



Community HealthSim

[<http://vetoviolence.org/apps/community-healthsim>]

Welcome to Vetoville! This tool is a game-like experience that demonstrates the connections between violence and community issues. You will be given the chance to serve as a consultant to Vetoville, a city working to address issues many communities face: rising health care costs, safety concerns, education challenges, and limited resources with which to address them.

You will decide how to spend those resources and then get a glimpse—15 years in the future—of how your choices and investments affect the long-term success of Vetoville. You will also see first-hand how these challenges are linked to violence in the community.

Introductory Dialogue

[After the Community HealthSim experience begins, you are given some introductory dialogue to give some background information on Vetoville.]

Our town needs some help!

Vetoville has always been a wonderful place to live and work. However, over the past few years, businesses have begun to struggle, and the schools are starting to underperform. The rising cost of healthcare and limited funds for public safety have been challenging. You've been brought in as a special advisor to help turn things around.

Are you ready to help the people of Vetoville?

Mayor's Overview

[After accepting Vetoville's request for assistance, the Mayor greets you, gives you a tour of the town, and presents the problems that need to be solved.]

Whew! I'm so glad that you've agreed to come to help us. I'm the Mayor of Vetoville. There's so much to do! Before we get started, let's take a quick tour around town.

[In the interactive web experience, you would visually move through an interactive map of the town, and be shown markers on different buildings to show where the problems are occurring.]

This is a live look at our community. The markers show some of the problems that are happening right now.

- Hospital emergency department overcrowded, public health clinics shutting down

- Crowded jail
- Business having problems hiring qualified employees

We are seeing problems at home and at school too:

- Home foreclosure
 - Kids getting bullied
 - Students expelled for selling drugs
-
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Spending Funds Interactive

[The Mayor informs you that you have been given a certain amount of funds to spend in areas of the community. In the interactive web experience, you would choose which of four areas you would like to spend money on - and how much. After an overview of each of the four areas, we will allocate coins for you.]

We've just received a specific amount of funds (eight coins) to fix problems in four areas of our community: **Business, Health, Public Safety, and Education.**

Please help us decide the best ways to spend all of the money available. Then we'll fast-forward 15 years to see what happens to Vetoville because of our decisions.

Let's get started.

First, let's see what's going on in our community. Then choose how you want to spend your 8 coins. You can spend 0, 2, or 4 coins in each area.

Area One: Business

We have a big manufacturing company that is talking about leaving town unless we can find a way to help them financially. The CEO told me they often have to hire from out of town because they can't find enough qualified workers here. This is adding to the cost of labor.

Funds are tight, but they are our biggest employer. Should we give the business some financial help?

Area Two: Health

The newspaper is about to run a story on problems with the emergency department at our local hospital. The story includes quotes from patients about wait times being so long that people pack blankets and food when they come.

The administrator is asking for money to hire more staff.

I've got the reporter on the phone. He's asking if we have any plans to improve things. Should we give the hospital money to hire more emergency department staff?

Area Three: Public Safety

I'm hearing from different groups asking what we are going to do about public safety in our community.

We're seeing increases in drug offenses, alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, and gang activity. The Police Chief keeps asking me for more resources. He wants me to increase the budget so we can expand our jail. Should we spend money and expand the jail?

Area Four: Education

There's a sharp drop in test scores and school attendance is getting worse. The Parent Teacher Organization wants to see improvements in technology. Should we spend money to update the technology?

Here Are Your Options: Choose Where to Spend Your Funds

• **Business**

Our biggest employer is threatening to leave. Should we give them a financial break?

[Response if you choose YES to invest]

Okay, thanks. Hopefully GLOBO-CO is here to stay.

[Response if you choose NOT to invest]

Okay, thanks. Hopefully GLOBO-CO is here to stay.

• **Health**

Our emergency department is overcrowded. Should we give them money to hire more staff?

[Response if you choose YES to invest]

Thanks for your help. I can't wait to tell the administrator about the additional money!

[Response if you choose NOT to invest]

We'll still be dealing with these problems after the news cycle is over, but maybe we should focus on other things.

• **Public Safety**

Crime is becoming a problem in this town. Should we spend money on law enforcement and jails?

[Response if you choose YES to invest]

Great, thanks for weighing in. Hopefully a larger jail will help.

