

# NATIONAL FORUM ON YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION



August 2013

## Camden City Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Strategic Plan

*In April 2011, Mayor Dana Redd established the Youth Prevention Policy Board to avert the city's youth from the juvenile justice system and prevent others from becoming adult offenders. To propel this work forward, in fall 2012, the US Department of Justice selected Camden City to be among the second cohort of cities nationally to participate in the highly coveted National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. Over the past six months, the Mayor's 40-member broad-based Task Force engaged in collaborative needs assessment, research, and planning to create a comprehensive citywide plan to prevent and reduce youth violence.*

# Executive Summary

In recent years, Camden City has earned the dubious distinction of being among the most poverty-stricken and unsafe cities in the county. With violence and murder rising steadily, a sense of despair surrounds our citizens, threatening the well-being of every resident in this city and compromising the future of Camden's youth. Camden recognizes we must break the cycle of poverty and hopelessness—which are often the root causes of violence—by addressing the urgent public safety issues in our community through a comprehensive, full scale, long-term approach to violence prevention.

Building on the early work of the Mayor Dana Redd's broad-based collaborative planning board, the Mayor recently launched the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force to engage with community members and service providers in a solution-focused, action-driven process to bring about real change for the city of Camden. The Task Force partners worked to develop a plan for the reduction and prevention of youth violence grounded in a public health approach and within a service delivery continuum that begins with young children and continues through young adulthood. The *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* is comprised of four research-based strategies:

- The **prevention strategy** will promote conditions to preclude youth violence and crime in the community, featuring mentorship and other youth development opportunities, and to substantially improve the culture within the Camden City Public Schools using an evidence-based decision-making framework shown to increase social competence, prevent violence and illegal drug use, and improve overall academic success for all students (known as PBIS).
- The **intervention strategy** will target youth at-risk of violent crime through increased support services, trauma recovery, and transportation to out of school time activities.
- The **enforcement strategy** will create a citywide culture that impedes criminal activity, including a community policing model, quality of life sweeps, and replication of an evidence-based intervention model (formerly known Ceasefire) proven to reduce shooting and killings and make communities safer.
- The **reentry strategy** will provide transitional services for reentry youth, including job training and employment opportunities, family reintegration support, and health and mental health services.

Under the executive leadership of Mayor Redd, the city will designate a full-time staff lead to manage the implementation of *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* and to facilitate partner communication, coordination, and service delivery integration. Moreover, the Task Force partners have committed to establishing a results-based accountability system to share and use data to strengthen service delivery and make mid-course corrections, measure the overall impact of their work on reducing youth violence, and hold stakeholders accountable for both process and outcome-focused results.

# Message from **the Mayor**

On behalf of the City of Camden, I am pleased to introduce the city's comprehensive plan to prevent and reduce youth and gang violence. With Camden deemed the most dangerous city in the nation in multiple recent years, we are particularly proud of the multi-disciplinary and collaborative effort undertaken to move Camden forward and create a safe future for our youth and our neighborhoods.

With a record-breaking 67 homicides in 2012, it is clear that much work remains until Camden is a city that compares to some of New Jersey's calmest suburbs. By continuing this solution-based, multi-partnership approach, together we can enhance public safety initiatives aimed at getting criminals off our streets and out of Camden neighborhoods, make sure our youth have safe havens, and ensure that Camden's children attend first-rate schools.

This plan will serve to guide our work in youth violence prevention towards increasing information sharing, enhancing youth opportunities in a variety of ways, and strengthening and mobilizing our community. Through participation in the planning grant activities, the full membership of the 40-agency collaborative have embraced the responsibility to stop youth violence, the accountability for the plan's implementation and outcomes, and the commitment to change needed to ensure our success over the next three years.

I look forward to working with the community partners, faith-based organizations, schools, and residents that share in the mission to end violence for Camden's youth, with the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* as our roadmap for change.

Sincerely,

Dana Redd

Mayor of the City of Camden

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# 1. Introduction

## BACKGROUND

Violence represents a major health, criminal justice, human rights, and development challenge. It threatens the lives and physical and mental health of millions of people, over-burdens health systems, undermines human capital formation, and slows economic and social development. According to statistics from the CDC, youth violence is the second leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 10 and 24. In 2010, the CDC reported that 4,828 youth ages 10 to 24 were victims of homicide – an average of 13 every day. Of these murders, an estimated 82% of them were killed using a firearm ([www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury)).

Camden City suffers the reality of these horrific statistics each day, with violence and murder on a steady rise. Mayor Dana Redd took office in 2009 and made a firm commitment to address the urgent public safety issues that are threatening the future of Camden’s youth and the well-being of every resident in this city.

In October 2012, the US Department of Justice selected Camden City to receive a National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention expansion project planning grant. With violence reduction and public safety as a top priority, the Mayor’s Office, together with the Camden City Police Department, the Department of Education, Center for Family Services and the broad array of partners that comprised the Camden Youth Prevention Policy Board, launched a special Youth Forum Task Force. The Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force enabled a more broad-based set of partners that strategically focused on reducing youth violence, a significant and worsening issue in Camden City, in four key areas – prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry. Currently, the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force includes 40 members that represent local social service and faith-based organizations, residents, and county- and state-level agencies (see appendix for a full list). As Camden moves from planning to implementation, the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force will continue serve as the oversight entity and work in concert with the Mayor’s Youth Prevention Policy Board.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

### ABOUT CAMDEN

All of Camden City, which is located in Camden County in southwestern New Jersey directly across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, served as the pilot expansion site for the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. With a total population of 77,344 as of the 2010 United States Census, the city experienced a 3.2% decline in residents from the 2000 Census. Although once recognized as a prosperous center for manufacturing and industry, Camden has more recently become notorious for its challenges. In March 2013, New Jersey Governor Christie filed the necessary paperwork to assume direct oversight and operational control of the Camden City Public Schools at the start of the 2013-14

year. Nearly 90% of Camden’s schools, 23 out of 26, are in the bottom five percent performance-wide in all of New Jersey, including the three lowest performing schools in the state.

In 2011, CQ Press ranked Camden the most poverty-stricken and unsafe city in the country, taking into account the *city’s murder rate of 60.6 per 100,000 – a rate that was 12 times higher than the national average*. In 2004, 2005, 2008, and 2009 CQ Press ranked Camden America’s most dangerous city based on FBI data on murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and theft.

Table 1. Numbers of Homicides and Shootings in Camden City, 2009-2012

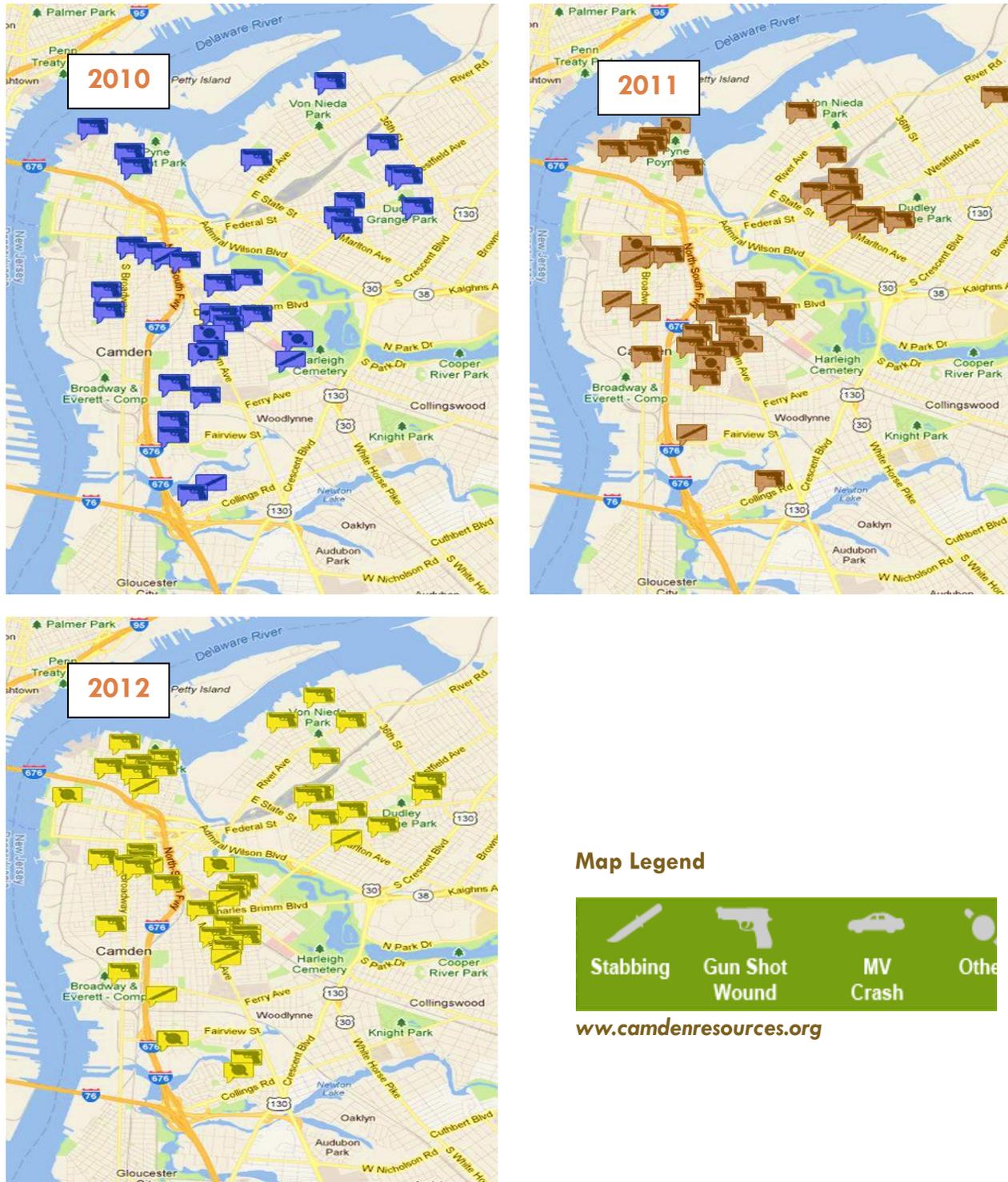
	Total Homicides	Number of Homicide Victims-Gun Shot Wounds	Number of Shooting Victims – Non Fatal	Total Shooting Victims (Fatal & Non-Fatal)
2009	35	30	121	151
2010	39	30	141	171
2011	53	39	196	235
2012	67	52	203	255

Source: Camden City Police Department

Significantly, based on the number of murders reported by the FBI and the number of residents living in the city, a 2011 analysis of these data conducted by Location Inc. shows that Camden City has one of the higher murder rates in the nation when compared with cities and towns for all sizes of population. As shown in table 1, the data showed 23 homicides in Camden City in 2009, 35 in 2010, and 42 in 2011. By 2012, there were 67 murders in the City of Camden, which is the highest homicide rate for the city since 1995 when there were 58. Moreover, *among the city’s 203 non-fatal shootings in 2012, almost one third of these gunshot victims were under 24 years of age (66 or 32.5%) and at least 17 of the perpetrators of these violent crimes were under age 24*.

