

UNDERSERVED TEEN VICTIMS INITIATIVE CASE STUDY GUIDE



2001 Jefferson Davis Highway
Suite 901
Arlington, VA 22202
202-466-6272
202-296-1356 (fax)
www.ncpc.org

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL (NCPC)

The primary mission of the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is to be the nation's leader in helping people keep themselves, their families, and their communities safe from crime. NCPC's strategic plan is centered on four goals: protect children and youth; partner with government and law enforcement to prevent crime; promote crime prevention and personal safety basics; and respond to emerging crime trends. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and a national focus for crime prevention, and acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America—more than 400 national, federal, state, and local organizations representing thousands of constituents who are committed to preventing crime. NCPC also sponsors the National Crime Prevention Association, an individual membership association to promote resources and career development to crime prevention practitioners. NCPC also operates demonstration programs and takes a leadership role in comprehensive community crime prevention strategies and youth crime prevention. NCPC manages the nationally recognized McGruff® "Take A Bite Out Of Crime®" public service advertising campaign.



THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

The National Center for Victims of Crime, established in 1985, is the nation's leading nonprofit resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. Its mission is to forge a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. Through collaboration with local, state, tribal, and federal partners, the National Center helps provide direct services and resources to victims of crime across the country; advocates for laws and public policies that secure rights, resources, and protections for crime victims; delivers training and technical assistance to victim service organizations, counselors, attorneys, criminal justice agencies, and allied professionals serving victims of crime; and fosters advanced thinking about the impact of crime and the ways in which everyone can help victims of crime rebuild their lives. Our Youth Initiative builds the nation's capacity to support youth victims while working to advance their rights and ensure youth leadership on issues that affect youth.



This project was produced by Grant No. 2009-SZ-B9-K007 awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the campaigns and initiatives of the 2010-2011 Underserved Teen Victims Initiative (UTVI) program sites. While this document will explore some best practices of engaging youth in outreach activities, it should not be used as a "how-to" guide for implementing similar programs into your community. For additional information on how to use this program in your community, please check out the UTVI guidebook at www.ncpc.org.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Importance of Youth Victim Outreach	Page 4
The Underserved Teen Victims Initiative	5
Target Audience: Hispanic/Latino	7
Target Audience: Asian Pacific Islander Youth	11
Target Audience: Runaway and Homeless Youth	13
Target Audience: American Indian Youth	15
Target Audience: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning Youth	17
Target Audience: Muslim and Arab Youth	19
Inspired To Create Change in Your Community?	21

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH VICTIM OUTREACH

Teens in the United States make up almost half of all victims of violent crime over the age of 12. Teens from underserved populations, such as ethnic minorities and teens with disabilities, are often victimized at even higher rates than the general teen population. While most teens have limited access to qualified, age-appropriate victims services, teens from underserved populations have even fewer options. Often times, teens from underserved populations face additional challenges and barriers to accessing victim services.

Many victim service providers, schools, and community centers have been forced to eliminate or drastically reduce youth outreach and support programs due to agency budget cuts.

The lack of culturally appropriate and targeted outreach to teens in underserved populations can result in ignorance about victimization. Youth may not recognize that they have been victimized or abused, or they may believe that behaviors that are in fact abusive are just a normal part of social relationships. Teen victims from these underserved populations may also experience feelings of isolation, powerlessness, shame, and mistrust, which prevent them from reaching out for help. Some cultures discourage reaching out to others to manage personal problems, so victimized teens may feel alone in their struggle to overcome their victimization.

Victimization can have a profoundly negative effect on adolescents. Teens who have been victimized often display rapid changes in behavior, including sleep disturbances, aggression and acting out behaviors, withdrawal, poor peer relations, high-risk behaviors (such as drug use), unhealthy weight management, and suicide attempts. Victimization often results in problems with academic performance, increased truancy, and increased negative contact with teachers. Victimized teens are also more likely to suffer from long-term emotional problems—victimized teens have reported levels of depression and anger/aggression that are three times higher than peers who have not been victimized. The negative consequences of victimization can be mitigated if teens receive help from victim service providers.

