

Starting at Home

A link between Domestic Violence and Community Violence

2017 POSITION PAPER





"Domestic Violence does not discriminate and has no boundaries. It is in almost every neighborhood and at every income and education level and in every racial and ethnic group. Alarming, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men will experience Domestic Violence in their lifetimes."

MONSIGNOR MICHAEL M. BOLAND
PRESIDENT, CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE
ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

In 2016, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago

produced a white paper: the *Effects of Community Violence on Children*. In it, Catholic Charities attested to the fact that "Violence leaves no aspect of a child's life untouched, and robs them of normal development and future opportunities." Many studies demonstrate that: "Children who are exposed to violence are more likely to suffer from attachment problems, regressive behavior, anxiety, and depression, and to have aggression and conduct problems. Other health-related issues, as well as academic and cognitive problems, delinquency, and involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, are also associated with experiences of violence. Children who feel the effects of violence often manifest negative consequences throughout their lives" (Child Trends Databank, Children's Exposure to Violence, May 2016).

This year's position paper takes a deeper dive into the correlation between domestic violence and community violence.

1. IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON THE NEXT GENERATION

In addition to the obvious extreme danger inherent for children living in households encountering domestic violence, studies show that children who are witness to or victims of domestic violence experience devastating, long term effects. The harmful effects of witnessing domestic violence may be even greater than the effects of witnessing other forms of destructive conflict,¹ including community violence. Children who witness domestic violence are:

- More likely to show a range of behavioral, social, and academic problems ²
- Less likely to feel empathy for others ³
- At greater risk for substance abuse, juvenile pregnancy, and criminal behavior ⁴
- Likely to feel socially isolated ⁵
- Unable to make friends as easily due to social discomfort or confusion over what is acceptable ⁵
- More likely to demonstrate aggressive behavior, such as bullying, and are up to three times more likely to be involved in fighting ⁶

2. INTERSECTION OF DOMESTIC AND COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Community and domestic violence are connected in their tremendous negative impact on both the family and the community.

- In 2011, admissions to Cook County Jail for domestic violence accounted for 44% of all admissions for violent crime, including community violence. Domestic violence was the second highest arrest category overall, outranked only by possession of a controlled substance.
- Among female homicide victims, one in three is killed by a current or former intimate partner. ⁷ For every woman killed in a domestic violence homicide, nine more are critically injured. ⁸
- More chilling, from 2009 to 2012, 40% of mass shootings – defined as having four or more victims killed – started with the shooter targeting a girlfriend, wife, or ex-wife. ⁹

It's important to note that with community violence, perpetrators are usually unknown or unrelated to the victims. Although there are risk factors for some traumas, community violence often happens without warning and comes as a sudden and terrifying shock. Because of this, communities suffering from violence experience increased fear and feelings that the world is unsafe with potential for harm at any moment. Although some types of trauma are accidental, community violence is intentional. This can lead survivors to internalize an extreme sense of betrayal and distrust toward others.

3. THE NEED: ADDRESS PRIMARY RISK FACTORS FOR COMMUNITY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Violence, whether in the community or the home, takes a direct toll on the physical, mental, and emotional health of its victims. Any violent incident is a traumatic event, which involves directly experiencing or being threatened with physical or psychological harm, or witnessing others being harmed.

To prevent violence of any kind, one must first address its many causes. Very often these causes mirror the root causes of poverty. There is no single solution to eradicating either violence or poverty, but a viable plan should simultaneously consider both issues while pursuing enhanced quality and dignity of life for people and communities. Initial interventions may include trauma-sensitive services to address mental and emotional health, domestic violence, substance abuse, gang activity, employment, and homelessness, along with the confounding layers of other issues.

Emerging evidence suggests that some promising avenues for violence prevention could address risk factors common to both perpetration of domestic violence and community violence. These factors include growing up in a violent home, harmful use of alcohol, motivations to aggressive behavior, and social norms condoning violence.¹⁰

Specifically, interventions that may prevent both community violence and aggression (particularly male-on-male) and domestic violence may include:

- Parent training and parent-child programs
- Early identification and effective treatment of behavior and emotional disorders
- Alcohol abuse prevention and treatment

- Community-based multilevel interventions to shift gendered social norms
- Social marketing campaigns designed to modify social and cultural norms that support violence¹¹

4. CATHOLIC CHARITIES OFFERS A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE CAUSES OF AND SUPPORT VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Breaking the cycle of violence has been an essential part of the services provided by Catholic Charities for many generations. Following are some highlights:

Specialized counseling programs

Designed to provide a safe and supportive atmosphere for youth, adults, and families, Catholic Charities services are professionally-driven, evidence-based and strengths-focused. Professional staff has degrees in psychology, social work, and counseling, and are licensed to practice in Illinois. Counseling is available in English and Spanish at locations across the Agency's service area. Specialized counseling includes:

- Parenting and healthy relationship groups
- Prevention and community education efforts to decrease risk factors for domestic and community violence
- Child counseling/trauma-informed child therapy, including school-based youth therapy programs
- Individual, marital, and family counseling
- In-home counseling
- Substance abuse treatment

- Grief counseling
- Counseling and support groups for survivors of suicide
- Specialized counseling and case management services for victims of domestic violence, including individual and group support
- Counseling services for immigrant women in abusive situations

House of the Good Shepherd

In a national day-in-time survey of service requests received and service connections made, the number one unmet need of domestic violence victims was for emergency shelter/housing.¹²

One Catholic Charities program helping to fill this particular service gap is the House of the Good Shepherd. The House of the Good Shepherd's domestic violence shelter and healing recovery programs help women and children survivors of domestic violence rebuild lives with hope and dignity. In addition to safe housing, the shelter provides residents with opportunities to learn financial literacy skills, participate in job training, and access resources to become self-sufficient and maintain economically stable lives.