[Response if you choose NOT to invest]

He's not going to like it, but he knows how tight our finances are.

• **Education**

The quality of our school system seems to be in decline. Is technology the answer?

[Response if you choose YES to invest]

You know I think that was the right move. Technology could really help these kids.

[Response if you choose NOT to invest]

The teachers and parents aren't going to be happy, but they know we are facing budget challenges.

Fast Forward

[In the online training, you could choose how to spend coins, but here we have chosen for you. You spend two coins in each areas, a time-lapse based on a systems dynamic model will occur, and show what can happen when a model factors in violence.]

Thanks for helping with the decisions on where to spend our money. We can take a look at how things may play out. A health meter measures changes. It's linked to all of the things we've spent money to try and fix: businesses, health, public safety, and education.

Okay, ready to fast-forward? See you on the other side!

[The results of your actions play out in the community over 25 years through an animated video of newspaper headlines. Here the time lapse is explained through a table. Note that the community's health status is given a score on the scale of 1 to 25, with 1 being the worst and 25 being the best.]

Year	Newspaper Headline	Community Health Status
2017	Mayor Elected To 2nd Term	22
2018	St. Patrick's Day Run A Success	22.5
2019	Wildcats Going To 2017 State Semifinals	23
2019	Home Break-Ins On The Rise	22
2020	Road Rage Caught On Video!	21
2021	Public Intoxication A Problem At City Parade	20
2022	City Proposes New Street Lighting System, To Be Installed Within 5 Years	20.5
2022	Local Hospital To Upgrade Facilities	21
2023	School Attendance In 2022 Dipping To Record Low	20
2024	Violence Increases In Community	19
2024	Parents Demand Metal Detectors In School.	18
2025	Wildcats Athletics Defunded	17
2026	3 Teens Commit Suicide	16
2027	Graduation Rates Decreasing	15
2028	Drug Arrests Are Increasing	14
2029	Unemployment Rate Highest Ever Recorded	13

Year	Newspaper Headline	Community Health Status
2029	Property Values In Sharp Decline	12.5
2030	Local Sculpture Vandalized	12
2031	Homeless Shelter Over Capacity	10
2031	Mayor Promises Intervention Efforts	10.5
2032	Vacant Homes Vandals And Squatters	9
2032	Four Killed In Alcohol Related Car Crash	8
2033	Teen Killed In Gang Initiation	7
2034	Globo-Co To Leave Town	6
2035	Sexual Assault Reported At School	5
2035	Candlelight Vigil Held For Drive-By Victim	4
2036	State Takes Control Over All Local Schools	3

[The mayor re-appears to address you about the results.]

Whoa! What happened? Even though we spent two coins in each of the four sectors, overall things got worse over time. I don't know about you, but I'm confused.

Let's go talk to some of the leaders in the community to see if we can figure out what's going on here.

Connecting the Dots

[We now see icons representing the community leaders; Business Owner, Hospital Administrator, Police Chief, School Superintendent. You will hear from each community leader and learn how problems trace back to violence as a source.]

Let's see what we can learn from talking to some of the folks that saw the decline in community health over the last decade.

Area One: BUSINESS (CEO, GLOBO-CO)

The Mayor always did her best for us. My company struggled for eight years before we eventually left town.

We saw a steady decline in productivity at GLOBO-CO. Employees just weren't as efficient as they used to be. We were seeing lots of distracted workers on the factory floor, and finding qualified people was becoming really tough.

We know from research that **violence is linked** to a variety of work-related consequences, such as reduced productivity.

Pins on the community map read:

- Absenteeism
- Poor job performance
- Lost productivity

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? According to one study, 10 % of women reported missing at least one day of work as a result of intimate partner violence.

It was horrible to see that happening to our employees. The cost of insuring rose year after year, and we lost productivity when chronically ill employees couldn't report to work.

We know from research that exposure to **violence is linked** to increased rates of depression, diabetes, and heart disease, leading to increased healthcare costs and greater unemployment.

Pins on the community map read:

- Increase in the number of people with chronic illness

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? Those exposed to childhood abuse experience higher lifetime healthcare costs.

Meanwhile, outside of work, our employees were exposed to violence in the community and at home.

