

Improving Community Safety through Social Connections

July 2025

The Issue

Strengthening social connections is deeply interwoven with public health efforts to enhance community safety because connected communities have lower rates of crime and violence. In addition, when community members feel more connected they also feel a greater sense of comfort and belonging and are more likely to collectively take action to prevent crime.

Webinar Highlights

Ruben Cantu, Director of Safety and Wellbeing at Prevention Institute, shared an overview of the organization's Community Safety Realized Framework and described evidence-based strategies for improving safety and connection in communities. John Reid, Director of Community Engagement for Urban Family, shared strategies that have been successful to create safe and connected neighborhoods for communities of color in South Seattle.

- Community safety strategies should be employed before, during, and after incidences of violence. For example, preventative strategies can include working on factors that increase social equity such as voting rights, living wages, equitable community investment, and developing spaces and opportunities for folks to connect. Strategies to employ when incidences occur include programs that provide high-touch personalized opportunities for those involved in or at risk for firearm violence. And after-the-fact strategies include those that focus on healing and restoration.
- The Community Safety Realized Framework illustrates two public health pathways: one leads to violence, the other to safety and healing. A range of drivers, systems, and factors influence each outcome. Social and racial equity are a focus on the safety pathway as they create equitable institutions and systems. Equitable institutions and systems, in turn, create community conditions with lower risk factors for violence and higher protective factors for safety.
- Strategies that strengthen community protective factors include building and maintaining safe parks and green spaces with accessible programming, greening vacant lots, and improving the built environment, such as well-lit public spaces.
- Efforts that improve individual and relational protective factors cover areas such as street outreach and violence interruption, social emotional learning, positive youth development and youth employment.

- Urban Family is dedicated to transforming the lives of youth and families in South Seattle by weaving a web of care and support around Black and Brown communities that foster resilience, empowerment, and community well-being. They are part of a network with other non-profit organizations, each covering geographical segments and providing unique content expertise across the broader Seattle region.
- Urban Family promotes community safety through outreach, crisis response, and strong partnerships with schools, law enforcement, and other sectors. Their community-rooted team provides case management, safety planning, and on-site support in high-risk areas, while their Safe Passage programs and safety hubs help protect youth and families in real time.

Access more information from the webinar: [recording](#) and [slides](#).

Resources

REPORT

- The [Community Safety Realized: Public Health Pathways to Preventing Violence](#) report and framework was developed by Prevention Institute and Big Cities Health Coalition. It describes how the science and practice of public health and the values of equity and justice can shape community-driven, multi-sector approaches to safety. May 2021

TOOLS

- [Health Equity in Practice](#) is a set of online modules developed by Prevention Institute and others to help violence prevention partners integrate health equity and racial justice principles and strategies into their practices, programming, and policy work. 2021
- [Tool for Health & Resilience In Vulnerable Environments](#) (THRIVE) is a framework and tool for understanding how structural drivers play out at the community level in terms of the social-cultural, physical/built, and economic/ educational environments. 2015

COMMUNITY EXAMPLE

- [SYNC Safety 2.0: Continuing a National Effort to Heal, Invest in, and Celebrate Our Communities](#). This blog describes Strategies for Youth and Neighborhood Centered (SYNC) Safety, a Center for Disease Control and Prevention funded project designed to increase partnerships with community-based organizations that serve Black and Brown communities with inequitable risk for violence. 2025

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

