



# PHILADELPHIA'S STRATEGIC PLAN TO **PREVENT YOUTH VIOLENCE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
September 2013

# If there were a Bill of Rights for Philadelphia's children, the first and most important would be the right to be safe: at home, at school, and on the streets.

But for too many of Philadelphia's children, life is anything but safe: Large numbers have been the victims of violence, and many who have escaped physical injury have been traumatized by violent incidents against their families and neighbors. Research shows that it is these very young people who are at most risk of eventually perpetrating violence.

Since Mayor Michael Nutter took office in 2008, Philadelphia has reduced violent crime by 15% and property crimes by 9%. This modest success does not change the fact that a shocking number of the city's children, particularly African American children, remain in danger of becoming victims or eventual perpetrators.

Presented by the Philadelphia Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative (YVPC), this Youth Violence Prevention Strategic Plan outlines a collective effort to turn Philadelphia into one of the country's safest cities. It aims to do this by 1) embedding youth violence prevention and reduction in the work and priority of every relevant city agency; 2) ensuring that youth and high impact communities are engaged in the development and ownership of the strategy; and 3) taking a long-term approach.

The Collaborative was created in fall 2012 when the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) selected Philadelphia to be among the ten cities participating in the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. The National Forum is a network of communities and federal agencies that work together, share information and build local capacity to prevent and reduce youth violence and build comprehensive solutions at the local and national levels.

Emphasizing the urgency of the situation, Mayor Michael A. Nutter called on the city to redouble its efforts on youth violence prevention. Driven by the Mayor's Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, Everett Gillison, over 30 leaders from government, academia and other stakeholder groups in Philadelphia are part of the Collaborative, which is co-chaired by Anne Marie Ambrose, Commissioner of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, Kevin Dougherty, Administrative Judge of the Family Court of Philadelphia, and Charles Ramsey, Philadelphia Police Commissioner.

The Collaborative members represent the city's leadership across a wide cross-section of disciplines in recognition that many factors contribute to and can alleviate youth violence. Through their participation, the Collaborative members ensure that the city's efforts to alleviate poverty, enhance workforce development, and reform juvenile justice, for example, are aligned with this strategic plan to prevent youth violence.

YVPC's executive director is Richard Greenwald, a Stoneleigh Foundation Fellow. Nine other individuals from city government devote a portion of their time to this work. In all, over 125 people have been involved in workgroups to create this plan, which is focused on the National Forum's priority strategies: Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement, Reentry, Data & Evaluation.

Lastly, this plan recognizes that the youth violence prevention strategy must be a living document that responds to and reflects community needs, with community ownership and participation, so that it will be sustainable across mayoral administrations. Therefore, this plan will continue to evolve as a result of a collaborative process that includes diverse stakeholders.

# 5,051

**NUMBER OF PHILADELPHIA YOUTH  
SHOT OR KILLED IN THE LAST 6 YEARS**

## **STRATEGIC FOCUS**

Youth violence has many root causes: among them, joblessness and poverty; poor educational opportunities; a lack of adult role models; barriers to reentry for those who have been incarcerated; and a cycle of trauma and violence.

These causes are tightly intertwined and focusing on them individually has been demonstrated to be ineffective. A major task of this strategic plan is to address the causes simultaneously by aligning the work of multiple city agencies with that of other community-based service providers and the private sector. This will require concerted attention to collecting, analyzing and using data to 1) devise effective and sustainable strategies that address community need and 2) inform how the city directs its resources of time, talent and investments.

With technical assistance from the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, this strategic plan will create a structure in which each city agency contributes to the collection and assessment of key data points that enable the Director and Co-Chairs to regularly evaluate progress, and report to the Mayor on strategy outcomes.

YVPC's strategic plan will focus on one of Philadelphia's highest-crime, highest-need neighborhoods, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District in North Philadelphia. The 22<sup>nd</sup> District is unfortunately notorious for some of the highest and most violent crime rates in the city. These conditions have persisted for generations and vividly illustrate the challenge of breaking the cycle of violence.

# THE PROBLEM IN CONTEXT

Over the past six years, 5,051 young Philadelphians ages 14 to 24 have been shot or killed. Many more young people have witnessed violence, some multiple times.

