

Child Impact Statement for:

Defending Childhood Initiative

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Operation Safe Community

The impact on children directly or indirectly affected by the effort will be:

Extremely Positive

The effort will create or greatly enhance resources, services, or facilities that provide access to or protection of assets children need in order to prosper.



Evaluation

Evaluation of the stated concerns according to how they may affect children and families:

Violence permeates Shelby County, Tennessee, triggering a local cycle of crime, violence, and abuse that threatens the future of many of our 245,712 children 0-17. The purpose of Project Safe Futures is to break this cycle with a coordinated community response to prevent and reduce the impact of children's exposure to violence.

Evaluation of the significance of the effort's concerns according to how important they may or may not be to children and families:

This planning grant is 1 of 8 across the nation chosen by the Attorney General Eric Holder's office, Department of Justice. Once this plan is completed and is chosen by the Department of Justice, it will receive FULL IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING. If not chosen to receive full funding, it will receive partial funding. Shelby County wins either way.

the risk to the health of our community cannot be overstated. The cycle of violence in homes, schools and communities threatens the future of many of our 245,712 children and youth age 0 -17. Just over half (51%) of residents are African-Americans and 4.5% are Hispanic or Latino. Almost a third (28%) of children live in poverty, as well as 20% of families with children and 41% of female householders with children. Compared to Shelby County overall, Memphis, Shelby County's largest city, has a higher percentage of people under age 18 (36%); a higher percentage of African-Americans (63%) and Hispanics or Latinos (5.1%); more residents living below poverty (23%); and more families (28%) and female-led households (44%) with children in poverty.

Memphis' crime rate is two to three times higher than national rates across all crimes, with the Memphis MSA rated number three in violent crimes in 2009.

Many neighborhoods with the most violent crime also have more children as a percentage of population who are regular witnesses to homicides, assaults, and gunfire. Just over 40% of high school-age students in 2007 were in a physical fight themselves, compared to 35.5% nationally.

Violence including gangs, is a problem inside the Memphis City Schools, a district of 110,000 students. In 2007, students had more exposure to school violence than the national average, including percentage of students in a physical fight on school property (18% vs. 12%); those threatened or injured with a weapon (9% vs. 7.8%); and those physically abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend (12% vs. 9.9%) (40% vs. 35.5%).

In 2009, 1,383 students were arrested on school premises, with 1,181 students already arrested in 2010.5 Perhaps most troubling; violence in our homes, both directly against children and domestic violence that exposes children to violence, is pervasive and growing.

Between 2001 and 2008, domestic violence crimes increased by 52%, with domestic violence comprising approximately one-half (135,917) of crimes against persons in Memphis and one-third (57,608) of crimes against persons in the rest of Shelby County.



46.6% of all women in Shelby County have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime vs. 25% nationally. 55% of local women in poverty had at least one experience of physical or sexual violence as adults. Of these, 51.5% reported had at least one child under age 18 living with them when the abuse occurred and 34% reported that their child(ren) witnessed the violence.

Exposure to intimate partner violence may frequently co-occur with other types of violence such as child maltreatment and violence occurring in the neighborhood, school or community. Indeed, Shelby County has a high prevalence of child abuse and child maltreatment, with 6,697 referrals to the state's child welfare agency concerning child abuse/neglect and other family concerns in 2009.

Also in that year, the Memphis Child Advocacy Center (MCAC) reviewed 2,568 reports of child abuse, or an average of seven reports of child abuse per day based on a 365-day year.

Some children and adolescents will recover from trauma, such as child maltreatment, domestic violence and community violence with great resilience. Many others will show signs of distress or develop psychiatric conditions. The effects of exposure to violence often triggers a cycle of on-going violence, as effects of exposure can persist into adolescence and include increased risk of victimizing others or being victimized, delinquent behaviors, substance use, and/or emotional problems.

This cycle appears significant in Shelby County.

Evaluation of the stated goals according to how they may measurably improve or worsen the conditions affecting children and families:

The projects goals are to 1) improve the quality of programs and services to prevent and reduce impact of children's exposure to violence; 2) establish a comprehensive, coordinated culturally-competent system of prevention, intervention, treatment and response programs and services to prevent and reduce impact of children's exposure to violence through a "no wrong door approach"; 3) increase family access and utilization of high quality programs and services; 4) improve public policy and funding to build and sustain a coordinated community response; and 5) establish a community-wide continuous quality improvement system to measure, monitor, report and inform system improvements to improve child and family outcomes.

Evaluation of the action steps according to how they may create intended or unintended consequences affecting the well-being of children and families:

The project will accomplish these by building on existing collaborations to establish a Project Safe Future Council, conduct a community scan and assessment, and facilitate diverse stakeholders, including youth and families, to develop a comprehensive, coordinated community response to childhood exposure to violence.

Evaluation of the effort according to the benefits and risks it poses for children and families:

This proposed vision and planning process for Project Safe Futures builds on highly successful community-wide strategies and infrastructure that have been in place for a number of years: Memphis Fast Forward Community Revitalization Plan & Early Success Coalition. Numerous favorable protocols, policies,



and/or legislation provide evidence of administrative and policy support. Project Safe Futures will use the infrastructure provided by Memphis Fast Forward and Early Success Coalition to build on these elements and accelerate the planning, implementation and sustainability of Project Safe Futures.



Research

Domains of child well-being potentially affected by the effort:

Safety, Early Childhood Development, Education, Home Environment, Health, Mental Health and indirectly Family Income-All domains are potentially impacted by this effort.

Conditions surrounding children and families within the domains identified:

data already provided in narrative.

Consequences the effort may pose for children and families:

There are only consequences are if the Memphis and Shelby County community continues to fail in promoting a healthy and safe community for all children despite the geography of their birth, as well as in prevention of and improved coordinated response to domestic/family/sexual violence.

Resources that may further inform or enable the effort:

The Faith Community, Victims Services Community, Criminal Justice System, Government, Schools & Universities, Healthcare community, and all civic societies-all are resources in a coordinated community.

