

For Information

DATE: May 8, 2012

REPORT TITLE: **YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION UPDATE**FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services  
Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services**OBJECTIVE:**

To provide an update regarding the work being done to address youth violence prevention in the Region of Peel.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- In 2005, the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee and Network was formed.
- The Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network Steering Committee transformed into an Advisory Committee in 2010 with the creation of the Peel Children and Youth Initiative.
- The Youth Violence Prevention Working Groups continue their community outreach and youth engagement activities in collaboration with the Peel Children and Youth Initiative.
- In 2009, the Ontario Government released the **Roots of Youth Violence** report which presented 30 major recommendations and four high level objectives to describe the outcomes required to address youth violence as a societal issue.
- The Region and its community partners have advocated for a provincial response to the report and continue to work to build community capacity to address youth violence.

**DISCUSSION****1. Background**

The Region has been involved in efforts to address youth violence for several years, beginning with the formation of the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network in 2005, led by a Steering Committee with representation from Regional Councillors, Human and Health Services departments, Caledon OPP, Peel Regional Police, Peel District School Boards and the Safe City Organizations. The vision of the Network was to make youth violence prevention a priority issue in the community by increasing awareness, engaging the community and strengthening networks of involved partners.

As Council is aware, the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network Steering Committee transformed into an Advisory Committee with the formation of the Peel Children and Youth Initiative (PCYI). PCYI was formed to tackle issues affecting all children and youth from 0 to 24 years of age. The creation of PCYI was also driven by the need to reduce duplication of effort and find ways to, where appropriate, integrate and support the activities of youth

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violence prevention work in Peel, Success By Six Peel, and the Student Support Leadership Initiative.

### a) Provincial Roots of Youth Violence Report

In 2009, the Ontario government released the **Roots of Youth Violence** report which presented 30 major recommendations and four high level objectives to describe the outcomes required to address youth violence as a societal issue. This report was well received and Regional Council resolved that the government should implement its recommendations together with quick action and funding to support the report's 12 structural recommendations. Areas for specific action in the region of Peel were identified as:

- Keeping our public buildings and schools open after regular school hours;
- Sustainable funding for youth programs and community groups;
- Development of a seamless support for children of all ages; and
- Shared advocacy for youth safety.

## 2. Findings

To date, the provincial government has not issued an update regarding progress on any of the recommendations outlined in the **Roots of Youth Violence** report. Despite this, the Region and its community partners have both advocated for provincial response to the report and have worked to build community capacity to address youth violence.

### a) Advocacy

Regional community partners have achieved numerous accomplishments to address the root causes of youth violence. The impact of these initiatives would have the best chance at lasting impact if there was a provincial strategy in place, as recommended in the **Roots of Youth Violence** report. Given the importance of advocacy in relation to youth violence prevention activities, staff are collaborating with community partners, together with the Peel Children and Youth Initiative (PCYI), that work directly or indirectly on youth violence prevention and seek to work with partners to advocate on behalf of youth to bring youth violence prevention to the provincial table and secure adequate resources to ensure positive outcomes for youth.

Recent advocacy efforts also include submission of a briefing note addressed to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services in August 2011 encouraging the government to provide an update and move on the recommendations from the 2008 **Roots of Youth Violence** report.

In addition, one of the roots of youth violence is the lack of mental health services for youth. As reported to Council, through Peel's advocacy on mental health and addictions, in June 2011 the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) released the Open Minds, Healthy Minds: Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, which has a strong focus on children and youth mental health. As part of this, the MOHLTC and Ministry of Children and Youth Services have each made funding announcements aimed at enhancing access to mental health and addictions services for children and youth. For Peel, the additional funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is being used for:

- Ten (10) mental health nurses in schools in Mississauga-Halton and Central West LHINs; and

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- Forty-eight (48) full time equivalents (FTEs) for child and youth mental health workers, some for upstream prevention in schools and some for community counselling, treatment and walk-in clinics.

These investments from the province are intended to increase service provision and reduce waitlists for children and youth regarding mental health issues. This represents a positive step forward. Once fully implemented, service providers will assess whether this funding is enough to address the unmet needs in Peel.

