1998 ANNUAL REPORT

COVER STORY:

A REVIEW OF THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF THE VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE

The California Wellness Foundation
Contents

Letter from the Chairman and CEO, 2

A Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention: A Review of the First Five Years of the Initiative

Introduction, 5
Research Program, 11
Policy Program, 19
Leadership Program, 27
Community Action Program, 35

Grantmaking Highlights, 42
Selected Grants Awarded, 44
Board and Staff, 54

NOTE:
The Foundation does not put its financials in the web versions of its annual report but you may obtain the information upon request.
uring the beginning of the 1990s, our country was witness to the devastating effects of violence against our youth. The United States’ youth homicide rate was, and still is today, the highest among all industrialized countries.

California mirrored the country’s dark statistics, with youth—above all other age groups—being most vulnerable to violence. Although the public didn’t know it at the time, handguns had become the number-one killer of youth in California. Fueled by the accessibility of guns, alcohol and other drugs, more kids were dying by violence than by car crashes, disease or drugs.

Yet violence is usually addressed after the fact—in courts, prisons, trauma centers and coroners’ offices—with costly results. In California, crime and violence had for too long been framed primarily as a criminal justice issue that should be addressed by tough penalties, especially against youth. Our state’s answer has been to invest more in prisons than in intervention and prevention programs. We boast some of the highest rates in the world of incarceration of and violence against youth.

This was the atmosphere in 1992 when The California Wellness Foundation was created with a mission to improve the health of Californians through its grantmaking for health promotion, wellness education and disease prevention.

OUR GRANTMAKING PRINCIPLES

Before developing the grants program, we first looked inward as an institution to shape our funding principles, which would guide us in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of our program activities. These principles would later become evident in the structure of the Violence Prevention Initiative.

Among them was a firm conviction that the solutions to our state’s health challenges would come from collaborative efforts involving individuals and organizations representing a diverse array of perspectives, backgrounds, disciplines, expertise and experiences. We believe that no one institution can dictate solutions,
rather that many answers are found in the very people who are closest to the problems and who are directly affected by them.

We wanted to address health problems not being adequately addressed by others, take risks others were unable or unwilling to assume, make larger grants over longer periods, attempt to leverage our resources by forming partnerships, and serve as a neutral convener of individuals and organizations representing diverse opinions and viewpoints.

With those principles adopted by the Board of Directors, we convened our first gathering to help us initiate a multi-step planning process that would determine our priority funding areas. The first meeting involved a group of health experts from community clinics, hospitals and public health departments to identify the state’s most important health issues that might be addressed through funding for disease prevention and health promotion.

We then convened several focus groups composed of clients and staff from community-based organizations. Background papers were developed on the top six health issues identified by the experts and focus groups, and presented to the Board. After a lengthy discussion, the Board chose violence prevention as its first major grants program.

Our decision to fund the Initiative was profoundly influenced by the devastating statistics on violence that had motivated the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and former United States Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to advocate for a public health approach to address the growing epidemic of violence.

We also recognized that no major broad-based funding effort in the state—or nation—had been launched to comprehensively address the root causes of violence through prevention using a public health approach. Here was an opportunity to make a long-term grantmaking commitment to violence prevention in a way no other philanthropic institution had done before. We hoped the effort would also serve as a catalyst in attracting more grant dollars to this important issue.

Our Board allocated $60 million over 10 years to the Initiative. We have been joined by eight other foundations who pledged an additional $10 million for grants to prevent youth violence. Our funding partners are the Alliance Healthcare Foundation, Crail Johnson Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, S.H. Cowell Foundation, Sierra Health Foundation and The California Endowment. Their participation expanded the Initiative’s community sites from the 10 originally envisioned to 18.

AN EVOLUTION OF A PLAN

The valuable information we received from health professionals, the community, and research literature helped formulate a violence prevention grantmaking plan. In August 1992, we assembled a diverse group of 45 advisors to critique a rough draft of the plan.
This gathering included academics, community leaders, public health professionals, physicians, attorneys and policy experts. Also in the group were youth—both victims and former perpetrators of violence. The diversity of this group would become a hallmark of the Initiative.

