



**PARK CITY**  
bridgeport, ct

# CITY OF BRIDGEPORT

---

## MY BROTHER'S KEEPER INITIATIVE REPORT

# MY BROTHER'S KEEPER BRIDGEPORT



*“As Mayor, it is an honor to stand with President Barack Obama and commit Bridgeport to his My Brother’s Keeper initiative. It’s my job to make Bridgeport an even better city every day – a place where our kids and grandkids will choose to live, work, and raise their families. That’s why I’ve made creating jobs today, preparing our kids for the jobs of tomorrow, and bolstering the safety and security of our city for kids and families my top priorities.”*

**Mayor Bill Finch, Bridgeport, Connecticut**

Mayor Bill Finch would like to say “Thank You” to all those who helped with Bridgeport’s My Brother’s Keeper initiative.



This report would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication from the following people.

**PARK CITY**  
bridgeport, ct

Rina Bakalar  
StriveTogether C2C Collective Impact,  
United Way, Coastal Fairfield County

Dana Forry  
Program Manager, Juvenile Review  
Board

Barbara Mosocva  
Program Manager, Today’s Students  
Tomorrow’s Teachers

Merle Berke-Schlessel  
President and CEO,  
United Way, Coastal Fairfield County

Bob Francis  
Chief Executive Officer, Regional Youth  
Adult Social Action Partnership

Kingsley Osei  
CT Against Gun Violence

Gwen Brantley  
Regional Program Coordinator (STEM),  
Today’s Students Tomorrow’s Teachers

Genevieve Halloran  
My Brother’s Keeper Initiative  
Consultant, The Halloran Group

Tammy Papa  
Youth Program Director, Bridgeport  
Department of Youth Services

Ernest Brown  
Social Services Office,  
Bridgeport Department of Health and  
Social Services

Mary Pat Healy  
Executive Director, Bridgeport Child  
Advocacy Coalition

Tina Peloso-Ulreich  
Director of Early Childhood Education,  
Bridgeport Board of Education

Mayra Cabanas  
Bilingual Assessment Worker,  
Bridgeport Department of Social  
Services

Kenny Jackson  
Program Manager, StreetSafe

Marlon Ramnanan  
Community Educator, The Center for  
Family Justice

Lamond Daniels  
Director of Neighborhood Initiatives,  
Bridgeport Mayor’s Office

Jonathan James  
Public Health Associate,  
Bridgeport Department of Health and  
Social Services

Shanika Rucker  
Coordinator of Crisis and Housing  
Services, The Center for Family Justice

Marie Desances  
Consultant, Bridgeport Department of  
Health and Social Services

Nancy Kingswood  
Deputy Director of HIV Services,  
GBAPP, Inc.

Indra Sen  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer,  
Bridgeport Mayor’s Office

Harold Dimbo  
Detective, Bridgeport Police  
Department

Nestor Leon  
VP Operations, The Workplace

Carolyn Vermont  
CT Against Gun Violence

Kristin duBay Horton  
Health Director, Bridgeport  
Department of Health and Social  
Services

Dr. June Malone  
Director of Birth to 8/Director of  
Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children,  
United Way, Coastal Fairfield County

Teresa Wilson  
Executive Director, The Village  
Initiative College Prep Program

William Marshall  
Pastor, City of Life Worship &  
Deliverance Center

Dementred Young  
Director of Social Work, Bridgeport  
Board of Education

# My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge



President Barack Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative to ensure that all youth, including boys and young men of color, have opportunities to improve their life outcomes and overcome barriers to success.

In September 2014, President Obama issued a challenge to cities, towns, counties and tribes across the country to become "MBK Communities." This challenge represents a call to action for all members of our communities, and mayors in particular, as they often sit at the intersection of many of the vital forces and structural components needed to enact sustainable change through policy, programs, and partnerships.

*"That's what 'My Brother's Keeper' is all about. Helping more of our young people stay on track. Providing the support they need to think more broadly about their future. Building on what works – when it works, in those critical life-changing moments."*

**President Barack Obama, 2/27/2014**

## The 6 Milestones

The MBK initiative offers communities up to six milestones to focus on in order to demonstrate progress towards the overall aim of the program. The six milestones chosen by the White House are:

1. Ensure all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready
2. Ensure all children read at grade level by third grade
3. Ensure all youth graduate from high school
4. Ensure all youth complete post-secondary education or training
5. Ensure all youth out of school are employed
6. Ensure all youth remain safe from violent crime and have a second chance

# Bridgeport's Focus



PARK CITY  
bridgeport, ct

In October 2014, Mayor Bill Finch and Congressman Jim Himes joined community leaders and stakeholders to announce that Bridgeport has accepted President Barack Obama's challenge to become a My Brother's Keeper Community.