THE UNDERSERVED TEEN VICTIMS INITIATIVE

The Underserved Teen Victims Initiative (UTVI) is an innovative program created in partnership with the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) and National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) to address the issue of teen victimization. The UTVI program taps into the creativity and energy of youth leaders and local organizations and supports them with a national network of training and technical assistance.

The National Partners discovered the gaps in culturally appropriate resources for underserved populations through their work on the Youth Outreach for Victims Assistance (YOVA) project. The YOVA project enabled youth leaders across the country to develop and implement an outreach campaign educating their peers on victims' rights and awareness. Building on the success of YOVA, the National Partners used the YOVA model to support organizations to develop outreach campaigns directed at populations of underserved teens. The National Partners selected 24 program sites located across the nation committed to conducting outreach to underserved populations of young people, specifically

- + Hispanic/Latino
- + Asian-Pacific Islander (API)
- + Runaway youth
- + American Indian
- + Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth (GLBTQ) youth
- + Muslim or Arab

PROGRAM GOALS

The Underserved Teens Victims Initiative was created to accomplish these two main goals:

- + To raise awareness of teen victimization and identify promising strategies for reaching and supporting underserved populations of teen victims
- + To build the capacity of victim service professionals to reach and support these underserved teen victims

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The UTVI program is designed for local communities to develop and implement a youth-led outreach campaign specific to the unique needs of the youth in their communities. Each program site is asked to identify a target population it wishes to reach and an issue to focus its outreach efforts on.

Before launching their campaigns, all program sites were required to attend a two-and-a-half day training event hosted by the National Partners. The training event prepared both adult and youth leaders to run a successful youth outreach campaign through skill building, including developing PSAs, press releases, culturally sensitive materials, and website content.

Each local team was then asked to do the following:

- + Form a team of youth and adults to design and implement a new campaign directed at one or more of the specified underserved population of teens.
- + Plan and implement a public outreach campaign to inform youth about victims' rights and services available to teen victims. These campaigns could be audio or video, public service advertisements, or printed materials such as brochures, palm cards, or tip sheets.

The 24 sites that were selected to participate in the UTVI program received funding, training, and technical assistance from the National Partners over a period of five to 10 months. In the examples that follow, you will read about the various campaigns, initiatives, and resources that each UTVI site developed and implemented in its community. You will see how with a little support, a group of dedicated youth leaders, and a tremendous amount of passion, you can make a huge impact.

TARGET AUDIENCE

HISPANIC/LATINO

Each of the following UTVI sites chose to focus its outreach efforts on Hispanic and Latino youth in its community. While the target audience may be the same, each campaign was developed to address the unique needs of each local community.

FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Bronx, New York

A LITTLE PASSION GOES A LONG WAY

The division of the Department of Pediatrics at Jacobi Medical Center, Family Advocacy Program (FAP), is a nationally recognized Child Advocacy Center dedicated to providing services to children and teens that have been affected by sexual abuse or neglect. Prior to being selected as a UTVI program site, FAP was already conducting outreach and providing services to underserved populations of teens. To further this work, FAP developed a youth outreach campaign named BOUNCE, seeking to empower Hispanic and Latino youth in transitional housing to stand up and speak out against their victimization.

Fueled with the passion and determination to jumpstart its outreach campaign, FAP immediately set its hopes high from the start. Being mental health providers, FAP felt itself in a unique position to empower runaway and homeless youth to not only seek help but also to develop leadership and communication skills. The adult leader of the program, Dr. Whitney Maynor, believes strongly in the therapeutic process of having teens who have been directly or indirectly affected by sexual violence mentor others who may have gone through similar experiences. Incorporating the use of socio-drama, journaling, and verbal and non-verbal creative expression, FAP created a three-stage mini-workshop to conduct at the local homeless shelter, Inwood House.

TAKE ACTION!

Teens are experts in educating peers. Let teens take charge in discussions, developing resources, and community outreach.