Out of that two-and-a-half-day meeting came a recommendation for a grants program with the goal of reducing violence against youth in California. The advisors believed that no one part would be more important than others or completely effective alone, therefore, the Initiative would need various components, each of which related to and supported the others. They also recognized a need for multiple strategies that could work simultaneously and that would allow grantees to connect with one another—without requiring the components to be interdependent.

In October 1992, the Foundation’s Board approved the Violence Prevention Initiative and soon after, requests for proposals were issued. By September 1993, the four components of the VPI had been funded and the projects were operational.

FOUR COMPONENTS THAT ARE LINKED

The components decided upon were research, policy, leadership and community action. We also funded an evaluation of the Initiative to measure its overall impact, assess the effect of each of its components and provide ongoing constructive feedback to the Foundation and its grantees.

The Research Program deepened the body of information and data essential to public policy development. We funded research to examine the risk factors for youth violence, as well as the relationship between violence and the availability of firearms and alcohol. This component was structured with the belief that health research would not remain an ivory tower enterprise disconnected from real world concerns. The research equipped those implementing the community action and policy programs with the knowledge they need to identify specific solutions to prevent violence against youth, to educate the community and to garner support to make changes.

The Policy Program was established in the belief that coordinated, focused social action is crucial to effect policy changes in an area as complex as violence prevention. The Foundation provided funding to establish institutions and programs that would educate policymakers about the need to reduce access to firearms, alcohol and other drugs, and to increase funding of prevention programs for youth. To further these goals, this component includes a major public education campaign that uses strategic communications to reach key audiences. The campaign has used advertising, direct mail and other communications tools in an attempt to shift the public perception to view violence as a health issue. Another facet of this component focused on the entertainment industry and outreach efforts to the creative community in addressing portrayals of youth violence in media.
The Leadership Program has provided grants in three areas. Each year, 10 Community Fellows were selected to receive two years of funding based upon their demonstrated leadership. They used the funding to help them strengthen existing violence prevention programs or start new ones in their communities. The Leadership Program also funded Academic Fellowships at six institutions each year to increase the number of women and underrepresented ethnic groups in the health professions with expertise in violence prevention. Lastly, the Foundation’s California Peace Prize annually provides $25,000 each to three individuals who receive public recognition for their outstanding work to prevent violence in their communities.

The Community Action Program (CAP) is composed of community collaboratives across the state. Initially 18 CAPs were funded. Each collaborative is made up of organizations serving diverse populations in areas with major problems, such as high rates of violence, population density, school-dropouts, poverty and unemployment. CAPs received training in media and policy advocacy to assist them in making changes in their community. An innovative aspect of the CAPs is the significant role of youth in their efforts.

**WORKING TOGETHER TO EFFECT CHANGE**

In the following pages, you will read about the grantees’ collective achievements thus far at the mid-point of the Initiative. Most significantly, you will learn how the diverse people and organizations involved in the components have come together to form a rich, complex and strong tapestry that has made a profound change in the way California now views prevention of violence against youth.

In spite of—or perhaps because of—their myriad perspectives and expertise, the grantees have made a difference in our state by uniting to pursue one singular goal: reducing the senseless killing of our youth.

“**Violence is as much a public health issue today...as smallpox was in previous generations.**”

C. EVERETT KOOP  
Former U.S. Surgeon General
In the following pages you will read about the people and organizations who call their involvement in the Foundation’s Violence Prevention Initiative a “movement.” Because of the dedication, commitment and hard work of these VPI grantees, we believe that one day soon we will be able to say that violence is no longer the leading killer of our youth.