Another positive move by the province includes the provincial government's Safe Ontario's Safe Schools Strategy. This strategy recognizes that violence in schools, including bullying and sexual harassment, is a serious issue. Through the strategy, students will have the opportunity to learn about gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behaviours in the classroom. The government also introduced the *Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act* which requires the reporting of all serious and violent incidents including sexual assault. Each school in Ontario is mandated to address bullying in their curriculum to promote a safer and more welcoming learning environment.

### **b) Community Capacity Building**

Community capacity building is a key role for staff working on youth violence prevention. The initiatives and results form part of the overall input to address the associated term of Council priority which is to build community capacity. In order to help inform this work a tool called the Youth Violence Prevention Continuum (Continuum) was developed by staff. The Continuum maps out a variety of evidence-based interventions along a range from prevention (building safe and healthy communities) through to intervention (treatment and support). A full description of the Youth Violence Prevention Continuum is located in Appendix I.

The Continuum is helping to inform the work of staff with community agencies, police, safe city organizations, the Peel Children and Youth Initiative (PCYI) and community stakeholders. It has been used to map out efforts in Peel to address the roots of youth violence and is a tool to help determine where the current gaps and opportunities are in Peel region. This ensures that a well-informed and comprehensive approach is utilized which reduces duplication of effort by various community agencies and local government. Information about programs/approaches that have been proven to be effective/ineffective is shared with community partners.

Staff and their community partners have achieved numerous accomplishments while working together and mobilizing community partners to address the root causes of youth violence, while ensuring appropriate measurement and evaluation of initiatives. For example, the Region is part of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination. Racism and discrimination are identified as roots of youth violence. Community partners and the Region are also working together to address issues related to poverty, youth employment, housing, healthy school climate and family health, and community outreach initiatives to address the diverse issues within identified priority neighbourhoods. A detailed update is contained in Appendix II. Some highlights are as follows:

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**i) Youth Violence Prevention Working Groups**

Two working groups, with representatives from external agencies, continue community outreach and youth engagement activities with community partners. A detailed description, including the Express Yourself initiative and an agency-focused support and collaborative information exchange initiative is contained in Appendix II.

**ii) Collaboration with Safe City Organizations and Police**

Staff continue to collaborate with organizations such as Brampton Safe City, Safe City Mississauga and police to ensure the youth violence prevention agenda remains a priority. Examples of our collaborative efforts are detailed in Appendix II.

**iii) Regional Programs and Strategies Dealing with the Roots of Youth Violence**

In addition, there are a number of other things that community partners and Regional staff are involved in that address the roots of youth violence along the Youth Violence Prevention Continuum. These efforts focus on advocacy and building community capacity. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Mental health advocacy;
- Anti-poverty efforts;
- Anti-racism;
- Bullying prevention;
- Affordable housing; and
- Neighbourhood development.

Yet another example is the Region's "Summer Job Challenge" which is geared to giving 75 youth the opportunity to obtain eight weeks of employment during the summer of 2012.

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**CONCLUSION**

Staff, within the roles of advocacy, community capacity building and social marketing/education, will continue to work on a number of fronts to address the complex issue of youth violence prevention in the region of Peel while striving for useful measurement and evaluation. Staff will continue advocacy efforts related to the recommendations in the **Roots of Youth Violence** report. In particular the recommendation that schools be true community hubs and open after regular school hours for use by the community. As well, staff will continue to work collaboratively with the safe city organizations, Caledon OPP and Peel Regional Police to share program ideas, best practices and program expansion where appropriate.



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Commissioner of Health Services



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**Approved for Submission:**



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c. Legislative Services

## APPENDIX I

## Youth Violence Prevention Continuum

The Youth Violence Prevention Continuum (Continuum) was developed based on a review of effective interventions for youth violence prevention. The Continuum serves as a reference point to ensure staff working on youth violence prevention strategies are equipped to help educate and build community capacity regarding strategies that have been proven to work through evidence-based literature reviews. A comprehensive approach requires a wide range of interventions to co-exist and support one another and has been shown to reduce youth violence. The Continuum is shown on page three of this appendix (Appendix I).

## Navigating the Youth Violence Prevention Continuum

The Continuum is structured into four major categories of intervention, with the intensity and cost of interventions per capita being lower on the prevention end (left), increasing at the intervention, treatment and support end (right) of the Continuum. Some interventions span more than one category; while Child and Youth Mental Health Services spans the entire Continuum.

