

Violence Reduction Action Plan

AUGUST 2011



About REACH

REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities is a community-based organization, with the goal of making Edmonton a safer community in one generation, by focusing on crime prevention initiatives. It's doing so by implementing the 9 recommendations in the REACH Report; which is the final report of the Mayor's Taskforce on Community Safety

REACH Edmonton works with organizations, agencies, community groups and individual Edmontonians; bringing them together to implement their innovative ideas for crime prevention solutions.

Since it was launched in June 2010, REACH has engaged as members 83 organizations and 126 citizens and created prevention initiatives rooted in community leadership.

Introduction

Overall, Edmonton is a safe city – since 2008 the overall crime rate has fallen more than any other city in Canada. The City of Edmonton has a vision to maintain and improve Edmonton’s livability, which includes keeping our community safe. In the City’s Plan – The Way We Live, a number of key goals are directed towards achieving this vision.

However, the high number of homicides in 2011 has prompted the City and REACH Edmonton – a Council for Safe Communities to develop new programs and enhance existing ones to reduce violence in Edmonton. The Edmonton Police Service also plays a vital role in reducing violence, and our entire community has a role to play in ensuring our city remains safe.

Each organization has numerous ongoing initiatives in place to address many of the conditions that contribute to violence. Information on these initiatives is available from each of the respective organizations. Some of the City initiatives include Family and Community Support Services, the Africa Centre, Community Social Workers and Community Safety Fairs.

Violence between vulnerable people is one of the most disturbing characteristics of the recent homicides. Therefore, the City and REACH initiatives focus on high risk populations. The initiatives outlined in this report are either completely new, or new enhancements of existing efforts.

We’ve approached this complex issue in four areas, focusing on Prevention, Intervention, Suppression and Information/Engagement as methods under which strategies can be grouped and aligned with other organizations.

APPROACH - Prevention

Goal: *Address identified gaps in support services for aboriginal, multicultural communities and vulnerable populations, particularly homeless people.*

Actions:

City of Edmonton

Social Development Rapid Response Team

Address the immediate social development needs of vulnerable populations, such as refugees, newcomers, fragile elderly and youth-at-risk through the development of team that will respond immediately to high-priority personal social crises by moving in and working directly with affected communities. This team will assist citizens to build protective factors and reduce the risk factors associated with crime. To begin, two City Social Workers and two Community Recreation Coordinators will address and implement quick, responsive actions aimed at high priority social issues.

Increase Social and Recreational Programming for Vulnerable Populations

Enhance connectedness of newcomers with additional activities and programs to help people get to know one another and assist with integration into the wider community. Reaching out to newcomers often involves strategies that employ natural leaders in the communities being served. To this end, the program will help to increase opportunities for members of the aboriginal and multicultural communities to be program leaders as an essential component.

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24-7 service delivery model

REACH will work with key stakeholders and champions to seek space and funding to implement an innovative 24-7 service delivery model in downtown Edmonton this fall. The REACH 24/7 service will provide at risk Edmontonians with round-the-clock access to the help they require, reducing dependence on medical, police and judicial services.

INJERA

REACH will continue to support and seek funding for the innovative INJERA Coalition Initiative aimed at building trust and understanding between immigrant and refugee communities and police, by establishing a community hub in the inner city.

APPROACH - Intervention

Goal: *Enhance activities that target vulnerable populations most in need.*

Action:

City of Edmonton

Relentless Outreach to the Homeless

With information obtained from partners and agencies such as Hope Mission and Boyle Street Community Services, it has become clearer that there is a gap in outreach to the hardest to house. The reason is not simply a matter of insufficient services - the individuals “living rough” have often become so marginalized from society that they do not reach out for help.

Building on work done by Homeward Trust, a study on the hard-to-house by the Homeless Commission to be released in the Fall, and the REACH 24/7 initiative, the City will provide funding immediately for a year-round, city-wide coordinated outreach to the homeless. This initiative will fill a gap and help us achieve the goals set out in the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.

APPROACH - Suppression

GOAL: *Enhance enforcement of rules to stop behaviours that threaten the peace, health or safety of the community.*

Actions:

City of Edmonton

Neighbourhood Empowerment Teams (NET) Expansion

The City will work with EPS, Family Centre, and the United Way, to increase the number of NET Teams over the next three years. The City will immediately deploy an additional NET teams in one neighbourhood identified as high risk. The goal is to have NETs operational in as many high-risk neighbourhoods as resources, with teams available to respond to other neighbourhoods.

Public Safety Compliance Team Expansion

The team will expand its enforcement approach in hospitality areas across the city. A greater emphasis will be placed on monitoring and inspection of events with liquor service, as well as businesses and bars that demonstrate poor management practices that contribute to public disorder and/or jeopardize public safety. This will be a proactive approach by enforcement resources to increase focus on alcohol related events and bars. In addition to EPS resources needed, three additional bylaw officers will be part of this.

Increased Bylaw Enforcement

Enhancements to the Business License Bylaw will come forward this year that will put requirements in place for patron management plans, security plans, medical and safety plans, added business application requirements, ownership scrutiny, and greater integration and collaboration with police and regulatory agencies. A report coming to Council in September will identify the additional resources needed to support this enhancement

APPROACH - Information and Engagement

GOAL: *Engage with partners to expand current initiatives and reach priority audiences.*

Actions:

City of Edmonton

Mayor's Initiative on Family Violence

In conjunction with service providers and businesses, a public education campaign will be undertaken aimed at reducing domestic violence. Violence prevention encompasses not only violence perpetrated on our streets but also that which occurs behind closed doors. In Edmonton alone, there are approximately 6,500 reports of family violence received each year, not including those that are unreported. The City is currently working on an education and awareness program with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters that will engage a number of corporations in Edmonton in the discussion about domestic violence, its effects in the workplace, and how it can be prevented. By reaching out to the business community we can reach a broad cross-section of our citizens with the message that domestic violence hurts us all.

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Community Conversations

As Edmonton's community voice to engage citizens in safety, REACH will lead a series of community conversations around community safety in the fall of 2011.

- partner with Edmonton Police Service and the City of Edmonton in hosting a variety of opportunities to engage citizens- on line, in person, forums and events, Community Safety Fairs and more.
- host a forum for REACH member organizations to identify gaps and solutions
- support the Step Up Step In campaign to engage youth and parents in crime prevention through a variety of social media and marketing.

Conclusion

The problem of violence in society is complex and multi-faceted. It requires diligent, ongoing coordinated work across a number of agencies and organizations. This includes other orders of government, who have information and resources that will be required in order that solutions be comprehensive, and sustainable over the long-term.

The City and its key partners will continue their efforts to understand and address the root causes of violence and maintain order and safety in our community, keeping the livability of Edmonton among the best in Canada and the world.