



# Archdiocese of Santa Fe

Office of Communications/Social Media

4000 St. Joseph's Place NW | Albuquerque, NM 87120-1714

Leslie M. Radigan, Director

Voice: 505.831.8180

lradigan@asfnm.org | archdiosf.org

## NEWS RELEASE

### Stakeholders Convene a Dialogue on Gun Violence and the Impact on Children

ALBUQUERQUE – Tuesday, January 23, 2024—IMMEDIATE RELEASE—CHI St. Joseph’s Children convened a series of dialogue sessions with participating hosts Archbishop John C. Wester and Speaker of the House of Representatives Javier Martínez and numerous stakeholders included below. The dialogue focused on addressing the impact of gun violence, crime, and drug abuse on children and families in Albuquerque and surrounding areas.

The meetings brought together leaders of faith communities, law enforcement, city government agencies, not-for-profit community service and advocacy, and county-based agencies.

“We gathered together as community leaders united by our concern for the safety and well-being of our children and set aside political ideologies in the interest of cooperating around our shared goals and values,” said Speaker Martínez.

Through facilitated dialogue, a process of sharing, participants were challenged to discern common values that cross the barriers of philosophies and ideologies. The quality time dedicated to dialogue facilitated a genuine connection of participants with one another as they recognized shared values. One value that came through was participants’ desire for a sense of security and safety in their neighborhoods and communities.

The facilitator grounded the discussion by acknowledging unique roles of community leaders as “the Prophets of our time,” meaning those who adamantly call the public to awareness of the problem. In the case of gun violence in Albuquerque and surrounding communities, the prophetic imagination calls for awakening from the numbness that has become the status quo of daily news reports of gun violence.

The participants were called to explore the experience of anguish rather than anger for the sake of entering the suffering of and impact on children and families. The goal in coming together is to identify and name our despair and anguish with the status quo that is failing our expectations of how we ought to live together in a community.

“The effect of gun violence on our children, which has become the status quo, is not acceptable. As a community, we need to come together in a unified effort to solve our communities’ endemic gun violence,” Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, stated.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that early childhood trauma, like that experienced as a result of gun violence, crime, and drug abuse, negatively impacts a child’s psychological, social, and educational development.

“Childhood trauma is often an unseen force in a child’s life. When that child lacks resources for

psychological and social care, they can slip into new cycles of drug abuse, crime, and even gun violence,” said Dr. Miskimins, UNMH Trauma Medical Director and trauma surgeon, “The tail end of this cycle can end up with grave consequences at UNM Hospital’s Trauma Center.” New Mexicans are enduring the consequences of the trauma experienced in communities. Sam Bregman, Bernalillo County District Attorney, states, “Juvenile gun crime is exploding. We, as an entire community, including parents, need to focus on this very challenging issue and find solutions.”

At the conclusion of its first series of dialogue sessions in January, the group identified a range of policies, actions, and funding steps. These included:

- Focused messaging campaigns to foster community support for the expansion of early childhood development programs;
- Messaging campaigns specific to pre-teens and teens, with attention to the media and spokespeople preferred by these audiences;
- Coordinated messaging across government, faith communities, and community service agencies to focus on the shared core values to advance child safety and well-being;
- Address numbness and the prevailing mindset that, as individuals and community members, we are powerless to change our circumstances;
- Confront numbness expressed in the observation that “the public, both individually and communally, does not want to hear it”;
- Overall, foster community support for needed judicial, educational, and faith reforms.

#### Judicial Reform

- Promote policies to identify sources of firearms in juvenile crime;
- Develop policies and resources to determine and disrupt organized efforts that co-opt juveniles in crime;
- Where appropriate, advance measures for parental accountability in juvenile crime;
- Fund resources to address both compassionate accountability and judicial accountability for the gravest youth offenders;
- Revisit and reform pre-trial detention;
- Prevention (at all levels of state, county, municipality);
- Develop social prevention and funding to address social determinants of childhood well-being, particularly in high-impact locales;
- Develop social prevention and funding for judicial reform, educational reform, and youth access to mentoring and alternatives to gun violence, crime, and drug culture.

