



## ABOUT THE COMMUNITY ADVOCATES PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE

The Public Policy Institute works to promote and implement evidence-based policies that will prevent and reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for individuals and families in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin.

The Public Policy Institute, a division of Community Advocates, was founded in 2008 to prevent and end the poverty that so often brings people through our doors at Community Advocates seeking help.

The Public Policy Institute analyzes and advocates for policy changes; we convene and coordinate coalitions; and we distribute funds to community-based programs while offering them training and technical assistance to increase impact.

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# 2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

Steady work and patience has been a lesson reinforced within the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute (PPI). We maintain a big-picture focus guided by a clear vision toward our goal of preventing and reducing poverty. It's with this mindset that we continually look for opportunities to mobilize with community partners around prevention efforts and ways to impact policies that will improve the quality of life for individuals and families. "Progress is seldom easy or quick to come by, and sometimes we encounter challenges," shared PPI Deputy Director Kari Lerch. "However, with clear vision and strategies, good collaboration and hard work, we can make progress in trying times."

Reflecting on 2016, one of our greatest accomplishments was the introduction of **The Stronger Way Act** by U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ). PPI staff Julie Kersick, Conor Williams and David Riemer (now retired) were essential to the ground-breaking legislation that proposed large-scale subsidized employment across the entire country and an expanded Earned Income

Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. These policies are key parts of the policy package that PPI has promoted as proven ways to cut poverty in half. While it was not passed as part of the 114th Congress, Senator Baldwin used the legislation to build support for the individual policies and the role that government can play in reducing poverty. She is committed to continuing the effort, and we will continue to work with all members of the Wisconsin delegation to promote these policies.

The Public Policy Institute continued our efforts to protect and expand health coverage and benefits for low-income Wisconsin residents. Mike Bare, our Research and Program Coordinator, led this work. We encouraged jails across Wisconsin to implement a policy that allows individuals leaving incarceration to enroll in BadgerCare before returning to the community to ensure continued care. We also worked to change a state policy that terminates BadgerCare coverage of those who are incarcerated and their families, which several counties enacted. As we face potential changes to the Affordable Care Act in 2017, we will continue to work for universal and affordable access to quality health care.



*Community Advocates was proud to host several community leaders at the introduction of The Stronger Way Act. At that event, the legislation was praised by Brian Osei, a successful Transitional Jobs participant.*



Milwaukee youth Tramesha and Danajha were the proud winners of the 2016 DFC sponsored "A Drug-Free 53206 for Me" contest.

## NEW INITIATIVES

The **Milwaukee Transitional/Subsidized Jobs Collaborative**, which we coordinate, continues to play an important role in advancing work-based solutions to alleviate poverty. At the state level, our efforts contributed to the expansion of funding for subsidized jobs beyond Milwaukee. Additionally, in response to the unrest in Sherman Park in August 2016, Governor Walker instructed the Department of Children and Families to allocate TANF funds to create 150 transitional jobs for residents of Sherman Park.

Building on this work, PPI received a five-year \$1 million grant from the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health to fund **Improving Health Through Expanded Work**. The pilot is working to improve the health and economic well-being of residents in some of the poorest communities in Wisconsin through subsidized employment and providing access to effective mental and physical health care.

Additionally, we are excited to be a partner in a three-year U.S. Department of Justice **Smart Reentry Grant: Focus on Evidence-Based Strategies for Successful Reentry from Incarceration to Community Program**. Partners will help individuals returning from prison to Milwaukee with access to transitional

jobs, health care and mental health care, in an effort to reduce their probability of returning to jail or prison.

A **Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma (ReCAST)** was a grant awarded to the City of Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** in September that will advance the city's efforts to promote resilience and equity in communities that have recently faced civil unrest. PPI is proud to not only be a partner in the grant, but to have also played a large role in planning and designing the program.

## MILWAUKEE BRIGHTER FUTURES

In addition to new growth, 2016 brought much advancement to prevention initiatives, which address the root causes of poverty.

