

PROJECT BRIEF

Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission

Background

Homicide is the leading cause of death among 15-24 year old males in Milwaukee¹ and there are formidable race and gender disparities in occurrence; for example the firearm homicide rate among black males between the ages of 15-24 is 170.44 versus 30.3 for white males of the same age, almost 6 times higher^{2,3}. In 2004, leaders in Milwaukee including the Mayor, Police Chief, and District Attorney assembled a working team of professionals charged with reducing homicide in Milwaukee through the development of a homicide review process.

Purpose

The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission (MHRC) is a multi-level, multi-disciplinary, and multi-agency homicide review process aimed at reducing the occurrence of homicides in Milwaukee. Formed in January 2006, the MHRC creates an environment for many disciplines and agencies to share information and work collectively on violence prevention strategies.

Goals

Based upon the public health approach to violence reduction, the MHRC has three goals:

- To gain a better understanding of homicide through strategic problem analysis;
- To develop innovative, effective responses; and
- To focus limited enforcement and intervention activities on identifiable risks.

Progress

Since its inception, the MHRC has reviewed over 150 homicides, and developed over 100 recommendations based on themes that emerge from case reviews and focus on initiating change at system,

agency/organization, and individual levels. An Interim Progress Report was released in May 2007 and a 2008 report is pending release in September.

Key Findings

The 30 criminal justice reviews, 15 community service provider reviews and 2 community reviews that covered cases from January 2005 through November 2007 revealed that homicides in the City's intervention districts:

- were largely clustered in very specific places, such as in and around taverns,
- were largely clustered around active offenders who were very well known to the criminal justice system
- were often the outcome of an ongoing dispute between individuals and/or groups and involved respect, status, and retribution as motives.

Information Sharing

Enhanced information sharing would aid in investigations, prevention/deterrent strategies and allocation of resources. The Center conducted an Information Sharing Needs Assessment and provided recommendations to the MHRC.

PROJECT BRIEF

Accomplishments

- Improved communication between local, state and federal criminal justice agencies;
- A comprehensive set of actionable recommendations which are being implemented and monitored by the MHRC;
- New strategic criminal justice activities;
- Changes in ineffective agency practices; and
- New cooperative efforts between community service providers.

Impact Evaluation

Using a time series of monthly counts of homicides in the control and treatment districts (January 1999-December 2006), implementation of MHRC interventions was associated with a statistically significant 52% decrease in the monthly count of homicides in treatment districts.

Academic Accomplishments

O'Brien, M., Woods, L., & Cisler, R.A. (2007). The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission: An Interagency Collaborative Process to Reduce Homicide. *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, 106(7), 385-388.

Awards

Outstanding Service by a Research Partner. United States Department of Justice, Project Safe Neighborhoods, September 18, 2007.

Outstanding Wisconsin Population Health Practice Paper. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's Improving Wisconsin's Health: Prevention, Policy and Priorities for Research Conference, Pewaukee, Wisconsin, November 2007.

Funding Sources

Wisconsin Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future
Project Safe Neighborhoods
Violence Against Women Act

Project Leadership

Milwaukee Police Department
Mallory O'Brien, Ph.D., Director
Deputy Chief Brian O'Keefe
Laurie Woods, M.S., Researcher

Center for Urban Population Health
Ron Cisler, Ph.D., Academic Partner
Barbra Beck, Ph.D., Assistant Faculty Associate

Participating Community Service Agencies

The Alma Center
Asha Family Services
Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Abuse Response Service
Bayview Neighborhood Association*
Benedict Center*
Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Project Ujima
Citizens of Milwaukee
City of Milwaukee Health Department
Community Development Block Grant Coordinating Agencies
The Counseling Center of Milwaukee
Harambee Ombudsman Project, Inc.
Hillside Family Resource Center*
Hope House
Incarnation Lutheran Church*
Latina Resource Center
Lisbon Avenue Neighborhood Association*
Legal Action of Wisconsin, Inc.
The Milwaukee Christian Center*

Center for Urban Population Health

PROJECT BRIEF

Medical College of Wisconsin, Emergency
Medicine Department

Milwaukee Commission on Domestic
Violence and Sexual Assault

Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood
Services

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett

Milwaukee Police Department, Community
Liaison Officers

Milwaukee Public Schools

Private Industry Council

Project Safe Neighborhoods

Running Rebels

Saint Adalbert's Church*

Social Development Commission

Sojourner Truth House

Southside Organizing Committee

Task Force on Family Violence, Inc.

Urban Underground

Various Faith-Based Agencies

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic
Violence

Wisconsin Community Services

Participating Criminal Justice Agencies

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
Program

Milwaukee City Attorney's Office

Milwaukee County District Attorney's
Office, Community Prosecutors and
Crisis Response Unit

Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's
Office

Milwaukee Housing Authority

Milwaukee Police Department

Milwaukee Public Schools Public Safety
Division

Office of the District One Chief Judge
US Attorney's Office

US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms
and Explosives

US Drug Enforcement Administration

US Federal Bureau of Investigation

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

US Marshals Service

UW-Milwaukee's Criminal Justice
Department

Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division
of Criminal Investigation

Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance

For more information, contact:

Mallory O'Brien, Ph.D., Director
(414) 935-7985
mobrie@milwaukee.gov

* Agencies that have recently been invited and have committed to joining the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission

¹ Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health, Bureau of Health Information and Policy. Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) data query system, <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/wish/>, Mortality Module, accessed 08/15/07.

² U.S. Census Bureau; Census 2000 Summary File (SF 1) 100-Percent Data; generated by Laurie Woods; using American FactFinder; <http://factfinder.census.gov/>; (15 August 2007).

³ Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission; generated by Laurie Woods; using Homicide Database; (15 August 2007).

The Center for Urban Population Health is a partnership among the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Aurora Health Care, Inc. Our mission is advancing population health research and education to improve the health of urban communities.