In recent years, the national conversation around racism and racial inequities has gained momentum, echoing an established understanding amongst the public health field that racial inequities are a key determinant of health and wellbeing.

Injuries and violence - the leading cause of death among persons ages 1-44 in the US - are inequitably distributed across communities, primarily and adversely impacting vulnerable communities with residents who have been historically marginalized. These communities are more likely to be communities of color enduring high rates of poverty, poor access to quality education, substandard housing, and frequent traumatizing events throughout their lives. These inequities are caused and driven by structural policies and systemic practices that maintain imbalances in access to wealth, power, and social resources necessary for achieving optimal health. These inequities and practices exist in every system in our society, and function in reinforcing ways, resulting in high levels of preventable experiences of injury and violence.1

In March 2022, Safe States launched the Equity-Focused Approaches for Injury and Violence Prevention Seed Grant Program (Equity Seed Grant Program). Three organizations received seed grants to pilot or scale-up existing interventions to advance equity-focused efforts designed to address injury or violence prevention topic areas over a six-month period with projects ending in September 2022.

The foundation of this Equity Seed Grant Program stemmed from the 2021 Injury and Violence Prevention (IVP) Health Equity Scan conducted by Safe States in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The scan assessed how IVP programs and nationwide entities are addressing health and/or racial equity in their work. Building on the formative work completed with the scan, Safe States held a special convening of the Injury and Violence Prevention Network (IVPN) to mobilize members and other professionals to identify opportunities within IVP to further address inequities through enhanced community engagement, partnership activities, and policy initiatives. Equity Seed Grantees were encouraged to frame their interventions based on the vision outlined in the IVPN special convening summary report and integrate equitable approaches to advance one or more needs identified in the summary report.

**Key Partners**

- Comma Bookstore & Social Hub (Genesee County)
- Michigan Department of Education
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, including CDC Rape Prevention Education-funded programs and the MY Consent Culture Sexual Violence Prevention (SVP) Team
- Michigan Youth (MY) Girls Advisory Board (GAB), MY Trans Voice, MY Voice, and MY Access, and the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) Collective
- MOASH’s YAC, including Michigan Young Girls Student Advocacy Center
- Planned Parenthood - Flint Health Center
- The Michigan Roundtable
- The Power Initiative (Genesee County)
- Wayne State University and Michigan State University’s CDC-funded Promoting Protective Policies (P3) Project

**PROJECT GOALS AND PURPOSE**

Through the Equity Seed Grant Program, MOASH aimed to establish and implement a Michigan Youth Racial Equity Council (MYREC) and a MOASH Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to focus on sexual violence prevention efforts. MYREC will work closely with MOASH’s Michigan Youth Girls Advisory Board (MYGAB). The collective of MOASH YACs strived to address and enhance equity for injury and violence prevention (IVP). The advocacy director focused on training youth to engage with a variety of officials (school board, policy makers, etc.) to advance key priorities. YACs are known for providing spaces for youth that:

1. Analyze challenges, needs, and gaps in their community;
2. Advocate for youth within their communities; and
3. Provide opportunities for civic engagement and peer networking.

The project serviced the BIPOC community ages 13-24 and those most impacted by lack of access to high quality sexual violence prevention education and services in Flint, Michigan and the greater surrounding area of Genesee County. MOASH, along with other local organization, youth, and community leaders discovered a need for a youth council of color; this idea gave birth to MYREC. The MYREC is comprised of 13 youth with the aim of becoming leaders on racial equity issues relevant to sexual violence prevention (SVP) in Michigan. To achieve this, the group's goals included:

- Hold regular meetings.
- Lead three trainings focused on sexual health/violence, consent, and bodily autonomy.
- Advance two pieces of legislation.
- Meet with MYGAB to identify and implement a collaborative project focusing on race and SVP.

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CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES

MOASH initially aimed for 12 youth to participate in their council. Both a challenge and a success, the group received over 50 applications from interested youth; MOASH was thrilled that so many individuals were interested in participation, but the high volume of applicants overwhelmed staff and delayed the selection process. Despite delays, they were able to finalize a strong group of engaged participants for the council and increased their council from the proposed 12 participants to 15.

Due to limited capacity, the council decreased the number of trainings from three to two, but maintained the original focus on bodily autonomy, consent, and sexual violence prevention. The group maintained strong community engagement, participating in youth advocacy days for sexual violence prevention.

MOASH, in partnership with The Power Initiative, organized a one-day digital summit titled “Survive & Thrive: A Youth Racial Justice and Sexual Violence Prevention Event” that focused on sexual violence prevention and its impact on BIPOC communities. The summit, held on September 24, 2022, featured five workshops, performances, scheduled sessions led by Planned Parenthood, including a health equity council for youth of color, and other self-care activities.

NEXT STEPS

MOASH plans to continue its current YACs, and the newly established MYREC has tentatively received additional funding to continue its work into the next year. They hope to continue to receive local funding and leverage shared resources with partners for long-term sustainability.