In 2009, Camden County had the highest juvenile arrest rate (14.9%), the third highest violent arrest rate (9.1%), and the fifth highest juvenile drug arrest rate (8.3%) of any New Jersey county, with the most juvenile offenses concentrated in Camden City. According to a July 2011 report of the Juvenile Justice Commission, *Juvenile Arrests in New Jersey 2009*, the number of juvenile arrests in New Jersey’s six major urban municipalities (which includes Camden City) is disproportionate to their share of the statewide population, particularly for violent offenses. Among these six cities, the proportion of juvenile arrests for violent index offenses was more than double that of the statewide youth population (28.4% vs. 12.0%, respectively). In 2012, there were 507 juvenile arrests in Camden City, including 78 or 15.3% for violent crimes. Figure 1 presents neighborhood-based maps for Camden City that show detailed homicide information, including the numbers of fatal stabbings, gunshot wounds, and other incidents (e.g., beatings, blunt force, and smoke inhalation) for three years (2010, 2011, and 2012) and includes crimes and victims for children, youth, and adults.

FIGURE 1. CAMDEN HOMICIDES, BY NEIGHBORHOOD AND CAUSE OF DEATH, 2010-2012



The demographic profile of Camden City mirrors the risk factors typically associated at the individual, peer/social, family, and community levels with perpetration of youth violence (DHHS, 2001; Lipsey and Derzon, 1998; Resnick et al., 2004). These include history of violence, communitywide poverty, diminished

economic opportunities, involvement with alcohol and drugs, association with delinquent peers, involvement in gangs, poor family functioning, and poor grades in school.

The 2011 poverty rate for Camden City (42.5%) is almost triple the national average (15.3%) and is much higher than that of Camden County (29.3%). When looking at this statistic for the city's children and youth, it is even more alarming – more than half of the city's children live in poverty (56.7%) and 58.2% of single female-led families in Camden City lack the resources to provide their children with basic needs (living in poverty, 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates). These data also showed that (in 2011 inflation adjusted dollars) the median household income for Camden City was only \$21,191, which is less than half than for Camden County (\$57,784). In 2011, Camden City had a 18.4% unemployment rate, which ranked 9<sup>th</sup> among all cities in New Jersey, and was three times that of the State of New Jersey (zipatlas.com). The employability of Camden City residents is poor, with more than one third of adults over age 25 with no high school diploma (35.7%), compared to 13.1% for Camden County (2011 ACS). Similarly, only 6.8% of Camden residents have a college degree, compared to more than a third of all New Jersey (34.6%).

## ABOUT OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Any successful communitywide plan to curb violence must be comprehensive. However, to be sustainable, Camden recognizes that we must break the cycle of poverty and despair, which are the root causes of the multi-faceted problems that lead to violence. Two reports released this year by the Children's Defense Fund – *Portrait of Inequality 2012: Black Children in America* and *Portrait of Inequality 2012: Hispanic Children in America* – describe the gross disproportion of challenges and barriers to success that African American and Hispanic children must overcome beginning from birth. African American children are more than three times as likely to be poor than white children and Hispanic children are nearly the same. The number of gun related deaths of Black children and teens increased by 30 percent between 1979 and 2009, while it decreased by 44 percent for white children and teens during the same time. One in five children and teens killed by firearms in 2009 was Hispanic. Camden's residents are primarily African American and Hispanic and are faced with the significant challenges that come with joblessness, poverty, and a failing educational system. This plan addresses the specific barriers to success that our youth face.



*Mayor Redd and Chief Thompson along with a trauma counselor, and other community leaders address community concerns on drug abuse, especially the use of PCP-laced marijuana that led to two tragic deaths of young Camden children.*

Poverty continues to set the stage for school failure for a large majority of the city's children and youth. The student mobility rate (percentage of students who entered and left during the school year) for Camden High School in 2010-11 was a staggering 66.0%, which more than doubled from 2008-09 (28.6%) and is 7.5 times higher than the state average (only 8.8%). Camden's poor performance on the 2011 standardized tests clearly exhibits why the district has not met federal requirements and portrays clearly the degree to which the Camden schools are struggling. Camden students achieved proficiency on the New Jersey state exams at approximately 30% of the state rate. Even when compared to students from district's with similar socio-economic backgrounds (the District Factor Group or DFG-A), Camden students underperform. The Camden City School Districts shows **only half** the achievement rate of its DFG-A peers. Only 51% of Camden students met or exceeded the state's most basic requirements for proficiency on the English language arts component of the New Jersey High School Performance Assessment (HSPA). Even more alarming, **less than 20%** were proficient in math on the HSPA in 2011. Taken together, these data show that less than one in five high school students in Camden reached even basic proficiency in reading and math.

Consequently, in 2011, Camden City youth were substantially less likely to attend school (76.7% attendance rate for Camden City vs. 94.6% for the state) and graduate by passing both sections of the HSPA (37.9% for Camden City vs. 82.2% for the state) and much more likely to drop out of school altogether (12.9% vs. 1.4%, respectively). These data are significant given the research that connects poor attendance to course failure at the high school level, which, in turn, leads to high school dropout, delinquency, substance use and abuse, suicidal thoughts and attempts, and early sexual intercourse (*Truancy Literature Review*, US Department of Justice, OJJDP, 2009). Research also consistently links poor school performance, truancy, and dropout rates with higher crime and violence. Farrington (1999) found that youth with high truancy rates at ages 12 to 14 were more likely to engage in violence as adolescents and adults; leaving school before the age of 15 also predicted later violence. As such, the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* will have a strong emphasis on re-engaging the city's youth in school.

## ABOUT OUR STRUGGLES WITH VIOLENCE

According to a February 2012 article by The Associated Press, the New Jersey State Education Department has cited the Camden City Schools for underreporting violence in the schools. For 2009-10, the district reported 25 incidents of violence, vandalism, and weapons and only 20 police notifications, which the Associated Press reported is in contrast with 249 police responses to violence involving students during the same time-period. For the first half of the 2012-13 school year (September 2012 through March 2013), the Camden City Schools already reported 45 different incidents of violence, including—17 for assault, 21 for physical fights, 6 violent or criminal threats, and 1 incident of robbery.

In May 2012, Operation Billboard, a nine-month investigation led by a multi-agency task force of the state Division of Criminal Justice, the Camden City Police Department, the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, the New Jersey State Police, and the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement took down a major heroin distribution network in Camden. The arrests included the leader of the network, Noel Gonzalez, a Camden city local and reputed member of the Ñetas street gang. The Associated Press (January 11, 2013) reported that investigators broke up the ring by targeting an area of Camden they described as a 'hotbed of violence and daytime shootings.'

Data from the 2007 New Jersey State Police Gang Survey revealed seven distinct gangs in Camden City. By 2012, the gang presence in Camden City tripled, with 21 gangs identified from the survey results, including four that were present in the schools. Among these 21 gangs, members were involved in violent crimes (homicides), theft crimes (residential burglary, robbery, car theft), drug crimes (selling cocaine, ecstasy, marijuana, methamphetamine, and prescription drugs), and weapons trafficking. Current data from the Camden City Police Department established that the Bloods (823 confirmed members), Latin Kings (196 confirmed members), and the Crips (170 confirmed members) are the most prevalent gangs operating within the city. According to police department, these numbers would be more than double if “suspected” gang members were also included.

## ABOUT OUR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE

The multitude of problems facing Camden City over the past three decades has left a struggling city with many scattershot programs and with major systems, such as education, reentry, enforcement, and prevention services operating within silos. Within these silos, each system is too often overwhelmed and lacking the infrastructure to analyze and use data effectively and share critical information with other systems. The review of existing health and human services, the inventory of community assets, and interviews conducted with key stakeholders, revealed critical needs for better communication, improved coordination, informed data collection and analysis, and increased accountability across all sectors. Some specific examples include:

- Too many Camden families and community-based service providers are unaware of the city’s resources, programs, and services that already address prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry needs. The city lacks a comprehensive resource database or a designated entity in charge of compiling, updating, and disseminating information about available health and human service resources.
- Existing programs and services are often difficult or cumbersome to access for both families and service providers. As a result, Camden does not maximize what limited resources do exist, and communities do not receive the necessary dosage and saturation to reach a positive tipping point.
- The deep-rooted problems within the Camden City Public Schools have resulted in a history of poor record-keeping, inconsistent data reporting, and a lack of transparency with collected data. The lack of sharing with outside providers and out of school time supports has led to gaps in services, and children falling through cracks.
- The capacity to access, analyze, and use data among the city’s agencies and service providers varies considerably across the city. Some, such as the Camden Metro Police Force, are well equipped with effective data collection and analysis systems and expertise, but other public agencies and community providers, particularly the school system, lack the technical expertise to understand and access existing data sources, to identify or develop data collection instruments, or to effectively use their own data to inform service delivery or document outcomes.

The City of Camden has a critical need for more effective collaboration and a strengthened infrastructure across all systems to be intentionally integrated to achieve clear and measured outcomes. Research has shown that agreement on a common set of goals, outcome measures, and desired results using the Results-Based Accountability model can facilitate cross-systems collaboration and enhance agency capacity to judge the effectiveness of their efforts (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1994).