The workshops were facilitated by the BOUNCE youth leaders and were a definite success. The first workshop of the series presented general information on what sexual violence is and how victims can receive help. The second workshop pushed teens to think critically about sexual violence and encouraged teens to express their feelings through poems and journaling. The final workshop of the series brought everything together and participants processed all the information they had received. Each teen who participated in these workshops contributed in making a traveling quilt that will continue to have a constant presence in the community even after the program has completed. The quilt will travel through different community centers, homeless shelters, and possibly schools, to encourage other victims to speak out against their victimization.

The three-stage workshop model helped foster a trusting relationship with teens and provided them with a safe space to express their thoughts and feelings with their peers. Dr. Maynor felt that “it was a very empowering experience for the youth leaders. The teens who participated in the workshops felt it was also empowering for them, seeing the power of expressing their feelings. They felt they could reach out to other people about their victimization.”

BOUNCE has had a ripple effect in the community. Its success at Inwood House has helped to build lasting relationships and has led to additional requests for workshops and more interest in the program. Undoubtedly, FAP will continue to reach and serve underserved populations of teens and will continue to gain the support of its community through lasting community partnerships.

ADELANTE MUJERES

Forest Grove, Oregon

Adelante Mujeres engaged Latino/Hispanic teens in its community through a number of different outreach efforts. Youth leaders created a traveling mural portraying facts on cyberbullying and encouraging words to empower cyberbullying victims to seek help. The mural will travel through community centers and possibly local schools to encourage victims of cyberbullying to seek help. Adelante Mujeres also extended its outreach efforts to Latino/Hispanic youth in Forest Grove through its local Spanish programming television station, Univision Portland. The station aired a PSA produced by Adelante Mujeres on victim resources available to local youth.

BRIGHT HORIZONS

Norfolk, Nebraska

As a former YOVA project site, Bright Horizons continued its youth outreach efforts educating Latino/Hispanic youth on teen dating violence. Bright Horizons hosted a school assembly at a local middle school where guest speaker Miss Ohio Becky Minger came to talk with students about her experiences with bullying and dating violence. With the support of the local media outlets, Bright Horizons was also able to produce a PSA on teen dating violence that will play on local radio stations.

NEVADA HISPANIC SERVICES (NHS)

Reno, Nevada

An organization dedicated to conducting outreach to Hispanic and Latino youth in Reno, Nevada, NHS incorporated the UTVI campaign into its existing outreach efforts. Building upon a great working relationship with the local schools, NHS was able to do a number of workshops in three surrounding high schools. The youth leaders educated their peers on stalking victimization and the resources available to them.

RYASAP-YOUTHSPEAK

Bridgeport, Connecticut

Tackling the issue of teen dating violence, RYASAP developed an innovative and interactive youth outreach campaign that included movie discussions, a red carpet event, and the launch of a new website. Using recent movies like Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, RYASAP hosted a movie series that brought young people together to identify and discuss healthy relationships. RYASAP also launched a youth-targeted website, MYOSpace.com, where youth can log on and learn about dating violence, participate in online discussions, and learn about future outreach events.

THE SHELTER FOR ABUSED WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Naples, Florida

Upon leaving the national UTVI training event, the Shelter knew exactly what it wanted to do. The youth leaders got right to work on writing, directing, and producing their very own PSA on healthy relationships, which will be shown at local PTA meetings and other youth-centered events in Naples. To further its outreach, the Shelter also launched a Facebook page for its initiative and plans to continue its outreach to Latino/Hispanic youth in its community.

SNOHOMISH COUNTY HEALTH AND SAFETY NETWORK

Everett, Washington

A former YOVA site, Snohomish County Health and Safety Network chose to continue its youth outreach efforts on the issue of healthy relationships. Using its PowerPlays program, Snohomish County presented local presentations to young people and community leaders on what makes a healthy relationship. These presentations facilitated by youth leaders, left participants with a comprehensive understanding of healthy relationships and key steps they can take to prevent teen dating violence.