All six of the milestones in the White House's MBK initiative are being addressed by existing efforts. Of the six, Bridgeport's Mayor Finch put special emphasis on two of the initiative's milestones.

## Focusing on the Key Milestones

Ensure all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready

REINFORCES →  
Ensure all children read at grade level by third grade  
Ensure all youth graduate from high school  
Ensure all youth complete post-secondary education or training  
Ensure all youth out of school are employed

Ensure all youth remain safe from violent crime and have a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance

REINFORCES →  
Ensure all youth graduate from high school  
Ensure all youth complete postsecondary education or training  
Ensure all youth out of school are employed

These milestones were chosen based on potential impact and ability for the city and its partners to effect change. In order for Bridgeport to provide a cradle-to-career education system, the city must start its efforts with the beginning of the child's life and ensure that all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally ready. Building success in this area will lead to more success in the other milestones around 3rd grade reading, high school graduation, post-secondary education, and employment. Similarly, ensuring all youth remain safe from violent crime and are provided a second chance will have spillover effects into other milestones. Concerns around having a safe environment can hurt academic achievement in our schools, prevent focus on post-secondary opportunities, and deter business and job growth. Preventing violence and enabling youth to have a second chance to re-engage the community as a productive, valued member of society will culturally and systemically change Bridgeport.

# Partnering with Strive Together



MBK will find its Bridgeport home within the StriveTogether Collective Impact structure. There it will utilize administrative and technical support through the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County which is the backbone agency of the framework.

The Bridgeport community is working to improve outcomes cradle-to-career. The StriveTogether Cradle-to-Career Collective Impact movement is taking community efforts in Bridgeport beyond collaboration and building a civic infrastructure (structure, processes, tools) that enables the community to work together more effectively; use data more strategically; identify and improve what works; and direct resources in a more evidenced-based, coordinated way to support success for children and families. This approach engages local residents and stakeholders in the solutions. It is a new way of working together to produce greater impact.

Mayor Finch has aligned the My Brother's Keeper work with the StriveTogether effort providing a clear framework for improving outcomes and meeting goals. The alignment will further ensure long-term commitment and sustainability for the My Brother's Keeper initiative. The StriveTogether work has engaged over 500 community members to help establish a clear community vision and has built a diverse Core Leadership Team comprised of leaders from the following sectors: business, philanthropy, health, education, city neighborhoods, parents, finance, the faith community, and higher education.

StriveTogether Outcomes	My Brother's Keeper Milestones
Infant Health & Kindergarten Readiness & Ensure all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready	
Early Grade Reading	Ensure all children read at grade level by 3rd grade
Middle Grade Math High School Graduation	Ensure all youth graduate from high school
Post-secondary Enrollment Post-secondary Degree Completion	Ensure all youth complete post-secondary education or training
Youth Employment/Jobs	Ensure all youth out of school are employed
Ensure all youth remain safe from violent crime and have a second chance (adopted by Strive Together)	

A Data Table has been seated that is in the process of identifying key indicators that will be used as measures to guide the collective work, to identify when course-change is indicated, and to determine progress toward community-identified objectives. This Data Table is working to develop indicators/common measures for the My Brother's Keeper goals. The integration of these two efforts provides an excellent model for alignment and impact in the community to dramatically improve outcomes for young people.

