

October 11, 2012

Funding Received to Create YouthHaven Community Approach to Preventing Violence

Building on the five year collaboration to prevent youth gun violence, the New Haven Family Alliance and the Yale School of Medicine Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Clinical Scholars Program have been awarded three years of funding by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Development of the National Institutes of Health to engage New Haven youth in establishing YouthHaven.

While gun violence in New Haven has been on the decline, the history of violence in New Haven continues to cause concern among youth and adults in the city. Chronic exposure to violence can lead to “toxic stress” which disrupts developing nervous, cardiovascular, immune and metabolic systems and can impair learning, physical, behavioral and mental health. Solutions to address violence often come from adult experts. YouthHaven is designed to train a group of Youth Ambassadors from New Haven to engage other youth in understanding the patterns and causes of violence in the city and offer actions for youth, adults living in the neighborhoods impacted by violence, local service providers, and policy makers to take together to reduce violence in New Haven. The research developed by youth will be presented at a Youth Congress to be held at Gateway Community College in late 2013 or early 2014. This Congress will be charged with developing actions to reduce violence. These actions and their implementation will be monitored and evaluated during 2014 and 2015. We believe that the design and results of YouthHaven can serve as an example to others.

Overseeing, guiding, and supporting the work of YouthHaven is a diverse group that has been meeting for over a year to reduce violence in our neighborhoods and help neighborhoods address the community trauma that sustained violent acts create. This group known as the New Haven Community Violence Response Group is attended monthly by over 30 individuals including Chief of Police Esserman, representatives of the City Health Department, Youth Services Department, a number of community-based and neighborhood-based organizations, federal agencies, health care providers, the faith community, Gateway Community College and others interested reducing youth violence.

The organizers of YouthHaven, Barbara Tinney, Executive Director of the New Haven Family Alliance and Dr. Marjorie Rosenthal, Pediatrician and Assistant Director of the Yale RWJF Clinical Scholars Program, RWJF Clinical Scholars, Drs Nurit Harari and Anita Vashi, Georgina Lucas, Deputy Director of the Yale RWJF Clinical Scholars Program and Dr. Emily Wang, internist and Director of the Transitions Health Clinic are working with a smaller youth oriented group from the New Haven Violence Response Group to hire a coordinator for the project to work with in recruiting 6 Youth Ambassadors designing and implementing YouthHaven.

For questions about the project, please contact either Marjorie Rosenthal at marjorie.rosenthal@yale.edu or Barbara Tinney at barbara.tinney@nhfamilyalliance.org