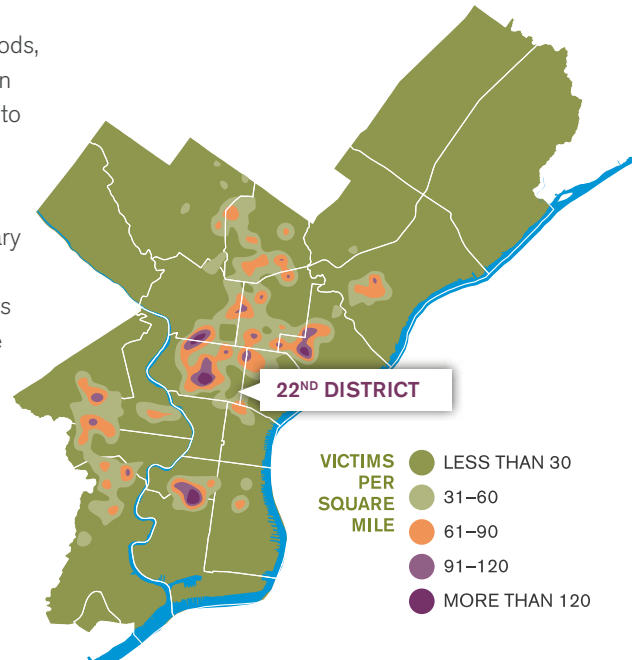
In 2012, 331 people were murdered in Philadelphia. Nearly 40% of those victims were youth 24 and younger.

African Americans in particular are disproportionately affected: 75% of the homicide victims and approximately 80% of those arrested for homicide are black men, predominately young, between the ages of 17-22.

Violence continues to be clustered in the most impoverished and segregated neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

For several Philadelphia neighborhoods, violence is considered by some as an appropriate and even expected way to solve a conflict.

A map of the geographic density of the 1,589 shootings between January 1, 2011 and June 30, 2013 depicts troublesome and persistent hot spots of violence, including the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District in North Philadelphia.



HOMICIDES IN PHILADELPHIA



## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE TARGET AREA: THE 22<sup>ND</sup> DISTRICT

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District is located in North Philadelphia and bounded by Poplar, Lehigh, 11th, and 33rd Streets, representing 4.31 square miles. Within the District, there are approximately 70,000 residents, approximately 4.7% of the city's population. Nearly 53% (about 37,000) of the residents are youth under the age of 24 (This total includes some Temple University students.)<sup>1</sup> About three-quarters of the population – 76% – are African Americans.

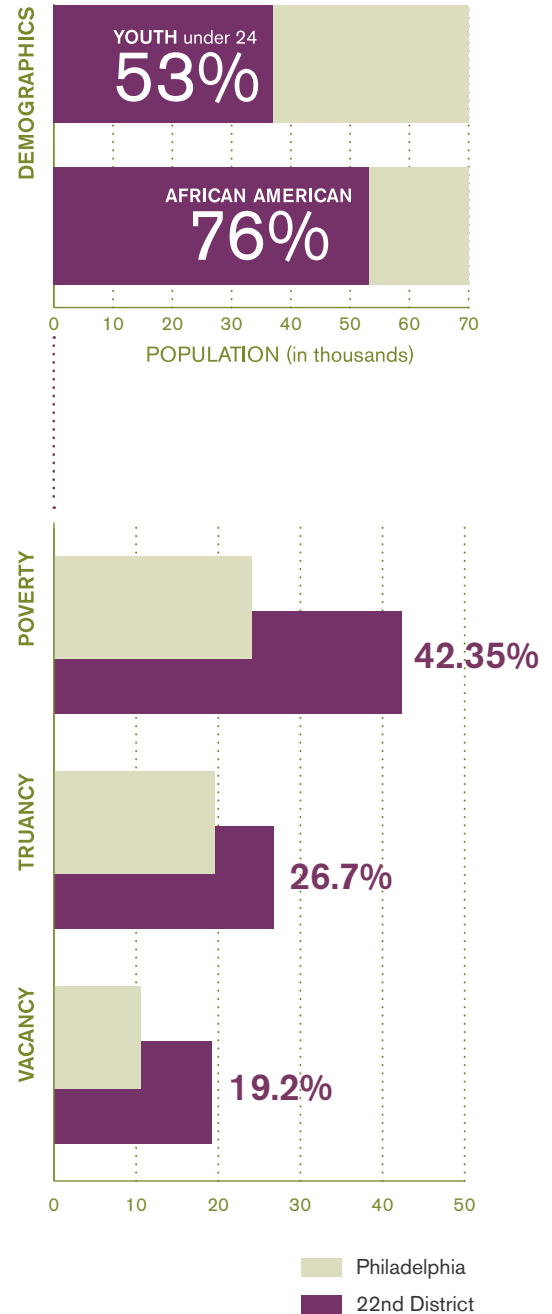
There are many positive assets in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District, but its liabilities include:

- **The city's highest rates of concentrated poverty:** 42.35% of residents in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District live below the federal poverty line, compared to 28 percent of Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup>
- **The highest rates of child abuse and neglect:** 29.3 incidents per 1,000 households in 2012, about 2.5 times the city average.
- **Environmental blight:** A 19.2% property vacancy, twice as high as the city's 10.5%.<sup>3</sup>
- **A large concentration of crime-ridden public housing,** including 12 Philadelphia Housing Authority facilities. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District is the location of 35% of the aggravated assaults in PHA housing and almost 36% of all homicides in PHA housing in 2010, 2011, and 2012.<sup>4</sup>
- **Low connection among residents to higher education and the labor market:** Less than 44% of the working-age population participates in the labor force.

### Special Educational Challenges and their potential for increased violence

While the entire city of Philadelphia faces a severe school crisis of low enrollments and budget cuts, the problems are significantly worse in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District, with five district school closings at the end of the 2012-2013 school year, compared to a maximum of two closings in other police districts.

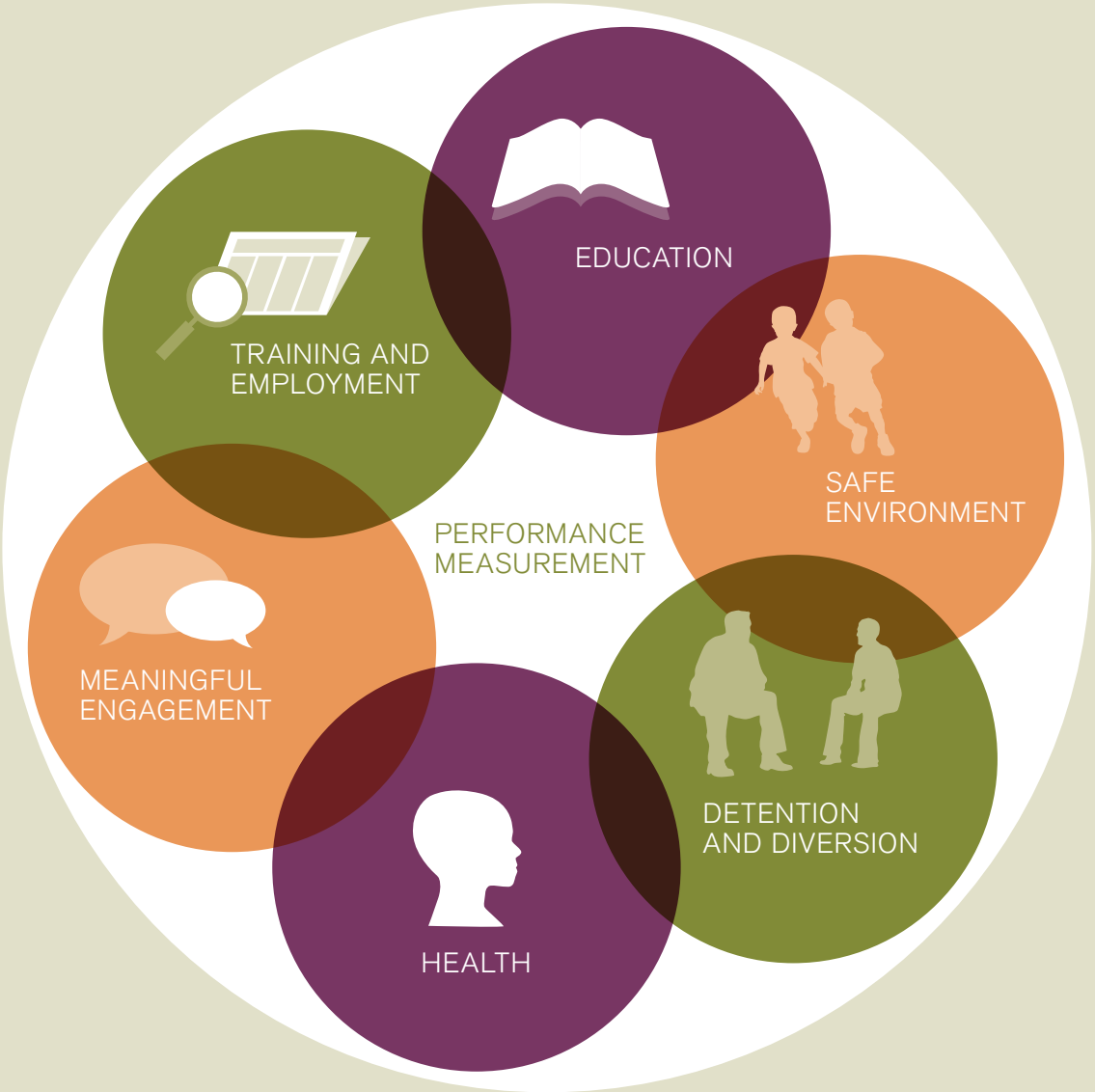
As a result, in the fall of 2013, many public school students in the district are traveling further from home to their schools, often crossing neighborhood boundaries in high crime areas, which may result in violent incidents and more truancy. The School District at-large is plagued by a 19.6% truancy rate, but the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District's rate, 26.7%,<sup>5</sup> is even worse.



# STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Participation in the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention allows the Philadelphia Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative to assess the effectiveness of youth violence programs being implemented by Forum partners as well as learn best practices derived from data-driven and tested research.

Philadelphia has identified seven immediate priorities in its plan to reduce and eventually prevent youth violence: training and employment; meaningful engagement; health; detention and diversion; a safe environment; education; and performance management.



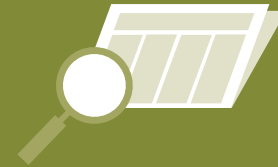




# TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

**GOAL:**

All youth participate in career training and job opportunities so they are college- and career-ready



Young people who are considered “opportunity youth” – those who are not in education, employment or training for more than six months – are in greater danger than their peers of falling into long-term joblessness, ill-health – and criminality.<sup>6</sup>

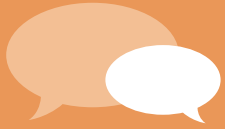
According to 2006-2010 American Community Survey Data, the unemployment rate in the target zip code for this plan, 19121, was 21.6%, almost double the 12.6% rate for the entire city during the same period. A special employment challenge is presented by youth who have been arrested or incarcerated. An inability to find a job markedly increases the chance that returning citizens will return to crime.

**SIGNS OF SUCCESS**

- Youth employment rates increase, including for juveniles returning from placement and detention.
- Youth participate in meaningful summer work experiences (internships and paid jobs).
- Youth have access to year-round apprenticeship, career training and job skills training.
- More youth graduate from high school and complete workforce certification programs and are college-and-career-ready.

**INITIAL STRATEGIES**

- Establish baseline information of youth employment rates, eligibility criteria and availability of summer and year-round jobs and internships, and job skills training across various sub-groups.
- Work with existing evidence-based or promising government and government-funded programs to expand summer employment as well as full-time employment opportunities, including connections to transitional work experiences in city agencies. It will also include exploring credentialed apprenticeship and training programs in private industry.
- City’s Commerce Department shall identify and support business investment in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District.



**GOAL:**

All youth participate in after-school and out-of-school activities

# MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT



## Juvenile crime rates triple between 3 to 6 p.m.

Repeated studies confirm the positive impact of out-of-school time programming, whether organized or simply connecting youth to healthy adult relationships. YVPC will work to ensure all that youth have access to positive after-school and mentoring opportunities.

### SIGNS OF SUCCESS

- Increase access/availability of high-quality after-school and out-of-school activities for youth.
- Increase access/availability of evidence-based mentoring opportunities for youth.
- More youth live in families with positive family involvement and positive community support networks.
- Police are able to secure information from community members necessary to arrest perpetrators of violence.