Violence is a difficult epidemic to understand and prevent because no one approach — the elimination or redesign of guns, a decrease in the availability of alcohol or a reduction in the portrayal of violence in the media — will prevent all violent incidents. Each type of violence in a community results from a unique combination of social, cultural and economic risk factors.

This is why effective violence prevention strategies must work on many levels — local, statewide and national — and involve experts from many disciplines, including community organizing, education, research, law, medicine, public health, policy, law enforcement and the media. The VPI is structured to address the problem of violence against youth from these various levels and disciplines.
“We need more research on identifying and quantifying the risk factors associated with violence. Community people are very enthusiastic about getting this information. They want to use scientific evidence, but, for the most part, it’s just not available to them.”

Maria Alaniz, Ph.D., is a principal investigator at Prevention Research Center in Berkeley. Her research provides necessary data to formulate and enact effective policies that contribute to the reduction of violence against youth.
When the foundation decided to fund the Violence Prevention Initiative, we knew that children were being injured and killed at epidemic rates in California. This is what moved us to action. What we then needed was accurate, detailed, in-depth research to tell us why California’s youth were dying and why policy changes were needed to reduce the violence.

In 1992, the scientific literature supported the overall goals and objectives of the VPI. To address unanswered and emerging questions, we decided to fund research to broaden and deepen the knowledge base in support of the Initiative’s goals. At the end of the first five years, 32 research papers had been produced by 11 different institutions and agencies providing valuable information in three areas: risk factors for youth violence, the role of alcohol and other drugs, and firearm injury and death.

These three funding areas were grounded in the public health approach, which does not rely on the individual, but also takes into account the agents—including genes—and the physical and social environments. It was our hope that this research would provide a more comprehensive view of factors contributing to youth violence and ways to make changes both locally and statewide.

This is indeed what happened. The researchers were required to disseminate their findings among the VPI grantees, and the information gleaned from these presentations was used repeatedly by others in the Initiative—through statewide public education campaigns and through local organizing efforts—to advocate for policies and programs to prevent violence against youth. What follows are examples of research funded by the Initiative within the three focus areas.

RESEARCH FOCUS: RISK FACTORS FOR YOUTH VIOLENCE

Violence does not happen in a vacuum. Leaders and policymakers from the community level to the state level believed that environmental factors—such as racism, poverty and inadequate education—were contributing to high rates of violence, but research was needed to pinpoint risk and protective factors, and to develop policy recommendations for effective violence prevention programs.

RAND Corporation completed a study that identified risk factors, examined socioeconomic factors and explored the association between violence and other public health problems. RAND researcher Dr. Phyllis L. Ellickson found that a major risk factor was a history of problem behaviors, such as involvement with drugs, repeated felonies and delinquency. Like academic performers, lack of parental support and perceptions of parents’ substance abuse also were shown as strong links to violent behavior. Bonds to family and to school were found to be strong protective factors from violence, especially among girls with family problems and stressful events in their personal lives.

Clearly the research argued for prevention and intervention programs that addressed problem behaviors early and strengthened bonds to family and to school. Ellickson and her colleagues shared their results not only with the Initiative participants, but also made presentations at state, national and international conferences concerned on public health, drug policy and children’s issues.

WIIA researcher Dr. Susan R. Kamerow focused much of her research on disenfranchised and under-researched populations such as immigrants, Latinos and youth. One report that received considerable media attention was titled Risk of Youth Homicide Victims by Zipcode-Status, which found that immigrants as a group are at higher risk of homicide than residents born in the United States. This information was invaluable because, even though immigrants are an increasing segment of California’s population, studies of immigrants in connection with violence had not previously been done.

Other constructive research in this arena came out of the UCLA Prevention Research Center/Policy Institute, which provided information about community-oriented policing as a violence prevention strategy. Characteristics of successful community policing programs were found to include: neighborhood partnerships, responsiveness to community priorities and decentralization of command structures. A briefing of the findings was held for 50 police officers, elected officials, county supervisors, city administrators and the news media. The report was also distributed to 1,700 similar personnel throughout the state.

The University of California, Riverside, contributed to the field by developing a useful evaluation model to help program directors demonstrate their impact on youth violence, the continuum outcomes and possible program recommendations for policymakers, funders and practitioners.

RESEARCH FOCUS: THE ROLE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Previously, produced literature in other geographic areas had pointed to the possibility that excessive alcohol consumption was related to violence. We provided funds to study the association between alcohol and violence in California and to develop policy recommendations. The researchers not only found a strong connection between alcohol and violence, but also revealed that the higher the density of alcohol outlets and advertising, the higher the risk of excessive alcohol consumption and violence.

Dr. Maria Alkonis and Dr. Robert Parker of the Prevention Research Center overlaid maps of alcohol outlets, such as bars and liquor stores, with maps of crimes in both San Jose and Redwood City. The study documented a strong correlation between alcohol outlets and crime. The researchers also found that alcohol outlet density in Latino communities was much higher than in other areas. In fact, in a one-square-mile radius in Redwood City with a high concentration of Mexican-Americans, 69 alcohol outlets were found. The state average for the same distance is 9.

Alaniz and Parker also discovered a correlation between ethnic-specific alcohol advertising and youth violence. Their research found times as many alcohol ads in Latino neighborhoods as in predominantly Caucasian neighborhoods, and that Latino children pass to 61 alcohol ads while walking home from school. The alcohol industry was also increasingly sponsoring Latino festivals and events, including Cinco de Mayo celebrations, which are often marred by violent incidents. The Center’s research states that in 1996 the alcohol industry spent $26 million advertising to Latinos, with ads featuring Mexican flags, architecture and models.

Research findings: Violence Flourishes Where Alcohol is Bought and Sold

Supported by fact-based figures, communities have been able to take action to reduce alcohol-related violence. This public health approach seeks to change society’s values and behaviors—such as lowering the number of alcohol outlets in a community and violent crime.

Another study showed there was a disproportionate number of alcohol outlets in predominantly Latino neighborhoods—nearly five times more than in predominantly Caucasian communities.

Looking at police reports, alcohol was found to be present in more than one-half of all incidents of domestic violence.

It is estimated that one-third and three-quarters of sexual assaults involve alcohol consumption by either the perpetrator, the victim or both.

Research Findings: Violence Flourishes Where Alcohol is Bought and Sold

• Funded research discovered a dramatic correlation between the number of alcohol outlets in a community and violent crime.

• Another study showed there was a disproportionate number of alcohol outlets in predominantly Latino neighborhoods—nearly five times more than in predominantly Caucasian communities.

• Looking at police reports, alcohol was found to be present in more than one-half of all incidents of domestic violence.

• It is estimated that one-third and three-quarters of sexual assaults involve alcohol consumption by either the perpetrator, the victim or both.

R E S E A R C H TO INFORM A C T I O N A N D C H A N G E
RESEARCH FOCUS: FIREARM INJURY AND DEATH

Media. Essentially the only positive image they saw reflected of themselves was associated with alcohol. 3

The Prevention Research Center put together packets of information for community groups, academics, policymakers, alcohol industry representatives, advertising firms and community leaders. This information was instrumental in Humboldt City’s refusal of alcohol sponsorships for the Cinco De Mayo festival. The San Jose Human Rights Commission voted to encourage event organizers to stop alcohol sponsorships of their city’s Cinco De Mayo festival. The San Mateo County board of supervisors decided to monitor the number of liquor licenses issued in areas with an already high concentration of alcohol outlets. The findings were also used by community advocates and policymakers around the state to promote similar public education campaigns and policy changes.

Dr. James F. Mosher of the Rand Institute produced research that furthered the discussion concerning policies on alcohol. He began by developing a model policy, which included: beer tax reform, regulation of industry promotion and advertising, regulation of alcohol outlet density, and the ability of local jurisdictions to give more input into the establishment and monitoring of Alcohol Beverage Control laws. His research found that this model can help local governments strengthen local policies and reduce alcohol consumption. Similar to the Prevention Research Center’s conclusions, Mosher also determined a close relationship between alcohol availability and youth violence.