The four major categories of intervention are:

- 1. Community Foundations:** these strategies seek to prevent violence before it occurs and can be delivered to the whole population. The interventions address many of the societal, structural and cultural roots of youth violence such as health, economic, educational, and social policies that affect economic or social inequality, availability of weapons and societal norms. Interventions include:
  - Increasing opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills;
  - Changing societal norms to reject violence; and
  - Reducing inequality, racism and poverty.

Efforts decrease risk factors and increase protective factors that can affect young people's chances of being involved in violence later in life. Other strategies seek to prevent violence directly, for example, by modifying the places in which violence occurs.

- 2. Early Prevention:** these strategies are also delivered to the whole population but provide more opportunities for training programs to particular groups (i.e. parents, communities that are at higher risk) and with an eye to addressing personal risk and protective factors against youth violence. Examples of interventions include:
  - Parenting programs;
  - School-based prevention programs; and
  - Social skills development programs.
- 3. Intervention:** these strategies target children and youth at increased risk for violence and/or those who exhibit early signs of violent behaviour. The increased risk could be due to neighbourhood characteristics, relationships and family situation as well as personal factors such as mental health or socioeconomic status. Interventions include:
  - Mentoring programs;
  - Gang prevention programs; and
  - School based prevention programs.

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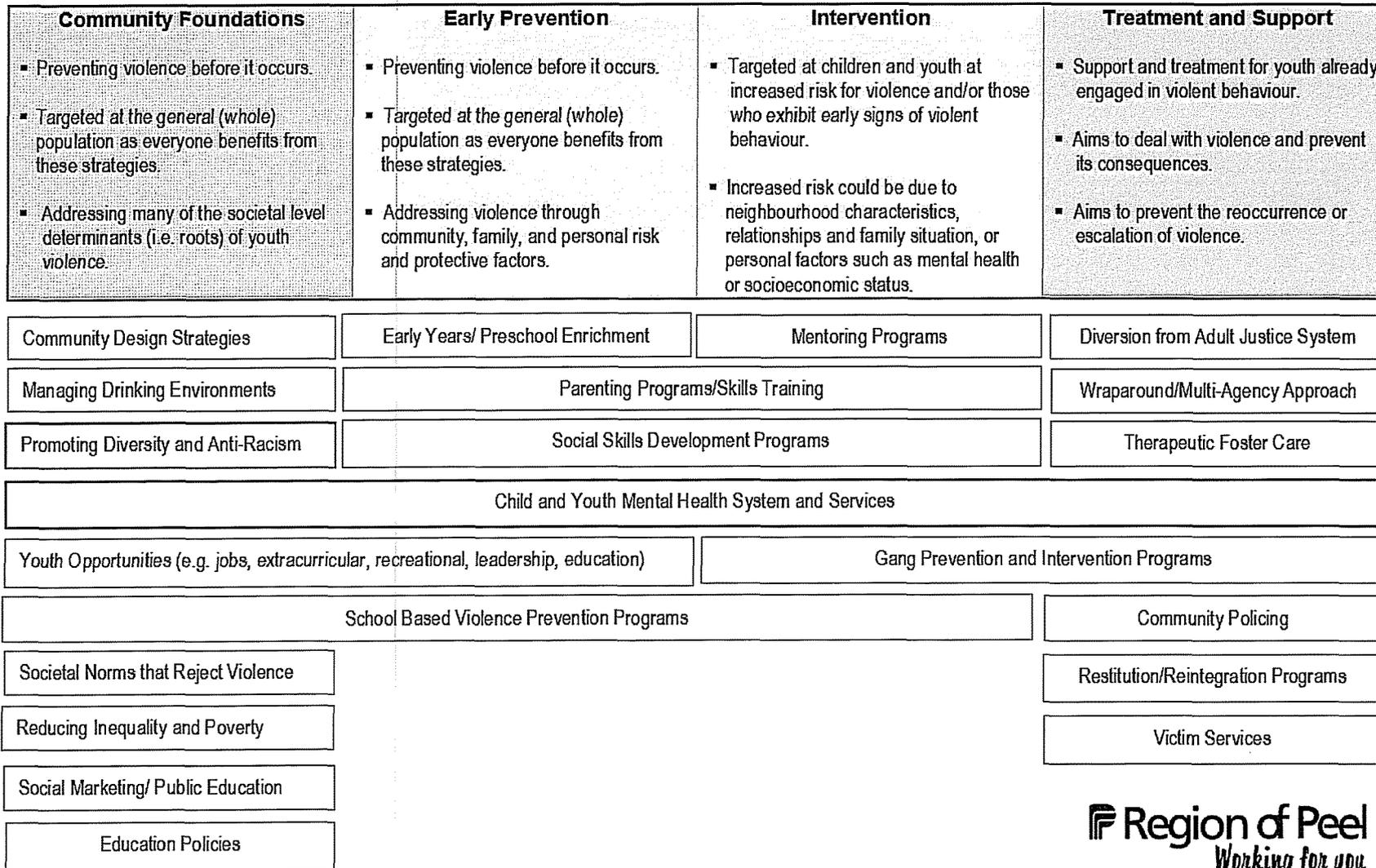
4. **Treatment and Support:** these interventions involve providing support and treatment to youth already engaged in violent behaviour. They are the most costly and aim to deal with the existing violence, prevent its consequences, reoccurrence and escalation. Example of interventions include:

- Programs which divert youth away from the adult justice system;
- Restitution/reintegration programs;
- Victim services; and
- Multi-agency/wraparound approach.

### Youth Violence Prevention Continuum

A comprehensive approach to youth violence prevention requires addressing effective and promising intervention strategies, across a continuum of prevention. The role of the Community Health Initiatives Team includes: Advocacy and Public Policy, Community Mobilization and Capacity Building, Knowledge Transfer and Social Marketing/Public Education in collaboration with our community partners in Peel across this prevention continuum.

Advocacy and Public Policy ~ Community Mobilization and Capacity Building ~ Knowledge Transfer ~ Social Marketing



**APPENDIX II**

**Youth Violence Prevention - Update on Initiatives**

Many initiatives of the Region's Health and Human Services departments address the complex issue of youth violence prevention in the Region of Peel. Staff collaborate with community partners in the Region that work directly or indirectly to address the root causes of youth violence while ensuring appropriate measurement and evaluation of initiatives. Updates on initiatives are detailed below.

**1) Community Capacity Building**

**a) Services and Supports for Youth Working Group**

The Working Group members developed the grass roots initiative called 'Express Yourself' with involvement from the IMPACT Youth Advisory Group. The initiative kicked off with the Express Yourself Contest (March 26 to May 4, 2012 ending during National Youth Week). The purpose of the initiative is to draw awareness to the issue of youth violence prevention in Peel. The contest is part of a larger strategic initiative to inform and assist agencies in Peel delivering programs and services to Peel youth. It was designed to inspire youth to express, in a creative way, how youth violence impacts them and help define, from their perspectives, what can be done to prevent youth violence in the Peel community. A showcase event took place at the Rose Theatre in Brampton on the evening of May 11, 2012. Contest submissions will also be displayed on the [www.voice4peelyouth.ca](http://www.voice4peelyouth.ca) website and at some agencies serving youth in Peel.

Partners in the contest include Brampton Safe City, City of Brampton, City of Mississauga, Elizabeth Fry Society of Peel-Halton, Malton Neighbourhood Services, Nexus Youth Services, Peel Children and Youth Initiative, Punjabi Community Health Services, and Rapport Youth and Family Services, and Safe City Mississauga.

**b) Families and Education Working Group**

The program evaluations and participant feedback from the Middle Years Parent and Youth Program were analyzed in Fall 2011. Overall, bullying was a strong area for concern for parents. Parents also indicated the need for additional support and resources regarding communication strategies and assisting their child with homework. Based on this feedback, a session was offered in January 2012, at McHardy Court in Brampton, which addressed the above mentioned issues. Some of the needs identified by parents overlap with the parenting aspect of Safe City Mississauga's child tutoring initiative called Aspire. Discussions have begun regarding the opportunities to expand the Aspire Program across Peel and will be discussed with community partners in the coming months.

**c) Collaboration**

Staff continue collaboration with key agencies to ensure the youth violence prevention agenda remains a focus. Some examples of collaborative efforts include:

**i) Safe City Organizations and Police**

- Brampton Safe City's strategic planning day to assist them in charting their future course;

- Safe City Mississauga's "Partners for a Safer Community" event to develop a crime prevention framework for Peel;
- Assisting Safe City Mississauga related to the evaluation and measurement of both the Youth Ambassador Program as well as the Aspire Program to support planning and implementation;
- Staff shared information with Peel Regional Police regarding effective youth violence prevention interventions as well as in measurement and evaluation;
- Staff are exploring opportunities for IMPACT Youth Advisory Group members to get more involved with partnering organizations; and
- Discussions with Caledon OPP, while they are going through staff transition they remain dedicated to continuing their involvement with the Youth Violence Prevention Advisory Committee.
- Peel Regional Police and Caledon OPP both run youth violence prevention programs in Peel schools.

