



CARE Research Partnership Program: July 2007 Pilot Projects

Grant Recipient: Community Mediation, Inc.

Title: *Reducing urban youths' violence perceptions and behavior: Evaluation of a school-based violence prevention program*

Background: Addressing youth violence is a pressing issue in the New Haven community. Although the total number of crime incidents has decreased in the past year, crime levels still remain high (9,167 cases in 2006 vs. 9,811 in 2005 with a denominator of approximately 120,000 residents). In 2006, for example, 15 of the 22 New Haven residents killed by gunshots were under age 30, and six were age 18 or under, including two 13 year-olds. While a great interest exists, to date, few formal evaluations have examined the impact of New Haven's youth violence prevention programs on participants' attitudes and behaviors. The Youth Training Partnership engages urban youth in positive activities both during and after school, fostering new friendships, empowering them to resolve their own conflicts inside and outside the classroom, striving to produce better decision makers, productive citizens, and leaders.

Specific Aims: To systematically evaluate Community Mediation's Youth Training Partnership's impact on participant's empowerment, self-esteem and participation in anti-social behaviors.

Methods: This intervention will deliver school-based conflict resolution workshops and peer mediation trainings to youth ages 10-18 throughout the City of New Haven. Six conflict resolution workshops for 140 students will be conducted in New Haven Public Schools during the 2007-08 school year. In addition, 20 youth in the same schools will be trained as peer-mediators, acting as agents of change within their schools. Both the workshops and the trainings will emphasize peaceful communication, problem solving strategies, anger management, decision-making, and other life skills for youth.

Outcomes: This intervention will be evaluated using a mixed-methods approach: a quantitative pre/post quasi-experiment component and a qualitative focus group component. The before and after pre/post study will use validated questionnaires to assess the impact of the intervention on participants' perceptions of self-efficacy, feelings of hopelessness and hostility, and violence perceptions. Changes in school attendance, suspension rates, and participation in violent acts at school will be assessed using school records. Focus groups will be held with participants to gain insight into their attitudinal changes towards violence as a result of participating in the program.

Principal Investigators: *A University-Community Partnership*

Charles Pillsbury, Executive Director, Community Mediation, Inc. has been the Executive Director of Community Mediation, Inc. for 18 years. He will be responsible for conceptualizing the evaluation design in collaboration with the Yale research team. In addition, he will work with the Yale research team in disseminating the study results to the New Haven Board of Education and New Haven Department of Police Service as well as to other local community organizations. Mr. Pillsbury has developed and implemented a number of violence prevention programs and has a long history of involvement in violence prevention efforts in the New Haven community.

Nora Groce, PhD, Associate Professor, Yale School of Public Health, is a medical anthropologist with post doctoral training in domestic and interpersonal violence from Harvard Medical School. Dr. Groce was the director of the Urban Health Program (1996-2001) which examined violence in neighborhoods, focusing on domestic and firearm violence among a culturally diverse population. She will oversee both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of research. Dr. Groce will have primary responsibility for disseminating the findings to the participants and other stakeholders.