## ABOUT OUR ASSETS AND AREAS OF EXPERTISE

While the problems and challenges facing Camden are vast and widely known, many assets exist that provide a foundation for positive change. In addition to its location on the Camden Delaware River waterfront close proximity to the city of Philadelphia, among the city's key strengths are active resident engagement and leadership (Presidents of both the Cooper Lanning Civic Association and Lanning Square West Residents in Action), committed faith-based organizations (Congress of Community and Faith-Based Organizations), a strong and engaged higher education presence (Rutgers University-Camden, Rowan University, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, Camden County College), several health care anchor institutions (Cooper University Hospital, CamCare Health Corporation, Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center), and long-term support from businesses (Campbell Soup Company, Camden Iron and Metal) and local foundations (Nicholson Foundation). These entities will provide a wide array of local experts to assist and advise the Task Force as needed and many will be engaged in directly addressing community needs and service delivery gaps such as employment and job training.

Moreover, many of the Task Force partners are leading or contributing to key existing neighborhood transformation efforts and local and state initiatives, which will support the successful implementation of the city's Youth Violence Prevention Plan. These include:

- In January 2013, the state launched the county-run **Camden Metro Police Division** to replace Camden City's police department disbanded in 2012. The Camden Metro Police Division uses a community-based model for policing the City of Camden, increasing potential for enforcement/social service partnerships and reentry and social service partnerships. Under the leadership of Chief Scott Thompson, not only will a community based model of policing be implemented, but there will be a significant increase (nearly double) in the number of officers on the ground. The transition to the Metro Police also garners additional support from and coordination with the Camden County Prosecutor's office, and other county based supportive services.
- The **Quality of Life Task Force for Neighborhood Safety** launched in spring 2013 and will work closely with the Metro Police to provide increased support for residents, business owners, and community leaders become active participants in helping Camden communities become healthy, clean, and safe. With the Public Safety Monitor, Lanny Ferguson, the quality of life task

*Of the new Camden Metro Police Division, Mayor Redd noted, "The Metro is more than boots on the ground... it is about empowering residents, youth, and business owners to take back their streets."*

force will provide additional focus on vacant housing, enforcement of code violations, improved lighting on the streets and in public parks, and regular “clean and green” efforts.

- The **Congress of Community and Faith-Based Organizations** is a coalition of residents, community-based organizations, community development corporations, and faith-based organizations formed to ensure that Camden residents are involved in improving the quality of life in neighborhoods across the city through active civic engagement. The Congress of Community and Faith Based Organizations has taken a lead on recruiting and training mentors, completing the chaplaincy program training, and collaborating with neighborhood watch programs, and the police to respond to community incidents to work with impacted residents.
- The **Camden Cooper Lanning Promise Neighborhoods (CCLPN)** is a multi-partner planning effort focused on increased education and family and community supports through a cradle to career pipeline. This initiative aims to ensure successful educational outcomes, strong families, and strong communities, breaking the generational cycle of poverty that exists in the Cooper Lanning neighborhood within Camden City. This is led by Center for Family Services, a leading human services provider, who has built an established network of education, service provision, and health experts to do a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative community assessment and building a comprehensive pipeline of data driven, evidence based programs to change educational and community outcomes for youth. Partners that comprise the CCLPN have already received training in RBA and its data tracking system (Results Scorecard) from the Results Leadership Group through the Promise Neighborhoods planning grant and will serve as mentors and turn-key trainers for Task Force partners.
- **Camden Choice Neighborhoods**, led by the Housing Authority of Camden City, experts in housing development, is an initiative focuses on the neighborhoods of Liberty Park, Whitman Park, and Centerville and uses a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation based on three core goals. The Choice Neighborhoods Team, co-chaired by Chuck Valentine, serves as a key member of the Mayor’s Youth Violence Prevention Task Force and is working closely with the Mayor’s office, the Camden Metro Police, and Center for Family Services to integrate planning and implementation with Promise Neighborhood and to assist with data collection and sharing using RBA. The three core goals of Camden’s CHOICE Neighborhood are:
  - Transform distressed public **housing** into energy efficient, mixed-income, and affordable housing
  - Transform **neighborhoods** of poverty into viable, safe, well-functioning communities with access to high quality public schools, services, public assets, transportation, and improved access to jobs.
  - Ensure that **families** with the target housing developments and the surrounding neighborhood have the opportunities for improved health, safety, employment, and education.
- In March 2013, Governor Christie, with the support of Mayor Redd and education advocates across New Jersey, filed the necessary paperwork to assume direct oversight and operational

control of the Camden City Public Schools. In July 2013, the NJ Department of Education appointed an interim superintendent, Peggy Nicolosi to take control of the Camden City Board of Education. Superintendent Nicolosi has quickly formed a transition team to begin an in-depth review of all processes and systems within Camden's BOE, and to develop an initial change plan in concert with the state developed Regional Achievement Centers (RAC). Beginning in fall 2013, the Christie administration will implement **Education Reorganization and Reform Strategies** focused on four key areas: leadership, curriculum, talent, and resources. Taken together, these will improve overall performance of the school district and the academic experience for Camden students from day one of the school year. Both the NJ Department of Education and Superintendent Nicolosi have committed their support and involvement in the Mayor's Task Force and the Violence Prevention Plan.

- To examine in a comprehensive way the causes of senseless violence occurring nationally and in New Jersey, in January 2013, Governor Christie issues an executive order that established the **New Jersey SAFE Task Force on Gun Protection, Addiction, Mental Health and Families, and Education Safety**, known as the NJ SAFE Task Force. The Governor charged the NJ SAFE Task Force with reviewing “the root causes of mass violence and developing recommendations aimed at ameliorating those root causes in order to keep New Jersey residents safe from gun violence.” As part of their work, the SAFE Task Force held public hearings in Camden, Lincroft, and Newark, which provided the community residents with opportunity to state their opinions on issues related to safety and gun violence. The recommendations of the SAFE Task Force will inform the implementation of the Camden Youth Violence Prevention Plan.

## 2. Description of Process

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When Mayor Dana Redd assumed office in January 2010, the city of Camden was at a unique turning point. In 2002, faced with overwhelming fiscal crisis, escalating violence and crime, and enduring poverty, Camden complied with the largest municipal takeover in US history (New Jersey Monthly, June 2012), stripping the city's mayor of any real power or decision-making authority. After eight years and little progress, the state restored local control in January 2010, ending the takeover two years earlier than planned and giving newly elected Mayor Redd full authority. From the onset, Mayor Redd declared public safety and education reform high priority areas.

By April 2011, under the leadership of Mayor Redd, the Camden City Mayor's Office joined forces with the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General to establish the Camden Youth Prevention Policy Board, a broad-based collaborative planning body focused on issues related to juvenile delinquency and youth development. At that time, the Camden Youth Prevention Policy Board was comprised of approximately 40 representatives from 28 organizations, including municipal and county government, faith-based and non-profit organizations, and educational institutions. The Youth Prevention Policy Board focused on six

major youth priority areas identified by Mayor Redd: juvenile crime and violence, truancy and absenteeism from school, youth workforce development, childhood obesity, youth homelessness, and youth mental health continuum of care. The Mayor charged each workgroup with collecting and analyzing needs assessment data and conducting SWOT analyses, which included compiling and reviewing key data points at the individual workgroup level from data various sources, including:

- Uniform crime report published by the Camden Police Department
- United States Decennial Census and American Community Survey
- Kids Count
- New Jersey Department of Education
- Camden City Board of Education
- New Jersey Department of Children and Families
- Youth Services Commission
- Emergency Room Visits for assault
- Crime Hot Spots
- Homicide victim demographics

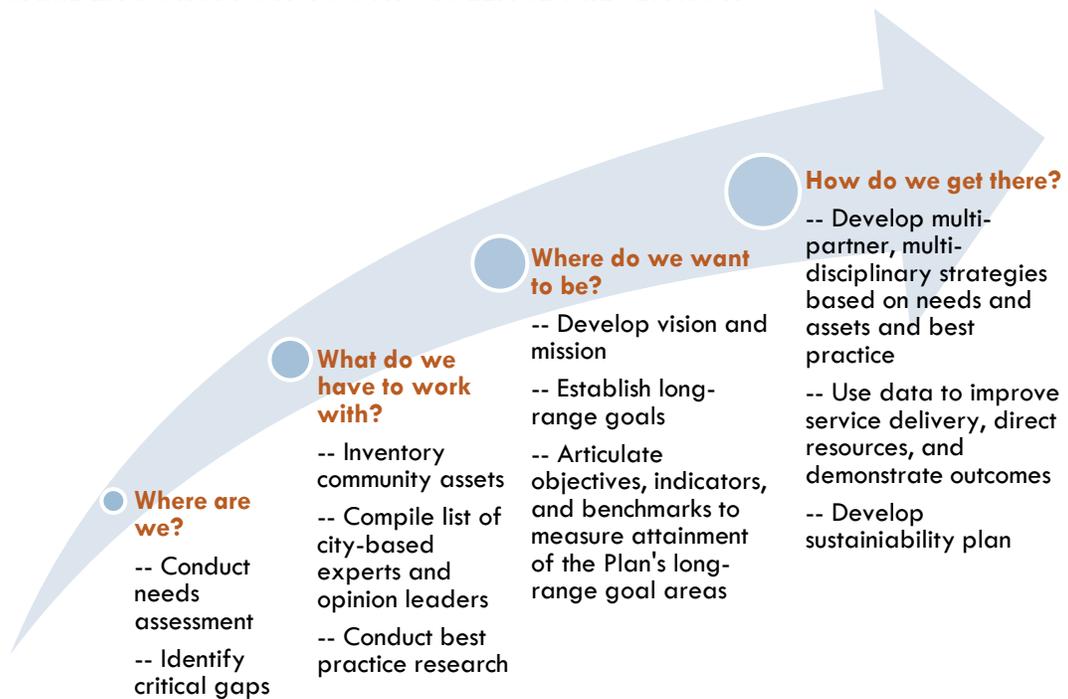
From the needs assessment findings, the workgroups continued their work, identifying emerging youth delinquency problems and associated risk factors, prioritizing issues, researching best practices, and identifying data- and research-driven strategies (policy, practice, or program) to address the priority issue areas.

