

Nobel Peace Prize Forum
Report on the Higher Level Dialogues
on Gun Violence
September 13-14, 2017

BACKGROUND

How this got started

The Nobel Peace Prize Forum added gun violence as a focus area in 2017, and determined to create Higher Level Dialogues (HLD) in all focus areas over the two days leading up to the Forum. Rev. Nancy Nord Bence of Protect Minnesota was connected to the Nobel Peace Prize Forum through Americans for Responsible Solutions. She offered to pull these dialogues together on behalf of the Nobel Peace Prize Forum and host them during the Northstar Public Health Conference on Gun Violence, September 13-14, 2017, in Minneapolis.

Goal

It was decided that the goal of the Dialogues would be to develop a statewide action plan for gun violence prevention. This was in keeping with the goals set for other focus areas.

Recruitment

The goal was to recruit 30-35 participants. Beginning in July, 2017, Bence contacted approximately 54 statewide leaders from diverse sectors who are experts or stakeholders in the issue. Although most were very supportive of the concept, many had conflicts they couldn't resolve. She also extended an invitation to three of the national gun violence prevention experts scheduled to present plenaries at the Northstar Conference.

Participants

Ultimately there were 32 total participants, seven of whom could commit to one day only. Seven more were expected but couldn't come in the end. Of the participants, one was a facilitator provided by the Nobel Peace Prize Forum and one was a recorder provided by Protect Minnesota.

Participants represented the following sectors:

- Municipal/Community Leaders - 3
- Domestic Violence Specialists - 2
- Elected Representative - 1
- Faith Community Leaders - 5
- Gun Violence Prevention Activists - 3
- Health Care/Public Health - 2
- Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Professionals - 6
- Media - 1
- Mental Health Advocates - 4
- National Experts - 3
- Facilitator and Recorder - 2

Format

The Dialogues took place during the Northstar Public Health Conference on Gun Violence, Sept. 13-14, 2017. All participants attended the morning plenaries and lunchtime panel discussions. The first day's plenaries and panels focused on the intersection of gun violence and mental health, with an emphasis on suicide. The second day's plenaries and panels focused on urban gun violence, disparities, and law enforcement.

In the afternoon, while all the other conference registrants were attending breakout sessions, the Noble HLD participants went into a separate room for the dialogues. All in all we spent about seven hours in discussion.

Dialogues

The Dialogues were honest and respectful, but frustrating at times. There was significant confusion about the

purpose and scope of the project. Definite questions and divisions in the wider gun violence movement came to the surface, including:

- Concerns about stigmatization in the mental health community, especially around language used regarding suicide and GVPO legislation.
- Issues related to race and disparities:
 - Is it right or helpful to treat the effects of trauma as “mental illness”?
 - How do we balance the importance of “expert” knowledge with lived experience of those in communities most impacted by gun violence?
- Some territorialism
- In coalition forming, how do we determine who is “in” and whose “out”? Can a group still be considered an ally if they opt not to work against a given policy or piece of legislation that they can’t actively support?

2017 ACTION PLAN ON GUN SAFETY AND GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Overarching Strategic Vision

Begin to build a statewide coalition or “table” encompassing many partners representing diverse constituencies who are committed to working towards the following gun violence prevention goals:

Goals

1) Education

Undertake a statewide “hearts and minds” gun safety and gun violence prevention education campaign that emphasizes human stories, facts about gun deaths and injuries in Minnesota, and evidence-based solutions.

2) Practice

Coalesce around and work to fully implement:

- the Minneapolis Group Violence Intervention Initiative strategy as one model for urban gun violence prevention.
- the goals and objectives outlined in the Minnesota State Suicide Prevention Plan, 2015-2020.

3) Policy

Develop statewide support for key gun violence prevention policies and legislation.

Values

As a Core Team works to build the coalition and develop achievable objectives and actions under each goal, the following values should be given prominence:

- Emphasize healing over criminalization.
- Address all forms of gun harm in Minnesota, including suicide, domestic violence, urban gun violence, and childhood trauma.
- Recognize the role racial disparities and trauma play in the cycle of gun violence.
- Engage **all** stakeholders – including gun owners and those not present in these dialogues.
- Make use of evidence-based expert information and commentary already available, rather than “reinventing the wheel.”
- Recognize the power of faith communities in changing societal views.
- Give individual citizens as well as organizations and municipalities ways to engage within their own contexts.
- Make use of existing coalitions.
- Incorporate performance indicators to measure outcomes.

Next Steps

12 members of the Dialogue group expressed an interest in participating on a Core Team to continue the work. Others expressed a desire to support the project in other ways. Protect Minnesota will take the lead in organizing a meeting of the Core Team in October. Protect Minnesota will also send the action plan to all those who wanted to participate in the Dialogues but couldn’t, and invite their participation moving forward.