

we PLAN

FOR ACTION

An Opportunity to Improve your Community

**Cook County
Department of Public Health
Cook County Health and Hospitals System**



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Above: Panelists Susan Avila, Monique Brunson, and Terry Smith.

PANEL CALLS FOR POLICY, COMMUNITY CHANGE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

A three-member panel said that violence is a serious threat to the health of Cook County residents at the June 3rd wePLAN

For Action quarterly meeting convened by the Cook County Department of Public Health. The panel also gave specific examples of policies and programs that can succeed at stemming violence. Panel members included Susan Avila, Violence

Prevention Program Coordinator at the Stroger Hospital Trauma Unit; Monique Brunson, Director of Violence Prevention at the Cook County Department of Public Health; and Terry Smith SASS Coordinator at Sinai Miles Square Community and

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Vision Statement

The public health system will ensure the conditions people need collectively to be healthy in communities of suburban Cook County. To succeed in this task people and organizations that make up the public health system will work and plan together.

WEPLAN TASK FORCE UPDATES

Chronic Disease Prevention

CCDPH recently re-organized and expanded its membership on the Chronic Disease Prevention Task Force and convened a meeting on May 19, 2009 with additional regional partners to con-

tinue work on chronic disease prevention in suburban Cook County. The ACHIEVE initiative will play a significant role in helping coalition members work together to develop a county-wide comprehensive plan. This initiative, along with its direct link to

the wePLAN planning process where chronic disease was identified as a focus area, will provide a catalyst to building community leadership and engagement in addressing chronic disease.

An initial commu-

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Newsletter Purpose: To serve as a forum for wePLAN participants and the residents of Cook County to share timely news and information related to wePLAN priorities and community related health improvement activities.

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nity action plan will be developed during the summer months and beyond, via a core group of organizations that have been identified to serve as key planning constituents.

The suburban Cook County ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and EnVironmental change) initiative, funded by the CDC through the National Association of City and County Health Officials, has the following goals: 1) Build a system of coordination and communication with current and new system partners, 2) Increase purposeful, strategic action to address social determinants of health, and 3) Increase capacity for sectors (schools, worksites, health-care institutions, community organizations and the community-at-large) to implement identified actions toward healthy living policy, systems and environmental

change at the regional level.

Access To Care

The wePLAN Access to Care Task Force has undertaken three main tasks this quarter: coordinating an information-gathering trip to Stroger Hospital to address questions and concerns experienced by community health nurses of the Northwest suburbs when referring clients; developing and administering a Patient Navigator survey; and developing a report based on the results.

1. The Stroger Hospital tour was quite successful in informing and raising awareness of hospital policies, protocols and procedures. We learned about the IRIS system which is an efficient electronic referral system linking the hospital and its allied community health

clinics and providers.

2. A survey was developed and distributed to Patient Navigators who we define as anyone who helps clients navigate the health-care and social service systems. The survey asked respondents about community health resource referrals, best practices in making referrals, barriers in making referrals and cultural considerations in accessing referrals. Respondents were geographically dispersed throughout suburban Cook County and representative of health care and social service providers, health ministries and governmental entities.

3. The results of the surveys are being assessed. A report will be developed and policy recommendations will be made by the Committee based on the findings. The report will be disseminated at the Health & Medicine Research Policy Group's Regional Health Care Safety Net meeting in late June.

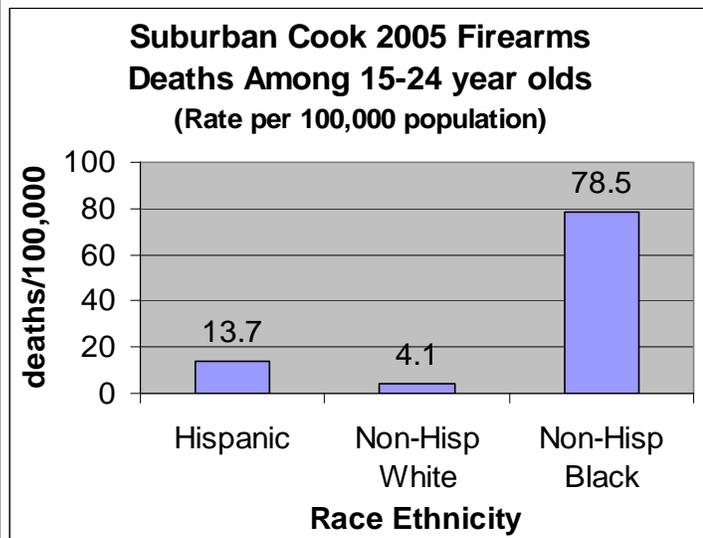
For more information or to join the Access to Care Task Force please contact Venoncia M. Bate', Task Force Chair at batev@alexian.net

logo to be used on any communication efforts. The logo is in the final stages of approval and will be used on the upcoming resource guide.

Keith Winn added the final touches to the resource guide, which will highlight violence prevention programs and services throughout the suburban Cook County area. Several members of the task force participated in youth violence prevention trainings co-facilitated by the staff of the CCDPH Office of Violence Prevention Coordination. These members walked away from the training with tangible information to use with their service groups.

The task force continues to meet every three weeks at the CCDPH central office in Oak Park. *You are welcome to join the task force or keep up with its efforts on the WePLAN for Action list serve* [www.weplanforaction.seework.com].

170 people died from firearms in suburban Cook County in 2005. Below – racial/ ethnic inequities in firearm death rates. Source: Illinois Department of Public Health



Violence Prevention

In the past few months task force members have focused on completing the initial objectives set at the onset of the meeting process. With the assistance of Kim Junius of CCDPH, the task force drafted a

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Use the Basecamp collaborative tool website to post events, resources, news and comments about community health issues.

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Mental Health Center.

Health Department data shows that violence is disproportionately experienced in suburban Cook County by people living in poor communities and communities of color. Towns with high rates of violent crime had a median household income of \$33,000. In contrast, towns with a low rate of violent crime had a higher median income of over \$100,000. To successfully prevent violence panelists called for policies addressing social conditions such as poverty, as well as individual-level interventions.

Terry Smith, who works with youth in crisis and develops mentoring programs, said that he challenges a 'go along to get along' complacency among some prevention workers he has seen. "It's not the children who have changed, it's the adults," he said. He described a moment of self-examination as an example of the important effect that adults have on youth. "I caught myself kicking out kids playing basketball outside my house at two in the morning. I had to check myself. Otherwise I knew they could get in trouble." Mr. Smith said mentoring is an important solution to preventing gang-related violence. Adults need to build relationships of trust with youth. Mentoring is powerful because youth have a strong desire to please adults they respect.

Susan Avila described data showing that violence is especially severe in the United States. In one measure of violence—homicide, the US rate among youth is ten times the rate of Canada. Despite 30,000 fire arms-related deaths in the US in 2006, Avila said, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been prevented from conducting research on some as-

pects of gun violence. Other forms of violence include war and suicide. Ms. Avila called for policy changes away from an emphasis on incarceration and toward mentoring youth instead. She cited a 2008 study in North Carolina that showed a higher rate of homicide among men after their release from prison.

Monique Brunson said CCDPH will play a role by publicizing existing resources. She is building a database on organizations and programs so that people can get up to date information. The Health Department will be releasing a report documenting the results of three community discussions held about violence. "We need to help communities know how they can change policy," Ms. Brunson commented.

The WePlan for Action welcomes and needs participation from all suburban Cook County residents. Only a diverse group of people working together can create the changes required at the individual, neighborhood, and institutional levels to tackle complex health problems.