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**AG COAKLEY ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH CAMBRIDGE POLICE  
DEPARTMENT, NORTH AMERICAN FAMILY INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH-POLICE  
INITIATIVE**

*Project YES Partnership to help break down barriers, increase trust between at-risk youth and  
local police officers in Cambridge*

**BOSTON** – Today, Attorney General Martha Coakley announced a partnership with the [Cambridge Police Department](#) and the [North American Family Institute](#) (NAFI) to sponsor a youth and police initiative aimed at building trust in the law and law enforcement, while reducing delinquency and violence among at-risk teens. The goal of this program, the [Youth & Police Initiative](#) (YPI), is to positively impact relationships and interactions between local patrol officers and adolescents in higher risk communities, while also strengthening community relations. The Cambridge pilot program is a part of the Attorney General's [Project YES Partnerships](#) and will focus on teen girls in North Cambridge.

“We are pleased to support this initiative that encourages positive communication and interaction between at-risk youth and local police officers as a means to build trust in the law and to reduce crime in our communities,” said AG Coakley. “This program will allow police officers to create personal bonds of understanding with the youth they encounter, while legitimatizing the role of law enforcement to adolescents. Creating these relationships between local law enforcement officials and Massachusetts highest-risk youth will not only develop positive role models but will also help to stem the cycle of violence and crime that grips many of our urban neighborhoods.”

“As we believe that the public is our greatest law enforcement resource, we are excited about the opportunity to reach out to the youth in our community,” said Cambridge Police Commissioner Robert C. Haas. “This initiative will serve to cultivate positive relationships between our officers and the community built on trust and mutual understanding that will aid us in our effort to continually improve upon public safety by more effectively communicating with our residents.”

“Developing community partnerships is essential to positively impacting youth in sustainable ways,” said Jay Paris, Executive Director of Youth Link, which oversees NAFI’s prevention initiatives, including YPI. “We are especially appreciative of the leadership that Commissioner Haas and Attorney General Coakley have brought to this unique approach to engage kids who are not well linked to Cambridge’s many resources. Bringing this initiative to girls in need is also a plus that we believe will make a real difference.”

YPI was developed by NAFI’s [Youth Link](#) division to facilitate more effective and constructive communication between police and youth, and ultimately reduce youth crime and violence. Over the past seven years, Youth Link conducted research and field tests across the nation as a prerequisite of implementing YPI training. The YPI training program has been customized to fit the specific needs of North Cambridge. The program consists of an initial ten hours of preparatory training for selected Cambridge area teen girls, which incorporates group and community-building work before the youth participants interact with the police participants. The training with the youth and police participants includes facilitated discussions, highly structured team building exercises, problem-solving activities, and reality-based scenario training geared towards breaking down barriers, stereotypes and biases. The primary goal of this training model is to establish stronger bonds and increase understanding between youth and police while enhancing trust in the law.

The [Project YES Partnerships](#) are part of Attorney General Coakley’s continuing efforts to promote community safety through targeted prevention-based programming. The YPI pilot program will focus on adolescent girls in several North Cambridge Housing Developments. The six-session program will be held at the Jefferson Park Housing Development during the first three weeks of October and will conclude with a celebration dinner and a plan for longer term collaboration.

The YPI program is being supported by the Attorney General’s Office, with additional support provided by the Cambridge Housing Authority, Cambridge Health Alliance, and the Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs.

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