The work of the Mayor's Youth Policy Prevention Board created the groundwork for Camden to become a National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention expansion site in fall 2012. In an unprecedented partnership between the Mayor's Office, the Camden Board of Education, and the Camden City Police Department (now the Camden Metro Police Force), the Mayor established the Camden Violence Prevention Task Force, which built on the early work of the Mayor's planning board. The Forum for Youth Violence Prevention grant provided a unique opportunity for these unlikely partners to engage with community members and service providers in a solution-focused, action-driven process to bring about real change for the city of Camden. As a result of the planning process, the Task Force has taken on a significant role in coordinating services and programming with the goal of reducing and preventing violence. The relationships built and the realization of the quick progress that can occur with improved communication and a common vision has reinforced the ongoing need for this Task Force.

## THEORY OF ACTION

The development of the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* is one important component of the Mayor's overall plan for solution-based change in Camden City. With improved public safety and education at the core, the partners that comprise the Camden Youth Violence Prevention Task Force have embraced a theory of action essential to successful community transformation and realization of the Mayor's vision for sizeable, lasting positive change in the lives of all children, youth, and adult residents of Camden City.

FIGURE 2. CAMDEN FORUM ON YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION THEORY OF ACTION



## COMMON VISION AND MISSION

Violence in Camden is not a foregone conclusion, but rather a preventable disease treatable with an intentional, cross-sector approach. Under the strong leadership of Mayor Redd, this multi-disciplinary partnership worked closely to develop a unifying long-range vision (e.g., identifying what key things would be accomplished for Camden’s future) and mission (e.g., specifying why the Task Force was formed and how it will accomplish its work and achieve its vision). The Camden City partners believe firmly that the city’s approach to the reduction and prevention of youth violence must target children and youth across all age groups and this plan must occur within a service delivery continuum that begins with young children and continues through young adulthood. Moreover, partners have selected results-based accountability as a powerful and proven management tool to facilitate collaboration among Task Force partners and to help them to continuously think creatively about solutions to Camden’s most pressing problems, while ensuring that interventions are timely, relevant, and integrated to achieve mutually shared goals, moving Camden from a categorical program approach to a holistic approach focused on outcomes. RBA will provide the critical structure to systematically collect data and monitor progress, to critically identify successes and failures, to engage partners in using this information to improve the implementation of the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* and the operations of the Task Force governance and accountability structure, and to demonstrate results and re-build confidence in the city’s health and human service organizations. As such, the resulting vision and mission statements (shown below) reflect the values and commitment of the Task Force partners, and will guide the work of the Task Force moving forward.

The Task Force sought to leverage the core strengths, assets, and expertise that already exist in Camden to serve as building blocks from which to develop the overall plan to achieve the articulated vision. At the same time, the partners identified additional core capacities needed (through the Youth Forum planning process) so that the Task Force would have the governance and accountability infrastructure needed to function well and become a sustainable entity within the city’s service delivery culture.

*The vision for Camden City is that all children and families thrive in safe communities and are engaged in sustaining their neighborhoods.*

*The mission of the Camden Youth Forum Task Force is to reduce violence and to advance safety, well-being, and educational success of city’s youth and families using a coordinated, integrated, and data-driven approach to service delivery*

The next key step in the planning process was the articulation of the long-range conditions of well-being for Camden’s children, youth, and families and the intended future direction of the city’s neighborhoods. The Task Force has developed the following overarching long-range goals:

1. Children and youth are safe and healthy, and fully prepared to enter and succeed in school;
2. Youth graduate from high school and college and have access to and are prepared for gainful employment opportunities;
3. Families and neighborhoods are stable, strong, and engaged to support the healthy development, academic success, and well-being of their children;
4. Law enforcement is equipped to increase safety in Camden City and address crime hot spots, drug and gang violence, and reduce guns in the community; and
5. Youth offenders receive the support they need to be successful upon returning to the community and avoid recidivism.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACH

We recognize that we cannot rebuild the City of Camden without our residents being involved from the outset to develop the solutions. Mayor Redd has brought residents and representatives of city’s faith-based community together to be at the table and is committed to supporting community-based efforts, such as Promise and Choice Neighborhoods, which share the commitment to developing and implementing plans *with* the community – not *to* the community.

*“There are few more important tasks than ensuring our children receive the tools they need to succeed in life, and that all starts with ensuring our schools are doing that job for our students.” – Sheila Davis, CEO, Community Development Corporation*

Guided by the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Strategic Planning Toolkit, the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force undertook a comprehensive approach to develop a plan

that would ultimately curb youth violence in Camden over time. The balanced approach was research-based, data-driven, and aligned with Mayor Redd’s vision for comprehensive community change. As such, following a Call to Action by Mayor Redd, key partners established a targeted Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force, broadening the mandate of a workgroup of the Mayor’s existing Youth Violence Prevention Policy Board, which served as the initial platform for developing the city’s plan for youth violence prevention.

An Executive Council of top-level leadership from the Mayor’s Office, Camden City Public Schools, Camden Metro Police Force, Center for Family Services, Community Action and Planning Council, Camden City Department of Health and Human Services, and residents guided the work of the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force. The Executive Council members engaged in a series of hands on working sessions focused on in-depth reviews of real-time data in education and crime/violence, as well as targeted discussions on the challenges and barriers to cross-sector communication and collaboration.

*“I want to break down the silos that are trying to deter our great City to move forward on such issues like public safety, quality of life, and neighborhood revitalization and stabilization.” – Mayor Dana Redd*

Once launched, the Task Force organized into working groups comprised of representatives from the neighborhood, community-, county- and state-level partner agencies, and others to focus on four key strategy areas of prevention, intervention, law enforcement, and reentry. Each workgroup designated a chairperson who was responsible for reporting regularly to the Executive Council and working closely with other groups to ensure that overall the workgroups integrated and aligned efforts.

With the assistance of planning consultants, the work of the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force followed the proposed Theory of Action, including the following key activities:

- Reviewed research on risk and protective factors, evidence-based youth violence prevention strategies, and lessons learned from the six cities that participated in the inaugural National Forum on Youth Violence demonstration project in 2011
- Conducted a comprehensive, citywide needs assessment that collected, analyzed, and synthesized data in the areas of violent crime/public safety, education, juvenile delinquency, and general economic conditions and determined specific “hot spots” or higher need areas within Camden City
- Compiled an inventory of existing resources, assets, and areas of expertise
- Articulated a unifying vision and mission and developed a set of long-range goals
- Established workgroup-level goals and priorities based on needs assessment findings
- Aligned existing programmatic resources of the Task Force members and others in the community to advance the purposes of the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention effort

The individual workgroup efforts built on the asset reviews and SWOT analysis. Workgroups identified service delivery needs and developed plans to address services gaps to ensure youth will have access to necessary individual and family supports, remain in school, are successful in their learning, and have

consistent opportunities for positive recreational activities and employment opportunities after school and in the summer.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS

While the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* will target all of Camden City, to the extent possible, the work of the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force will concentrate efforts on four neighborhoods in the city, which emerged as city's extreme hot spots with regard to crime and violence – Cooper Lanning, Centerville, Whitman Park, and Liberty Park. These four neighborhoods also align with the Camden Cooper Lanning Promise Neighborhoods and Choice Neighborhoods initiatives so the city can leverage current investments and existing collaborations to achieve greater impact faster.

The planning process maintained an inclusive focus on individuals, families, schools, and the community. The approach ensured that each of these environments were addressed in a positive way for youth to thrive, which we believe is critical to address the multi-faceted challenges and risk factors that confront Camden youth. This resulted in several key priority areas that will be integrated across and connect the plan components for prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry. The Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force priority areas are as follows:

- Prevent youth from missing school (truancy)
- Encourage disengaged youth to “drop back in”
- Address early behaviors that can lead to violence
- Ensure every child is connected with a caring adult
- Link delinquent youth with vital social services
- Change the social norms and apathy so that the community will not accept the current state of violence
- Increase trauma response and intervention (e.g., chaplaincy program, trauma response training and collaborations)

# 3. Governance and Accountability

## PLAN GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

To successfully move from strategic planning to plan implementation and ultimately achieve our goal of reducing youth violence, Camden City recognizes the importance of strong leadership across all sectors, as well as ongoing accountability among all partners for our efforts. Mayor Dana Redd, supported by her Chief of Staff Novella Hinson, will provide executive leadership of the implementation of the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan*. Under the direction of Vice President Merilee Rutolo, the Center for Family Services (CFS), Camden’s largest nonprofit social service agency, will serve as the operational lead for the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan*.

During the first year of plan implementation, the Camden City Forum Executive Council – comprised of high-level decision-makers from the Mayor’s Office, CFS, Camden City Public Schools, Camden Metro Police Force, Community Planning and Advocacy Council, City Department of Health and Human Services, and the Mayor’s Youth Policy Prevention Planning Board – will continue to convene quarterly. The membership of the Camden City Forum Executive Council represents an unprecedented commitment of these stakeholders to convene regularly and to work together to lead systems change in the City of Camden, shifting the paradigm of single program implementation to a coordinated, integrated service delivery model that will ultimately operate within a results-based accountability system.

The Camden City Forum Executive Council will serve as the executive leadership team to drive communications and decision on issues related to: articulation of goals and objectives in collaboration with the newly appointed leadership within the Camden City Public Schools and the Camden Metro Police Force; and development of plans for fund raising, resource allocation, and sustainability. The Executive Council will also provide leadership and direction to the Chairs of the four strategy teams that will implement the Plan.

The Camden City Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force strategy committees will become strategy teams during the implementation phase. Each strategy team will have a designated chairperson and will be comprised of representatives from all partner agencies involved in the strategy implementation plan, as well as community residents, and members of the faith-based and civic organizations. The role and responsibilities of each strategy team will be to work collaboratively to:

- Finalize a set of strategy-level goals, objectives, and measurable indicators to support the development of the RBA system,
- Keep abreast of, and analyze data, evidence, and resident feedback to continuously identify community needs,
- Keep abreast of best practice and apply those as applicable,

- Identify opportunities for joint staff training, fund raising, and other ways to further partner integration and coordination,
- Ensure that all of the programs, services, and activities that comprise the strategy are implemented with fidelity and high quality, and
- Report to the members of the Executive Council and the executive leadership team.