# Bridgeport by the Numbers



147,000 people

27% born in another country

46% of population speaks a language other than English

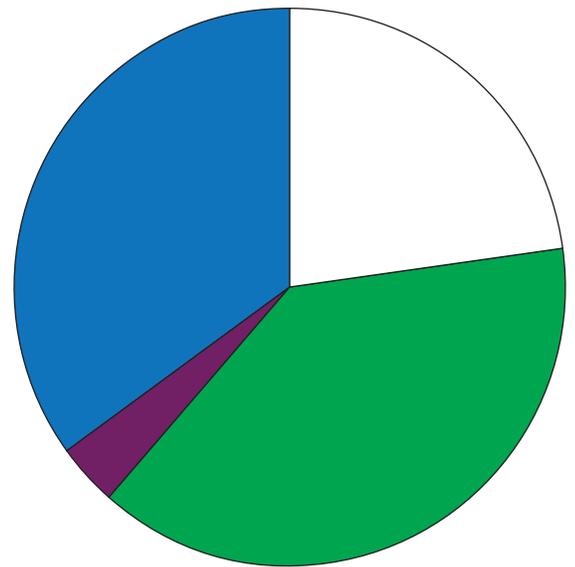
25% receive food stamps

37% of households make less than \$35 K/year

23% below the poverty line

## Bridgeport Population

White Hispanic Asian Black



## Bridgeport Schools

White Hispanic Asian Black

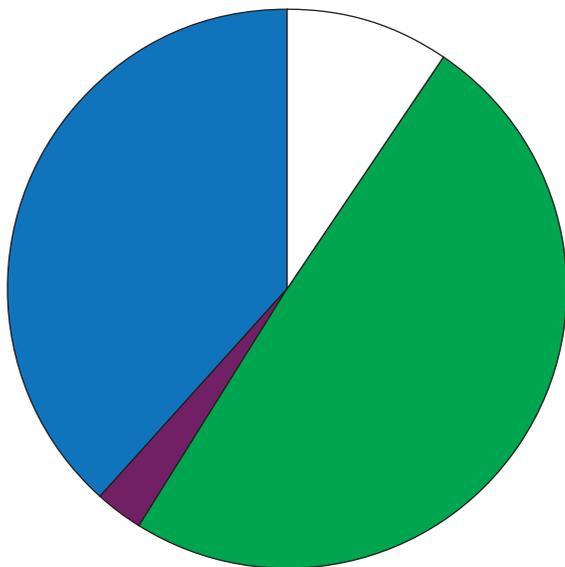
73 different languages spoken in schools

37% of the population is 0-24 years old

38% of Hispanic households headed by women only

44% of black households headed by women only

5,000 families with children ages 0-8 are headed by single mothers





**PARK CITY**  
bridgeport, ct

## Ensure all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready

### The Challenge

In Bridgeport, young children are unprepared for both preschool and kindergarten, as they lack the required exposure and stimulation. Eight out of ten parents of children under the age of six reported reading to their child less than ten minutes a day.

Although the number of children with preschool experience has risen from 61% in 2002 to 73% in 2008, one in four kindergarteners still have no preschool experience. 56% of kindergarteners are at grade level on their developmental reading scores - levels are lower for Latino boys (53%) and higher for African-American boys (57%).

### MBK Strategic Objective

Early childhood education is at the forefront of the White House's MBK goals and is one of the two milestones upon which the Mayor's Office, Bridgeport MBK and Collective Impact framework will focus.

Mayor Bill Finch has taken a strong leadership role to rapidly expand access to high quality pre-k in Bridgeport. Over the past year under his administration, 366 new pre-k seats have been added in Bridgeport, more than any other municipality in the state of Connecticut. Mayor Bill

Finch's and Superintendent Fran Rabinowitz's advocacy have led to Bridgeport being awarded new slots from the federal and state government, thanks to the administrations of President Barack Obama and Governor Dannel Malloy.

A child's first eight years of life are critically important to growth and development. Studies have shown this time period will affect, in a significant way, a child's adult life.

The Mayor's Office has a permanent seat on the Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children (BAYC) Leadership Team. BAYC works with families and the greater community to ensure access to quality care, education, and health services for all children birth to age eight and has developed one of the CANs (Community Action Networks) of Strive Together. BAYC's mission is closely aligned with MBK strategic goals which are:

- Increase parent awareness of their role as their child's first teacher and participation in programs to fulfill this role.
- Expand the supply of quality programs and their access to them.

### Community Partners

- Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children (BAYC)
- Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC)
- ChildFIRST
- Lee Y Seras
- Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
- Bridgeport Hospital
- Bridgeport Child Guidance Center
- Bridgeport Board of Education Teen Parenting Program
- Greater Bridgeport Adolescent Prevention Program
- Optimus Community Health Center
- St. Vincent's Medical Center
- Southwest Community Health Center
- Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI)

- Increase opportunities for parents to expand the skills and knowledge that will help them support their child's engagement, attendance, and success in school.
- Increase systemic and comprehensive screening for young children and their parents in multiple community-based programs and settings.



