The Network of Neighbors Responding to Violence

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Network of Neighbors Responding to Violence (NNRV)?

The Network of Neighbors Responding to Violence is a new, neighbor-driven network of Philadelphians who are called-on to support communities after violent traumatic incidents. Network members, also known as Acute Trauma Responders, are trained in a community-based trauma intervention model, which taps into social connections to foster healthy coping. These supportive interventions are meant to decrease stress experienced after violence, to increase social cohesion, and to bolster individual and community functioning.

What is the history behind the Network?

In 2014, a coalition of public, nonprofit, and academic groups came together around an urgent policy question which, for many of them, was deeply personal: in a city overwhelmed by more than 250 homicides per year and non-stop violence, how can those of us who work with victims of violence effectively support our most vulnerable communities? How can we begin to support Philadelphians, particularly our youth, who are experiencing persistent trauma? The Victim and Community Support Committee (VCSC) was born out of this coalition, led by Philadelphia’s Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services. The Committee’s primary mission has been to develop a coordinated, trauma-informed, and evidence-informed response process for individuals and communities impacted by violent events.

What is the VCSC?

The VCSC is a collaboration of community-based organizations, academics, local government agencies, and first responders from across Philadelphia that engage with individuals and communities impacted by violence. The committee includes representation from community based organizations, victim service agencies, trauma-informed counseling providers, school-based service providers, violence prevention and education programs, city human service agencies, first responders, and other violence response organizations.

What is the role of the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS)?

The Network is coordinated through the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS). DBHIDS’s Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit will act as the hub of...
communication and coordination—receiving requests for Network support, triaging each situation, and then “deploying” Network responders to lead individual or group sessions.

Who is Dr. Robert Macy?

DBHIDS and VCSC are thrilled to have Dr. Robert Macy and his team consulting for the city as we recruit and train for the Network of Neighbors.

Dr. Macy is a pioneer in interventions for stress reduction following acute traumatic incidents. Over 15 years ago, Dr. Macy began working with a small team to train and built out an acute community trauma response network in Boston, Massachusetts. Since then, he and his team have expanded their network model and honed its interventions in the US to Massachusetts, Florida, California, New Jersey, and internationally, to Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Since its inception in Boston, the Boston network has grown substantially with over 3,000 trained community members.

Who are the ideal Trauma Responders for the Network of Neighbors Responding to Violence?

DBHIDS and its partners in the Victim and Community Support Committee are actively recruiting the first group of responders in Philadelphia. Acute Trauma Responders should include a range of Philadelphians who:

- Are committed to supporting neighborhoods impacted by violence and trauma;
- Frequently engage with individuals, especially youth, that are exposed to community violence;
- Work with community-based programs or organizations invested in their neighborhoods.

Potential Network responders may include community activists and organizers, mental health clinicians and case managers, PTA members, religious leaders, school principals & teachers, block captains, etc.

When the Network of Neighbors is called to offer support following a violent incident, what do they do? How do they help individuals and the community?

The Network responders aim to reduce acute traumatic stress through a variety of structured group sessions that make up the Post Traumatic Stress Management (PTSM) intervention. Depending on the nature of the event and the needs of the community, the acute trauma responders in the Network may offer one or more of the following structured activities:

- An **Orientation/Information Session** for large groups where responders provide updates on the traumatic event, share information on normal physical and emotional reactions, available resources, and resilience building.
- A **Stabilization Group** is a session for 6-15 individuals with similar levels of exposure to the incident. Held within 24-hours of an incident, this session focuses on mindfulness, grounding, self-care, and psychological safety building.
• **A Coping Group** is a session for 6-10 individuals with similar levels of exposure to the incident, which can be held up to 4 weeks after incident. This session focuses on techniques to adapt to trauma and avoid trauma processing/dwelling on incident

• **Ongoing technical assistance** includes longer-term support for community leaders and other requesters, includes supporting groups during anniversaries of a traumatic incident.

**What are the goals of a Network of Neighbors PTSD response?**

To support community members who have been exposed to violent incidents in the following ways:

• To immediately reduce the acute traumatic stress symptoms associated with a violent incident

• To increase coping skills and resilience within the community

• To support the natural tendency of peers to come together and handle crisis, providing direction to help communities heal themselves

• To identify those needing more individualized behavioral health care

**How can you be credentialed to join the Network?**

In order to actively participate in acute trauma responses, you must complete an application, and **you must complete the 2.5-day training provided by Dr. Robert Macy and his team**. The kickoff training for responders is June 13th-15th. If you are interested in attending the training, you can go to [http://goo.gl/forms/WPtcXhRX13](http://goo.gl/forms/WPtcXhRX13) and complete a brief Google form. Once you complete the form, you will be notified when the official registration information is available.

**What is included in the training for Network of Neighbors responders?**

All responders must complete a 2.5-day PTSM training where participants build practical skills for planning, organizing, and leading individual and group sessions. Utilizing the models of Psychological First Aid & Post Traumatic Stress Management, trainees will learn how to effectively work with neighbors impacted by community violence in order to:

• To support the natural, human tendency to group together, seeking solace and safety after traumatic incidents;

• To reduce acute traumatic stress common among survivors; and

• To identify high-risk individuals in need of ongoing behavioral health support.

**What if I am interested in the Network of Neighbors, but I don’t have the time or interest to be an Acute Trauma Responder for the Network?**

If you do not intend to participate in incident responses, but you want to still support and spread the word about the Network, you may choose to attend a 3-hour orientation.
What if I am unable to attend the 3-day training in June still want to be an Acute Trauma Responder?

We recognize that many people have schedules that will prevent them from attending the full training in June 2016. Depending on the level of interest, we hope to plan another training for responders in the near future.

How can you request a response from the Network?

If you are part of community that’s been impacted by a violent incident, you will call the network number, which is managed by the Department of Behavioral Health. You can also email a request to ysaye.zamore@phila.gov. *Please note that the Network will not be active until after the training in June; however, residents can call Phil DeMara or Ysaye Zamore at the Department of Behavioral Health at (215) 546-4100.*

How does the network determine what types of incidents to respond to?

Since the Network of Neighbors is designed to be community-driven, the Network of Neighbors will primarily respond to violent incidents when Trauma Responders are requested or invited by a community member, a community-based organization, or an individual/family that has been impacted by the violence.

Currently, NNRV limits its responses violent community incidents that meet the following parameters:

- A violent incident leads to death or injury by suicide, shooting, or stabbing.
- The incident occurred within the city of Philadelphia.
- The incident has a significant emotional impact on groups affiliated with the victim or perpetrator.

The Network, when called, will discuss the incident with the requesting person or organization – what happened, what is the impact, what resources are present in the community, what does the community need at this moment. Based on that information, a response plan will be formulated that may include partner response organizations and/or Network resources.