



DEFENDING CHILDHOOD

PROTECT HEAL THRIVE

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder launched the Defending Childhood initiative (Defending Childhood) on September 23, 2010 to address a national crisis: the exposure of America's children to violence as victims and as witnesses.ⁱ The goals of Defending Childhood are to prevent children's exposure to violence as victims and witnesses, mitigate the negative effects experienced by children exposed to violence, and develop knowledge about and increase awareness of this issue. Children's exposure to violence, whether as victims or witnesses, is often associated with long-term physical, psychological, and emotional harm. Children exposed to violence are also at a higher risk of engaging in criminal behavior later in life and becoming part of a cycle of violence. Effectively addressing childhood exposure to violence must become a shared concern and a shared cause.

Building on lessons learned from previously funded research and programs such as Safe Start, the Child Development-Community Policing Program, and the *Greenbook* Initiative,ⁱⁱ Defending Childhood leverages existing resources across the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to prevent, address, reduce, and more fully understand childhood exposure to violence. Federal partners include: the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, Office on Violence Against Women, and the Office of Justice Programs. Defending Childhood includes the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence, Children Exposed to Violence Demonstration Sites, and the Defending Childhood evaluation and technical assistance programs.

Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence

The Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence (Task Force) is a national task force commissioned by U.S. Attorney General, Eric Holder, to examine the extent and nature of the problem of childhood exposure to violence in the U.S. and identify policies and promising practices to address it. The 13-member Task Force will study and examine the issue of children's exposure to violence through four national hearings that were held from November 2011 - April 2012. Based on the testimony at these public hearings,ⁱⁱⁱ on comprehensive research, and on extensive input from experts, advocates, and impacted families and communities nationwide, the Task Force will issue a final report to the U.S. Attorney General presenting its findings and comprehensive policy recommendations in the fall of 2012. The report will serve as a blueprint for preventing children's exposure to violence and for reducing the negative effects experienced by children exposed to violence across the U.S.

Defending Childhood Initiative National Hearings

Date	Location	State
November 29 - 30, 2011	University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law	Baltimore, Maryland
January 31 - February 1, 2012	City Council Chambers, Vincent E. Griego Council Chambers	Albuquerque, New Mexico
March 19 - 21, 2012	University of Miami Newman Alumni Center	Miami, Florida
April 23 - 24, 2012	Wayne State University	Detroit, Michigan

Children Exposed to Violence Demonstration Sites

In 2010, DOJ awarded grants to eight sites in cities and tribal communities around the country to develop strategic plans for comprehensive community-based efforts to further demonstrate the goals of Defending Childhood. Each

of these sites received additional support in 2011 to help launch, sustain, and expand programs and organizations focused on the development of community-based solutions to address the problem. Four sites will develop comprehensive demonstration projects that include implementation in Phase II. Two tribal communities received planning grants and two additional sites will implement their strategic plans without an evaluation component.

Defending Childhood Initiative Phase I Awards

Grantee	City, State	Funding Level
City of Boston	Boston, Massachusetts	2,000,000 (Comprehensive)
Chippewa Cree Tribe Box	Elder, Montana	1,000,000 (Planning)
Cuyahoga County Board of Commissioners	Cleveland, Ohio	2,000,000 (Comprehensive)
City of Grand Forks	Grand Forks, North Dakota	2,000,000 (Comprehensive)
Multnomah County Department of Human Services	Portland, Oregon	500,000 (Excludes evaluation component)
City of Portland	Portland, Maine	500,000 (Excludes evaluation component)
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Rosebud, South Dakota	1,000,000 (Planning)
Shelby County	Memphis, Tennessee	2,000,000 (Comprehensive)

Defending Childhood Evaluation

DOJ committed funding to accomplish developmental and evaluation activities for Defending Childhood. During 2011, the Center for Court Innovation conducted a formative evaluation^{iv} of Phase I. The goals of this formative evaluation were to: 1) implement a participatory research process with all eight sites; 2) describe key strategies, outcomes, and available data; and 3) produce eight evaluability assessments^v and an evaluation design for Phase II – the implementation phase.^{vi} The lessons of Phase I are directed at helping other communities better understand collaborative efforts to address children's exposure to violence and are compiled in a report that is available at www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/Defending_Childhood_Initiative.pdf.

Defending Childhood Technical Assistance

Futures Without Violence, formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund, leads the Defending Childhood Technical Assistance (TA) project to respond to the broad range of disciplines and address concerns that will support program implementation, improvement, and learning. The overall TA approach is based on three key principles: 1) Inclusiveness: TA, training, and peer-networking that meaningfully engages all eight sites individually and in peer learning communities; 2) Expertise: Support to implement strategic plans, learn from external experts, and increase exposure to work in related fields; and 3) Sustainability: Capacity building to not only achieve the goals of Defending Childhood, but sustain long-term accomplishments and integrated systems.

The Prevention Institute, the Native Streams Institute, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) serve as the core partner

agencies. As a core partner, NCJFCJ will participate in project development, planning and assessment; provide on-site and virtual training and TA to sites and Defending Childhood; provide targeted TA to sites and Defending Childhood on issues related to children exposed to violence and the role of the courts and judicial officers; disseminate Defending Childhood results and learning through judicial networks; and develop new tools for judges and courts to improve practice for children exposed to violence and their families.

For additional information or to request technical assistance, contact the Family Violence Department of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges at:
 PO Box 8970
 Reno, NV 89507
 Phone: (800) 527-3223

This document was distributed by Grant Number 90EV0415 from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

ⁱ Some of the content contained in this brief was synthesized from information available at www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/.

ⁱⁱ The *Greenbook* Initiative was a federal project that funded six demonstration sites to implement a comprehensive set of responses designed to eliminate or decrease the effects of domestic violence on battered mothers and their children who were in the child welfare system. The *Greenbook*, published in 1999 by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, is formally titled *Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hearings were open to the public. Due to space limitations, registration for in-person attendance and to provide up to three minutes of oral testimony was necessary. Written testimony was also accepted by the Task Force.

^{iv} Formative evaluation is done during the development of an initiative to ensure that its goals are achieved and to disseminate strategies and lessons for the benefit of other jurisdictions that might be interested in replication. It both describes an initiative and highlights potential barriers to implementation.

^v An evaluability assessment helps identify whether, if a program were to be implemented, program evaluation would be justified, feasible, and likely to provide useful information. It shows whether a program could be meaningfully evaluated and whether the findings would help improve the program and contribute to the field.

^{vi} Swaner, R. & Kohn, J., *The U.S. Attorney General's Defending Childhood Initiative: Formative Evaluation of the Phase I Demonstration Program*, Center for Court Innovation, U.S. Department of Justice, November 2011.