



DFC Coalition Limelight

A monthly series showcasing the innovative and inspiring work of DFC coalitions nationwide

Get SMART West Baltimore DFC Coalition Uses Their Perceived Risk Hierarchy Theory to Help Youth (18 and under) in High-riskscapes.

One of the greatest challenges faced by The Get SMART West Baltimore DFC Coalition is working in an environment known as a *high-riskscape*. *High-riskscapes* are areas that continue to be challenged by the results of discriminatory housing (e.g., red-lining) and segregation. The theory is that youth who reside in *high-riskscapes* are in a constant state of mobilizing for fight or flight and on high alert for perceived threats. Under these circumstances it becomes less likely for them to concentrate, learn, recall, perceive a future orientation, and/or delay immediate gratification.

Informed by their rich public health background and deep understanding of their community's historical and ongoing challenges, the Get SMART DFC has developed a risk identification [tool](#). The DFC works with youth in their community to develop individualized risk portfolios that include a risk assessment and a risk prioritization analysis. The risk assessment identifies the youth's perceptions of imminent and immediate risks such as the threat of community trauma, violence or exposure to violence, high-risk and hostile environments, neighborhood decay, and perceived survival expectations. The risk prioritization is made based on the perceived hierarchy of risk identified by the youth. This provides a description of the factors that contribute to the health behaviors and attitudes of youth and emerging adults in the community.

The Get SMART West Baltimore DFC Coalition works with their youth population to unpack their individual risk portfolios to better understand the risk factors at play and inform their interventions. They use a strengths-based approach to show their youth that they are not responsible for the historical trauma in the community and that they have the power to change themselves. The Get SMART DFC instills hope by informing youth of their options, referring them to community organizations such as after school programs and faith-based organizations. Centered on resiliency and community building, the DFC uplifts their youth and works hard to undo the mistrust in the community.

Based on the risks reported by their youth, the Get SMART DFC has initiated community change by working to uplift the community's perception of themselves and their resilience. The DFC has also invested in partnerships with local stakeholders like faith-based organizations, NGOs, and businesses to change policy surrounding liquor store density, advertising, and underage sales. Often, liquor stores are the only source of groceries in a neighborhood and the Get SMART DFC



is fighting to mitigate daily exposure to alcohol and drug advertising. As a result of their innovative work, Get SMART West Baltimore DFC has increased the relevance of their services to meet the needs of their community.

The Get SMART West Baltimore DFC Coalition suggests that coalitions consider the risks of their communities and apply a tailored approach to mitigate the environmental barriers present in their communities. By considering the ways that historical trauma is passed down to the present-day youth, community coalitions can better understand youth perspectives on their own capacity and prioritization of change.

For more information about The Get SMART West Baltimore DFC Coalition, visit their website [here](#) or contact Dr. Lorece Edwards at lorece.edwards@morgan.edu

Interested in having your coalition featured? Email Zainab Jafari at xfw6@cdc.gov.

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