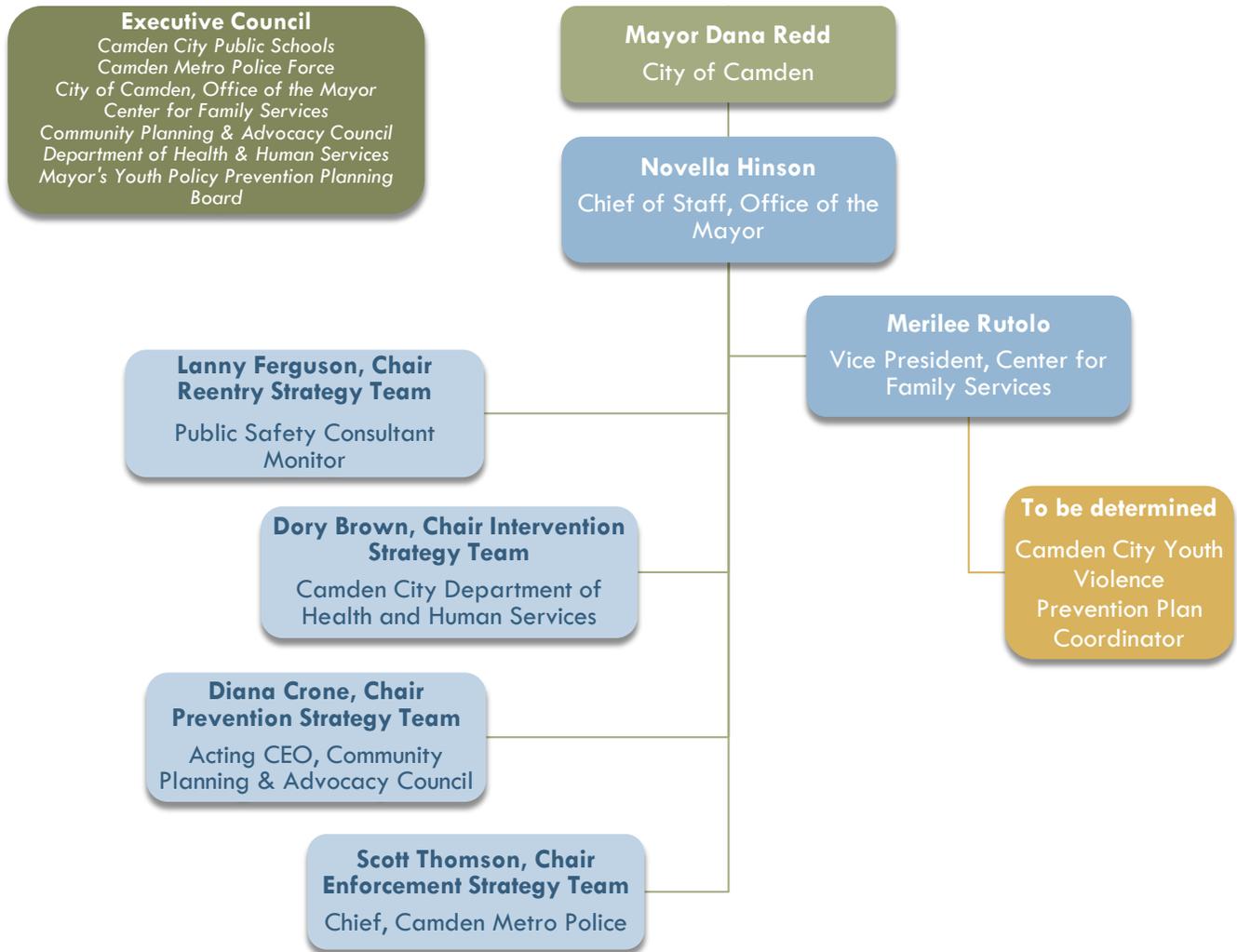
The strategy teams will meet monthly, hold virtual meetings and online discussions as needed, and ensure agendas and meeting minutes are posted on the city's website.

The day to day management of the plan operations and implementation will be the responsibility of a full-time Plan Coordinator. The dedicated plan coordinator and other supporting staff from both the Office of the Mayor and Center For Family Services, along with the executive committee partners and task force committees ensure the successful implementation of the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan*. The Plan Coordinator will report directly to Merilee Rutolo at the Center for Family Services and Novella Hinson, Chief of Staff to the Mayor, and will have the following key responsibilities:

- Coordinating and integrating service delivery within and across the Plan's four main strategy team areas (prevention, intervention, reentry, and enforcement)
- Helping to coordinate and facilitate data sharing among the Strategy Team Chairs and other members of the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force
- Organizing partner training and technical assistance activities
- Assisting Task Force partners with data collection, sharing, and analysis activities (where needed), and
- Serving as the liaison between the Strategy Team Chairs, the Mayor's Office, and the members of the Executive Council

The Plan Coordinator will also serve as the liaison to integrate efforts between the work of the Camden City Youth Violence Prevention and other citywide initiatives to ensure leveraging of resources and expertise and avoid duplication of services. The figure below shows the governance and management structure that will support the execution of the Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan.

FIGURE 3. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



## RESULTS ACCOUNTABILITY

The City of Camden will establish a results-based accountability system to allow the Strategy Team Chairs and other Task Force partners to facilitate data collection, regularly share data, monitor implementation, and support both process and outcomes evaluation within and across the Plan’s four strategy areas. Should Camden City be awarded OJJDP funding, these stakeholders will receive training and technical assistance on using the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) model as a management tool to help facilitate collaboration and data sharing among partners and strengthen the impact of their collective work in order to achieve better results in programs and in Camden. The Results Leadership Group will implement a series of RBA 101 capacity-building sessions. The sessions will strive to give participants more than a conceptual understanding of the RBA framework. The aim will be for partners to be able to apply RBA as a way of working within their respective agencies and as members of the

Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force with a common vision and measureable results using the *Results Scorecard*, a web-based software tool based on the principles of the RBA framework.

The governance and accountability structure will also include a partnership with Metis Associates, a research and evaluation agency, to design and implement a process and outcome evaluation based on the plan's goals, objectives, and performance measures; and to support the RBA capacity-building focused on performance measure development and data collection.

## 4. Action Plan

The Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force has developed a strong action plan comprised of powerful, research-based strategies in four strategy areas – prevention programming, intervention programs, law enforcement efforts, and reentry programs. Effective strategy implementation will occur through a continuum of care framework and a citywide collaborative body to ensure a well-coordinated effort responsive to local needs, informed by best practices, and built on local strengths.

In this section, we describe the research base for the overall plan, followed by the primary objectives of each strategy area, and the set of signature (existing) and aspirational (future) initiatives that will comprise each strategy area. The signature initiatives are efforts already underway in Camden City, while the aspirational initiatives are programs, services, or activities that the Task Force plans to implement over the next three years based on the needs assessment data and the critical gaps identified.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The overarching theoretical basis for the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* is the research conducted by the World Health Organization and others that demonstrates that cultural and social norms (rules or expectations within a cultural or social group) are highly influential in changing violent behavior (2009). Children, youth, families, and communities with increased resilience and decreased risk are more likely to thrive and be safe from violence. Youth deserve to grow up in strong families and thriving communities – free from violence at home, in school, and in their communities. Too many of Camden's youth are growing up in an unsafe environment with limited opportunities, which has led to diminished access to and hope for positive alternatives. The result is the overwhelming violence in Camden. However, we also know that violence is a learned behavior that can be unlearned. Camden's violence prevention efforts will address the community norms that have made violence a regular and expected occurrence.

More than one out of five teenagers has witnessed a shooting. The 2008 National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence found that more than one in five 14-17 years olds in a national representative survey of children had witnessed a shooting at some point in their lives. Researchers estimate this number to be even higher among low-income children.

Literature in psychology and sociology suggest a number of theories about the possible causes of violence. These include that violence is 1) learned from role models; 2) caused by social forces; 3) a

cultural norm in subgroups with a higher rate of homicide; and/or 4) a series of events or interactions between co-disputants that can escalate into a homicide (Rosenberg et al., 1977). If these theories hold true and violence is driven by learned, preventable behaviors, then it would follow that violence can be prevented by employing behavior change theory to change social norms that violence is normal, acceptable or expected, and by providing alternatives to violence.

Experiences with, exposure to, and fear of violence have been known emotional and mental health consequences, which are often life long and require extensive treatment. Too often, the young children and youth in Camden do not receive the necessary mental health treatment, which should focus on addressing the underlying trauma experienced. The ACE Study conducted collaboratively by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente demonstrates that “adverse childhood experiences are the most *basic and long-lasting* cause of health risk behaviors, mental illness, social malfunction, disability, biomedical disease, death, and healthcare and prison costs.” The personal and community costs and negative long-term impact for the children and teens growing up amidst the current level of violence in Camden is clear and all partners consistently cited this as a priority issue throughout the planning process. This further proves that prevention efforts, as well as trauma-informed practices woven throughout the pipeline of prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry is critical to reducing violence, retaliation, and re-offending and will be a key focus of the plan’s first implementation year.

The *Camden City Youth Violence Prevent Plan* is also largely informed by the recent report of the Children’s Defense Fund, *Portrait of Inequality 2012: Black Children in America*, which describes a Cradle to Prison Pipeline crisis that is confronting too many Black children and youth in America. Like described in Children’s Defense Fund staggering report, the great majority of Camden’s children and youth are poverty stricken, left without family support systems, lack quality education, enter school already behind, which too often result in prison over college and career. Camden’s partners developed four strategies that make up the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* (prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry) to specifically help our children and youth overcome these grave challenges and succeed in life alongside their non-minority peers. As such, our plan’s four key strategies encompass the following research base:

- Demonstrating to youth that there are other options through increased focus on legitimate employment and opportunities to gain experience through internship and volunteerism.
- Developing strong families, including parents with strong capacity to raise their families and have opportunities to bond in positive ways with their children by fostering stronger relationships between children and their parents.
- Establishing one caring adult in each child’s life is critical to prevention because if a child feels isolated and unable to count on at least one positive adult “role model” there is increased likelihood for that child to make unsafe choices or seek negative outlets to feel connection to others.
- Increasing opportunities and engaging youth in youth leadership and other out of school time activities helps to boost self-esteem and self-worth, instills a sense of competency, and strengthens youth’s capacity to make safe choices. These qualities help youth to steer away from negative behaviors and look forward to the future.

- Increasing attendance and graduation rates improves the youth’s outlook on their future, enhances their earning potential in legitimate ways, and promotes options for advanced degrees. Education is the foundation for a more productive and prosperous future.

## 1. PREVENTION STRATEGY

### KEY PARTNERS

**Chair:** Dorri Brown, Camden Mayor’s Youth Council

**Writer:** Madhuri Rodriguez, Director Children’s Services, Community Planning & Advocacy Council

Tracy Swan, Walter Rand Institute

Gaylen Conley, Executive Director of Safety and Security, Camden Board of Education

Nicole Sheppard, Center for Family Services

Dorothy Burley, Fairview Neighbors/Congress of Community and Faith-Based Organizations

Michael Cade, SafeStop/Mayor’s Youth Council

Charmaine Thomas, Area Director, NJ Department of Children and Families, Department of Child Protection and Permanency

Adonis Banegas, Program Director, Hispanic Family Center

### SIGNATURE INITIATIVES

- The Center for Family Services and the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative will continue to offer Camden’s vulnerable pregnant and parenting mothers with home-based support and will work with other partners to take these programs to scale. **Nurse Family Partnership** provides no-cost pregnancy assistance to first-time mothers through home visiting and follow up services. Specially trained nurse home visitors ensure a healthy pregnancy and delivery, coach on child development, and answer and questions and concerns. **Baby’s Best Start** is a no-cost nine-week program modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone Baby College Program to provide low-income and at-risk mothers, fathers, pregnant women, and other caregivers the information



Mayor Redd meets with Camden’s children and talks to them about their dreams and what they want to be when they grow up.

and support they need to raise happy, healthy children who remain safe and ready to enter school. Using a case management approach, Baby’s Best Start uses a home visiting model to help families learn how to keep children safe and healthy, connect with community resources, and understand stages of child development.

- Novella Hinson, Chief of Staff for Mayor Redd, is a certified trainer for the evidence-based **Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum**. The Camden Board of Education intends to use this classroom-based social skills curriculum to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children by increasing their social competency skills. The program is composed of grade-specific curricula: preschool/kindergarten, elementary school (Grades 1–5), and middle school (Grades 6–8). The curriculum teaches students to reduce impulsive, high-risk, and aggressive behaviors and increase their socio-emotional competence and other protective factors. The Second Step® elementary curriculum consists of 15 to 22 thirty-five-minute lessons per grade level taught once or twice a week. Group discussion, modeling, coaching, and practice are used to increase students’ social competence, risk assessment, decision-making ability, self-regulation, and positive goal setting. Partners will pilot the Second Step program within Camden’s Head Start facilities beginning with pre-kindergarten classes in fall 2014.
  
- **Project COPE** provides an effective intervention for Camden’s children (ages 4 to 18) with one or more incarcerated parents, helping these children follow a safe path toward a successful future. Implemented by the Center for Family Services, Project COPE is a mentoring program that carefully matches target children with mentor volunteers that provide support and guidance to their young person for a period of at least one year. Mentors help their mentees develop self-esteem, achieve greater academic stability, improve behavioral and social relationships, and grow and mature into strong, confident young adults.
  
- The **Levels to Brilliance Program** is a 16-week youth leadership initiative for Camden City youth to further understand the value of an education and the importance of contributing positively to their school and community. Launched with an inaugural group of 18 students, the program included four essential components – preparation of body, mind, soul, and spirit – and concluded with a White Diamond Cotillion Ball. The Task Force will expand Levels to Brilliance to serve a new cohort of 30 students and to offer educational, employment, and job training opportunities. Led by the Mayor’s Office, the program will run from June through October 2013, and will collaborate with the Camden City Board of Education to help identify program students.



*Levels to Brilliance Youth Leadership Cotillion 2012 graduates.*

- **New Jersey Youth Corps** is a voluntary program for young people who have dropped out of school run by The WorkGroup, a local nonprofit organization that works with at-risk youth in transition to adulthood, helping them with the skills, education, and confidence to become self-directed, self-sufficient individuals who are productive and responsible members of their families and communities. The Youth Corps Program serves approximately 100 individuals annually who at admission have met the minimum entrance criteria of a 6.0 reading and math grade level. Most of our students are 16 to 24 years of age, and have been out of school for at least two years.
- **School -Based Youth Services (SBYS) Summer Program** provides summer programs for 6-8 weeks during normal school hours. Summer activities emphasize recreation, transition programs for incoming students, character development, and enrichment programs, and may include any of the enumerated SBYS services provided during the regular school year.
- The **School-Based Youth Services** are support services offered at the Camden City middle schools and high schools in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families. The initiative offers a team of staff to provide health, mental health, and social services to students and families. The program goals are to help youth successfully navigate their adolescent years, acquire the skills needed to obtain employment or continue their education, and graduate healthy and drug free. Services include mental health counseling, employment counseling, substance abuse education/prevention, preventative health awareness, primary medical linkages, learning support, healthy youth development, and positive recreational activities.

## ASPIRATIONAL INITIATIVES

- The Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force aims to increase the number of summer employment slots for youth to 200 by 2014 by creating a multi-partner **Youth Job Training and Employment Initiative**. Partners that already include the YE2S Centers, the Workforce Investment Board, local businesses (e.g., the Riversharks) will work together to identify the challenges youth face to securing summer employment (e.g., transportation, work papers), conduct job training and preparation workshops, host job fairs, and engage additional community-based partners in the initiative as needed.
- The Girls Scouts and Boys Scouts of Central and Southern New Jersey will plan a **Youth Summit** for spring 2015. The Youth Summit will provide a forum for Camden-born adults in leadership positions to share their stories with Camden’s youth and will provide engaging training opportunities in youth leadership. For example, the Youth Summit might follow the Framework for Authentic Youth Civic Engagement guide for communities published by the National League of



Cities to plan projects for Camden’s youth. Using the authentic civic engagement approach, Youth Summit projects would be planned so that young people are viewed as valuable participants in solutions for their own community, engaged in meaningful roles in addressing issues relevant to Camden (namely reducing youth violence), and partnered with adults who respect, listen to, and support them.

- In fall 2013, the Camden City Public Schools will launch the initial phase of a district-wide **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)** initiative, an evidence-based model that will support proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to promote positive school environments. The school system has already entered into an MOU with the Mayor’s Office and the Center for Family Services that will establish and train a district PBIS Leadership Team and plan and implement a PBIS pilot project at two Camden schools, including six full days of training held throughout the school year and participation in monthly booster trainings and support sessions to ensure fidelity to the PBIS model. The NJ State Education Department has committed to including Camden City in the next cohort of schools in the state to participate in the comprehensive PBIS training over the next two years.
- A growing body of research has established that young children – even infants – are particularly vulnerable to the effects of exposure to traumatic events. Because children in Camden are exposed to traumatic stressors (including community violence, domestic violence, and physical trauma and abuse) at rates that far surpass their young peers in New Jersey and nationally, the Task Force will conduct research on existing evidence-based initiatives and known best practices to plan an **Early Childhood Trauma Intervention Program** appropriate for our city’s young children.
- Knowing that school readiness and safe and positive outlets for young children are strongly associated with long-term education success, the Task Force will ensure that **Year-Round Early Childhood Education Programs** are available throughout Camden. The Camden Board of Education and Head Start, in partnership with private providers, will expand existing early childhood programs. These programs will be full day and will provide curriculum-based educational activities, as well as offer health eating and parent education and support.
- The **Out of School Time (OST) Initiative** is a planning initiative currently led by the Center for Childhood Students at Rutgers University-Camden that is assessing the current state of youth development programs in Camden. The planning initiative will result in a multi-partner effort to



provide coordinated and comprehensive out of school time opportunities for Camden youth ages 14 to 21 based on specific research conducted with Camden youth to identify what draw youth to successful OST programs and activities. The OST programming will span evenings, weekends, and the summer.

- The **Safe Corridors/Safe Passages** will establish safe routes for schoolchildren to travel to and from school and instill a greater sense of security and well-being for Camden’s children and parents. This initiative will target crime-ridden hot spots in and around a designated Safe Corridor geographic boundary and will involve a number of law enforcement partners and residents, including the Neighborhood Congress, Camden County Metro Police Force, the New Jersey State Police and State Parole, the New Jersey Army National Guard, the Camden City Parking Authority. Partners expect the Safe Corridors/Safe Passages initiative will launch in November 2013.
- The Task Force is committed to planning a youth job readiness and training program called **Go for the Gold** that will feature helping youth obtain different job certifications to increase employment viability.
- Teaching financial literacy will be an important component of our overall goal to help Camden’s youth achieve their full potential. The Task Force will use resources such as the Finance Project to identify an evidence-based **Youth Financial Literacy Program** developed for at-risk youth. Partners will pilot test and ultimately implement this program in the high schools throughout Camden City.



