
PREVENTING VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN POLICE AND YOUNG BLACK MEN

MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES FOR ACTION

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For our Colleagues and our Communities



BACKGROUND

High profile events have drawn attention to the longstanding problem of violent encounters between police and young black men.

“Daily the Negro is coming more and more to look upon law and justice, not as protecting safeguards, but as sources of humiliation and oppression. The laws are made by men who have little interest in him; they are executed by men who have absolutely no motive for treating black people with courtesy or consideration; and finally, the accused law-breaker is tried, not by his peers, but too often by men who would rather punish ten innocent Negroes than let one guilty one escape.”

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Of the Sons of Master and Man" (1903)



Social Injustice in Policing

- Black men between the ages of 18 and 44 are 3 times as likely as White men of the same age group to be killed by a police officer.
- While Black men make up roughly 6 percent of the U.S. population, they account for one-third of the unarmed individuals killed by police.

(Swaine & McCarthy, 2017)

Laying the Foundation to Prevent Violent Encounters Caused by Police

- Pilot Project I – Causes of Violence and Existing Prevention Resources
 - Key Questions
 - What causes violence between police and young Black men?
 - Are there existing policies, programs, and practices that can prevent violence between police and youth?
 - What existing infrastructures can be leveraged to strengthen police-youth violence prevention efforts?
 - 48 interviews of stakeholders in North Minneapolis and the East Side of St. Paul
 - Young Black men, parents, educators, staff at youth-serving community organizations, police officers

Laying the Foundation to Prevent Violent Encounters Caused by Police

- Pilot Project II – Moving towards Action via Community Mobilization
 - Key Question
 - What can be done to prevent violence between police and young Black men, in particular?
 - Planned virtual interviews of 30-40 stakeholders in Minneapolis
 - Young Black men
 - Police officers
 - Community members focused on violence prevention

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CHAAMPS

<https://chaamps.com/>

Publications

- Calvert, C., Brady, S. S., & Jones-Webb, R. (2020). Perceptions of violent encounters between police and young black men across stakeholder groups. *Journal of Urban Health*, 97 (2), 279-295.
- Jones-Webb, R., Calvert, C., & Brady, S. S. (2018). Preventing violent encounters between police and young black men: A comparative case study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 55 (5S1), S88-S94.



CHAAMPS

<https://chaamps.com/>

Major Themes

What causes violence between police and young Black men?

1. Police lack a connection with the Black community
2. Over-policing of black communities and racism in the police force
3. Community members fear and distrust police
4. Police fear and distrust community members
5. Youth disobey laws, talk back to police, and resist arrest
6. Socioeconomic conditions

I. Police lack a connection with the Black community

“...when you do have that one cop who’s in the community, then you see a real strong bond. But then a lot of these cops are just out here doing their jobs from another city, just coming into the inner city and they don’t...they can’t really relate or connect to the kids.”

-Youth

2. Over-policing of Black communities

“...I think more than anything it’s a trust issue... They grow up in a community where disproportionately they or their family members have been singled out and enforced at a higher level, and it increases the distrust and dislike of the system.”

-Police Officer

2. Racism in the police force

“They do not come in with the gratitude of a servant, they do not come in with the mindset of, ‘I’m going to serve you, how can I help you?’ They come in with a mindset of, ‘I’m big and bad now and you know it. If you ever challenge that in any type of way, not only do I have to prove to you that I’m big and bad because now my insecurities are hurt and now my pride is pinched but I have to prove to everybody else around you that just saw that [challenge to my authority], that I’m big and bad because now they are not going to be scared of me.’”

-Staff at Youth-Serving Community Organization

3. Community members fear and distrust police

“What sucks is...we’ll build these relationships with these kids, but their parents, and their friends, and their relatives may have had a bad experience in the past with police. So I’ve seen people tell their kids not to talk to the police. I’ve seen people tell their kids that we are murderers. I’ve kids tell me that, ‘Oh, my mom said that you are just going to shoot me, so I should not talk to you.’ When that comes out of a kid’s mouth, I mean it makes me feel like crap. It’s like, ‘I’m not going to shoot you.’ I do not go around every day wanting to shoot people. I just want to talk to you.”

-Police Officer

4. Police fear and distrust community members

“... they are probably scared of us. So them being scared causes them to act out like that. Causes them to do stuff they should not do as officers of the law. ... I mean, they kill people. They be so nervous, and having that gun on their side make them feel like they got a little more power than the next person. And I know that that gun can change somebody life, let alone take somebody life.”

