

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEKALB COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH RECEIVES

HHS and DOJ Award \$1.1M to Support Innovative Approaches to Curb Youth Violence

Funding program seeks to reduce violence and help youth reach their full potential

The DeKalb County Board of Health, in partnership with DeKalb County Government's Police Department and the City of Clarkston's Police Department, announced the acceptance of a \$1.1M award by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to help curb youth violence and improve the health and well-being of underserved and distressed communities.

Despite significant improvements in the overall health status of the nation, youth violence and reduced access to public health services persist among racial and ethnic minority populations. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), more than 4,700 young people ages 10 to 24 were victims of homicide in 2012 – an average of 13 each day. In this age group, homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans, the second leading cause of death for Hispanics, and the third leading cause of death for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

According to the DeKalb County Board of Health's 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 6.4% of high school students attending public school self-report carrying a weapon in the past

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30 days to school. 9.6% of youth reported not attending school because they did not feel safe and 16.8% of high school students report having been in a physical fight on school property. Students (48%) also reported that there was gang activity in their schools.

The DeKalb County Board of Health is one of nine demonstration sites to receive a Minority Youth Violence Prevention: Integrating Public Health and Community Policing Approaches (MYVP) grant. Funding in the amount of \$357,557 over a three year period will be provided through a joint effort by HHS and DOJ to support interventions aimed at addressing youth violence, improving academic outcomes, increasing access to public health and social services, reducing disparities, reducing negative encounters with law enforcement and reducing violent crimes against minority youth. The sites will field initiatives that combine community policing and prevention approaches within a public health framework.

“We want to surround our youth in DeKalb County with more positive choices such as programs that engage them in sports, music events, and job skill-building as well as increase their access to public health prevention education and early screening programs,” said S. Elizabeth Ford, M.D., M.B.A., District Health Director, DeKalb County Board of Health. "This grant will also help us foster a stronger and more innovative collaboration among public health, the DeKalb County Government’s Police Department, City of Clarkston’s Police Department and the numerous community groups working to improve education, employment and health outcomes for all youth.”

The MYVP will support promising violence prevention and crime reduction models for youth, help to build and support a coalition of youth-focused community stakeholders and augment existing programs such as the Police Athletic League (PAL).

For more information about MYVP, please contact Brandi Whitney, Project Lead, at (404) 294-3719.

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Pictured (L to R): R. Reed Daniel, Jessye Brick, Keith Barker, Lee May, Dr. S. Elizabeth Ford, Ronald L. Davis, Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, Sheryl Jones, Kristin Fulford, Cheryl Rogers, Dr. Cedric Alexander

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