TEXAS NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES-diyYOUTH ART PROGRAM

Austin, Texas

The diyYOUTH art program helps at-risk youth explore their talents through art and expression. Using the creativity of the youth leaders in the program, diyYOUTH developed a number of unique resources educating its peers on cyberbullying. Putting their creativity to work, youth leaders developed t-shirts, bags, and key-chains with phrases such as “connect with respect,” encouraging teens to use the Internet with respect and to choose not to cyberbully others. The resources have been distributed at a number of community events and will continue to be passed out to youth in the community.

UMOS LATINA RESOURCE CENTER

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Described as the “heart of the Hispanic community,” UMOS Latina Resource Center provides services for underserved Latino/Hispanic individuals and families living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. To educate young people on teen dating violence, UMOS hosted a teen summit event featuring interactive workshops, socio-drama, and posters. UTVI youth leaders educated their peers on the dangers of dating violence and created a PSA identifying aspects of healthy vs. unhealthy relationships.

YWCA OF BERGEN COUNTY (YWCA)

Hackensack, New Jersey

Partnering with the Urban League of Bergen County, the YWCA hosted a panel event bringing together experts in the field to educate teens on the issue of cyberbullying. Internet experts, law enforcement officers, and victim service providers spoke with young people on the tragic effects of cyberbullying and how to report cyberbullying incidents. Participants gained a better understanding of what is cyberbullying, the steps to take if they are being cyberbullied, and active ways to get involved to help stop it.

TARGET AUDIENCE

ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER YOUTH (API)

RESPECTING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

CRIME VICTIM CARE OF ALLEN COUNTY (CVC)

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Since opening its doors in 2005, Crime Victim Care of Allen County (CVC) has tried to keep up with the growing needs and services of its diverse community in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Being home to the largest Burmese refugee population in the country, CVC founder Dr. Saneta Maiko, established CVC to help bridge the gap in services for these resettled refugees.

CVC is a unique faith-based organization that provides spiritual, emotional, and socio-cultural oriented care and counseling to immigrants, refugees, and non-English speaking crime victims in Allen County, Indiana. Already committed to conducting outreach to underserved populations, CVC focused its efforts on educating Burmese and Asian Pacific Islander teens on the issue of bullying. Under the leadership of high-school student Thae Ohu, CVC launched a community-wide, anti-bullying campaign to get youth, educators, victim service providers, and law enforcement officers thinking about how they can take an active role in preventing bullying in their community.

Being such a diverse community, bullying and hate crimes were happening at an alarming rate in local schools and neighborhoods. Violent crime, assaults, and suicides were all issues that young people in Fort Wayne dealt with on a regular basis. To address these issues, CVC identified bullying as its primary concern. Fueled by its commitment to help better serve the underserved, CVC held a bullying awareness event to bring young people together to talk about bullying: what it is, what their rights are, and how to get help. The successful event brought together teens and community leaders from all over Fort Wayne to begin the discussion of how to prevent bullying and hate crimes from happening in their communities. Participants at the event heard tragic stories from youth who had been bullied and cyberbullied, gained awareness on how widespread the issue is, and left with a better understanding of how bullying has an impact on today's youth and where youth can turn for help.

TAKE ACTION!

Attend or host a cultural competency training. The more culturally competent you are, the more effective you will be at helping underserved populations.

The awareness event proved to be a critical step in **raising awareness** on bullying and the steps individuals, schools, and organizations can take to address and prevent it. Dr. Maiko said of the effort, "If we don't listen to young people's cries we are doomed to fail as adults and leaders in the community. We must speak to other adults and challenge them to think seriously about

bullying and how it affects their children in their communities.”

Driven by the passion and determination of CVC's youth leaders, participating in the UTVI program is just the beginning of its outreach efforts to underserved teens. CVC has plans to continue this type of work in its community with more events, awareness, and community involvement in the future.