PARK CITY  
bridgeport, ct

## Ensure all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready

### The White House’s MBK Focus Area Recommendations and Bridgeport Initiatives

#### Ensure Access to High Quality Early Care and Education

- Kick Off to Kindergarten is a six week pre-k experience for those children who are identified as not having had preschool experience at kindergarten registration. 72 children are enrolled in Kick Off to Kindergarten at four schools in Bridgeport.
- The Bridgeport Board of Education secured a federal grant which allowed it to open nine additional preschool classrooms and extend part day preschool classrooms to the full school day.

#### Implement Universal Early Health and Developmental Screening

- MIECHV is a program that provides intensive parent support to mothers from pregnancy through age three.
- Nurturing My Baby enrolls pregnant women in multi-session trainings and is based on the Harlem Children’s Zone model.

- BAYC has utilized the Ages to Stage Questionnaire (ASQ), a tool parents can use to screen their children for key developmental milestones. Currently, 773 parents have been enrolled and trained to use ASQ. This parent-to-parent initiative has a goal to reach 4,000 parents in three years, which is the birth to three population.
- ChildFIRST has developed a parent screening tool used in all Bridgeport Hospital Outpatient Clinics for routine screenings of families for risks to healthy social-emotional development.

#### Eliminate Suspension and Expulsions in Early Learning Settings

- PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) is a program which provides a systematic approach to discipline that teaches positive behavioral expectations, rewards proper behavior and provides consequences and additional supports for rule violators. PBIS includes a data-based decision-making process to identify needs.

This approach helps to design strategies to reduce problem behaviors and improve academic performance.

#### Close the Word Gap and Support Enriching Home Environments

- Lee Y Seras is a parent training program that teaches parents how to read to their children. Lee Y Seras focuses on Latino families.
- The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) helps train parents to become leading advocates for their children.
- ChildFIRST is a home-based social services network to support Bridgeport’s most vulnerable parents and their children.
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) is a program launched in 2012 to enroll pregnant mothers not receiving prenatal care, and then uses Parents as Teachers First (PATF) to work with both mothers and fathers to improve social emotional development.



better every day

PARK CITY  
bridgeport, ct

## Ensure all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready

### Mayor's Call to Action

The Mayor and Superintendent of School have pledged to reach universal quality preschool in Bridgeport in the near future. BAYC is the lead in working to achieve this goal with dozens of organizations signing onto these efforts.

The Mayor has also supported the health department's role in basic health equity and social justice which seek to improve baseline health outcomes for all Bridgeport residents including collaborative work with community partners to increase access to health foods and physical

activity ([GetHealthyCT.org](http://GetHealthyCT.org) and [bridgeportct.gov/Food-Policy-Council](http://bridgeportct.gov/Food-Policy-Council)), reduction of childhood lead poisoning through healthy homes efforts and increasing lead screening efforts ([Healthyhomesbridgeportct.gov](http://Healthyhomesbridgeportct.gov)).



*“As the father of four kids who have attended public schools in Bridgeport, I know the importance of our city’s education system. If we want to ensure our kids are prepared for 21st century jobs, we need to start early. We need to keep making progress on pre-k access so your kids – and my kids – are reading at the level they should be by third grade and beyond.”*

**Mayor Bill Finch, Bridgeport, Connecticut**



**PARK CITY**  
bridgeport, ct

## Ensure all youth remain safe from violent crime and have a second chance

### The Challenge

Bridgeport crime is at its lowest levels in more than 40 years, and preliminary statistics show another significant decrease in 2014.

When compared to similar sized New England cities, at 21 percent, Bridgeport has seen the largest drop in violent crime. Violent crime in Bridgeport has dropped 13 percent since Mayor Finch took office in 2007.

Over the last four years, violent crime is down 36 percent and criminal arrests have decreased by nearly 28 percent.

Although crime rates for both adults and juvenile rates are falling, Bridgeport is still an American city and faces urban challenges. Young Black and Latino men are the most likely to be both victims and perpetrators of violence.

Additionally, many young people, especially Bridgeport's boys, who have gone either through the juvenile justice system or prison, struggle to turn their lives around. The second part of this initiative is to give young people with a record a second chance and an opportunity to rejoin the community in a productive and healthy manner.

