



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 3
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Dominic Pisciotta, Board Chair

Susan Stetzer, District Manager

February 1, 2011

Cressida Wasserman
Department of Youth and Community Development
156 William Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10038

Dear Ms. Wasserman:

I am writing on behalf of Community Board 3, Manhattan in response to New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) call for written comments regarding the Teen ACTION concept paper. Youth Violence has become an issue of great concern in Community Board 3 these last few years. After one youth died in a racial incident between Latino and Chinese groups last year, the concern took on great urgency. Community Board 3 recommended a Chinatown YMCA Program Director to represent the Lower East Side in the City's Youth Violence Prevention Workgroup. The Board also worked with community organizations to hold a local Youth Violence meeting on August 12th, 2010 based on the format created by the Youth Violence Workshop. The purpose of this meeting was to provide information to the City to inform future programming needs. In addition, the Community Board and local organizations have formed a Lower East Side Youth Violence Coalition to continue to work with the City on protecting our youth and encouraging them to be the most that they can.

One of the strongest messages that came out of our Youth Violence meeting is that youth problems are starting earlier and earlier. Both youth and NYPD youth officers stressed the need to work with youth at an earlier age. The DYCD RFP targets youth starting at 7th grade. This is outdated—we know that to be effective you must work with younger youth.

It is shocking to see that Community Board 3 is not one of the targeted communities for this RFP. We are past the stage where someone must die to make us all take notice. Community Board 3 urges and pleads that our community be eligible for this programming.

Community Board 3 is an immigrant community. We strongly urge DYCD to consider the needs of recent English Language Learners (ELL) and other immigrant students who either live or attend school in Manhattan Community Board 3.

AAFE is one of the community organizations participating in the Youth Violence Coalition. Community Board 3 works closely with AAFE in all areas of community concern and supports AAFE's Teen ACTION youth program. This program includes students who either attend high school or live in or near Chinatown and the Lower East Side, many of whom are recent immigrants and English Language Learners. In particular, the program works closely with Lower East Side Prep, a transfer school where 90% of the students are recent Asian immigrants and are between the ages of 17-21.

Over the past four years through DYCD funding, AAFE has been able to find ways to successfully promote the goals of Teen ACTION: appreciation for service and civic engagement; life-skills and critical-thinking skills; supportive relationships with caring adults; commitment to academic achievement; and healthy behaviors. AAFE Teen ACTION participants have organized citywide conferences, presented to hundreds of young people and decision makers, and reached thousands of local residents in Chinatown and the Lower East Side through youth-led community projects.

There are no other programs in the City that combine service-learning, the development of life-skills and critical-thinking skills, and encourage community health focused on recent ELL students in the Asian Pacific American community. The proposed revisions to the Teen ACTION program would leave a high-need population and neighborhood without any service.

Community Board 3 strongly urges DYCD to reconsider the program eligibility so groups like AAFE can continue to make a positive difference in the lives of underserved youth. Community Board 3 needs to be included in targeted communities. In addition, we need to work with our youth before the seventh grade to guide them before they encounter grave problems. Thank you very much for your consideration of these comments. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dominic Pisciotta". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dominic Pisciotta
Board Chair