

Acknowledgments

Montbello Residents

Denver Public Schools

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1. Executive Summary

Steps to Success Overview: Steps to Success is a unique partnership between Far Northeast Denver's Montbello community, faculty researchers from the University of Colorado (CU) Boulder and the CU School of Medicine/Children's Hospital to promote positive youth development and reduce youth violence through a coordinated community-wide effort. The project is funded by a five-year (2011-2016) \$6.2 million cooperative agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Academic Centers of Excellence (ACE) in Youth Violence Prevention. The Steps to Success project is based on the Communities That Care model to provide a framework for members of a community to work together to prevent youth violence and other problem behaviors, including substance use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school.

Purpose of Community Assessment Report: This report describes the results of the risk and protective factor assessment completed as part of Steps to Success and highlights prioritized risk and protective factors specific to the Montbello community.

What are Risk and Protective Factors: A risk factor is anything that increases the chances that a person will suffer harm. A protective factor is something that decreases the potential harmful effect of a risk factor. Many of us understand risk and protective factors related to our chances of having a disease like cancer or heart disease. Exercising and eating healthy can be protective factors from getting cancer or heart disease, while smoking or obesity puts us at greater risk for having these diseases.

In this report, the risk factors identified increase the likelihood that a young person will become violent or engage in other problem behaviors such as dropping out of school or using drugs and alcohol, while protective factors buffer the young person against those risks. Many of the same risk and protective factors that predict violence also predict other problem behaviors, including substance use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school. Likewise, a reduction in the risk factors and an increase in the protective factors that predict violence and other problem behaviors will also help to promote positive youth development.

- **Risk factors:** Factors that increase the likelihood that a young person will become violent or engage in other problem behaviors such as dropping out of school or using drugs and alcohol. Examples include association with delinquent peers, poor parental monitoring, and academic failure beginning in elementary school.
- **Protective factors:** Factors that buffer young people against risk and decrease the likelihood that they will become violent or engage in other problem behavior. Examples include good social skills, being recognized at school for pro-social involvement and attending religious services

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Data Collection and Prioritization Process: A key goal of the Steps to Success project is to work in partnership with the community during the entire project. Data have been collected in both the community and in local schools based on the experiences and perceptions of residents in order to prioritize the most important risk and protective factors related to youth violence and other problem behaviors for Montbello. **Data on a total of 2,144 students (grades 4-12 from 5 Montbello elementary schools, four Montbello middle schools, and 4 high schools in Montbello), 415 community parents, and 695 community youth were collected and analyzed for this report. A previous version of this report presented data from a preliminary sample of 249 community parents and 434 community youth.**¹ The community assessment data – labeled community-parent, community-youth, were collected by a well-trained group of interviewers who went door-to-door to every household in the target neighborhood of Montbello seeking participation in a confidential survey from eligible households (those with at least one youth between the ages 10-17). Participant answers were recorded on a computer. Elementary school, middle school, and high school student data were collected by having the students complete an anonymous computer-based survey during the spring or fall 2012.

The aggregate data from these five groups (Community-Youth, Community-Parent, Montbello elementary schools, Montbello middle schools, and Montbello high schools) were presented to the Risk and Protective Factor Committee. The data was also presented with national or statewide comparison data wherever possible as a reference point for Committee members to understand what might be elevated or low in the Montbello community. The committee used the data from all five groups to determine the top risk and protective factors presented in this report. In some instances the community-parent data served to validate youth perceptions (e.g., parents were asked the same questions as the youth). Parents were also asked questions that were not included in the youth surveys (e.g., detailed information about the neighborhood and their family's history). Together these data sources provide an in-depth portrait of the strengths and issues in the Montbello community.

Community Strengths: Although much of this report emphasizes areas for improvement, there are many community strengths that the Committee believed were important to highlight. This report considers high levels of protective factors, things that can buffer the likelihood that youth will engage in violence or other problem behaviors, as examples of community strengths see Below is a list of protective factors that are over 80% for youth in Montbello (see Section 4.D. for a full list of the protective factors over 80% in Montbello).

- Over 80% of Montbello youth report **trusting relationships with caring adults, belief in the moral order, parents encouraging prosocial behavior, prosocial relationships with friends, a positive school environment and school opportunities for prosocial involvement.**

¹ Data from the preliminary report were compared to the final report results and the differences appear unlikely to have impacted the Montbello Community Board's prioritization of risk and protective factors.

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Top Risk and Protective Factors: The following risk factors were selected as areas for community attention and preventive action primarily because data indicated that they are elevated and or of concern within the Montbello community. The Committee also considered the strength of the risk factor as a predictor of violence in their decision making process (see Appendix 2). “People on the Committee worked very hard to look at data and take personal bias out of the process,” said Committee member Webster Hendricks.