#### ii) Peel Children and Youth Initiative

Two of Peel Children and Youth Initiative's (PCYI's) three strategies closely align with the prevention initiatives undertaken by the Youth Violence Prevention Working Groups, allowing for opportunities to partner. The strategies are Thriving Children - Stronger Future, Opportunities for Children and Youth in Peel (a research and planning report) as well as Peel's Kids Participate, a strategy to increase enrollment in healthy recreational, skill building and after-school opportunities.

- Staff from Peel Regional Police, Human Services and Health Services are on the Management Committee to ensure the work of staff is aligned to the goal of PCYI and there is no duplication of effort;
- Staff also provide information to the Research and Education Working Group as well as the Recreation and After School Strategy and will be involved in the upcoming associated Strategy Working Group; and
- A member of IMPACT Youth Advisory Group joined the Youth Advisory Council of PCYI.

#### iii) Peel Healthy Schools

Schools and staff from Public Health are partnering to create, supportive and healthy school environments for children and youth to adopt healthy lifestyles.

#### iv) Families First

The Families First Program provides structured recreation opportunities for children and youth enrolled in the program. These children might not otherwise be able to participate in the recreational activities.

#### d) Youth Reintegration Committee

Staff participate on the Youth Reintegration Committee with membership from multiple sectors in Peel. This initiative stems from the 2009 Mississauga Youth Plan which recommended that federal funding be sought to address youth violence, gang issues and gang prevention. The Committee's goal is to collaboratively develop a program model that will fill a gap in services for youth aged 14-24 who have come into contact with the justice system and are not being positively reintegrated back into their community. They are particularly interested in services for gang affiliated youth.

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Committee members recently partnered with Brampton Safe City as the lead agency, Safe City Mississauga, and PCYI, to pursue federal funding for early prevention, gang prevention and intervention programming. A partner agency will be responsible for the implementation of the program model.

**e) Agency Support and Collaboration for Information Exchange**

Stemming from agency requests for greater information exchange and support in the areas of program evaluation, staff have embarked on an initiative (yet to be named) to address these issues as they relate to youth violence prevention. The purposes of this initiative are:

- Support community-based organizations in Peel to effectively link research evidence to action, with the end goal of building capacity to achieve the highest quality programming and service delivery to residents to support the health issue of youth violence prevention; and
- Increase communication and sharing of information among agencies.

Staff are developing a related agency-focused website to support this work and are also collaborating with a researcher from the University of Western Ontario to assist by providing input and advice on the methodology, implementation and evaluation of the initiative.

**f) Youth in Action Fund**

Through the Community Investment Fund and Neighbourhood Capacity Support Strategy, the Region invests funding within identified neighbourhoods and non-profit organizations with the goal of addressing and strengthening youth programs and services. In particular, through a partnership with United Way of Peel Region, costs are shared jointly for a Peel youth opportunity through the Youth in Action Fund. This grant program is intended to empower youth to influence social change in Peel.

**g) Inter-Agency Discussion**

As part of continuing work to build capacity with community agencies and partners, staff engaged in a dialogue with agency partners to discuss current opportunities in the community and the existing services and supports for the Youth Working Group and the Families and Education Working Group and mobilize the community to address priority gaps identified. The outcome of this discussion was the identification of two key priority areas to work on in the next two to three years to ensure lasting impact of our collective efforts on youth violence prevention. The areas, which align with the work of Human Services and Peel Children and Youth Initiative, are:

- Youth Opportunities: jobs, extracurricular activities, recreation, mentorship, leadership and education; and
- Poverty and Inequality: Human Services staff are leading the development of a framework for the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy which will include issues pertaining to youth. Linkages have been made with staff in Human Services to avoid duplication of effort.

**2) Summer Job Challenge**

The 2012 Summer Job Challenge Program, led by Human Services, will hire 75 youth to work in agencies and at the Region of Peel during the summer of 2012. Many of these

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youth would not otherwise have an employment opportunity and chance to learn valuable new skills this summer.