### Community Partners

- Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC)
- Bridgeport Dept of Health and Social Services
- Bridgeport Police Department
- Center for Family Justice
- CT Juvenile Justice Alliance
- Lighthouse Program
- Engaging Leaders in Juvenile Justice Reform
- Project Longevity
- RYASAP (Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership)
- StreetSafe
- Juvenile Review Board
- Malta Justice Initiative
- Mine, Yours, Ours
- Disproportionate Minority Contact Committee
- Restorative Justice-Mediation

### MBK Strategic Objective

Ensuring the young people of Bridgeport are safe from violence, especially young boys and men of color who are the most likely to be both perpetrators and victims of violence, is a top priority for Mayor Finch and one of two main focus areas of MBK Bridgeport.

MBK Bridgeport will focus its efforts on developing new strategies, using baseline data and evidence-based activities, to ensure Black and Hispanic boys are safe from violence. RYASAP (Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership) in Bridgeport is heavily engaged in violence prevention through its programs to combat the complex issues surrounding violence: dating violence/abuse, gang/group violence and conflict

mediation, juvenile justice reform, diversion programs, restorative justice, rehabilitation, and others.

Bringing the Bridgeport Police Department, counselors, parents, parole officers, and community members together to share data-driven activities and collaborate in a shared common goal will be pivotal to reducing violence prevention among youth in city of Bridgeport.



PARK CITY  
bridgeport, ct

## Ensure all youth remain safe from violent crime and have a second chance

### The White House’s MBK Focus Area Recommendations and Bridgeport Initiatives

#### Encourage Law Enforcement and Neighborhood Residents to Work Hand-in-Hand

- The Young Adult Police Commission is a group of high school students who function like the adult police commission. They meet regularly to collaborate and give feedback to police on hot topics and issues.
- The Police Explorers, a division of the Boy Scouts that works on community service activities is a leadership development and community relations effort by the Bridgeport Police Department.
- Juvenile Review Board (JRB) is a court diversionary program for youth who have committed non-violent misdemeanor and status offenses. It is a program within RYASAP’s Restorative Justice division and uses Balanced and Restorative Justice principles to help youth repair harm done by their actions, treat any underlying needs they may have and build upon their strengths. The JRB utilizes a group of community volunteers including Police Officers,



Juvenile Probation Officers, youth, business owners, members of the faith community and other community supports, to help hold youth accountable and develop a collaborative plan of supports including counseling, mentoring, community services, letters of apology, pro-social activities, and mediation.

- The Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC) is a coalition of organizations, parents, and other concerned individuals committed to improving the well-being of Bridgeport’s children through research, education, advocacy, and mobilization. BCAC

provides a vehicle for the Greater Bridgeport community to take concerted action on issues that affect children’s health, education, and safety. In 2013 when the City of Bridgeport was under siege by numerous shootings, BCAC’s Health Task Force decided that it would make “violence as a public health issue” its priority. BCAC has extensive experience in leadership development and will be a vital partner in ensuring that residents are able to acquire the skills and tools necessary to advocate for and become leaders of community revitalization efforts.

## Ensure all youth remain safe from violent crime and have a second chance

### The White House’s MBK Focus Area Recommendations and Bridgeport Initiatives

#### Reduce Violence in High-Risk Communities by Integrating Public Health Approaches

- RYASAP’s StreetSafe Bridgeport places highly trained outreach workers who are dedicated to developing face-to-face, consistent connections with proven risk youth. The objective of this program is to interrupt conflict and guide them toward resources such as jobs, housing, mental health and educational opportunities.
- RYASAP’s MYO (Mine, Yours, Ours) SafeDates is a program that guides and supports youth in developing healthy relationships.
- Safe Schools, Healthy Students seeks to create safe

and supportive schools and communities for children and adolescents up to grade 12 through activities, services and strategies that decrease youth violence and promote healthy development of children and youth.

#### Reform the Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems to Keep Youth on Track

- RYASAP
- Juvenile Review Board
- Juvenile Justice Task Force - Through the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Pilot Program, the Task Force, in partnership with the Center for Children’s Advocacy and the Center for Children’s Law Policy, fostered major reductions in arrests of young

people of color, and guided agreements between the Bridgeport Police, Bridgeport Public Schools and RYASAP’s Juvenile Review Board to review arrests and divert youth to community services.