It was never our intention to leave the community. It was a costly decision, and we know it hurt the community financially.

I wish we would have realized earlier that violence was contributing to the increased healthcare costs and decreased productivity of our employees. If I had known that, I would have made different decisions.

Pins on the community map read:

- Employee mugged
- Domestic violence

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? Disadvantaged neighborhoods have higher rates of violence, lower graduation rates, and higher teen pregnancy rates.

Area Two: EDUCATION (Superintendent)

It was very challenging the past few years. Attendance was dropping and our graduation rates were the worst in the state.

We saw our dropout rates get worse and worse, until they became the worst in the state. And standardized test scores continued to drop.

Evidence suggests **violence is linked** to lower attendance and achievement at school, and lower graduation rates.

Pins on the community map read:

- Poor academic achievement
- Poor attendance
- Low graduation rates

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? In one study, youth exposed to violence were 30% less likely to graduate from high school.

I watched our schools become unsafe.

Bullying became commonplace and fights broke out among students. A lot of our teachers were trying to transfer to other districts.

We know from research that **bullying and youth violence leads** to fears about safety and more missed school days.

Pins on the community map read:

- Bullying

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? According to one national study, 6% of high school students missed at least one day of school in the last month because they feared for their safety.

I'd hear about how former students struggled in the community.

Evidence suggests **violence is linked** to poor academic achievement and lower rates of employment later in life.

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? A drop in the unemployment rate (less unemployment) is associated with a decline in property crime rate and a decrease in burglary, larceny, and auto theft.

Pins on the community map read:

- Former student dealing with substance abuse
- Former students with low paying jobs
- Former student charged with assault

Area Three: PUBLIC SAFETY (Police Chief)

Between my officer's overtime hours and court system costs, we spent a lot of time and money trying to deal with the town's problems, but it didn't seem like it was making much of a difference."

Despite what we spent to expand the jail and get more criminals off the street, crime continued to rise. There were the usual repeat offenders of course, but many of the faces we saw were new ones. Many of them were just teenagers – kids who grew up in a town where violence and crime were increasingly the norm.

We know from research that **violence can lead to** a cycle of more violence and an increased likelihood of future involvement in criminal activity.

Pins on the community map read:

- Gang violence case
- Convenience store robbery
- Drunk driving hearing

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? The lifetime economic burden of child abuse in one year (2010) is estimated to be \$121 billion including \$3.9 billion in criminal justice costs.

It wasn't long before our facilities became overcrowded again. The town just didn't have the funds for an expansion to handle any more prisoners. As crime increased, so did the burden on our budgets and resources. We had to cut many of our prison programs, like GED classes. And many of the prisoners were released back into the community with poor job prospects and without access to the medical and mental health care they needed.

Evidence suggests **violence is linked to:**

- Lower rates of employment rate
- Lower wages in adulthood
- Family disruption

Pins on the community map read:

- Offender gets released from prison

The lack of support for prisoners and their early release into the community led to more crime, more violence – and more young people entering the system.

We arrested as many as we could – but we could never seem to get ahead of the problem.

Pins on the community map read:

- Offender arrested for theft
- Offender goes back to court

Area Four: HEALTH (Hospital Admin)

Several years ago we saw emergency department use really start to increase. We couldn't keep up with the demand.

Our hospital saw a steady increase in patients. Many of our units, such as the cancer department, were operating over capacity. We were dealing with more chronic diseases, like diabetes and heart problems.

Our doctors were also giving more referrals for mental health services.

Evidence suggests **violence is linked** to increased rates of chronic disease and mental health issues.

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? Adverse childhood experiences, including child abuse, increase the likelihood of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and depression.

Pins on the community map read:

- Cardiac unit over capacity
- Cancer center over capacity
- Mental health specialist referrals

Our partners at public health clinics could not keep up. Some had to close down because funds dried up. Our doctors at our hospital outpatient clinics kept telling us that they needed more staff to handle the extra load of patients. Our emergency department also became overcrowded and many patients started using it as a clinic.

We know from research that **violence is linked** to increased healthcare use and costs.

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? Women with a history of intimate partner violence (IPV) had significantly higher healthcare use and costs, continuing long after IPV ended.

