please list your concerns about the violent incidents (shootings, etc.)

Please add your suggestions to address or reduce the violence in our community:

What is the best way to get the word out about peace initiatives and support services for teens?

I am willing to help the peace process by.... (the youth make a personal statement about their personal commitment)

2. Formalize neighborhood watches and establish a Community Watch President for Brockton who would work in liaison with the BPD Community Neighborhood Watch Police Designees. The Community Watch President would assist in bringing all coordinators together monthly for support meetings with police supervisors in order to empower each individual watch group. Community Watch Task Force with a Volunteer Community Resident as President may be able to assist with creating more bridges of communication. Look at designees reflecting neighborhood diversity. Evaluate all neighborhood watches to ensure leaders are effective. Each watch leader should have targeted goals for their area.
3. Involve our Teen Population by engaging with them in their neighborhoods and bring them into quarterly forums on what is happening in their neighborhoods. Put a youth from each section of Brockton and refer directly from the alternative schools to recruit. This will give them a voice. Place a civilian and an officer in charge of leading this group.
4. School Walk Safety Program- Enlist volunteer parents for each school in high traffic areas to walk with children in high volume areas. This is based on a gang prevention model from Chicago. This would build partnerships with School Resource Officers at Junior Highs and Elementary School Sites. All Volunteers need to be CORI and SORI checked.
5. Start a Living After Murder Program in Brockton (LAMP)
The Living After Murder Program is a free community organization that provides counseling in a safe and comfortable environment. LAMP also provides emotional and social support to people of all ages throughout the Boston area who have been a victim of

violence. Support is also available for victims who have lost friends or family to murder or attempted murder.

LAMP offers the following services: Crisis Intervention Counseling and Therapy, Group Support, School Based Support Services, Survivor to Survivor Team, Information and Assistance, Community Events

It would be important to start a program like this in Brockton for it would aid all those who have been affected and/or victimized by violence in the Brockton area. The services provided are helpful to all those experiencing the above emotions after a traumatic loss. These services are available to all ages. What is great about this program is the support specifically offered to children, adolescents, spouses, and survivors of violence. Brockton could use these services to prevent further violence, substance abuse, and risky behavior in the area. The program also would bring these individuals together so that they may hear the stories of others and heal together. Then these victims would not have to feel alone, different from others, or say that “no one understands”.

Thank you to all the hard work Brockton is doing. We have a lot of very dedicated individuals who truly care about this city. Although it may take a while, we believe with the implementation of these strategies Brockton will become an even better city to live, work, shop and play.