## 2. INTERVENTION STRATEGY

### KEY PARTNERS

**Chair:** Merilee Rutolo, Vice President, Center for Family Services

**Writer:** Wren Ingram, Mentoring Department Coordinator, Center for Family Services

Rev. Marilyn Dixon-Hill, Camden Churches Organized for People/Chaplaincy Program (Congress of Community and Faith-Based Organizations)

Tanisha R. Brown, Education Stability Liaison, NJ Department of Child Protection and Permanency

Diana Crone, Director of Children’s Services, CPAC

*Michael Simmons, Program Manager, Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies, Rutgers University*

*Felicia Reyes Morton, Board Member, Camden City Board of Education*

*Victor Murray, Director GPS Program, Cooper Hospital*

*Andrea Aumautre, School Based Youth Services, Camden City Public Schools*

## SIGNATURE INITIATIVES

- The goal of the **Street Outreach Services Program** is to help young people get off the streets. To that end, the program works to build relationships between street outreach workers and runaway, homeless, and street youth. Program staff members provide support services that aim to move youth into stable housing and prepare them for independence. The program's ultimate goal is to prevent violence, victimization, sexual abuse, or exploitation of young people living on the streets or in unstable housing.
- **School-Based Youth Services Parent Linking Program (PLP)** serves teen parents in Camden's public schools, primarily at Woodrow Wilson High School and Camden High School. The goal of the PLP is to prevent child abuse and neglect and minimize/eliminate barriers that often impede the ability of teen parents to complete their education. Program services include childcare, counseling, case management, parenting education, pregnancy prevention, and linkages to health services.
- The **Camden Guidance, Preservation, and Support Program** (known as Camden GPS) is a multi-disciplinary project aimed at preventing and reducing the recurrence of violence among the youth of Camden. The program identifies at-risk youth who are victims of violent crime and provides mentoring through role models with links to community resources and overall case management. The goal of the Camden GPS Program is to prevent future violent injury, retaliation, or recurrent involvement with the juvenile justice system through trauma-informed care. The target population is youth ages 10 to 24 admitted to a Camden emergency department due to assault violence (e.g., gunshot, knife, or other object and/or physical assault). Program staff recruits participants from all three Camden emergency departments – Cooper University Hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center, and Virtua Camden. By intervening and using the assault as a “teachable moment,” the program provides referrals to community service providers and maintains intensive follow-up with the youth and their families.
- Camden City recreation centers, known as **Youth Education and Employment Success Centers** (YE2S Centers) opened October 2012. Since that time, the YE2S Centers processed 50 Camden City youth. By March 2013, the program sought to enroll 100 dropouts back into school and provide at least 150 youth with the necessary suite of services to keep them engaged in school.
- The **Youth Court Forum Program** is a partnership initiative of the Office of the Mayor, Municipal Court, and the Camden City Public Schools. Trained youth encourage their peers to take ownership of their actions without making determinations of guilt or innocence. They work with

their peers to determine the most suitable or appropriate consequences (e.g., writing essays or letters of apology and/or conducting community service). The program will continue to run once a week during the school year and Community Congress members will continue to meet with truant students and their parents in court to address additional family and/or youth needs.

- In August 2012, the US Department of Labor awarded the Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC) a third consecutive three-year grant for its **YouthBuild Training Program**. The HACC YouthBuild Program is a nonresidential, community-based alternative education program that provides classroom instruction and occupational skills training to at-risk youth and young adults ages 16 to 24. Many of the program participants have been in the juvenile justice system, are aging out of foster care, have dropped out of high school, or are otherwise at-risk of failing to reach key educational milestones or opportunities that lead to career fulfillment. The program places a strong emphasis on leadership development and community service.



*Camden City youth participate in a mock Youth Court Forum during a visit from the OJJDP as part of the National Youth Violence Forum planning process*

## ASPIRATIONAL INITIATIVES

- On behalf of a consortium of partners, the Camden City Mayors Office submitted a proposal to the US Department of Justice for a Community-Based Violence Prevention Demonstration Program in April 2013. This multidisciplinary partnership (the City of Camden, the Center for Family Services, the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, the Camden Metro Police Force, the Camden Board of Education, the Housing Authority, and the Camden Coalition of Health Care Providers) is planning to replicate the evidence-based Cure Violence model (formerly known as the CeaseFire Model) citywide in Camden City, New Jersey. **Cure Violence** is an anti-violence program of the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention aimed at reducing gun violence by using outreach workers and violence interrupters to mitigate conflict on the street and to prevent and interrupt potentially violent situations. The model also involves working with the police, implementing a strong public education campaign, and building community capacity to exercise informal social control. Representatives from the Mayor's Office and partners will be participating in an intensive learning exchange in June 2013 with Cure Violence in Chicago.
- **Trauma Recover and Empowerment Model for Communities** will aim to build a network of services that provide physical and mental health services focused on delivering community-based trauma and recovery of trauma related to substance abuse disorders and addictions.
- Identified as a major barrier to program participation for many Camden families and youth, the Task Force plans to develop a **Transportation Services** in Years 2 and 3 of the implementation plan that will help youth access the suite of programs, services, and activities offered through the

Plan, including both the OST afterschool/evening and weekend programs. This innovative initiative will address the city's critical issues related to transportation and youth safety and will incorporate lessons learned from a similar effort implemented in Vineland, New Jersey in partners with local churches and New Jersey Transit.

- In 2005, a community collaborative comprised of law enforcement, resident volunteers, city agencies, and local social service providers launched the **Camden City Curfew Project**, a communitywide effort to address broad concerns about youth loitering. The Camden City Curfew Project goals are to educate the community about Camden City's curfew ordinance and to link young people and their families with resources such as youth development programs and social services. The project also aims to keep youths safe by removing them from public places during the hours when most violent crime occurs. Largely run with the support of specially trained volunteers on topics ranging from crisis management to gangs, police take curfew violators to a neutral program location staffed by a trooper, a Camden officer, a caseworker, and volunteers. The project team screened each youth against a current violator list, an open warrant list, and a missing-persons list and called his or her parent/guardian to the curfew program. The caseworker offered a variety of services, ranging from classes to emergency services, and follows up with each family a few days after the incident. The Camden County Metro Police Force will re-launch this successful pilot program in Year 3 of the implementation plan.
- The **Truancy Project** will expand on the Curfew Project model focused on youth with chronic attendance issues. Program staff will frequent hot spot areas where youth are known to be when truant from school, transporting the youth back to school to work directly with school-based truancy and attendance teams or to drop in centers (such as YE2S). In either setting, program staff will develop case plans for the target youth and their families to reenroll in school, connect with alternative education plan, enroll in YouthBuild, etc. The city's Chaplaincy Program and Congress of Community and Faith-Based Organizations will have key roles in the Truancy Project.

### 3. ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY

#### KEY PARTNERS

**Chair:** Mayor Dana Redd

**Writer:** Victoria Gilbert, Executive Fellow, NJ Office of the Attorney General

Greg Carlin, Camden County Police Department

Orlando Cuevas, Camden Metro Deputy Chief, Camden Metro Police Force

Louis Tuthill, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, Rutgers University-Camden

Lanuel J. Ferguson, Public Safety Consultant

Robert Corrales, Communications Director, City of Camden

## SIGNATURE INITIATIVES

- At the core of the Plan’s enforcement strategy is to operationalize fully the new Camden County Metro Police Force that began to employ a **Community Policing Model** for the City of Camden in April 2013. The deployment of 401 police officers through the new Metro Police Force is the first step in a larger strategic initiative aimed at addressing the public safety issues that impact the quality of life for Camden residents. This model will use community-based policing strategies to cultivate relationships with residents, business owners, and community groups, which will enable police to react effectively to crime and disorder.
- The **Gun Buy Back Program** provides cash for guns at safe community-based locations while providing anonymity to those handing them in. The program launched in December 2012 by a multi-partner collaboration that includes the New Jersey Attorney General’s office, Camden City Police Department, the Camden County Prosecutor’s Office, the Mayor’s Office, and the faith-based community. To date, the program has collected 1,137 firearms and the success has led to a commitment of several more buy-back programs over the next two years.
- The city’s **Station House Adjustment Multi-Agency Life Line Program** is a diversion program, known as the MALL Program, used by law enforcement. This program encourages the police officer who is responsible for juveniles to ask the parent, guardian, or caregiver of the juvenile, and the victim, if possible, to discuss offenses together at the station house. This helps to prevent youth from ending up in the court system for minor offenses.
- The **Camden Police Cadet Academy** provides Camden youth and young adults interested in a career in law enforcement with opportunities to gain hands experience with basic police services. The program’s mission is to foster pride, integrity, and community leadership while serving as strong role models for youth with a future in law enforcement. Following a rigorous application process that includes an oral board interview and background investigation, approved participants attend the Camden Police Cadet Academy, a seven-week training course consisting of both classroom instruction and hands-on scenario training. Upon successful completion of the Academy program, participants receive the title of Camden Police First Year Cadet.
- The Camden Metro Police Force will continue to implement the **Gun Abatement Tactical Team (GATT) Initiative**, a mix of investigative, tactical, and operational strategies to reduce gun violence, apprehend weapons violators and seizure of firearms, target violent weapon offenders, and identify and target straw purchases of firearms. The GATT Initiative employs specially selected officers with the requisite training and experience at identifying subjects involved with weapons and the willingness to engage this dangerous element. The initiative includes tactics/operations (proactive, investigative, and preventive), targets/re-targets (gun arrest logs, identified violent offenders, and parolees), deconflictions (targets and target locations, and operations), reporting (daily lineups, daily worksheets, and statistical spreadsheets), and evaluation (weekly meetings, trends, engagement, arrests, seizures, impact, and positive debriefings).

## ASPIRATIONAL INITIATIVES

- The Task Force plans to replicate the **YouthStat Program**, an early intervention program aimed at helping children avoid gangs and violence that was recently pilot-tested in Trenton, New Jersey with positive results. The YouthStat Program aims to improve system coordination and collaboration among the agencies that handle juvenile case management. There are four levels of YouthStat: Level 1 focuses on prevention (runaways, truants, curfews, or city ordinance violations), Level 2 targets youth charged with misdemeanor crimes, Level 3 serves probation or youth charged with assaults, and Level 4, which focuses on hardcore gang membership and violent crime offenders. YouthStat promotes collaborative decision-making and peer review for accountability. In the efforts by school, city, county and state agencies to reclaim and redirect youth, YouthStat would bring stakeholders to the table for constructive work together – and its interventions are timely and very important to each individual youth in need.
- **Zero Casualties in Schools** is a program designed to create safer people and safer places by changing attitudes and behaviors. The program is a school-based, hands-on tool to interrupt violence by changing perpetrator’s attitudes and behaviors and fostering healing and recovery among victims of violence and abuse. The program tackles explosive issues of gender, race, power, and violence in a way that raises awareness and brings people together. It addresses gender, gang, gun, and other forms of violence. The Task Force will develop a Zero Casualties in Schools pilot program with the Camden City Public Schools beginning in fall 2015.
- **ICAN Technology** is an interactive community software system to help residents report crimes, concerns, issues in a way that is safe and confidential and that will get a timely response from law enforcement.

