



Gun Violence: An Urgent Public Health Issue

Gun violence impacts all people, either directly or indirectly, and specific groups are at greater risk. In Massachusetts, firearms are the cause of death in 77% of youth homicides.¹ Thirty-nine percent of all firearm homicide victims are between 15 and 24 years old.² Young people of color are particularly likely to be victims of gun violence. Black male youth are 32 times more likely to be hospitalized due to firearm assault than their white male peers.³

The communities most affected by gun violence also have long histories of deep social and economic inequity. Discriminatory lending practices, poor access to social services and medical care, and lack of business investment mean that people in these communities have been denied fundamental economic, educational, and employment opportunities for generations. The Boston Globe 2017 Spotlight series on racism highlighted racial disparities in access to Boston's world-renowned hospitals and institutions of higher education.⁴ In 2019, WBUR explored how discriminatory [mortgage lending practices](#) contribute to the ongoing marginalization of communities.⁵

Research shows that the stress of growing up in traumatized communities can impact learning, behavior, mental health and chronic disease, but youth who have opportunities to work toward a better future can go on to lead healthy and productive lives. We also know that *gun violence is preventable*, and violence-free communities promote well-being for people of all ages.

The Massachusetts Gun Violence Prevention Program engages youth and community members to develop solutions to address the causes of youth violence.

The Massachusetts Gun Violence Prevention Program

The Massachusetts Gun Violence Prevention Program works with grantees in 15 communities across the Commonwealth to help youth avoid violent conflict and injury. Through a racial equity and trauma-informed lens, funded partners provide critical supports, such as close connections with trustworthy adults, opportunities to learn new skills, and access to the job market.

¹ Massachusetts Violent Death Reporting System, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2013-2017

² Massachusetts Violent Death Reporting System, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2013-2017

³ Massachusetts Inpatient Hospital Discharge Database, Massachusetts Outpatient Emergency Department Discharge Database, and Massachusetts Outpatient Observation Stays Database, Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA), 2014

⁴ Spotlight Team, (2017, Dec. 12). Color Line Persists, in Sickness as in Health. *The Boston Globe*.

⁵ Guerra, C. (2019, April 25). Redlining was Codified Racism that Shaped American Cities and this Exhibit Shows It Still Exists [Radio segment]. *ARTery*. Boston, MA: WBUR.



GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Funded partners include:

- [18 Degrees, Inc.](#) (*Pittsfield*)
- [Boston Uncornered](#) (*Dorchester*)
- [Greater Fall River RE-CREATION](#) (*Fall River*)
- [Madison Park Development Corporation](#) (*Roxbury*)
- [More Than Words](#) (*South End Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan*)
- [Mothers for Justice and Equality](#) (*Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan*)
- [New North Citizens Council, Inc.](#) (*Springfield*)
- [NorthStar Learning Centers, Inc.](#) (*New Bedford*)
- [Old Colony YMCA](#) (*Brockton*)
- [Project RIGHT, Inc.](#) (*North Dorchester and Roxbury*)
- [ROCA, Inc.](#) (*Lynn and Springfield*)
- [UTEC, Inc.](#) (*Haverhill and Lawrence*)
- [Worcester Youth Center](#) (*Worcester*)

Part of a Comprehensive Approach

The Gun Violence Prevention Program is part of the [Child and Youth Violence Prevention Unit within the Massachusetts Department of Public Health \(DPH\)](#). We invest in a variety of community-based programs to address the root causes of violence and improve health outcomes for young people ages 10-24 years old. Our approach to preventing youth violence supports the individuals who are most impacted by violence while addressing the context in which they live.

Our approach is guided by the following core principles:

- **Racial equity**
- **Trauma-informed service provision**
- **Positive youth development**
- **Intersectionality**
- **Cultural humility**
- **Restorative justice**
- **Collective impact**
- **Building and sustaining the leadership of people of color.**

DPH's complementary programs include: [Safe Spaces](#), offering trauma-informed services to LGBTQ youth; [HEAL Primary Violence Prevention](#), providing positive interventions for youth at elevated risk for violence who are not yet engaging in serious acts of violence; and [HEAL Secondary Prevention](#), tackling all types of violence affecting young people through gang intervention, outreach, job readiness, life skills, arts, and behavioral health supports. All these efforts augment the Shannon Community Safety Initiative and the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative, both part of a statewide strategy to keep young people safe in Massachusetts.

Learn More

Visit <https://www.mass.gov/child-and-youth-violence-prevention-services> to learn more about the organizations funded, and how you can help build safe communities for young people.