

**CITY OF BALTIMORE**

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**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Baltimore City Health Department Releases Youth Violence Report

**BALTIMORE, MD** (August 31, 2009) – Today, the Baltimore City Health Department released a two-year study entitled “An Examination of Youth Violence in Baltimore City.” This report was a retrospective record review for youth involved in violent crime from 2002 to 2007. This review provides a foundation for identification and collaboration around innovative strategies for reaching at-risk youth before they become perpetrators and victims of violence.

“This comprehensive report identifies the challenges the city faces in reducing youth violence,” stated Mayor Sheila Dixon. “It is extremely important to connect the dots of all city services in our kids’ lives at the earliest point possible. We now have the data to make the best choices for our city’s youths and continue to create a healthier and safer Baltimore City for everyone.”

The goals of the review were three-fold:

- Describe the trajectories of youth involved in violence in Baltimore City
- Identify markers of youth who are at risk for involvement in violence
- Compare the characteristics of youth victims and perpetrators of violence in order to inform early intervention efforts and to help better coordinate services for at-risk youth.

Among the findings, youth who later become victims and perpetrators of violence in Baltimore City begin to show signs of concern to child serving agencies within a year of entering Kindergarten. Among youth with reports to the Department of Social Services for allegations of abuse or neglect (48%), the average age of first involvement was 6.6 years. Academic records point to truancy and suspensions, both with an age of first occurrence around age 13 years (92% of youth with an available school record had a history of chronic truancy and 62% had a history of suspension or expulsion.). The average age of first referral to the Department of Juvenile Services was 13.6 years (73%).

The Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City Public Schools, the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office, Courts and Judicial Proceedings -Family and Juvenile Court, and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services contributed data.

“We consider homicide deaths a major public health issue,” said Interim Health Commissioner Olivia Farrow. “By identifying young children likely to become involved in violence and getting them appropriate services, we can begin to curb the epidemic of violence in our city.”

The Baltimore City Health Department's Office of Youth Violence Prevention oversees two innovative youth programs aimed at reducing violence:

- **Operation Safe Kids** provides community-based case management and monitoring to juvenile offenders who are at high risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. The Baltimore City Health Department workers work closely with Department of Juvenile Services case managers and other state and city agencies to reduce youth violence in the city by ensuring these young people have the tools they need to become productive adults.

- **Operation Safe Streets** is a community mobilization and outreach program designed to combat shootings and homicides. This intervention targets at risk youth aged 14 to 25, through outreach and service connection, and the community as a whole, through a media campaign and community mobilization. Operation Safe Streets replicates Ceasefire Chicago, a highly successful program created by the School of Public Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

In order to get more information about these programs, or to view the full "Examination of Youth Violence in Baltimore City" study, please visit [www.baltimorehealth.org](http://www.baltimorehealth.org).

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