#### Faith Leaders

- Convene leaders to coordinate approaches to address social determinants of childhood well-being and gun violence, specific to the needs of local communities and neighborhoods;
- Promote youth programs such as mentoring to prevent youth from being recruited by criminal influences;
- Commit to engage in a deliberate intervention for vulnerable children who may be susceptible to gun violence in the home and in the community;
- Empower and engage youth to participate in the development of experiences and curriculums to address gun violence.

#### School

- Promote curriculum and funding in gun literacy, drug literacy, and financial literacy as part

of a pre-teen and teen curriculum;

- Challenge school districts, administrators, teachers, and counselors to create forums to address the impact of gun violence, crime, and drug abuse on children and families.

#### Parents

- Parent engagement, accountability, and support for youth experiences;
- Explore parental responsibility for juvenile gun violence and crime.

#### Youth (pre-teen and teen) Engagement

- Develop a communications campaign specifically intended for youth, using the media they consume, and involve youth in its development;
- Expand policies and resources to address trauma related to gun culture, crime, and drug abuse;
- Create forums for youth to voice their experience/trauma as a path to self-determination.

#### Early Childhood Development

- Continue to advance the legislation, policy, funding, and programmatic resources made possible by the Constitutional amendment for early childhood development;
- Conveners of the community dialogue sessions anticipate a second round of sessions, beginning July 2024.

#### Attendees:

Javier Martínez, Speaker of the NM House of Representatives

Alicia Manzano, Chief of Staff to Speaker Martínez

Camille Ward, Communications Director for the Office of Speaker Martínez

Pamela Armstrong, Deputy Communications Director for the Office of Speaker Martínez

Most Reverend John Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe

Allen Sánchez, President of CHI St. Joseph's Children

Jessa Cowdrey, VP of Operations for CHI St. Joseph's Children

Richard Miskimins, UNMH Trauma Medical Director

Sam Bregman, District Attorney

Diana Garcia, Deputy District Attorney

Regis Pecos, Director of the Leadership Institute

Kristi Koppel, Rev. St. Paul Lutheran Church

Kurt Rager, Director of the Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-NM

Lynne Hinton, Director of the NM Conference of Churches

Janet Lynn Taylor, Conference Director Assistant at NM Conference of Churches

Miranda Viscoli, NM Gun Violence Prevention

Annamarie Luna, Services Director for Cuidando Los Niños

Barbara Tegtmeier, Head Chaplain for APD

Robert Chavez, CEO of Youth Development, Inc.

Concha Cordova, Vice-President for Youth Development, Inc.

Divya Shiv, Research & Policy Analyst at New Mexico Voices for Children

Doug Small, Civic Engagement Manager for Mayor Keller's Office

Celestino Landavazo, Coordinator for Valencia Community Action Network

Ramon Landavazo, Volunteer with the Valencia Community Action Network

Valeria Cervantes, Volunteer with the Valencia Community Action Network

Humberto Tinsman, Communities of Christ

Matt Cross, NM Department of Health, Health Promotion Specialist

Naja Druva, Violence Prevention Coordinator, NMDOH

Jeffery Bustamante, ABQ Community Safety Deputy Director

Contact:

Allen Sánchez | [Allen.Sanchez@CommonSpirit.org](mailto:Allen.Sanchez@CommonSpirit.org) | 505.319.3334

Jessa Cowdrey | [Jessa.Cowdrey@CommonSpirit.org](mailto:Jessa.Cowdrey@CommonSpirit.org) | 505.280.1722

CHI St. Joseph's Children (CHI SJC) offers FREE virtual home visiting (joyful parenting partnership) statewide with no income requirements. CHI SJC supports all families: ages, ethnicities, cultures, languages, faith traditions and beliefs, compositions, incomes, and educational accomplishments and we support families and children of all abilities. CHI SJC is a self-funded program due to an endowment. CHI SJC does not utilize any government funding (federal, state, or local government funds of any type) in serving families. CHI SJC does not bill the family or insurance for any costs. In addition to the joyful parenting partnership program, CHI SJC has started an Accreditation and Replication Program to support the upstart and development of home visiting programs nationally.

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