The top 3 risk factors, in red, are the priority factors the committee suggests focusing efforts on in next two to three years. According to the Communities That Care Risk Factor and Adolescent Problem Behavior Chart, *these 3 top prioritized risk factors predict substance use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop out, and violence* (see Appendix 1 E). An explanation of the top 3 prioritized risk factors listed below can be found in Section 4 of this report and the definitions and rationale for all 10 risk factors below can be found in Appendix 1. The list of risk factors below is presented in order of their ranking.

Risk Factor List in Priority Order:

1. **Early and Persistent Problem Behavior**
2. **Family Conflict / Family Management Problems**
3. **Friends Engaging in Problem Behavior / Weak Social Ties**
4. Lack of Commitment to School
5. Family Exposure to Violence
6. Gang Involvement
7. Availability of Drugs / Drug Use
8. Academic Failure Beginning in Late Elementary School
9. Family History of Problem Behavior
10. Low Neighborhood Attachment

The data also portrayed factors within Montbello that could be targeted in order to improve the protective buffer that can help keep youth on a path to success. In prioritizing protective factors, the community selected protective factors that showed low levels in Montbello. The top protective factors identified to increase are as follows, with the top prioritized factor in red.

Protective Factor List in Priority Order:

1. **Religiosity**
2. Family Recognition for Prosocial Behavior
3. Community Recognition for Prosocial Behavior
4. School Recognition for Prosocial Behavior

This report recommends the community give particular attention to the top three prioritized risk factors and top one prioritized protective factor when developing the community's action plan to prevent youth violence and other problem behaviors and to promote positive youth development.

Violence Risk Screening: This report also highlights the percentage of youth in Montbello middle and high schools and in the community that are at-risk for violence based on a 14-item violence screening questionnaire that was embedded in the community-youth and middle and high school surveys. This information may be important when making programming decisions

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because it provides an estimate on the number of at-risk youth that may benefit from evidence-based violence prevention programs.

- The results show that **18% of Montbello community-youth, 32% of Montbello high school youth** and **28% of Montbello middle school youth** surveyed had scores that indicated they were at risk for serious violence perpetration one year later.

Steps to Success Impact: If proven programs are chosen to be implemented in Montbello that address the prioritized risk and protective factors, and the programs are implemented properly, youth involvement in violence or other problem behaviors should be reduced over time in Montbello. As a result of this project, we expect that Montbello will achieve a substantive reduction in the overall levels of violence for youth ages 10-17. By substantive reduction, we expect to match or better the 10% reductions in the rates of violent behavior called for in the objectives of the national Healthy People 2020 Framework for the Violence Prevention Leading Health Indicators (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). The first follow-up community and school assessment will take place in 2015. Because many of the same risk and protective factors that predict violence also predict other problem behaviors, it is likely that these behaviors will be reduced by this amount as well.

- **Outcome Goals:** Reduce levels of youth violence and other problem behaviors among ages 10-17 by at least 10% by 2016.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Based on the analysis of the data and input from the community, the following priority risk factors were identified for the community to focus on over the next two to three years:

Top 3 Risk Factors:

1. Early and Persistent Problem Behavior
2. Family Conflict / Family Management Problems
3. Friends Engaging in Problem Behavior / Weak Social Ties

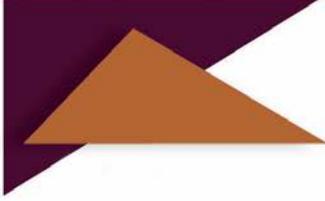
Top Prioritized Protective Factor:

1. Religiosity

These risk factors were selected as priorities because the data indicated they are strong or moderate predictors of youth violence and other problem behaviors and at elevated levels in Montbello. In prioritizing the top protective factor, the community selected a protective factor that showed low levels in Montbello. The Risk Assessment Committee recommends that the Montbello community give particular attention to implementing strategies or programs to address these risk and protective factors when developing the community action plan.

Next Steps:

The Resource Assessment Committee will use this report, to develop a second report, called the Community Resource Assessment Report. The Community Resource Assessment Report will identify evidence-based programs that can address the prioritized risk and protective factors



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listed in this report. They will look at existing community resource to identify strengths, gaps, issues and barriers related to resource and service access and ways to enhance or expand existing tested and effective resources.

With the knowledge of Montbello's strengths and needs, the community is well positioned to develop a data-driven Community Action Plan that includes tested and effective programs and strategies to promote positive youth development and prevent problem behaviors. All Steps to Success community partners are invited to attend a 2-day Community Action Planning Workshop on March 11-12th 2013. This workshop will use the information in both reports to develop a Community Action Plan for Montbello that will be approved by the Steps to Success Community Board.