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Governor Patrick Announces Positive Results of Administration's Safe and Successful Youth Initiative

Over the past four years, program has had significant impact on young people, reduced crime and saved taxpayer dollars

WORCESTER – Monday, December 22, 2014 – Governor Deval Patrick today announced the results of the Commonwealth's Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI), the Patrick Administration's comprehensive, interagency strategy for reducing youth violence in the Commonwealth. The evaluation, conducted by a third-party research organization over the past four years, highlights the significant returns on a \$22.4 million investment in programs and services to reduce violence in 11 cities across the Commonwealth.

"Our Commonwealth's investment in the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative was intended to provide a brighter future for young people who had hit a dead end and to strengthen communities that had been taken by an epidemic of violence," said Governor Patrick. "But with SSYI, the good investment is also the smart investment. Together, in partnership with law enforcement, program providers, community leaders and participating youth, we are saving money while saving lives."

Over the last two years, SSYI engaged cities experienced 139 fewer violent crime victimizations on average per month compared to non-SSYI municipalities. In 2013, SSYI cities saw a 31 percent reduction in aggravated assaults compared to 2009, as well as a 25 percent reduction in homicide victimizations. Youth in these cities who exhibited the proven-risk characteristics but not engaged with SSYI were 42 percent more likely to be currently incarcerated than SSYI-engaged youth. This year alone, for every dollar invested, taxpayers have saved as much as \$7.35 from the crime reductions produced through the program's support services.

"With SSYI, the Patrick Administration demonstrates that an investment in generational change displays a return that can be quantified," said Health and Human Services Secretary John Polanowicz. "Through collaboration and an interdisciplinary approach, we are promoting safer communities and enabling residents to make better lives for themselves and for generations to come."

The SSYI evaluation was conducted by the independent American Institute for Research (AIR). Over the past year, AIR has provided HHS with three separate studies to evaluate the outcomes of the program.

"According to the 2013 AIR and WestEd national review of programs similar to the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative, Massachusetts is the only state taking a comprehensive, research-based approach to combating violent crime across multiple cities," said Dr. Patricia E. Campie, Principal Researcher Health and Social Development Program, AIR. "The combination of a

targeted list of high-impact youth offenders, coupled with street outreach workers and case management that connect youth with needed services, has showed promise in reducing violent crime in the cities implementing the interventions."

Today's announcement took place at the Worcester Youth Center, which is home to Worcester's SSYI site. Worcester's program is coordinated through the Worcester City Manager's office and the Worcester Police Department. The program partners with Iglesia Cristiana de la Comunidad, Straight Ahead Ministries, Worcester Youth Center and the Worcester Youth Center to provide educational support, workforce development, subsidized employment, mentorship and behavioral health programming. The program has currently identified 105 young men as proven-risk and in need of services. According to the AIR city evaluation conducted this year, Worcester experienced 116 fewer victims of violent crime on average per year as a result of SSYI.

"Strengthening community partnerships is critical to breaking a cycle of violence that has perpetuated, in some families, for generations," said Sergeant Miguel Lopez at Worcester Police Department. "Through the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative we work together with youth programs to meet with families, facilitate conversations and provide supports that are driving meaningful changes within the community."

Governor Patrick was joined at the Worcester Youth Center by Worcester Police Department Deputy Chief Mark Roche, SSYI participant Jose Vasquez and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Children, Youth and Families Robyn Kennedy.

SSYI is a comprehensive, interagency strategy for reducing youth violence in the Commonwealth, bringing together law enforcement, employment, education, public health, and youth development agencies and initiatives toward eliminating youth violence. The program has a strategic focus on young men ages 14 to 24 who have a proven risk for criminal behavior, have been a victim of violence or are a family member of someone who has. SSYI-supported programs have served over 1,300 young people, connecting them with education and employment opportunities that help them achieve personal and professional success.

SSYI serves the cities Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Springfield and Worcester. The 11 cities were selected based on youth-related homicide rates, non-fatal assault rates and serious injuries rates.

SSYI is one of several Patrick Administration initiatives geared toward ending youth violence and creating an atmosphere for continued growth and opportunity among all of the Commonwealth's residents. Earlier this year, Governor Patrick announced \$27 million to launch of the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Pay for Success Initiative, the nation's largest financial investment designed to improve outcomes for hundreds of at-risk young men in the probation system or leaving the juvenile justice system. The Governor also proposed a \$12 million investment in the successful YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program in his FY15 budget.

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