

Violence Prevention Initiative

Overview

What is the Violence Prevention Initiative?

The goal of the Violence Prevention Initiative is to reduce violence and create safer and healthier communities for all Californians.

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is committed to preventing violence and exploring innovative approaches to address this complex issue through the lens of public health. CDPH focuses on preventing multiple forms of violence and has established the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI), with the purpose of elevating violence as a departmental priority, integrating and aligning efforts across multiple CDPH programs, and framing the public health governmental role in addressing violence.

The Public Health Role in Violence Prevention

Public health promotes and protects the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work and play¹; and preventing violence is an important component of any effort to achieve health equity and create healthy communities².

Public health recognizes that violence is preventable and takes a primary prevention approach, working “upstream” to address underlying causes to prevent violence from happening in the first place.



The public health approach to violence prevention focuses on the following four-step process:³

1. **Define and monitor the problem** – Analyze data such as the number of violence-related injuries and deaths.
2. **Identify risk and protective factors** – These can increase or decrease the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.
3. **Develop and test prevention strategies** – Use data and findings from evaluation and research as an evidence-based approach to program planning.
4. **Assure widespread dissemination of effective practices** – Share best practices through networking, training, and technical assistance.

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Accomplishments

- ✓ CDPH assembled an internal task force from across the department to focus on violence as a public health risk and explore and clarify the role and contribution of governmental public health in preventing violence in all its forms. This resulted in the establishment of the Violence Prevention Initiative.
- ✓ The Violence Prevention Initiative conducted a survey of local health departments to better understand the scope of local violence prevention activities, and identify barriers, needs, and opportunities for collaboration.
- ✓ CDPH's Safe and Active Communities Branch obtained a Violent Death Reporting System grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to collect and analyze data on violent deaths from various data providers (i.e., vital records, law enforcement, and coroners/medical examiners).
- ✓ The Violence Prevention Initiative established the Preventing Violence in California report series with the first installment, *Preventing Violence in California Volume 1: The Role of Public Health*. This initial report provides an introduction to the complex and multifaceted issue of violence and a high level overview of the public health role and approach to violence prevention.
- ✓ CDPH hosted the Violence Prevention Initiative: Public Health Convening in Sacramento, a gathering of public health leaders brought together to start a conversation about developing a shared agenda to prevent violence in California.
- ✓ The Violence Prevention Initiative conducted a follow-up survey of local health departments on violence prevention, the underlying root causes of violence, partnerships and collaborations, and suggestions for future priorities and activities.
- ✓ CDPH released the second installment of the public health report series, and the first data brief, entitled: *Preventing Violence in California Data Brief 1: Overview of the Homicide and Suicide Deaths in California*.

For additional information on the Violence Prevention Initiative, please contact us at violenceprevention@cdph.ca.gov or visit the [Violence Prevention Initiative webpage](#).

1. American Public Health Association. (n.d.). What is public health?
Retrieved from <https://www.apha.org/what-is-public-health>
2. Prevention Institute. (2011). Violence and health equity.
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3. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2015). The public health approach to violence prevention.
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