-Youth

No perceived resources to prevent violence between police and young Black men

- For the most part, participants did not perceive any formal programs and policies to prevent police/youth violence
 - Body cams were mentioned
 - Since data collection, the state developed a task force to plan for change
- Participants frequently mentioned informal practices to reduce the likelihood of violence
 - These practices placed the onus of prevention on young Black men (e.g., keep your hands on the steering wheel)

Informal Practice by Youth

“Just being respectful and talking to him like you would talk to an elder, and just having the most upper ... I was always taught to just have the best communication to a police officer and the most respect because that's the ones who we fear the most.”

-Youth

Pilot Project II - What Can Be Done?

- Partnership with the Minneapolis Health Department – Office of Violence Prevention
 - Sustainability
 - Involvement of community navigators
- Study Design
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Three stakeholder groups: (1) Young Black men, (2) Police officers, (3) Community Subcommittee members of the Violence Prevention Steering Committee

Selected Introductory Questions

Topic	Question for Young Black Men
Assets and contributions of young Black men	“What are some of the ways that young Black men are making a difference in their communities, schools, churches, mosques, and families in Minneapolis?”
Challenges to well-being and future success	“Young Black men can face a number of challenges in their communities. What do you see as some of the greatest challenges to well-being and future success ?”
Story or narrative about police	“When you think about your experiences with police, do you have a story that helps to explain how you feel about them?”
Historical, intergenerational, and institutional violence	“What are some of the reasons that you think young Black men, their families, and their communities can feel uncomfortable with the police ?”

Selected Questions about Change

Topic	Question for Young Black Men
Sense Unsatisfied Demands on System	“When you think about the way that police officers interact with young Black men and other members of their community, what do you think should be changed? ”
Search for Possible Responses	“Let’s think through some ways that violence between police officers and young Black men could be prevented...”
Interpersonal Strategies	“What things could police officers and young Black men do together to strengthen their relationships and understanding of one another?”
Police Department Policies and Practices	“Are there practices – or in other words, ways of interacting – that police officers can do to reduce the likelihood that interactions with young Black men and other members of the community become violent or hostile?”

Selected Questions about Change

Topic	Question for Young Black Men
Search for Possible Responses	“Let’s think through some ways that violence between police officers and young Black men could be prevented...”
Community Strategies	“What could be done to help communities organize and work together to prevent officer-involved shootings of young Black men and other interactions between police officers and young Black men that have the potential for violence?”
Anticipate Challenges and Generate Possible Solutions	“What challenges might communities and police face in working together to prevent violence involving police and young Black men?” “How do you think those challenges could be overcome?”

How can we apply this information?

- Refined strategies for building interpersonal relationships
 - MHD Office of Violence Prevention is planning programs for police and youth
- Organizational change within police departments
 - Policies that govern hiring and review
 - Ongoing training (e.g., implicit bias, de-escalation, empathy, relationship building)
 - Norms that influence practices
 - Policies that govern practices and consequences for misconduct
- Community capacity building and mobilization
 - Coordinate and leverage existing resources
 - Expand capacity and mobilization based on community feedback
- Policies to address structural racism in different domains (e.g., education, employment, housing)

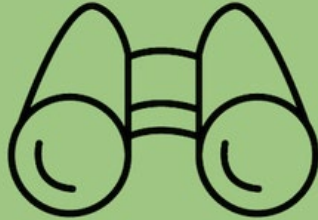
Campaign ZERO Recommendations

(Informed by communities, research, and President Obama's 21st Century Policing Report)