WAPI COMMUNITY SERVICES

Seattle, Washington

An organization equipped with a recording studio, screen printing machine, and a computer lab for art-based programs, WAPI took a creative and innovative approach to reaching out to API teens in Seattle. WAPI hosted a poetry slam, “Truth be Told: Youth Spreading Awareness About Their Experience With Violence Through Poetry and Art,” where API youth could come together to talk about their experiences with violence in a safe and bias-free environment. The event enabled over 100 teens to share their experiences through poetry, spoken word, and performing and visual arts, while also educating them on victimization and available local resources.

TARGET AUDIENCE

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH

CITY OF SPARTANSBURG PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

Spartansburg, South Carolina

GAINING A BETTER PERSPECTIVE

In 2009, the City of Spartansburg Public Safety Department saw an increase in teen victimization and a spike in the number of runaway and homeless youth who passed through its department. With the knowledge that many runaway and homeless youth are unaware of the help available to them, the department set its sights on generating awareness of the support and services for runaways that the department offered.

Throughout her career at the police department, Esther Gosnell has continued to notice the stigma placed on runaway and homeless youth by the community—that they are just “bad kids.” In reality, many of these young people have lived through some incredibly tragic experiences, including prostitution, sex trafficking, drug dealing, and abuse. Having worked with a number of youth in transitional housing, Ms. Gosnell understood the need to gain support from her community to effectively reach this population. “The community looks away from these issues, nobody wants to think it’s happening in his or her backyard,” said Gosnell.

In order to get the community thinking about the needs of these young people, Ms. Gosnell and a number of passionate youth leaders, many of which were former runaways, set to work on building awareness. To kick off the program, the department hosted a candlelight vigil to bring a voice to runaway and homeless youth. The vigil served as a place for young people to come and share their experiences and to encourage the community to gain a “new and different view” on this population. Although attendance was generally low, the event generated a significant amount of media attention, which enabled the department to get the message out to teens about the resources available to them.

TAKE ACTION!

Create resources that can be duplicated and reused. While community events are a great way to spread the message, make sure to develop lasting resources that can be used in years to come.

Eager to build on the attention of the candlelight vigil, the department began working on a documentary to spread the word at the local and statewide level. With hopes of diminishing the stigma attached to runaway and homeless youth, the documentary enabled young people to share their stories with the world. The stories included Anna’s, a young woman born into a gang who was repeatedly sexually abused, and Noah’s, a young man with an abusive father and a mother addicted to drugs. These stories portrayed the tragic experiences many youth face and brought to light the fact that help is available. The documentary

has been shown at local homeless shelters, a number of local schools, and on the local cable network. The department hopes to move on to the statewide level and have the documentary shown in all middle and high schools in South Carolina.

Prior to the UTVI program, the little attention runaway and homeless youth did receive in Spartansburg, SC, was largely negative. Now, however, a change has begun and individuals are beginning to recognize these youth are not “bad kids” but are a group that needs consideration and assistance. A change in the youth who have been reached through this program has also begun, empowering them to feel confident in their ability to share their stories to help others. Though times may be tough and support may be lacking, Ms. Gosnell encourages others to “keep going with it, even if you don’t get that much support from the community. Initial lift off is hard, but keep going. It’s worth it.”

HOGAR ESCUELA

Bayamón, Puerto Rico

As one of the few organizations in Puerto Rico offering prevention and social services, Hogar Escuela focused its campaign on conducting outreach to runaway and homeless youth living in its community. Hogar Escuela created a number of resources including t-shirts, a brochure, and other free items to hand out at local events. Hogar Escuela used these resources to raise awareness about its services at a number of local events, including International Peace Day, International Women’s Day, and National Youth Violence Awareness Week.

STANDUP FOR KIDS MIAMI

Miami, Florida

StandUP for Kids Miami is an all-volunteer nonprofit that conducts street outreach, mentoring, and prevention workshops for runaway and homeless youth in Miami. StandUP for Kids partnered with local elementary and middle schools to educate students about the experiences and issues that runaway and homeless youth may face. The workshops featured a motivational speaker who shared with students his personal struggle of growing up as a runaway. It also conducted workshops at local schools where participants gained an insight into the hardships of being constantly on the run.