Pins on the community map read:

- Public health clinics shutting down
- Overcrowded outpatient clinics
- Overcrowded emergency department

It drove healthcare cost up for individuals and families. Also employers were not happy with the increasing cost. The CEO of our town's biggest employer, GLOBO-CO, said he could no longer afford subsidizing employee health insurance to pay for their medical care.

Research has shown that **violence is linked** to increases in healthcare and mental health costs.

[Statistic appears in new pop-up:]

Did you know? Evidences suggests that Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) costs employers in the United States billions of dollars every year due to medical costs and diminished work productivity.

Pins on the community map read:

- Increasing healthcare cost for families
- Increasing healthcare cost for employers

We tried to fix the problems right in front of us for the patients that came to our hospital but we could never get ahead. It turns out that the patients coming through our doors were only the tip of the iceberg. Violence was connected to all of it, affecting even more members in our community. Unfortunately we didn't see it until after our healthcare system was overwhelmed.

What Can I do?

[The map zooms out to show the whole community. The connections to violence or links to violence discussed in the previous section are all displayed on the map as they pertain to particular community buildings/spaces. The Mayor comes back to talk about what happened.]

Wow! As we've heard from leaders in the community, violence really does touch everyone and all the things we care about. These are not isolated incidents – everything is connected. Violence becomes a risk factor for more violence. Experiencing violence has consequences that affect all areas and future generations!

If left unchecked, things could quickly become overwhelming, as you can see here.

The good news is that violence is preventable!

Lets see what this community could look like when you prevent violence before it starts.

[The pins on the map showing violence and the links to violence are removed from the Vetoville map.]

PREVENT VIOLENCE BEFORE IT HAPPENS

This looks much better! Unfortunately in real life, there is no rewind button. To learn about the things you can do, let's talk to a public health professional who will help explain more about violence and the things you can do to help prevent it before it begins.

[A Public Health professional now approaches with insight into what has happened in Vetoville.]

Hi, I've been asked to talk to you about the violence problem here in Vetoville.

As we saw, violence is connected to many factors affecting the health of our community. If we can prevent violence before it begins, everything we just talked about (Business, Health, Public Safety, and Education) would improve. And we'll start to see widespread benefits in our community.

You're a big part of making that happen. We have to work together to solve a problem this big and complex!

It's reasonable to try to think about "treating" violence by trying to remove people from the situation

- Lock up prisoners
- Remove children from abusive homes
- Violence hotline
- Battered women's shelter

These can help in the short term and can be important for people already experiencing violence. But what we are talking about here is preventing violence from occurring in the first place

So how do we prevent violence from happening? We know there are factors that increase people's risk of being involved in violence (risk factors). And we know there are factors that decrease that risk (protective factors).

Some protective factors are things like stable relationships and commitment to school. Some risk factors are poverty, childhood trauma, and substance abuse.

Protective factor pins on the community map read:

- + child in a safe, nurturing environment
- + woman in a safe and stable relationship
- + teen getting a good education

Risk factor pins on the community map read:

- poverty
- childhood trauma
- substance abuse

These are **some of the protective and risk factors** that contribute to the likeliness of violence occurring.

Protective Factors +

- Commitment to school
- Connectedness to family
- Social support

Risk Factors -

- Substance abuse
- Lack of employment opportunities for young adults
- Family history of violence, including child abuse
- Depression

Violence isn't something that just happens. If we can limit the risk factors and increase protective factors, we should see violence decrease in our communities.

Let's talk to the Mayor about what this means for things here in Vetoville, as well as your community too!

[The Mayor returns to discuss what you have learned.]

Wow, I don't know about you, but I've learned a lot! As you've seen, violence is connected to other things we care about. Violence affects all of us, and we all have a role to play in preventing it. Violence has long-term consequences for people and communities, and addressing these consequences can be expensive. The good news is, there are things we can do to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. And this can end up saving money in the long run.

There are easy steps each of us can take to create real and lasting differences in our communities. Help spread the word about the connections between violence and community health.

Resources:

- CDC's Division of Violence Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/>
- VetoViolence
<http://vetoviolenecdc.gov/>
- Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action
<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/opportunities-for-action.html>
- Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence
http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/connecting_dots.html

Supporting Evidence:

<http://newveto.vetoviolenecdc.gov/apps/community-healthsim/supporting-evidence>