1 END BROKEN
WINDOWS POLICING



2 COMMUNITY
OVERSIGHT



3 LIMIT USE OF FORCE



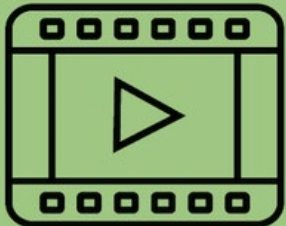
4 INDEPENDENTLY
INVESTIGATE & PROSECUTE



5 COMMUNITY
REPRESENTATION



6 BODY CAMS /
FILM THE POLICE



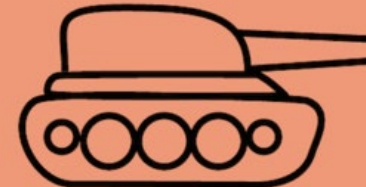
7 TRAINING



8 END FOR-PROFIT
POLICING



9 DEMILITARIZATION



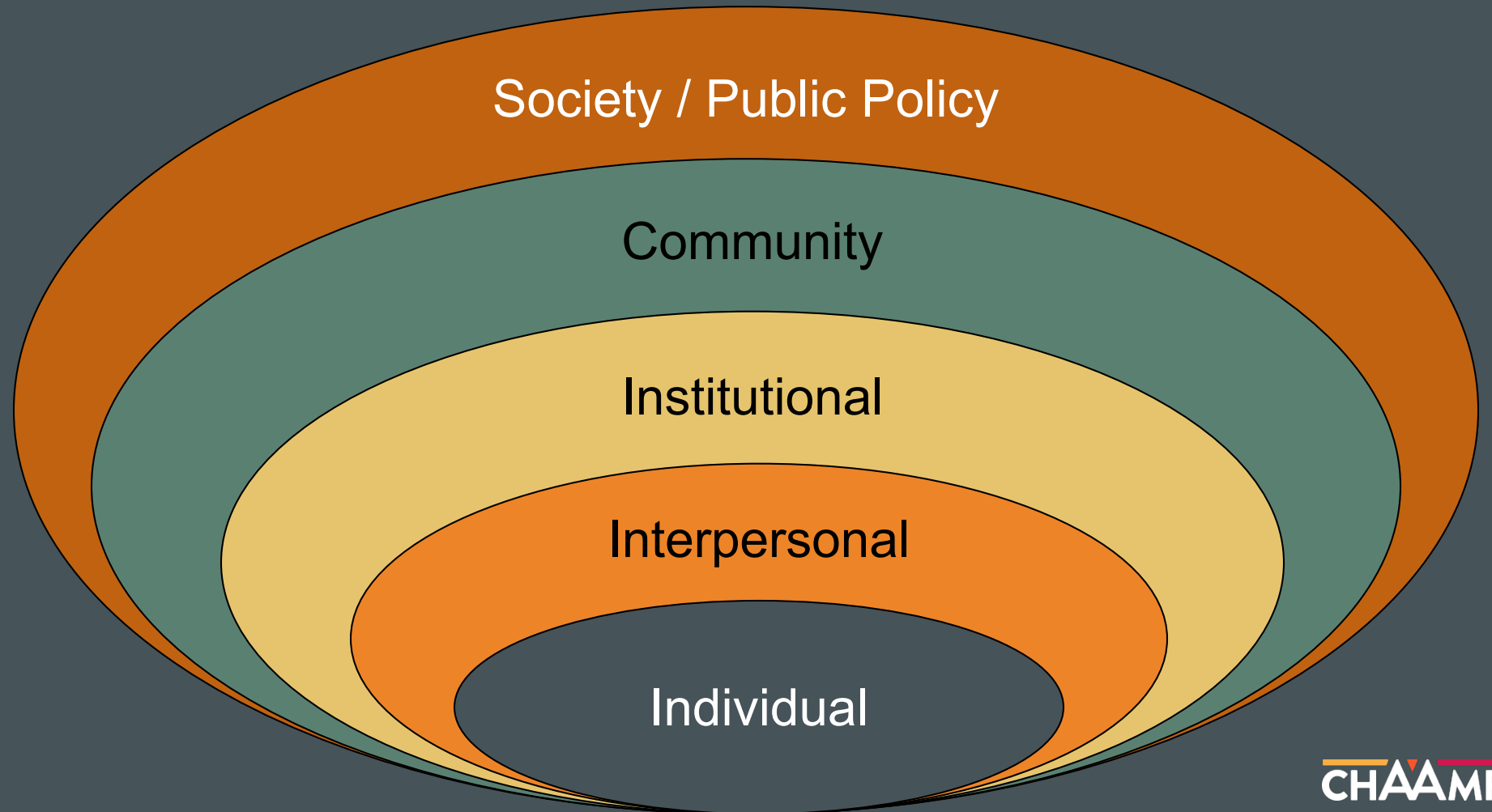
10 FAIR POLICE
UNION CONTRACTS



<https://www.joincampaignzero.org/#vision>
<https://www.joincampaignzero.org/about>

What is the role of our SPH and public health practitioners in preventing violence between police and young Black men?

- Programs
- Practices
- Policies
- What can be done at different levels of social ecology?



THANK YOU

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?