Utilizing Mosher’s research, several California communities enacted various reforms to reduce the adverse effect of alcohol outlets and alcohol marketing in their communities. The Maris Institute was particularly effective in working with Initiative grantees to support local efforts to effect policy change. With legal research papers, briefs and model policy recommendations, the project has informed both local and state reform efforts.

Ellickson of RAND Corporation and dean of UCLA also produced studies that confirmed a strong relationship between alcohol and risk of youth violence and homicide.

RESEARCH HAS PROVIDED VALUABLE INFORMATION AND HAS HELPED MOBILIZE EFFORTS TO REDUCE VIOLENCE.

E xposing the facts about gun violence (DOJ) • More Californians died from handgun wounds than from car crashes or disease. • 58% of all firearm-related deaths were young people, ages 10 to 25. • 25% of homicides, 25% of aggravated assaults and 35% of robberies were committed with a firearm. • 3,500 suicides were committed with firearms; 16% of all gun suicide deaths involved young people between the ages of 15 and 25. • Californians legally purchased an average of 1,000 handguns daily. • There are approximately eight more gun deaths in California than there are Midesbial’s. • The average cost of a Saturday night special handgun is less than $50.

California facts about gun violence (DOJ) • More Californians legally purchase an average of 30,000 handguns per month.

In 1994, an initiative sponsored by gun industry executives was presented to California voters, asking for the easing of gun laws. The initiative passed easily. Anti-gun advocates and policymakers around the state knew that they had to counter the initiative with strong public education campaigns and policy changes. The findings were also used by community advocates and policymakers around the state to promote similar public education campaigns and policy changes.

Dr. James F. Mosher of the Rand Institute produced research that furthered the discussion concerning policies on alcohol. He began by developing a model policy, which included: beer tax reform, regulation of industry promotion and advertising, regulation of alcohol outlet density, and the ability of local jurisdictions to give more input into the establishment and monitoring of Alcohol Beverage Control laws. His research found that this model can help local governments strengthen local policies and reduce alcohol consumption. Similar to the Prevention Research Center’s conclusions, Mosher also determined a close relationship between alcohol availability and youth violence.

Utilizing Mosher’s research, several California communities enacted various reforms to reduce the adverse effect of alcohol outlets and alcohol marketing in their communities. The Maris Institute was particularly effective in working with Initiative grantees to support local efforts to effect policy change. With legal research papers, briefs and model policy recommendations, the project has informed both local and state reform efforts.

Ellickson of RAND Corporation and dean of UCLA also produced studies that confirmed a strong relationship between alcohol and risk of youth violence and homicide.

RESEARCH HAS PROVIDED VALUABLE INFORMATION AND HAS HELPED MOBILIZE EFFORTS TO REDUCE VIOLENCE.

E xposing the facts about gun violence (DOJ) • More Californians died from handgun wounds than from car crashes or disease. • 58% of all firearm-related deaths were young people, ages 10 to 25. • 25% of homicides, 25% of aggravated assaults and 35% of robberies were committed with a firearm. • 3,500 suicides were committed with firearms; 16% of all gun suicide deaths involved young people between the ages of 15 and 25. • Californians legally purchased an average of 1,000 handguns daily. • There are approximately eight more gun deaths in California than there are Midesbial’s. • The average cost of a Saturday night special handgun is less than $50.

California facts about gun violence (DOJ) • More Californians legally purchase an average of 30,000 handguns per month.
Leah Aldridge is the program director of the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW).

“We gave policymakers an additional opportunity to fight gun violence by linking guns and domestic violence. For example, research shows that a gun in the house is 43 more times likely to be used on the occupants in the house than on an intruder.”
Charles and Mary Leigh Blek founded a grassroots organization, Orange County Citizens for the Prevention of Gun Violence, to inform the public, the media and policymakers that gun injuries and deaths are preventable. Their son, Matthew, was shot and killed with a Saturday night special handgun.