**Milwaukee Brighter Futures Initiative (MBFI)** is committed to prevention and positive youth development strategies. We are grateful to have been awarded the state's most recently funded Brighter Futures contract, enabling us to continue serving as administrator of the state's youth development and prevention dollars in Milwaukee, a role we've filled for over 10 years. The new three-year contract brings a focus to youth ages 12-21 that are in—or at risk of being placed in—out-of-home care, and re-grants funds for projects at local organizations: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Milwaukee,

## In 2016, The Public Policy Institute's work included:

- Received over 2.7 million dollars to launch new initiatives.
- Welcomed new staff Anneke Mohr, Deavon Collins and Rashidah Butler to the team!
- Hosted Harvard sociologist Matthew Desmond for a book reading at Boswell Book Company. Desmond wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin Community Services, Milwaukee Christian Center, Neu-Life Community Development, Pathfinders, SET Inc., The Parenting Network and Walker's Point Youth and Family Center.

As MBFI administrator, PPI provides training and technical assistance to increase program capacity, coordinated by PPI Prevention Services Manager Elysse Chay Wageman, Benchmark Coordinator Jeff Roman, and our Program Evaluation team at the Center for Urban Population Health. MBFI grantees met throughout the year to foster collaboration and receive additional supports to improve program outcomes coordinated.

During November and December, MBFI Contract Monitor Jan Buchler and Coordinator Jeff Roman facilitated focus group sessions with youth from all funded programs. A total of 107



MCSAP Coordinator, Kasaundra Brown staffed a prevention table at a Marquette basketball game to highlight the dangers of prescription drug misuse.



youth and young adults participated. As part of our technical assistance, each agency received a program-specific list of responses as well as a summary of all responses to help with program improvement and planning for 2017.

MBFI continued to support collective impact initiatives throughout the year, including Beyond the Bell Milwaukee, Coming Together Partnership for Gun Violence Prevention, Milwaukee Teen Pregnancy Prevention Network, and Prevent Suicide of Greater Milwaukee.

### **MILWAUKEE COUNTY SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION COALITION**

The **Milwaukee County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (MCSAP)** is a county-wide initiative bringing together resources and skills to create a healthy community, with a key focus on preventing youth marijuana use and prescription drug overdose. Through MCSAP, we also re-grant funds for direct service prevention programming through the **Stay Strong Milwaukee** component.

2016 brought changes in infrastructure to MCSAP that were impactful, including moving subcommittee meetings to occur during bi-

monthly coalition meetings. This change makes better use of volunteer coalition members' time and has proved to be successful as membership and attendance continues to grow. In fact, the coalition had to move to a larger meeting space in 2016 to accommodate our members! The meeting format was also enhanced to include presentations for members to increase awareness of resources, education, and ideas for collaboration.

The year also brought some leadership changes. Kaylin Jones of Silver Spring Neighborhood Center was voted in as a coalition chair in July. Kaylin fills an important new role and will be immensely helpful in providing support to her counterpart and MCSAP Chair Joyce Felker, of The Parenting Network, Coalition Coordinator Kasaundra Brown and project consultants Tracy Johnson and Melissa Ugland.

The **Marijuana Prevention Subcommittee** appointed Raymond Rivera of United Community Center co-chair of the group in the fall, following the announcement of former co-chair Michael Nunley's retirement. We are deeply appreciative to Michael for his past efforts. Raymond is now assisting our other

*PPI seeks strategies to prevent and reduce child abuse and neglect, youth violence and delinquent behavior, youth alcohol and other drug use and abuse, and non-marital pregnancy through positive youth development activities.*

co-chair, Jody Rhodes of Neu-Life Community Development, and through their leadership this year they expanded the opportunity for youth to develop messaging through its youth-driven "Marijuana Prevention Social Norms and Marketing Campaign." The youth developed grassroots posters, building on the "Let's Be Blunt" campaign launched the previous year. This campaign continued to generate attention in 2016, especially from Marquette University, which fostered a new partnership!

2016 also brought great strides for the **Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Subcommittee**, staffed by new Coordinator Deavon Collins, which brings awareness to how to properly dispose of unused medications and promote prescription drug drop boxes. Volunteers delivered postcards to more than 150 pharmacies throughout Milwaukee County, both major chain pharmacies as well as locally owned, to spread the word about safe drop box locations. A prescription opiate overdose

informational brochure was created to educate the community on commonly prescribed opiates, what an overdose is, and signs and symptoms of an overdose.

Wrapping up 2016, the subcommittee solidified an exciting partnership between MCSAP and Marquette University Sports highlighting the **Dose of Reality Campaign** to bring awareness to the dangers of prescription painkiller misuse. MCSAP will promote prescription drug misuse prevention strategies by featuring Dose of Reality messaging banners rotating on the scoreboard during Marquette University men's home conference basketball games, as well as radio messaging for games. The Marquette University Police Department installed a prescription drug drop box to encourage students to safely dispose of unwanted medications before they can be misused. This subcommittee received a new Partnerships for Success grant and gained a new chair in Rachael Cooper from AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin.

### ALLIANCE FOR WISCONSIN YOUTH AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS

The **Alliance for Wisconsin Youth (AWY)** administers the southeast Wisconsin region of Alliance for Wisconsin Youth by supporting substance use disorder prevention coalitions. 2016 brought continued recruitment efforts to grow the southeast AWY region, which includes Jefferson, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha counties. Several successful trainings were held to both increase knowledge and capacity for coalitions working in the region. We are also proud to have established a wellness and informational journal that is sent electronically to coalition members every month. Finally, a new **Partnerships for Success (PFS)** grant provides technical assistance to substance use prevention coalitions in the two southeast Wisconsin counties hardest hit by the opioid epidemic.



*A Milwaukee Brighter Futures participant shared in a focus group that "Participation in this program gives youth opportunities to learn new things and make better choices."*

### DRUG-FREE COMMUNITIES 53206

**Drug-Free Communities (DFC)** works to prevent and reduce youth alcohol and marijuana use in the 53206 zip code. Coordinator Rashidah Butler was hired in 2016 and hit the ground running. One hundred students were surveyed throughout the year to get accurate data about marijuana and alcohol usage and their perception of the risks and harms of this behavior. Nearly 300 students at Auer Avenue Community School took the "A Drug-Free Me" Pledge and made commitments to live a drug-free life and spread the message to their peers and community about why it is important. DFC also sponsored **COA Goldin Youth & Family Center's Above the Influence** poster contest, where more than 20 middle school students created posters envisioning "A Drug-Free 53206 for Me."

At the 53206 Drug-Free Communities Retreat on September 30, 2016, 20 representatives from our community came together to learn about the **53206 Drug-Free Communities Project**, network, and get extensive training on the Strategic Prevention Framework and Seven Strategies for Community Change. Attendees

also participated in a data walk and focus group to share their experiences and opinions on substance use in the 53206 zip code. The retreat helped shape the work in store for 2017.

### CITY OF MILWAUKEE TOBACCO-FREE ALLIANCE

In November, the City of Milwaukee Common Council voted to prohibit smokeless tobacco in all sporting venues in the city, including Miller Park. This ordinance was proposed by Alderman Michael Murphy following education he received from the **City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance** and its partners on the **Knock Tobacco Out of the Park** campaign! The Alliance, housed in PPI and funded by the Wisconsin Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, also conducted over 500 tobacco compliance checks with assistance from youth and the Milwaukee Police Department to ensure tobacco is not sold to young people under 18; educated 100 retailers on the state statutes related to tobacco sales and the importance of keeping products out of the hands of kids, in partnership with the City of Milwaukee License Division; and promoted smoke-free housing with 200 area landlords with the City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services. Environmental scans were also conducted in 40 retail shops in order to track differences in marketing and product placement between neighborhoods as part of a county-wide research project. In December, the Alliance welcomed Anneke Mohr as the new Coalition Coordinator following Deb Heffner's transition to Grants Manager in PPI. The Alliance will continue to focus on addressing tobacco-related health disparities, with a key emphasis on the LGBTQ+ communities in 2017.

**THANK YOU** to all of our community partners and funders who supported us this year and beyond. We truly couldn't do this important work without each of you. 2017 will provide more opportunities to convene partners and community leaders through our coalition work and "Conversations with Policy Leaders Series." We look forward to working together to prevent and reduce poverty!

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