YWCA OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Manchester, New Hampshire

The YWCA of New Hampshire worked hard to create a number of resources for runaway and homeless youth. Its focus was on raising awareness of the YWCA’s services for this population. The YWCA created a number of items to hand out to youth at community events, which listed its contact information and available services. The YWCA also created a permanent section on its website, raising awareness of the issues affecting runaway and homeless youth and encouraging them to seek help.

TARGET AUDIENCE

AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH

MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS-
TRIBAL COURT SERVICES (MBCI)*Choctaw, Mississippi*BREAKING DOWN
CULTURAL NORMS

Being judged by your peers is no easy task, regardless of whether you're an adult or a young person. But the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) has created the tribal court service, TEEN Court program, to do just that. The TEEN Court program is an alternative to the formal Tribal Youth Court System for youth in the community who have committed delinquent offenses. The program allows youth to judge their peers and determine a sentence for delinquent acts with a focus on intervening early to prevent escalation of such behavior.

Having the unique inside look at issues affecting young people in its community, MBCI chose to focus its efforts on teen dating violence. Diversion Coordinator Andrew Jones found that “in our community, dating violence is a normal part of a family structure. Young people don't view domestic violence as something wrong but as something that is normal.” MBCI felt strongly that this viewpoint was just plain wrong and set its campaign focus on changing young people's understanding that dating violence is not normal, but in fact is a crime.

Youth leaders decided to reach teens through community events and workshops. These workshops educated children and teens on healthy relationships and conveyed messages like “hands are not for hitting.” The workshops were a success, reaching over 500 teens and 275 children in the local schools. The message that dating violence is wrong and that victims have rights was an entirely new concept being brought before these young people. The workshops were a critical step in creating a change in young people's attitudes toward domestic violence in their community.

Although the workshops at community events were successful in driving individuals to think differently about dating violence, MBCI wanted to ensure it was making a lasting impression on young people. The campaign's core messages—you have a choice, you have rights as a victim, and you deserve help—were portrayed through a number of items that teens were able to keep and take home, reminding them later should they need help. The youth leaders designed a number of promotional items including t-shirts, basketballs, cups, and pens to distribute to youth with powerful messages such as “Love is respect. Stop teen dating violence” to help spread the word.

TAKE ACTION!

Bring a voice to the issues. Don't be scared to bring attention to issues that are viewed as controversial or private. People need to hear and talk about these issues in order to make a real social change.

MBCI felt passionate about bringing attention to an issue that continues to affect its community. The fact that dating violence and domestic abuse were being swept under the rug was simply not acceptable to the young people involved in the campaign. While this was just the beginning, Mr. Jones feels that “this campaign was so important. We finally got young people and adults to see dating violence as a problem that we need to address. We have brought the issue to the public’s attention, and no longer are we going to stay silent. Young people have choices; they don’t need to stay in these destructive relationships.” Does it plan to continue this type of work in the future? Absolutely! As far as it’s concerned, this campaign was the launch of something that will make a positive change in its community.

THE AMERICAN INDIAN CHILD RESOURCE CENTER (AICRC)

Oakland, California

Located in a community with a high rate of youth victimization, AICRC struggled with selecting the type of victimization it wanted to focus on. Sensing its community needed to gain an overall understanding of the tragic effects of youth violence, AICRC created resources and sparked awareness on sexual, physical, mental, and emotional abuse. Its youth leadership team generated awareness among their peers on youth victimization and participated in annual community events that attract Native American’s from across the region.

TARGET AUDIENCE

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
TRANSGENDER, QUESTIONING
YOUTH (LGBTQ)

OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (OUSD)

Oakland, California

KEEP THE
**GOOD WORK
GOING**

Growing up is hard. Growing up lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ), can be even harder. OUSD offers young people who may be misunderstood by their families and peers, or may not thrive in a traditional school setting, a place to “fit in.” A number of students who attend the schools have faced a great deal of challenges growing up: violence, poverty, or a lack of family stability. Even though OUSD allows young people a different type of learning environment focused primarily on providing a safe place for students to attend school, growing up is still hard.