“We do this because we don’t want you to suffer this terrible loss. We do this because we want to protect our other children. And we do it for ourselves because it helps us to heal.”

Mary Leigh Blek
STRATEGIES TO EDUCATE 
THE PUBLIC AND POLICYMAKERS

Strongly influenced by research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and California’s Injury Control Program, the Foundation established the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) Policy Program because it recognized that policy changes and focused social action are key factors in promoting public health goals. We believed that establishing clear policy goals would help grantees form a shared understanding of what the Initiative would try to achieve and provide a basis for measuring the results. We identified three policy goals: reducing youth access to firearms in order to prevent injuries and deaths, increasing support for youth violence prevention programs, and reducing youth access to alcohol and other drugs.

We provided grants to organizations to implement the goals of the VPI Policy Program. With many opportunities to work synergistically, these organizations contributed valuable policy, public education, and informational advice and assistance on crime and violence prevention policy. The Center also coordinated the Academic Fellows program and organized the annual Initiative conference. Among some of its success stories is the Center’s policy work on Saturday night special regulations. Others passed ordinances in California that restricted gun dealers, such as policy papers and fact sheets, Legal Services, the California Injury Control Research and Education Office (ICR), and the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI).

GOALS
To reduce youth access to firearms in order to prevent injuries and death. 
To increase support for youth violence prevention programs. 
To reduce youth access to alcohol and drugs.

CREATING A POLICY CENTER FOCUSED ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION

To ensure that all of the VPI’s components were integrated into the Policy Program, we awarded a grant in 1993 to the Truman Foundation in San Francisco to establish the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention. Leading policy organizations were retained by the Center to provide a wide array of resources to policy makers, the media and the public about violence prevention as a health issue and some of the solutions worth exploring.

ONE KILLER OF KIDS

We believed it was important to fund a public education campaign that would not have happened without information provided by the grantees of the VPI. "Before the Violence Prevention Initiative, there was no concerted group effort to address the problem associated with handgun violence. Now, 39 communities have passed ordinances to prevent the sale of Saturday night specials to reduce their risk to public health. These gun ordinances would not have happened without information provided by the grantees of the VPI," Andrew McGuire, executive director, Pacific Center for Violence Prevention.

“Saturday night specials” and "junk guns" are the terms commonly used to describe the short-barreled, easily concealed handguns that are disproportionately used in the commission of crimes. Since 1995, 39 California communities have passed ordinances to prevent the sale of these guns.

The Pacific Center, along with other VPI grantees, has helped change policy regarding the critical after-school hours and its effect on youth. Research indicates that violence against youth increases between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. There is some evidence that after-school programs not only help youngsters stay safe, but can also increase academic performance. Most recently, the state provided an ongoing allocation of $5 million annually to support after-school programs.

The Center has also taken advantage of technology to facilitate its statewide networking of grantees and other violence prevention experts by creating and managing an e-mail network and website. After five years of training and networking, community leaders, researchers, and health professionals have formed a strong constituency for educating the public about the public health approach to preventing violence.

PUBLIC EDUCATION TO INFORM AND MOBILIZE ACTION

The VPI Public Education Campaign provides the opportunity to inform opinion leaders and policymakers about Californians’ attitudes and about the ambivalence between public support for intervention and prevention.
Initiative’s policy goals. In 1995 Martin & Glantz received a grant to develop and implement a multimedia campaign.

The campaign supported the policy goals and advanced two key messages: reduce the availability of and access to handguns by youth, and create a greater awareness and consideration of policies that will increase resources for programs to prevent youth violence.

Throughout the Initiative, Martin & Glantz has developed many phases of the public education campaign, including “Youth Must You Know,” an innovative effort to facilitate the involvement of young people in policy discussions, and “Prevent Handgun Violence Against Kids.”