### INITIAL STRATEGIES

- Build on the positive after school and out-of-school activities currently being collated and categorized as part of a city-wide effort to increase the availability and quality of activities, made possible with the support of the Wallace Foundation.
- Enhance the diversity of recreation center programming to ensure it is age and gender appropriate for youth.
- Establish a Youth Community Action Committee to hear from youth and members of the community.
- Build on the work of Cities United and Black Male Achievement campaigns to target and engage African American males, especially those who are young parents, in finding solutions to end violence.





# HEALTH

## GOAL:

Reduce the number of youth exposed to trauma



As many as 44% of penetrating injury victims are victimized again within five years.

Identifying both victims and perpetrators in hospital emergency rooms and hospitalization presents a unique opportunity to intervene with a population at high-risk of violence by offering them access to trauma-informed care.

Cycles of violence generate cycles of trauma. Children exposed to violence, as victims or witnesses, are at a higher risk of eventually engaging in criminal behavior. Exposure to violence can cause poor performance in school, difficulty managing emotions and behaviors, and poor concentration. Traumatized youth may be prone to carry weapons to deal with intense feelings of vulnerability, or to use illicit drugs in an effort to treat their distressing symptoms.

In response, Philadelphia is beginning to provide training to members of key systems like the Departments of Human Services and Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbilities, and schools to help them recognize trauma and respond appropriately to it.

## SIGNS OF SUCCESS

- Fewer youth witness violence, including shootings, homicides, bullying and abuse.
- All youth and families have access to trauma-informed care.
- Systems are sharing data and information, as permitted, in order to appropriately serve youth impacted by violence or chronic trauma.

## INITIAL STRATEGIES

- Establish baseline information of youth exposure to violence and trauma.
- Identify opportunities to expand trauma-informed care programs already occurring in Philadelphia, including Drexel University's Healing Hurt People, city government's Mental Health First Aid, the Parent Child Interaction Therapy pilot and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support and restorative practices in the School District.
- Connect more families to health care insurance.
- Increase the supports available to youth and communities impacted by trauma.



# DETENTION AND DIVERSION

## GOAL:

Increase the number of youth allowed to remain safely in their communities while under court supervision



Some youth who commit offenses are better served in community placements than in prison-type settings with other high-risk youth.

Underlying mental and physical issues that contributed to the delinquent behavior should be evaluated with services provided at the most appropriate settings. This approach is reflected in the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) use of diversion programs and detention alternatives.

Philadelphia's Department of Human Services and The Family Court of Philadelphia, with the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, have undertaken bold efforts to implement diversion programs to provide community-based alternatives to prosecution for non-violent juvenile offenders.

## SIGNS OF SUCCESS

- Decrease the number of youth involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Increase the use of diversion alternatives for youth, when appropriate.
- Among youth who require placement, more remain in and near Philadelphia and close to their support networks.
- The percentage of youth in placement as a percentage of the total number of petitions declines.
- The average length and cost of stay decreases among youth in placement.

## INITIAL STRATEGIES

- Establish baseline information of youth offenses and treatment and analyze the data by subgroups.
- The Family Court of Philadelphia and Department of Human Services continue their bold efforts to implement diversion programs and alternatives to detention programs to ensure that youth and families are best served in the least restrictive setting. Currently, diversion programs provide community-based alternatives to prosecution for juveniles accused of non-violent crimes.
- Hot spot policing, a place-based policing strategy that reduces crime by assigning limited police resources to high crime areas, will be increased.
- Work with the Defenders Association and others to ensure parents and youth are informed of their rights and the consequences of delinquency adjudications.
- Identify youth at risk of being re-victimized or becoming perpetrators to develop a family-centered plan to provide trauma informed services.



**GOAL:**

Youth feel safe and are safer in their homes, on the street and in school

# SAFE ENVIRONMENT



Blight reduction has been shown to reduce crime.

Philadelphia City government data indicates that 20% of all property, including entire blocks in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District, is vacant. In one instance, an entire two-block stretch is comprised of vacant or boarded-up homes with the exception of a single inhabited house. In addition, recent school closings have highlighted the need to ensure safe routes to Philadelphia schools and provide protection against violent incidents in newly-merged schools.

### SIGNS OF SUCCESS

- Incidents of violence in school decrease.
- Incidents of violence en route to and from school decrease.
- There are fewer active nuisance-bars, -cars and -homes in high crime areas.
- Neighborhood blight is reduced, including dangerous, vacant and abandoned homes and lots.
- Police are able to secure information from community members necessary to arrest perpetrators of violence.