Peace Corner Youth Center

Catholic Charities Peace Corner Youth Center provides a critical safe haven and neutral center for at-risk youth living in Chicago's west side Austin community, an area that is plagued by gangs, drugs, crime, and violence. The Peace Corner welcomes more than 250 youth each year, offering many programs aimed at helping them change their futures, and break the cycle of poverty ever present in this community. The mission of the Peace Corner is to teach that the way out of poverty is through education and positive life choices.

The Center offers:

- A safe place for youth to complete their homework
- Mentors to help youth achieve and maintain passing grades
- Daily activities where youth learn valuable life skills
- Regular enrichment activities that help build critical thinking skills

By providing youth with these opportunities, Catholic Charities helps them envision and work towards a successful future.

Comprehensive specialized legal services to victims

Catholic Charities provides comprehensive legal services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In addition, the agency offers specific victim services such as orders of protection, representation in matters of child support and child custody issues, and translation and interpretation services.

5. PARISH AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Victims of violence often first seek help from their church, which they view as a safe place. Many parishes within the Archdiocese rely on Catholic Charities professional support and training to help those living in or attempting to leave a home where domestic violence is occurring, or reaching out to victims of community violence.

Catholic Charities President and CEO Monsignor Michael Boland is the Co-Chair of Cardinal Cupich's Archdiocesan-wide Violence Prevention Task Force. The Task Force was convened in 2016 by Cardinal Cupich to allocate the resources of the Archdiocese of Chicago to promote peace, especially the reduction of gun violence, in the region's most impacted communities.

The Task Force is comprised of different human services agencies, both Catholic and not; other community provider partners; officials from different levels of government; and representation from the justice system, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Police Department, federal law enforcement, private foundations, and interreligious groups, as well as the Catholic parishes, universities, and hospitals.

Additionally, Catholic Charities is instrumental in the Archdiocese's Domestic Violence Outreach efforts. The goal is to raise awareness of domestic violence, to promote the development and delivery of services such as counseling and group support to women, men, and children victims of domestic violence, as well as to perpetrators, and also to advocate for the prevention of domestic violence. Girls and boys, young women, and young men learn to recognize the elements of unhealthy and healthy relationships. This is accomplished through education at home, in parishes, and in schools.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago has been part of the Steering Committee for the Archdiocese Domestic Violence Outreach since its inception in 2010.

6. CATHOLIC CHARITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

Catholic Charities calls specifically for greater investments to be made in effective mental and behavioral health programs to alleviate the already existing, intertwined trauma of domestic and community violence. Existing programs need greater capacity to address layers of issues:

- Invest in robust mental health assessment and counseling services for children, youth, and adults particularly with trauma and post-traumatic stress syndrome
- Partner with health communities such as hospitals and Federally Qualified Health Centers to support mental health insurance coverage
- Increase the availability of safe and affordable housing for younger and older populations as well as families
- Invest in and be present in communities working to transform from struggling to thriving
- Continue to develop more outreach and communication to youth and families on how to access available services
- Enhance family strengthening-focused programming and efforts to establish future solutions to the sources of poverty and violence.
- Expand the capacity of 24/7 emergency social service responses, with a focus on mental health crisis treatment and anti-retaliation responses
- Establish programs that quickly foster healthy responses, reestablish stability, and stop the cycle of violence, including Crisis Response Teams
- Invest in Crisis Intervention Trainings for all staff, particularly front-line service providers

Donate, volunteer, and partner with Catholic Charities to help end the devastating impact of violence by addressing its root causes. Catholic Charities urges parishioners and people of good will across the Archdiocese of Chicago and beyond to reach out to and support social service agencies like Catholic Charities in whatever way possible.

Catholic Charities is aided in its mission by thousands of volunteers each year. This enables us to be efficient, and maintain the ratio of 92 cents of every dollar we raise going directly to our programs. Whether you become involved through your Parish, your circle of friends, or, if when you retire, you find yourself with time and expertise to share, volunteerism not only provides needed human resources for Catholic Charities, but it allows us to offer more compassionate services to people in need. In return, we attempt to provide all of our volunteers with an enriching experience that matches interests and enhances the quality of lives.

TO VOLUNTEER, CALL: (312) 655-4597
www.volunteerbridge.com

TO DONATE, CALL: (312) 655-7525
www.catholiccharities.net/donate

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"No one should live in fear of someone they love, or make their home in an unsafe community. Yet, millions of people from all walks of life suffer from the tragedy of violence."

MONSIGNOR MICHAEL M. BOLAND
PRESIDENT, CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



www.catholiccharities.net

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OUR MISSION

Catholic Charities fulfills the Church's role in the mission of charity to anyone in need by providing compassionate, competent, and professional services that strengthen and support individuals, families, and communities based on the value and dignity of human life.

CITY OF CHICAGO

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Southwest

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SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

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