#### Eliminate Unnecessary Barriers to Reentry and Encourage Fair Chance Hiring Options

- Project Longevity is a program that seeks to prevent recidivism in the prison system by assisting ex-offenders in a variety of services including finding meaningful employment.
- CT Renaissance is a substance abuse and mental health treatment program.
- StreetSafe, a street-based, non-law enforcement program, focuses on reducing group/gang and gun violence among youth while providing positive opportunities for those who are interested in changing their futures. The program uses a three prong approach which includes direct outreach, mentoring and case management to support and empower at risk youth.



## Ensure all youth remain safe from violent crime and have a second chance



### Mayor's Call to Action

Through the series of community conversations held for the planning on MBK, one call to action was abundantly clear: the need for more mentors for our city's youth, especially boys of color. One of the biggest barriers to success in any of the given programs and resources is a lack of trust on the part of the minor. Developing a trusting relationship between mentor and mentee is critical in ensuring our youth have the resources and the support they need to thrive.

Volunteer mentor programs are currently in existence and enormously helpful to those who are fortunate enough to be involved. However, it is evident that relying

on volunteer mentors to support the youth who could benefit significantly is limited in its impact. Consistently, mentor programs have a long waiting list for available mentors which leaves our youth vulnerable.

Bridgeport is taking the lead to develop a mentor program that utilizes long-term paid mentors to guide and support Bridgeport's most precious asset - its young people.

Governor Malloy has also proposed "Second Chance Legislation" aimed at ensuring that those engaged in the criminal and juvenile justice systems have opportunities upon re-entry. The

Mayor strongly encourages partners to support this courageous change.

The Mayor's Office is working with the Bridgeport Department of Health and Social Services in addressing violence as a public health issue in Bridgeport. Meetings on this effort were held in the winter and spring of 2015 – and Bridgeport Department of Health and Social Services will work with the Mayor's Office to gain continued community input through community conversations. This work will be fed into the StriveTogether initiative in its Fall 2015 convening meeting.

# My Brother's Keeper Data Tracking Plan

The My Brother's Keeper Initiative will work with the StriveTogether Data Committee to establish baselines, indicators, and underpinning markers that help the group understand how to generate results. Early data scans have produced the baseline results discussed above, as well as the following list of potential additional data points that will assist in these efforts.

Data for the school readiness table could include:	Data for the crime reduction table could include:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enrollment in pre-K, number of children not enrolled in pre-K</li> <li>2. Readiness levels (literacy, numeracy, reading, etc.) of students who enter Kindergarten with pre-K experience vs. those who enter K with no pre-K</li> <li>3. Adolescent births in Bridgeport and average birth rate</li> <li>4. Child maltreatment rate</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of young men of color involved in violent crime by month for past three years (broken down by geography, type of crime, victim vs. perpetrator, etc.)</li> <li>2. Number of young men of color arrested (arrest rate)</li> <li>3. Estimations of exposure to violence, etc.</li> <li>4. Imprisonment/detention rate</li> <li>5. Homicide rate</li> <li>6. Adolescent mortality</li> </ol>

In addition, work occurring with the Primary Care Action Group and their community wellness scan and health assessment will be integrated into our data efforts. A statewide random digit dial survey (that began in May 2015) will provide deeper data and information on the wide range of social determinants of health factors that can inform this work. One other core data concern is that the data scan discovered that most secondary data was available either by gender or race but not both. A true analysis of the risk of Black and Latino boys is difficult to attain due to this issue. The My Brother's Keeper team will discuss this issue with community partners to provide better data by the fall 2015 convening of StriveTogether.

## My Brother's Keeper Team

Recognizing the central role of public health in achieving each of these milestones, the Mayor's Office has partnered with the Bridgeport Department of Health and Social Services in undertaking these efforts. To stay engaged with these efforts or join the My Brother's Keeper Listserv please contact The Mayor's Office at (203) 576-7201 or via email at [MyBrothersKeep-er@Bridgeportct.gov](mailto:MyBrothersKeep-er@Bridgeportct.gov)

The team that worked to develop this plan included:

- Nina Chanana, Chanana Consulting
- Lamond Daniels, Bridgeport Mayor's Office
- Marie Desances, Bridgeport Department of Health and Social Services
- Kristin duBay Horton, Director of Health and Social Services, city of Bridgeport
- Genevieve Halloran, My Brother's Keeper Consultant, The Halloran Group
- Jonathan James, PHAP Fellow, Bridgeport Department of Health and Social Services
- Melissa McGarry, The Halloran Group
- Indra Sen, Bridgeport Mayor's Office