A 2009 student survey conducted at OUSD found that homophobia was the number one concern that needed to be addressed in schools. In response, the Office of Alternative Education at Oakland Unified School District (OUSD Alt Ed) quickly made its stance against homophobia known. As a 2007 YOVA site, OUSD Alt Ed understood the power young people can have in making a positive change in their communities. To continue its efforts on bringing awareness on homophobia in its school, OUSD Alt Ed started its campaign at the top of ladder: the school staff and educators. Naming its group the Rainbow Warriors, the youth leaders conducted an anti-homophobia training for school staff and educators. Young people spoke out against homophobia, told their personal stories of victimization, and encouraged staff to take an active role in ending homophobia in the school. While the training proved to be uncomfortable for some, **it built a foundation for a new way of thinking about homophobia among staff and educators.**

As the Rainbow Warriors continued to work hard to spread its anti-homophobia message, a student from a neighboring alternative education school was shot and killed. A number of the Rainbow Warriors were personally affected by this tragedy. It seemed like campaign activities were about to come to an abrupt halt when adult leader Shirley Yee focused on resiliency and taught the youth leaders how to support one another while still continuing their campaign to end homophobia.

TAKE ACTION!

Do your research. Find out what young people are concerned about. Find out what they want to change.

Times were definitely tough, but the Rainbow Warriors chose not to give up and instead transformed its frustration and hurt into fuel to finish its outreach campaign.

The Warriors held a Day of Recognition for the entire school where young people came together to share how they felt about relevant issues in their lives. Youth leaders led their peers in thinking about new ways to make their school safer and homophobic free. Amazingly, the Warriors were able to gather an entire school together where, according to Yee, “everyone was silent during the event. Young people hearing from other young people was really powerful. Students felt as if their fears and concerns were being validated and left feeling empowered.” With an overall positive reception from the school, the Rainbow Warriors plan to continue this work in the future. Ms. Yee says it best, “part of this work is reclaiming our hearts and healing and we did just that. What we really need now is an ally.”

THE KANSAS CITY ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT (KCAVP)

Kansas City, Missouri

KCAVP identified a gap in resources available for LGBTQ teens living in Kansas City. To address these gaps, KCAVP produced and directed a documentary about growing up LGBTQ in Kansas City. The documentary gives a powerful and emotional look into the lives of teen victims who have experienced bullying, dating violence, and harassment because of their sexual orientation. To launch the documentary, KCAVP hosted a “red carpet event.” Teens from all over the community came to view the documentary. KCAVP plans to show the documentary at other community events to further its outreach to LGBTQ teens.

VOICING OUR IDEAS, CHALLENGING EVERYONE (V.O.I.C.E.)

Sedro-Woolley, Washington

This youth coalition, through the Community Health Outreach Programs at United General Hospital, V.O.I.C.E., directed and produced a startling and moving documentary. The documentary featured LGBTQ teens sharing their stories of victimization and also stressed the importance of becoming an ally to help put a stop to hate crimes committed against LGBTQ youth.

YWCA OF GREATER CINCINNATI

Batavia, Ohio

Working with the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati trained school staff and students in rural communities on how to make their schools safer and more supportive places for LGBTQ youth. As a result of the training, KCAVP, along with the trained staff and students, hosted a Challenge Day where participants were asked to accept each other’s differences and celebrate diversity.

TARGET AUDIENCE

MUSLIM AND ARAB YOUTH

TURNING POINT FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES (TP)

Flushing, New York

RECLAIMING THEIR VOICES

Hate crimes, harassment, bullying, and violence: these are just a few of the many issues Muslims and Arabs living in New York City may face on a daily basis. After 9/11, many Muslims and Arabs found that the city they once loved, no longer seemed to love them back. It's estimated that between 600,000-800,000 Muslims currently live in New York, many of which are unable to access social services due to language or cultural barriers and a lack of knowledge regarding their rights.

