
2024 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs in Toronto

Issue/Background:

- At its meeting on January 18, 2024, Budget Committee requested Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to prepare a briefing note on the Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs in Toronto, including the annual Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) since the program's inception and the cost to return to a full complement. This briefing note responds to this request.
- Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs in Toronto have become an essential component of the multi-sector gun violence reduction planning through the implementation of SafeTO, the City's ten-year community safety and well-being plan.
- In approving the 2020 Operating Budget for Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA), Toronto City Council designated one-time funding of \$100,000 to pilot the hospital-based violence intervention program, Breaking the Cycle of Violence with Empathy (BRAVE), to operate out of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.
- In approving the 2022 Operating Budget for Social Development, Finance and Administration, Toronto City Council designated one-time funding of \$300,000 to support the expanded operations of the BRAVE Program at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Scarborough Health Network and Humber River Hospital and to implement the Toronto Hospital-based Reducing Injury from Violence Intervention and Evaluation (THRIVE) program out of St. Michael's Hospital.
- In 2023, SDFA directed one-time funding of \$300,000 from the Toronto Office to Prevent Violence to fund hospitals for the BRAVE and THRIVE programs.
- **Table 1** provides a summary of City investments to initiate a network of four Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs in Toronto since its inception.
- The City's investment in the BRAVE Program pilot has enabled the program to prove its concept in four Toronto hospitals and has demonstrated that early intervention by a qualified social worker in a hospital setting provides a meaningful opportunity to reduce risk by connecting victims to immediate supports and developing relationships to ensure a continuum of care.

- It should be noted that the City of Toronto does not have permanent funding to continue to invest nor dedicated FTE to work with community to enhance coordination of hospital-based violence intervention programs that are the responsibility of the Province of Ontario. Without investment from the other orders of government, the sustainable delivery of proven hospital-based programs that are critical to violence reduction is at risk and may result in the closures of the BRAVE and THRIVE programs.

Key Points:

- In February 2022, Toronto City Council adopted the [SafeTO Implementation Plan](#) directing staff to develop a comprehensive multi-sector gun violence reduction plan through the creation of the Toronto Office to Prevent Violence. Hospital-based violence intervention programs are a critical part of the plan and are now inherently connected to the work of the Office to ensure that there is a multi-sector approach involving the healthcare sector to reduce and prevent gun violence.
- When there is a violent incident that results in hospitalization, there is a significant opportunity to intervene for the purposes of providing medical, psychological, and social support to the impacted individuals (and sometimes family and community members). These interventions can both support the healing of the victims and communities, and, relatedly, address risk factors associated with involvement in violence. Effective intervention in the hospital and community settings contribute to the prevention of violence.

Table 1: City Investments to Initiate Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs in Toronto

Program	Funding Year			Hospital FTEs
	2020/2021	2022/2023	2023/2024*	
BRAVE Program • Sunnybrook (2021) • Humber River Hospital (2023) • Scarborough Health Network (2023)	\$100,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	2 FTE
THRIVE Program • St. Michael’s Hospital (2023)		\$100,000	\$100,000	1 FTE
Total City Support to Hospitals	\$100,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	3 FTE
City Budget for BRAVE/THRIVE	\$100,000	\$300,000	\$0	

*Given the value of the program, Social Development, Finance and Administration has directed funding from the Toronto Office to Prevent Violence to support the 3 hospital FTEs for the BRAVE and THRIVE programs which will conclude in 2024.

- SDFA will continue intergovernmental advocacy for funding these vital health programs and to explore opportunities to access philanthropic sources.

- The Breaking the Cycle of Violence with Empathy (BRAVE) uses a public health and trauma-informed approach to increase both access to customized supports for patients, and the coordination of those wraparound services, with an emphasis establishing and maintaining a continuum of care.
 - Since launching in 2021, the BRAVE program has served 271 victims of violence in the hospital and conducted 989 visits to victims in the community settings to ensure continuity of care.
 - BRAVE has made 656 successful referrals to respond to over 700 risk factors associated with violence experienced by victims.
 - City investment in Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre funds 2 FTE hospital staff that work across the 3 BRAVE hospitals.

- The design of the Toronto Hospital-based Reducing Injury from Violence Intervention and Evaluation (THRIVE) program out of St. Michael's Hospital was finalized and implemented in Q4 of 2023.
 - From October – December 2023, THRIVE served 9 individuals.
 - City investment in St. Michael's Hospital funds 1 FTE THRIVE hospital staff to implement the program.

- The BRAVE and THRIVE programs provide the day-to-day services to victims of violence within the four hospitals partnering on the delivery. The City supports both programs by building referral pathways including collaboration with City programs including the Community Crisis Response Program, TO Wards Peace, FOCUS, shelters and other social service and life stabilization supports.

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