### INITIAL STRATEGIES

- Establish baseline information on school violence, neighborhood violence and neighborhood blight in high crime areas.
- Fully implement Ceasefire Philadelphia, supported by OJJDP, which relies on teams of returning citizens to act as mentors to youth 14-24 years old, coaching them out of a lifestyle that often ends with gun violence.
- Continue to support WalkSafePHL to ensure safe routes to and from school.
- City of Philadelphia Licenses and Inspections department, housing and development agencies and Philadelphia Housing Authority to work together to reduce blight in targeted areas. In 2013 two Choice Neighborhood grants were submitted to U.S. Housing and Urban Development to revitalize public housing and their neighborhoods in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District.





# EDUCATION



**GOAL:**

Youth receive a high-quality education from pre-k through high school

Interventions targeted toward children – particularly disadvantaged children from aged 0 to 5 – have much higher returns than interventions at later stages of life.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District lacks sufficient high-quality early childhood care: of its 13 centers, eight have no rating from the KEYSTONE STARs program of performance standards. Five centers and have a STAR 1 (out of 4) rating.

While, the entire city of Philadelphia faces a severe school crisis of low enrollments and budget problems, in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District, the problems are significantly worse, with five district schools closings in the 2012-2013 school year, compared to a maximum of two closings in other police districts.

**SIGNS OF SUCCESS**

- There is more high quality educational programming for youth in high crime areas, including Head Start and KEYSTONE STAR 4 rated child care centers.
- There are more high quality classroom seats for youth in high crime areas.
- There are fewer truant youth.
- The graduation rate of youth in high crime areas increases, to meet or exceed the citywide average.
- Parents are informed about high quality education choices, and actively participate in their childrens' education.

**INITIAL STRATEGIES**

- Establish baseline information on availability and access to high-quality educational programs and schools and school truancy.
- Support the Philadelphia Compact and related organizations in their work to improve educational opportunities.
- Improve the availability and quality of early educational opportunities for children 0-5 years of age in line with the City's new anti-poverty plan, Shared Prosperity, found at [www.sharedprosperityphila.org](http://www.sharedprosperityphila.org)
- Target PhillyGoes2College and Graduation Coach Campaign resources to help parents and students in high crime and high need neighborhoods, promoting a college going culture.
- Support the School District's Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) efforts in two new schools in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District. PBIS is a decision-making framework around improving student behavior.



**GOAL:**

An evidence based strategic plan that drives smart decision-making

# PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



In Philadelphia, progress is being made on sharing data on services and interventions targeted toward at-risk youth.

Yet, it is still the case that there is a disconnected system made up of an array of programs with a variety of funding streams, data systems that are often unable to communicate across agencies, and no centralized administrative structure or a common vision. As a result, the ability to hold the City, the systems, and vendors who work with this population accountable is impeded.

## SIGNS OF SUCCESS

- A robust performance management system for tracking, managing and assessing performance against the goals outlined in the YVPC Plan.
- The Collaborative has a culture of continuous improvement, developing new outcome measures and re-evaluating program efficacy based on evidence and data.
- Evidence and data drives decision making and influences resource (re)allocation.