Turning Point for Women and Families (TP) is an organization devoted to helping Muslims living in New York access the services and help they need. TP launched its UTVI campaign in one of the biggest ways imaginable. One of the youth leaders working on the project was featured in an article in People Magazine. She spoke of her experiences of being bullied for being Muslim. The article generated a tremendous amount of community buzz and coverage in local publications, including Metro NY. The overwhelming community support empowered the youth leaders to speak out against their victimization. Branding its campaign "Arise-NY, Wake up, Speak up, Step up," TP went to local schools and spoke to students and educators on bullying and hate crimes. These workshops brought a voice to Muslim victims and let them know they do have rights, and they can seek help.

TP continued to conduct outreach to Muslim youth at schools, participate in town hall meetings, and let its presence be known. Through its workshops, TP found that many Muslims did not understand they were being bullied or discriminated against; they took the actions as a normal part of everyday life. Adult leader Shehnaz Kahn was surprised to find that many of the youth she spoke with had the attitude that while discrimination and hate crimes toward Muslims are wrong, they did not see this ever stopping saw no point in trying to put an end to it. Shehnaz pushed them to think differently. She remarked, "you have to be willing to take a stand and do it in the right way. Don't be silent about it." By providing young Muslim women with a safe place to openly discuss their fears and experiences, TP empowered these young women to stand up, speak out, and no longer take discrimination as a normal part of their everyday life.

TAKE ACTION!

Work with the local media to bring attention to your cause. The more buzz you create, the more support you'll gain.

Though there is still much work left to be done, TP was able to make a huge impact in a short amount of time. Prior to the campaign, Shehnaz felt the community was "crying out for help and something definitely needed to be done." Now she feels that the outreach "definitely left its mark. It made such a powerful difference in our community and Turning Point is now known as an organization

that helps these underserved populations.” While there certainly were hardships along the way, TP helped Muslim teens find their voices, and it started a movement in its community to work together to end discrimination, bullying, and hate crimes.

LATINAS UNIDAS POR UN NUEVO AMANECER (L.U.N.A)

Des Moines, Iowa

Recognizing that Bosnian youth in its community lacked resources and a place to turn for help, L.U.N.A. developed a number of resources in both English and Bosnian around the issue of teen dating violence. L.U.N.A. launched these new resources at a community outreach event where youth leaders presented to their peers on the lasting and tragic effects of teen dating violence. L.U.N.A plans to continue to conduct outreach to underserved teens through future community events and will continue to educate Bosnian youth on the resources available to them.

INSPIRED TO CREATE CHANGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

If you're feeling inspired to do similar work in your community here are some tips to get you started!

- + Talk to other organizations, schools, and community leaders about the importance of conducting outreach to underserved populations. Let them know the facts: teens are victimized at high rates, underserved teens may face barriers in getting help, and there may be gaps in resources available.
- + Recruit young people to help educate their peers on victims' rights and awareness. Young people have the power and passion to drive your outreach campaign to success.
- + Contact the National Partners for additional information on the program. The staff at NCPC and NCVV are always available to offer technical assistance and guidance as you move forward with your campaign.
- + Visit www.ncpc.org to obtain a copy of the UTVI guidebook to help get you started!

First time working with youth leaders? No problem! Follow these tips from the UTVI adult leaders on working with young people:

- + Come as a blank slate. Don't be adults who act like he or she knows everything.
- + Be flexible. Teens have crazy schedules with their clubs, afterschool programs, and sports, so be flexible when arranging meeting and event dates.
- + Take the time to get to know the teens. Building a trusting relationship is a key component to working with teens.
- + Create a safe place for teens to openly share their thoughts and feelings. Let teens facilitate the meetings or voice any concerns they may have. It may be hard, but don't overtake the conversation.
- + Use encouraging words. Teens want instant results and change can happen slowly. Keep the teens spirits up and focus on using encouraging, positive words.
- + Consider connecting with teens through different means. Use cell phones, social media websites, or e-mailing to get in touch with teens.
- + Offer free food! Teens love snacks. Free food is a great way to entice teens to continue to come to meetings or participate in events.