## 4. REENTRY STRATEGY

### KEY PARTNERS

**Chair:** Ramona Pearson-Hunter, Director of Office of Alternative Programs, Camden City Public Schools

**Writer:** Michael DeLeon, Walter Rand Institute

Steve Morocco, Juvenile Justice Commission/JPATS

Juan Rivera, CFS/Promise Neighborhood Family Success Center

Robert Mercado, Juvenile Justice Commission-Juvenile Parole

Ed Gittens, Camden YE2SS

Trevor Melton, Education Program Development Specialist, NJ Department of Education

Wanda Moore, Statewide Director of Reentry Programs NJ Office of the Attorney General

## SIGNATURE INITIATIVES

- Since 2004, the Center for Family Services has continued to offer a suite of mentoring programs, a research-based approach for reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors for youth violence prevention, including the city’s Mentoring Institute, which trains all potential mentors. **STEP**, a supportive internship program, pairs Camden teens on probation, ages 16–18, with a working professional who serves as a role model, coach, and advocate. Through this relationship, the teens learn work expectations and gain workplace experience.
- The Work Group operates the **New Jersey Youth Corps Program of Camden County**, a voluntary program for at-risk youth who are in transition to adulthood with the resources they need to become self-directed, self-sufficient individuals and productive and responsible members of their community. The Work Group will designate a specific number of slots in their signature career development and job readiness program for Camden reentry youth. The program will offer career and job planning, basic skills instruction, work-based experiences, counseling and case management, and placement services.

## ASPIRATIONAL INITIATIVES

- **Community Reentry Teams** will be composed of executive level representatives of youth service agencies in the City of Camden who, through interagency collaboration and partnership have the capacity to develop a shared vision that overcomes at the policy level, the obstacles to reentry success. In this way, agencies will be better able to share knowledge, resources, and expertise relevant to working with youth. Secondly, planning will be better able to avoid duplication. Lastly, establishment of this body will enable the city to be better prepared to pursue grant opportunities for the reentry population.
- The **Family Team Planning Initiative** will assign staff teams who will work with families prior to release and develop a Family Services plan with every youth 90 days prior to release. This will be a multi-partner initiative of the Juvenile Justice Commission, Juvenile Probation, Youth Advocate Program, Genesis, and the city’s Y2ES Centers.
- The Task Force will plan a system of care to ensure that incarcerated youth connect to a comprehensive suite of **Mental Health/Behavioral Services** and **Youth Substance Services** prior to their release. The service delivery providers will include Center for Family Services, Genesis Counseling, and FCIU. Youth Substance Abuse services will also target youth in juvenile detention and will establish an enrollment/link for continued substance abuse provision and recovery maintenance secured prior to release.
- Established in 2008, the **Camden Comprehensive Center for Fathers (CCCF)** is a public/private partnership that works with fathers owing child support. This program has increased child support payments in Camden County and has successfully re-united fathers with children, and assists program participants with job placement. CCCF is the outgrowth of two decades of deeply committed services, provided under the auspices of the Genesis Economic Self-Sufficiency

Program. CCCF meets the most critical needs of young dads released back into the community following extended periods of incarceration. CCCF links non-custodial fathers who are undereducated and unemployed, to supportive programs grounded in discipline, respect, and recognition of the role and value of fathers in the lives of their children and offers a structured environment, designed to enhance their education and marketability in the workforce. The program's primary objective is to provide each participant with a solid foundation upon which to build economic self-sufficiency and effective parenting skills.

## 5. Process and Outcome Evaluation

### INTRODUCTION

The Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force recognizes the importance of assessing the effectiveness of our Youth Violence Prevention Plan, monitoring implementation progress, and changing or modifying our core strategies, programs, or initiatives as needed to improve service delivery and expected outcomes and impacts on children, youth, and families. As such, the Camden partnership has developed a preliminary set of process and outcome objectives for each strategy that will continue to be refined and strengthened during each year of Plan implementation. The Task Force will implement an evaluation of the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan* that will include both an implementation study (Years 1-3) and an impact study (Years 2-3). The overall goals of the process and outcome evaluation will be to:

- Determine the extent to which our strategies are working as intended, reaching the intended participants, and meeting stated goals and objectives
- Measure the cost of efforts in relationship to benefits to Camden's children, youth, and families
- Monitor progress in strategy implementation and make improvements where needed
- Determine how well the Task Force partners function as a collaborate body and integrate programs, services, activities, and initiatives that comprise the Plan's four key strategy areas
- Inform the community about successes and challenges to implementation and realization of the plan
- Fulfill funding requirements for grant-funded programs and/or initiatives and report strategy-level results or positive changes in the community

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The evaluation plan will be implemented in phases in concert with the timeline for the Plan implementation. The chart below shows the evaluation framework for the first year implementation of the *Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan*.

Strategic Goals – Year 1	Process/Outcome Objectives	Performance Indicators
1. Implement a coordinated, integrated, and sustainable approach to reducing and preventing violence among Camden’s youth under age 24	1.1 Implement the strategic plan, including ongoing monitoring of implementation and progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of partner staff trained on the vision and implementation</li> <li>• Number of people trained in cross-agency, strategy-specific training</li> <li>• Number and types of revisions made to the strategic plan</li> <li>• Numbers of youth/clients served by strategy</li> </ul>
	1.2 Establish baseline and annual (Years 2 and 3) benchmarks for strategy-level outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of strategy team meetings held</li> </ul>
2. Coordinate, manage, evaluate, and sustain the implementation of the Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan	2.1 Provide training, capacity-building sessions, and technical assistance for the consortium of partners in the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework and the use of the <i>Results Scorecard</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of capacity-building and training sessions held</li> <li>• Number of partner organizations participating</li> <li>• Number of duplicated participants in those sessions.</li> </ul>
	2.2 Hire a Plan Coordinator to ensure the successful implementation of the <i>Camden City Youth Violence Prevention Plan</i> , including coordination and integration of service delivery across partners, effective use of data to drive decision making, and facilitate sustainability planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of recruitment and hiring</li> <li>• Number of proposals submitted and awarded in support of the plan</li> <li>• Number of meetings in which the identification of implementation challenges were discussed and addressed</li> </ul>
	2.3 Establish a results-based accountability system to allow partners to facilitate data collection, regularly share data, monitor implementation, and support both process and outcomes evaluation within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of the RBA performance measures and the population of the Plan’s Results Scorecard</li> <li>• Percentage of partners who attend more than one training and/or capacity-building session</li> </ul>

Strategic Goals – Year 1	Process/Outcome Objectives	Performance Indicators
	and across the plan’s four strategy areas (prevention, intervention, reentry, and enforcement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of partner organizations who use RBA in at least one program</li> <li>• Percentage of participants who report understanding RBA fundamentals and that they can apply RBA to their work</li> </ul>
	2.4 Implement the outcome evaluation for Plan Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased numbers of shootings by age of perpetrator, by at least 25%</li> <li>• Decreased number of homicides by age of perpetrator and victim, by at least 15%</li> <li>• Number of violence-related ER room visits by age of victim</li> <li>• Decreased numbers of juvenile arrests (for both violent and non-violent crimes)</li> </ul>
3. Substantially improve the culture within the Camden City Public Schools to increase social competence, prevent violence and illegal drug use, and improve overall academic success for all students	3.1 Establish a district-level PBIS Leadership Team to launch a system-wide approach to creating school environments that foster pro-social student behavior and a three-school pilot project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers and types of individuals on the PBIS Leadership Team</li> <li>• Numbers of planning meetings held</li> <li>• Numbers of team members that attend each meeting</li> </ul>
	3.2 Establish and implement key features and practices of PBIS, including ongoing training and technical assistance for both district- and school-level stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of district- and school-level team members who attend more than one training and/or technical assistance session</li> <li>• Percentage of participants with increased understanding PBIS fundamentals and the application of universal prevention activities</li> </ul>
4. Begin to change community norms in Camden City to discourage and not encourage violence	4.1 Replicate the Cure Violence model (formerly known as the Ceasefire model) in four target neighborhoods in Camden, including the following strategies – detection and interruption, behavior change, and change community norms about violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of Camden residents with appropriate beliefs about violence and the perceived risks of engaging in violence (pre/post administration of a <i>Cure Violence-Camden Resident Survey</i>)</li> </ul>

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Teamwork and collaboration have been a crucial aspect of the Camden Forum on Youth Violence Prevention Task Force. Various agencies created relationships that previously did not exist. Regarding sustainability, the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General has committed funding for the facilitation of the Task Force through the end of FY 2014. The Mayor's Office, the Center for Family Services, and members of the Task Force Executive Council are committed to resource development and sustainability planning and will incorporate resource development into the day to day operations of the plan implementation activities to ensure successful sustainability. For example, sustainability will be a standing agenda item at every Executive Council meeting, including the development of annual resource development goals. The Plan's process and outcome evaluation will also be a critical tool, helping Camden to track and document achievements that can be used to garner financial and other support for the Plan and its strategies with the ultimate goal of institutionalizing the effort as an ongoing city initiative.

Violence is a complex problem and we must address all of the problems that impact our youth and lead to the violence issues we have today – educational failure, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of employment opportunities, parental and family supports.

Each day law enforcement officers arrest more than 150 children for violent crime. Violence among youth – especially gun and gang related violence – is a growing problem in Camden and through America's urban areas. Youth from low-income backgrounds and who are black and Hispanic are alarmingly and disproportionately more susceptible to being victims of violence, participating in gang activity, and becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. As is the sad and unacceptable truth in poverty-stricken neighborhoods and communities across the country, the current conditions in Camden too often creates a sense of despair among our youth. Without a comprehensive, full scale, long-term approach to addressing the issues facing our youth – Camden's young people will likely be denied opportunity to be safe, healthy, and successful.