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## INITIAL STRATEGIES

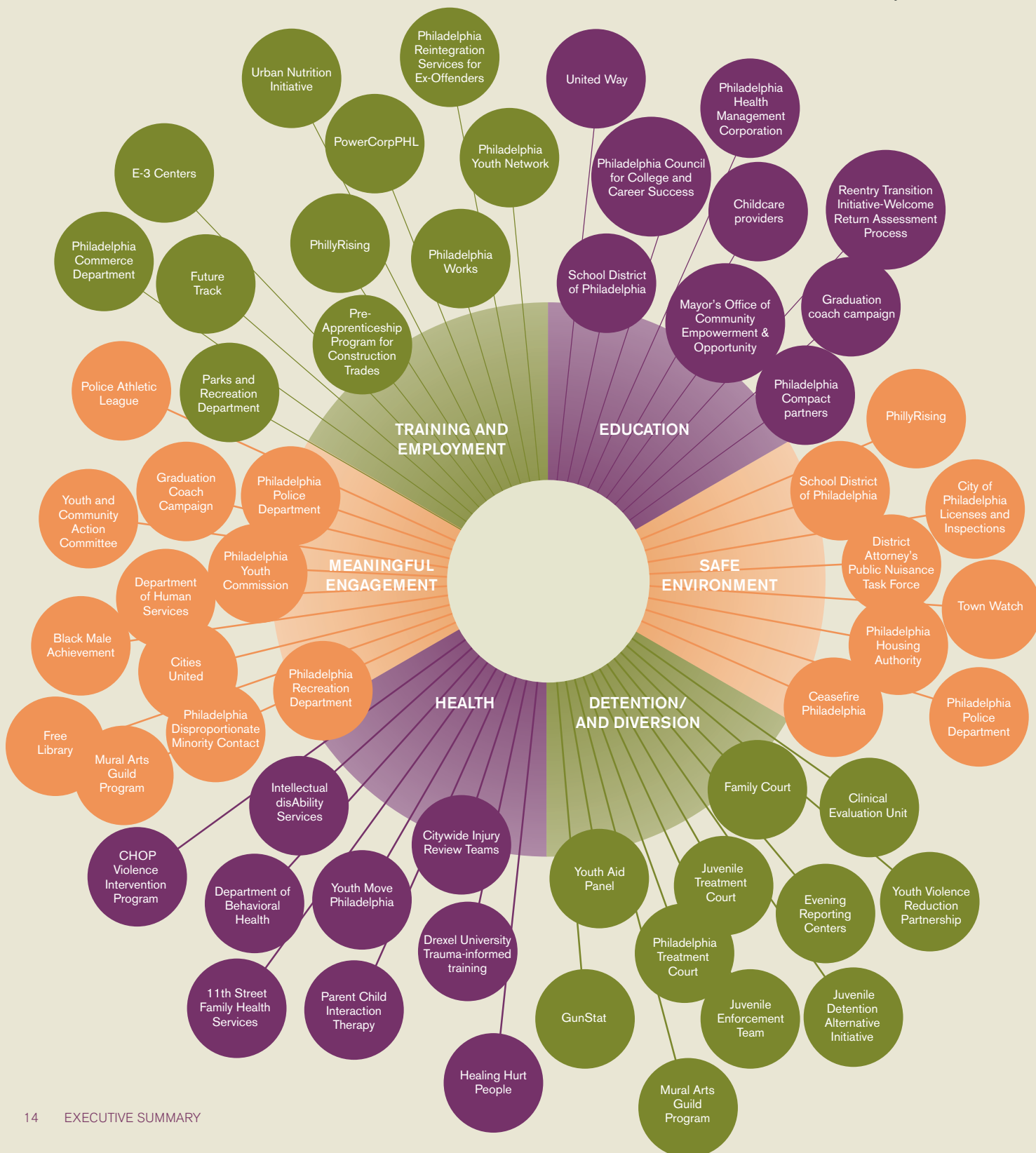
- Perform Asset and Gap Analysis - The YVPC has engaged faculty of Temple University's Department of Criminal Justice and School of Social Work to conduct a gap analysis in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District.
- Collect, track and analyze data related to youth violence prevention.
- Employ clear evaluation methods to ensure effective programs are being supported.
- A performance management/data and evaluation plan to be created to assess progress against the goals outlined in the plan, with technical assistance from the OJJDP's National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention.



# KEY DELIVERY PARTNERS

Preventing youth violence requires the participation of numerous organizations, city departments, and programs.

In addition to those listed below, successful implementation of this strategic plan will rely on current and new partnerships with faith-based organizations, youth organizations, nonprofit and philanthropic partners, academics and the business community.



This strategic plan was borne out of the vision and steadfast commitment of Mayor Michael A. Nutter. Philadelphia has become a safer city under Mayor Nutter's leadership and we intend that with this plan our city leaders, present and future, will have the building blocks to continue down a more prosperous path where all children can dream big and live free from violence.



REFERENCES:

- 1 Esri Report for 22<sup>nd</sup> Police District; Temple University;
- 2 Census, 2010;
- 3 Census, 2010; 4 Census, 2010;
- 5 Chronically Truant = 10 or more unexcused absences;
- 6 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/jul/07/teenagers-risk-joining-underclass>;

## We want to hear from you.

Please contact the Youth Violence Prevention Collaborative to get involved.

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