



## **Incorporating Parents in Violence Prevention in Baltimore City, Maryland**

### **Project Description:**

- "Steppin' Up" is a school-based intervention funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) that employs mentoring to increase interest in academics and reduce aggression and violence among predominately African American children and families in Baltimore City, Maryland.
- Building on this successful initiative, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded additional research to incorporate the power of parents in the intervention/prevention of violence. Using a community-based participatory approach, researchers have collaborated with a Parent Advisory Group in the Baltimore City community to design a violence intervention program for inner-city African American parents whose children participated in the original "Steppin' Up" intervention.

### **Background: Prevalence of violent behavior among African American youth:**

- Youth violence is a major health concern for African American youth and families and warrants specific attention. Homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans ages 10-24, the second leading cause of death for Hispanics, and the third leading cause of death for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Asian/Pacific Islanders. (CDC, 2006).
- **According to the Baltimore City Commission of Health, homicide is the leading cause of death in adolescents and young adults living in Baltimore City, Maryland.**
- Researchers have demonstrated that parental attitudes, youth's perceptions of parental attitudes, parental monitoring, and family conflict are predictive of youth engagement in violent behavior. In a qualitative analysis of inner-city African American youth, when asked about family factors that contributed to their participation in violence, youth felt that being able to talk to a parent was protective against participating in violent behaviors.
- The CDC has suggested that best practices in violence prevention include parenting interventions (Thorton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer. 2002). However, there is limited inclusion or discussion with parents in the development of violence intervention and prevention programming, particularly for low-income, inner-city African American youth in neighborhoods characterized by high rates of violence.

### **Research Intervention:**

- **Current research efforts focus on development of an effective violence prevention program for inner-city African American youth that incorporates parent intervention and community collaboration through community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods.**
- As part of two Steppin' Up studies, research will assess how African American parents and youth in an inner-city neighborhood with high rates of violence exposure communicate about fighting, conflict management, and violence in their community.
- In addition, with regular guidance from the Parent Advisory Group, researchers will develop and test the effectiveness of a pilot parent intervention focused on increasing communication about parent expectations, parental monitoring, and adaptive problem solving skills and techniques.

### **Policy Implications:**

- Parents must be involved in these efforts. Urban parents in particular must be central to recruiting efforts to engage other parents to participate in intervention initiatives.

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