The most recent phase of the campaign supports the second goal of the VPI Policy Program: increasing support for youth violence prevention programs. Titled “Resources for Youth: An Honest Dialogue About Strategies to Prevent Youth Violence,” it has included paid advertising, polling in local communities and efforts to draw new media attention to the need to increase resources for youth locally and statewide, such as after-school programs, job development and training and violence prevention programs.

“We are surprised by how few the campaign and its issues gained traction,” said Glen Glantz, principal of Martin & Glantz. But there were lessons learned throughout the campaign, among them the need for paid advertising rather than relying upon free television and radio public service announcements to disseminate key campaign messages. “We had to buy spots to reach the people we were after,” Glantz said.

Martin & Glantz surveyed audiences for a campaign message into two segments: the general public, and opinion leaders and policymakers. To reach the public, the firm used paid advertising in key markets and what Glantz calls “earned” media to convince journalists to cover violence-related stories in a health issue.

Opinion leaders were reached through direct mailings of educational materials they could use in their policy efforts, including kits loaded with data, examples of effective violence prevention tactics and recent policy developments. Since the start of the Initiative, Martin & Glantz has amassed a data base of 12,000 opinion leaders from 20 states, among them business, education, health, law enforcement and criminal justice.

The language used by state policymakers and other opinion leaders to describe violence and violence prevention has changed dramatically over the last five years. It is now common to hear elected officials, community leaders and health experts regularly quoted in the media referring to violence as a “health epidemic.” Many often cite information taken verbatim from the Initiative’s public education campaign, including one factoid: “3% of California fifth graders own a handgun.”

The most recent phase of the VPI Policy Program is an “Honest Dialogue About Strategies to Prevent Youth Violence.”

In addition to the main policy grantee, we have funded other important policy efforts. Among those is a couple who experienced personal tragedy and channelled their pain into action. Charles and Mary Leigh Bled founded the Orange County Citizens for the Prevention of Gun Violence in 1995 in memory of their son, Matthew, who was shot and killed in 1994 while in New York City during a break from his senior year in college. The instrument of death used in his murder was a Saturday night special handgun, most of which are made in the place Matthew called home: southern California.

The Bleds—husband and wife, they registered a chain—founded the countywide grassroots organization with the belief that gun violence “is a bipartisan, public health and safety issue that crosses all political lines and social classes.” Through the policy work of the organization, they inform the public, the media and policymakers that gun violence and suicide are preventable. They also want us to remember that victims of violence are not just statistics—they are beloved friends and family.

“We do this in memory of the loved ones lost to us, our communities, our nation,” said Mary Leigh Bled. “We do this because we don’t want you to suffer this terrible loss. We do this because we want to protect our other children. And we do it for ourselves because it helps us to heal.”

The foundation also funded Mediavox, an organization that works with the television and film communities to search for solutions to the way complex social issues are portrayed in entertainment. “A major concern in the way violence is depicted in entertainment,” said Mary Kelly, president and founder of Mediavox, a greater that organized forums, seminars and workshops. These activities involved entertainment industry representatives in the development, promotion and adoption of policies to improve the depiction of violence in the media.

As a result of these and other policy efforts, the dialogue of violence prevention in California has shifted from an incorporation-only perspective to one that includes a public health approach for preventing violence against youth.

Initiative grantees are improving the health of their communities through policy action, armed with new skills and information drawn from research-driven policy, media advocacy and cohesive public education messages.


Berkeley Media Studies Group
California Child, Youth and Family Coalition
California Council of Churches (Center on Violence and Criminal Justice, Community)
EPIC, State Department of Health, Legal Community Against Violence
Martin & Glantz
Women Against Gun Violence

PUBLIC RESPONSE

POLICY CHANGE AND FOCUSED SOCIAL ACTION ARE KEY FACTORS IN PROMOTING PUBLIC HEALTH GOALS.