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Youth Violence/Conflict Prevention Mini Grants

Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration, University of Massachusetts Boston

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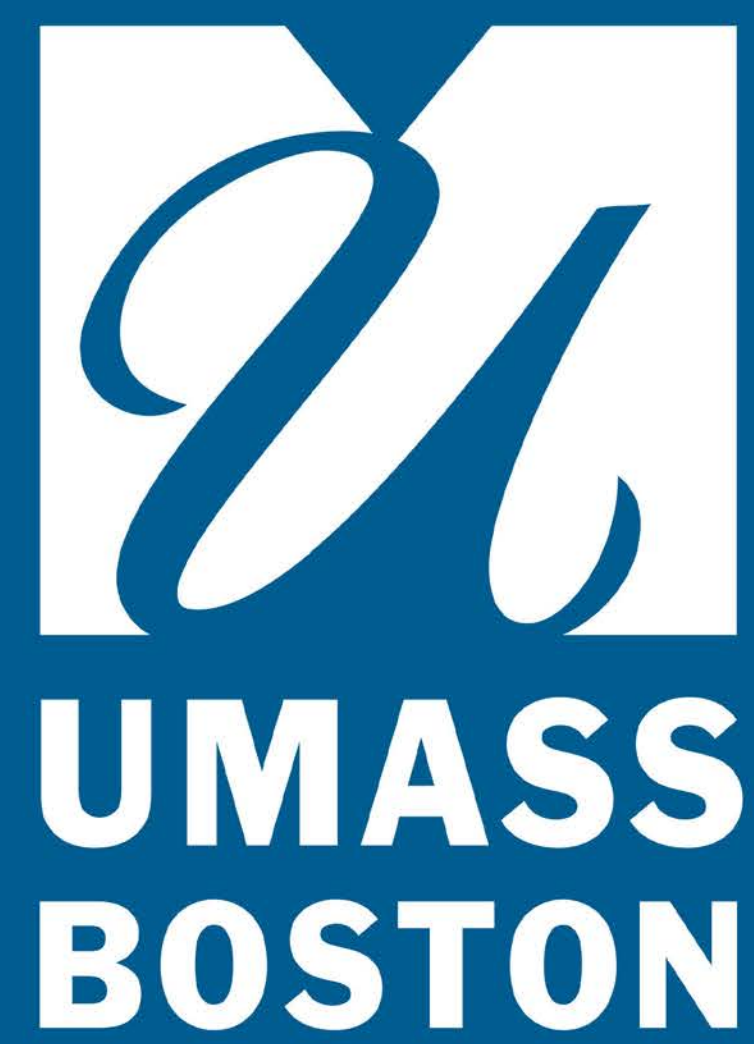


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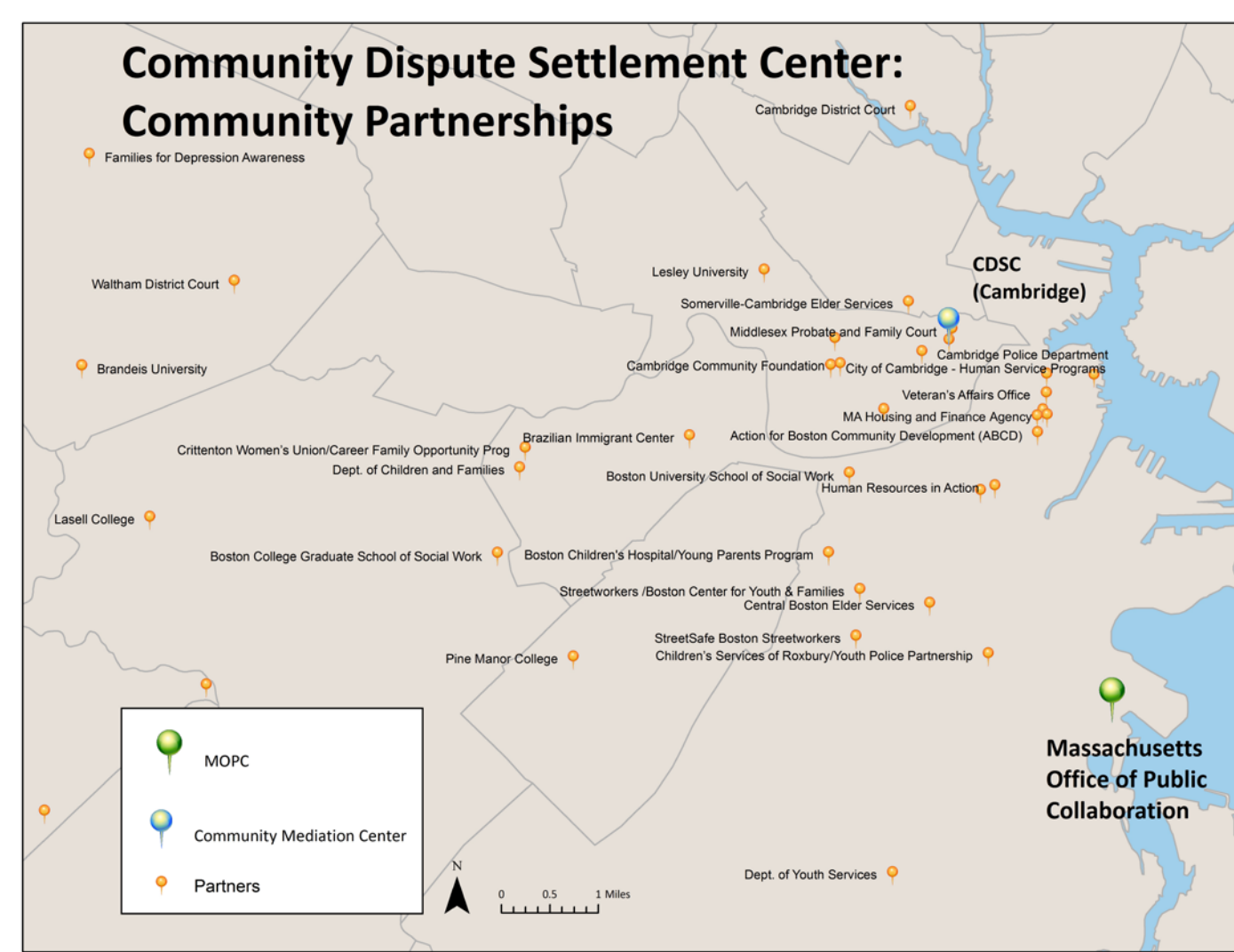
Youth Violence/Conflict Prevention Mini Grants

Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC), UMass Boston

Summary/Abstract

As part of the Community Mediation Center Grant Program, the MA Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC) in FY 2014 awarded four community project grants on youth violence/conflict prevention under a Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, which includes peer mediation and other youth-focused conflict resolution in schools, communities, and/or families. Four community mediation centers from across Massachusetts were awarded \$34,000 to carry-out these projects in partnership with a municipality/municipal entity. An example is the project by

Community Dispute Settlement Center (CDSC) in Cambridge, who in partnerships with the Cambridge Police Department and the Department of Human Services has so far trained 38 at risk youth in grades six, seven and eight to address conflict in a constructive, non-violent way. The project intends to train a total of 200 students by June 30, 2014.



Results/Impacts

\$34,000 in funds in FY2014 to four community mediation centers as follows:

1. \$6,000 to Community Dispute Settlement Center in Cambridge
2. \$10,000 to Mediation Services of North Central MA in Leominster
3. \$3,000 to North Shore Community Mediation in Beverly
4. \$15,000 to The Mediation & Training Collaborative in Greenfield

The impact of the above projects is being studied while the projects are ongoing. A novel approach of conducting participatory evaluation through youth-engaged photography is being designed which will enable students to narrate their personal experiences of mediation. These personal impact stories and other data systematically collected by MOPC will help design and implement a youth conflict resolution study that will inform Massachusetts state policies and programs.

Below middle school students from Cambridge take part in the CDSC mediation training



Conclusion/Next Steps

The aim of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) initiative is to learn from these initial projects in order to replicate them state-wide as a long-term solution to youth violence/conflict. In that regard, the following actions will be carried-out:

- A. Continuous funding to select community mediation centers for PYD work;
- B. Participatory Evaluation;
 - a) Story-telling approaches/human interest stories
 - 1. PhotoVoice: Narration of participant experiences through photography
 - 2. Case studies
 - 3. Wiki
 - 4. IRB Challenge: Safety, Consent & Reliability
- C. A Massachusetts Youth Conflict Resolution Study on the use of community dispute resolution to prevent youth violence/conflict; and
- D. Legislative advocacy to establish state-wide policy and public programming for strategic deployment of community dispute resolution resources on youth violence/conflict prevention.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of these mini grants on youth violence/conflict prevention are threefold:

- a) Fund and systematically study community mediation impact on youth violence prevention in families, schools and communities;
- b) Develop state-wide policies on addressing youth violence/conflict through community dispute resolution resources; and
- c) Create new public programming that will enable long-term public investment in youth violence/conflict prevention.

Cambridge Project

Goal: to increase the competency and comfort of students in grades six through eight when addressing conflict in a constructive, non-violent way.

Objectives: Eight trainings of 200 grades six to eight students will be conducted to increase student skills on understand the dynamics of conflict such as; styles, in which individuals respond to conflict, identify typical conflict situations and ways in which conflicts escalate.

Students will also be trained to utilize de-escalation and conflict prevention strategies like active listening, identifying each other's point of view, identifying anger triggers, identifying anger management techniques and be able to coach peers through conflict.

Approaches and Methods

These challenge grants required the center to raise a 100%, 50 percent of which must be in new funds. MOPC anticipates that these projects will be replicable for other centers, scalable state-wide and pilots for addressing community needs and diversifying funding sources.

As a required component of the community project challenge grants, centers had to engage a committed municipality/municipal entity as a partner and sponsor for the project. This requirement was to enable MOPC to study and document the value of community mediation to local governments, schools and communities, and to inform state-wide programming that MOPC is currently cultivating.

References and Resources

- *Legislative Study: A Framework to Strengthen Massachusetts Community Mediation as a Cost-Effective Public Service*, by MOPC, November 2011
- *CMC Grant Program FY 2013 Year-End Report*, by MOPC, January 2014
- www.umb.edu/mopc/projects/community_mediation_center_grant_program

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