

Remarks of Monica Valdes Lupi, JD, MPH
Before the Committee on Women, Children and Healthy Communities
Boston City Council
4/20/2016

Good Afternoon, Councillor Pressley, Councillor Campbell, Councillor Jackson, etc.

My name is Monica Valdes Lupi and I am the Executive Director of the Boston Public Health Commission. I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of you, but this is my first opportunity to appear before a Committee, so I am grateful that you called for this hearing.

I am joined today by Catherine Fine, the Director of our Division of Violence Prevention in the Child, Adolescent and Family Health Bureau at BPHC, who has been at the Commission for eight and a half years and before that worked on violence prevention efforts in Baltimore City.

We are here today to talk about an issue of paramount importance to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Boston: trauma and the city's response to traumatic events.

I appreciate the council's enduring interest in this issue – unfortunately there continues to be an ongoing need to respond to traumatic events, especially those related to homicide.

While we know that violence occurs in all of our neighborhoods, this burden is not distributed equally. Our latest data shows troubling health inequities based on race and ethnicity in this area of health:

- Violence is the leading cause of death for Black and Latino children in the city of Boston;
- 48 percent of high school students in our city know someone who has been shot or killed;

In addition, we have invested in community organizing strategies that promote peace and neighborhood cohesion in high-violence areas to build a movement that de-normalizes violence. We worked with Boston Public Schools to provide Open Circle, a social and emotional learning curriculum to over 7500 elementary school students. This model gives students the skills to stand up for themselves and others and to resolve conflicts. And we have developed Start Strong, a peer led healthy teen relationship program that supports teens to develop positive, productive relationships and strategies prevent teen dating violence.

As part of our effort to offer comprehensive support, over the last two fiscal years we have invested in a strategy that places community health centers at the heart of our response to community trauma.

Beginning in FY15 we contracted with 8 community health centers in Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester to provide ongoing care and assistance not only to the family of the victim or survivor but also to community members who may have been traumatized or re-traumatized by the violent event.

All centers are funded to be staffed with a trauma-trained clinician and a trauma-trained community health worker, and are contracted to provide Community Prevention, Support, and Recovery Services to the neighborhoods. Since March 2015, the teams have received ~40 hours of training and consultation on topics such as adolescent complex trauma, clinical intervention with adult survivors, attachment, coping strategies, and supporting regulation.

Here are some important highlights that wanted to share about this program and work between Mar 2015 and Mar 2016:

- Total # of referrals for care: 1159
- Total # clients completed 1st visit: 895
- Total # of visits completed: 5577
- Total # of referrals made to other healthcare providers or social service agencies: 605

Following violent incidents in the communities served, these health center teams have: