



PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE
Policy. Prevention. Innovation.

2015

A Public Policy Institute *Year in Review*

The Community Advocates Public Policy Institute has had a busy and fruitful year. 2015 has also been a time for transitions. We are grateful for Rob Cherry's past leadership as Director of PPI. In July, Rob took on a new role but he remains a trusted advisor to the Institute. Kari Lerch, formerly Prevention Services Manager, has taken on new responsibilities as Deputy Director of the Institute. We were pleased to welcome Elyse Chay Wageman as new Prevention Services Manager in November. In August, Senior Fellow David Riemer moved into an advisory role in advancing the Working Our Way Out of Poverty and Effective ACA Implementation Projects. A website redesign increased the amount of information available about PPI – please visit at ppi.communityadvocates.net.

PPI's 2015 **policy work** included continued advocacy and research focusing on the Affordable Care Act, Transitional Jobs, and testing and researching a five-part package of policies that would reduce the poverty rate by more than half.

PPI launched the **Working Our Way Out of Poverty Project** in 2015, continuing work from the former Pathways to Ending Poverty Project on pursuing a set of 5 policies that would, according to analysis by the Urban Institute, lift most people in the United States out of poverty. We continued to advocate for transitional jobs and celebrated their expansions at the state level in 2015. In August, the policy team presented at the McCrery-Pomeroy SSDI Solutions Conference, which included publication of our paper *Using Transitional Jobs to Increase Employment of SSDI Applicants and Beneficiaries*. We were pleased to provide technical assistance to anti-poverty efforts in Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania.

Thanks in part to advocacy by our **Effective ACA Implementation Project**, each individual transitioning out of state prisons to the community is offered the chance to enroll in BadgerCare before leaving prison. We released our vision for how to effectively implement the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in Wisconsin, including

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.

Web: ppi.communityadvocates.net

Twitter: [@ca_ppi](https://twitter.com/ca_ppi)

Facebook.com/[CAPublicPolicyInstitute](https://www.facebook.com/CAPublicPolicyInstitute)

expanding BadgerCare, which would save the state \$1 billion over the next six years. We also released a report analyzing the difference in premiums seen in the Wisconsin State Employee Health Plan between Dane County and the rest of the state and discussed what that difference means for health exchanges, including ACA marketplaces.

Prevention work in 2015 continued our past emphasis on creating a community where everyone, especially children, can live up to their full potential.

The **Milwaukee Brighter Futures Initiative** impacts Milwaukee youth in programming including teen pregnancy prevention, AODA prevention, and violence prevention. PPI's role is to manage more than 10 competitively awarded grantees, who collectively served more than 5,400 people in 2015. In September we learned that PPI was again chosen to lead Milwaukee Brighter Futures through 2018. Nonprofits from across the community were invited to apply for funding in October. Implementation features training and technical assistance to improve the quality and capacity of all grantee organizations.

The **Milwaukee County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (MCSAP)** continued work on its two key focus areas: youth marijuana prevention, and opiate abuse prevention. 2015 was the second year of the "Stay Strong" grants we awarded to 10 organizations in 2014 for youth substance abuse prevention work. In March, we were excited to take part in the City of Milwaukee's press conference announcing that nearly all Milwaukee Police Department district stations now house prescription drug drop boxes, which allow residents across the city to anonymously dispose of unwanted or expired pharmaceutical medications. This initiative is a result of a key partnership MCSAP developed with the Milwaukee Police Department. These boxes greatly increase options for safe medication disposal, which lowers the risk of



Deborah Heffner, Coordinator of the City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance, with Anthony Harris, Statewide Programs Manager at Diverse & Resilient and Allison Gorilla, Outreach Specialist at the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, presented the LGBTQ+ work groups poster at the National Conference on Tackling Tobacco Use in Vulnerable Populations Conference.

In 2015, the Public Policy Institute's work included:

- ❖ 5,400 people served by Milwaukee Brighter Futures grantees.
- ❖ Nearly 500 Wisconsin WINS tobacco compliance checks.
- ❖ More than 20 grants to local programs.

addiction and overdoses. In the fall, MCSAP presented a youth-led anti-marijuana campaign called "Let's Be Blunt," which included a poster contest, social media, and graphics on local buses.

In the fall, MCSAP began implementing a new five-year federal **Drug-Free Communities** grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Tarvus Hawthorne joined PPI as the new Drug-Free Communities Coordinator. He will direct coalition work to prevent youth alcohol and marijuana use in Milwaukee's



Youth from Neu Life Community Center take part in our Coming Together Partnership luncheon against gun violence in August. (Photo credit: Mike DeSisti)

high-need 53206 zip code. Launching this effort in 2015 included extensive outreach, training, and stakeholder recruitment.

In October, the **City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance** presented the poster “Opening the Doors to LGBTQ+ Tobacco Prevention in Milwaukee: A Community Readiness Assessment” at the National Conference on Tackling Tobacco Use in Vulnerable Populations in Bethesda, MD, as well as the LGBTQ Health Conference in Chicago, IL. The poster highlighted results from the Community Readiness Assessment



In 2015, we welcomed Elysse Chay Wageman as Prevention Services Manager (left) and Tarvus Hawthorne as Drug-Free Communities Coordinator.

conducted in 2014 and described how we are using the results to

inform future actions to reduce disparity rates. The Alliance also conducted 32 community meetings and outreach events and, with assistance from youth and the Milwaukee Police Department, nearly 500 tobacco compliance checks. Six presentations in particular focused on the harm of e-cigarettes, a growing concern.



Conor Williams presents about the Working Our Way Out of Poverty Project with colleagues Julie Kerksick and David Riemer in March 2015.

The **Minority Male Achievement Program** facilitated collaborative work to present Milwaukee’s second annual Boys & Men of Color Week in November. This week-long series of events convened hundreds of people focusing on building opportunity and success for boys and men of color in Milwaukee. The program continued its high level of involvement in supporting the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County’s ongoing response to the White House My Brother’s Keeper Community Challenge. This included extensive involvement with the City’s Black Male Achievement Advisory Council and co-hosting local My Brother’s Keeper Neighborhood Summits in May, July and September. We

hosted visits from national movement leaders including Michael Smith, the White House’s Director of the My Brother’s Keeper Initiative, who visited in May for a special briefing. We continued to grow local capacity for technical assistance, including co-creating a workshop track and supporting the philanthropists of the Milwaukee Boys & Men of Color Funder’s Collaborative.



In May, our Minority Male Achievement Program hosted Michael Smith, Director of the White House My Brother’s Keeper Initiative. Left to Right: Tracy Johnson, Jeffery Roman, Matthew Johnson, Michael Smith, Decoteau Irby, Monique Liston, Shannon Reed.

In 2015 we piloted the **Youth Works MKE** program. This program seeks to link teens at risk of criminal involvement with subsidized jobs and supportive services including mentoring. The goal is to increase employment skills and positive engagement while preventing participation in criminal and delinquent activities. Chicago’s Department of Family and Support Services initially implemented this program model in 2012 as the One Summer Plus program. During our 2015 pilot implementation, more than 30 low-income adolescents participated at Boys & Girls Club locations, where the youth were employed and were also linked

with mentors and Social-Emotional Learning sessions. We hope to learn from this pilot and expand the program in the future. Following a national grant competition, in March we were selected for a special opportunity to receive significant technical assistance from the National Council on Crime & Delinquency to assess feasibility and develop “Pay for Success” capacity—a new funding model—with regard to the Youth Works MKE program.

The **Coming Together Partnership** provided grants to six youth gun violence prevention projects in April of 2015. Each of the mini-grants covered youth-led projects completed during the summer that addressed gun violence. Projects included everything from resource fairs and community events to neighborhood revitalization and music videos. The partnership hosted a gun violence prevention luncheon in August for more than 100 youth and adults to celebrate the youth that worked on these projects. 2015 marked the third year of the Coming Together Partnership, which includes participation from Children’s Hospital’s Project Ujima and the City of Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention.

A new state grant awarded in late 2015 enables PPI to coordinate the eight-county southeast region of **Alliance for Wisconsin Youth** (AWY) coalitions, which focus on youth substance abuse prevention. Our role is to increase collaboration among the region’s



The Milwaukee County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition’s Let’s Be Blunt campaign posted youth-created anti-marijuana messages on local buses.

various coalitions, provide training and technical assistance, and help to grow more substance abuse prevention work in the eight counties. Partnership for Success funding, which aims to prevent prescription drug abuse, now flows through PPI because of our status as a regional AWY center. Partnerships for Success will impact Milwaukee and Kenosha counties.



In 2015, Kari Lerch became Deputy Director of the Public Policy Institute (left). Pictured with Kasaundra Brown, Coordinator of PPI’s Milwaukee County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition.

In 2016, we plan to continue our strong focus on preventing and addressing poverty and building a strong community, state and nation. We are grateful to our many volunteers, partners and collaborators. If we are not already acquainted, we hope to cross paths soon to share and advance mutual goals. To learn more, please visit our website at ppi.communityadvocates.net. And stay tuned for exciting activities related to Community Advocates’ 40th anniversary year!



COMMUNITY ADVOCATES
Public Policy Institute

Community Advocates Public Policy Institute
728 N. James Lovell St.; Milwaukee, WI 53233
(414) 270-2950

Web: ppi.communityadvocates.net
Facebook: [Facebook.com/CAPublicPolicyInstitute](https://www.facebook.com/CAPublicPolicyInstitute)
Twitter: @CA_PPI