

## Profiles in Prevention: Safe + Respectful

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As part of DCADV's DELTA FOCUS project, Child, Inc. receives funding and technical assistance from DCADV to plan, implement, and evaluate a locally-based violence primary prevention strategy: Safe+Respectful. The overall goal of Safe+Respectful is to improve physical/structural assets (Figure 1) within the neighborhood to ultimately increase community-wide support and connectedness and decrease the potential for community violence and intimate partner violence.

Figure 1. Example of physical structures improved by Safe+Respectful



The neighborhood where Safe+Respectful is being implemented is a low-to-moderate income community of over 550 townhomes with approximately 2,000 residents and a high concentration of children and youth. Residents have experienced chronic adversity and exposure to various forms of trauma including crime, isolation, poverty, and substandard housing conditions which are known to contribute to community violence as well as many other negative health effects.<sup>1</sup> In

addition, this community has been the focus of multiple revitalization and development efforts throughout its history, yet few have been sustainable. With an acknowledge of this history and context, Safe+Respectful employs a multi-level approach to address community violence through adapted and enhanced implementation of the YES evidence-based violence prevention program.<sup>2</sup> Core elements of the adapted YES model include:

- Youth Engagement and Education – providing youth with the knowledge and skills to make healthy relationship decisions and improve their community by increasing their sense of leadership, autonomy, and ability to plan and implement community change projects. Youth group members undergo a structured educational curriculum, but also participate in cohesion-building group activities, lead community service projects, and participate in community-wide events. Additionally, S+R is supplementing the original YES curriculum with an additional module and activities that focus specifically on healthy relationships, including concepts such as gender stereotyping and oppression.
- Community Engagement – focuses on building trust among and with residents by fostering community connectedness and raising awareness of Safe+Respectful's presence in the community. Safe+Respectful promotes active community engagement through community-wide events, and provides youth leadership opportunities by engaging them in the planning of community activities and using community events to showcase their service projects. In addition to promoting neighborhood cohesion, these events enable youth to build healthy relationships with adults in the community.
- Youth and Adult Partnerships – empowers youth to take a leadership role in their neighborhood and engage adults to serve as supportive allies. This is accomplished through building intergenerational partnerships between youth and adults through the recruitment and training of Adult Neighborhood Advocates who serve as adult allies that support youth efforts. Through youth and adult partnerships, youth lead activities to fight the stigmas of and learn how to confront adultism.

Although still in the early stages of evaluation, the strategy offers early insight into the experience of implementing and evaluating a neighborhood-based prevention strategy which addresses shared impact on multiple forms of violence (teen dating violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, youth violence, child maltreatment, elder abuse, suicide, etc.).<sup>3</sup> Continual review of a variety of sources of process data (such as: staff implementation journals, youth group observation forms, attendance logs, and event debriefs) has validated the critical need to incorporate an acknowledgment of trauma at all levels (individual, organizational, community, and historical) and to embed a trauma-informed approach into all aspects of prevention efforts. This not only helps to ensure that strategy efforts are effective, meaningful and sustained but also that well-meaning prevention efforts do not further stigmatize, victimize, and traumatize individual participants or the community.

## References

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