

# OPERATION: SAFE COMMUNITY

A MEMPHIS FAST FORWARD INITIATIVE



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## MEMPHIS LEADERS TO PRESENT SUCCESSFUL YOUTH VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS AS A PART OF WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON YOUTH VIOLENCE

*Memphis dignitaries, youth, and community stakeholders are gearing up to showcase strategies that work in reducing youth violence.*

Washington, D.C. –Memphis leaders are taking center stage today to share some of the city’s best practices in youth violence prevention. The 2012 National Summit on Preventing Youth Violence, hosted by the United States Department of Justice, April 2-3 in Washington, D.C., gives Memphis the opportunity to highlight the progress made this year on its youth violence prevention plan. Memphis is one of six cities chosen by the Obama Administration to take part in the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. The goal of the Forum is to use multi-disciplinary partnerships, balanced approaches, and data-driven strategies to address youth violence. Boston; Chicago; Detroit; Memphis, Tenn.; Salinas, Calif.; and San Jose, Calif., were the cities selected based on need, geographic diversity, and willingness and capacity to develop comprehensive plans.

“We have had a commendable level of commitment from diverse agencies and organizations throughout Memphis and Shelby County to develop a plan that builds on community partnerships to fully address youth violence,” said **Michelle Fowlkes, executive director of the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission**. “After one year, our partners have made tremendous strides in implementing the strategies in the plan, and today is an unprecedented opportunity for Memphis to be recognized for its youth violence prevention efforts,” added Fowlkes.

“While communities play the primary role in preventing youth violence, it is essential to the success of those efforts to have federal and state leadership and support,” remarked **Bill Gibbons, Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security Commissioner and Chair of Operation: Safe Community**. “The National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention is an excellent example of the federal government supporting the efforts of localities working to combat youth violence,” Gibbons continued.

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During the two-day summit, participants will hear from White House Cabinet officials including Attorney General Holder, Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan, and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Other officials that are delivering remarks during the event are Director R. Gil Kerlikowske of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, White House Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs Mary Lou Leary, Congressman Robert C. Scott (D-VA), Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, President and CEO of Casey Family Programs Dr. William Bell, and Grammy-nominated hip hop artist Lecrae Moore.

"The partnerships we have forged between community stakeholders and federal, state, and local governments have been instrumental in combating youth violence in Memphis and the surrounding region. Our proactive and innovative team efforts underscore the fact that there is no greater investment that we can make as a community than into the lives of our youth. The return on this investment is priceless," said **United States Attorney Edward L. Stanton, III**.

"One of my four priorities that is leading and shaping our work in city government is 'investing in our youth.' This priority matches with our continued work to address youth violence by addressing the pertinent quality of life issues that are so important in the bigger picture," said **Memphis Mayor A C Wharton Jr.** "I think Memphis is uniquely positioned to move the needle. The work ahead for us involves expanding capacity with those programs that work and deepening the way we leverage our existing resources," added Mayor Wharton.

The Memphis Delegation is well represented by federal, state, county, and city officials as well as community stakeholders. The team includes: Commissioner, Department of Safety and Homeland Security and Chair of Operation: Safe Community; United States Attorney, Western District of Tennessee; Shelby County District Attorney General; Director, Memphis Police Department; Chief Administrative Officer, Shelby County Juvenile Court; Chief, School Safety Security and Emergency Management, Memphis City Schools; Executive Director, Memphis Shelby Crime Commission; Major, Memphis Police Department, Pastor, First Baptist Church-Broad; Director, Youth Services, City of Memphis and Director, Student Engagement, Memphis City Schools.

"I'm pleased that the Shelby County Office of Early Childhood and Youth and our Shelby County Crime Victims Center are committed to reducing the threat of violence on young people. It will be good for their efforts to be recognized nationally," said **Shelby County Mayor Mark H. Luttrell, Jr.**

"This year our delegation includes two outstanding young men, Kenneth Douglas--a senior at Frayser High School and Jhukuruin Cole-- a Trezevant High graduate and current University of Memphis sophomore," said **District Attorney Amy Weirich**. "Their input and insight is vital. Our goal is to create safe, healthy, nurturing neighborhoods for our youth. We would fail if we did not include our youth in the process."

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Kenneth Douglas, Frayser High School Senior and Chairman of the Frayser Youth Council, served as a youth panelist for a discussion on the hope and resilience of youth and received a standing ovation for his insightful and honest comments. JIFF (Juvenile Intervention and Faith-based Follow-up) participant, 20 year old Jhukuruin Cole, is excited to represent Memphis at the event, “When I was younger I never thought I would ever have the opportunity to go to college. Now I’m a sophomore, studying Criminal Justice at University of Memphis.” Cole continued, “I have gained so much knowledge through all of my experiences and I have a lot of interesting ideas that I feel could be helpful to different cities across America.”

The National Summit on Preventing Youth Violence will engage participants in dialogue about various strategies necessary to combat youth violence including prevention, intervention, enforcement, reentry, multi-disciplinary partnerships and youth and family engagement efforts. Memphis Pastor Keith Norman, First Baptist Church-Broad, will moderate a panel on how families, houses of worship and community partners can work together to prevent youth violence.

Summit attendees and local leaders who have been fully engaged in this effort shared the following insight and comments:

“The Memphis plan to reduce youth violence fits very well with the National Forum's renewed focus on what works. Intervention programs already underway such as SHAPE, Hope Academy and Truancy Mentoring are producing tangible results. They are effectively preventing many Memphis youth from entering or moving deeper into the juvenile justice system.”

**Larry Scroggs, Chief Administrative Officer**  
**Shelby County Juvenile Court**

“Memphis City Schools is committed to working with Operation Safe Community on all the strategies related to reducing youth violence. All youth in Shelby County should be able to grow up and prosper in crime free environments. By working together in all areas as it relates to youth violence we are confident that this can and will be accomplished.”

**Gerald Darling, Chief of School Safety Security & Emergency Management**  
**Memphis City Schools**

More details about the Forum and summaries of the city plans are available at [www.findyouthinfo.gov](http://www.findyouthinfo.gov).

Founded in 1997, the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission is an independent, non-profit organization that spearheads Operation: Safe Community 2012-2016. This plan has 26 strategies, 45 accountable partners, and more than 90 public and private agencies engaged in the implementation of the plan. The Memphis Youth Violence Plan is incorporated under *Goal #5 – Reducing Youth Violence* of Operation: Safe Community 2012-2016. For more information visit [www.operationsafecommunity.org](http://www.operationsafecommunity.org).

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