

Youth Violence

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Opportunities for Youth

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Youth violence is a serious public health problem and an adverse childhood experience (ACE) that can have long-term effects on the health and well-being of the youth. It typically involves young people hurting peers who are unrelated to them and who they may or may not know well. Youth violence can include fighting, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence. An adolescent can be involved in youth violence as a victim, offender, or witness. Unfortunately, youth violence is common. According to the National Vital Statistics System, “homicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24” (Curtin, S. C., & Heron, M, 2019). “Each day, about 13 juveniles are victims of homicide and about 1,100 are treated in emergency departments for nonfatal assault-related injuries” (“Youth Violence”, 2020). Not only is it dangerous and affecting adolescents, but it is also costly. Youth homicides and nonfatal assaults result in more than \$20 billion annually in combined medical and lost productivity costs alone, not including costs associated with the criminal justice system, psychological and social consequences for victims, perpetrators and their families, or costs incurred by communities.

Longitudinal studies of youth development have identified an early and stable trajectory of youth antisocial behavior, including tendencies toward the use of violence. These studies indicate that characteristics of the parents, their child, and the social environment play a substantial role in the development and course of this trajectory. It is also important to recognize that the causes of violence are complex. Evidence on the risk and protective processes for youth violence is increasing. However, it is clear that additional and more nuanced knowledge is needed on both causes and effective solutions for different forms of youth violence in different contexts.

Preventions:

- Promote family environments that support healthy development
- Provide quality education early in life
- Strengthen youth's skills
- Connect youth to caring adults and activities
- Create protective community environments
- Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk

Potential outcomes:

- Reductions in behavior problems and disruptive behavior at home and school
- Reductions in physical fighting, aggression, and delinquency
- Reductions in arrests, convictions, and probation violations
- Reductions in alcohol and drug use by youth and parents
- Reductions in family conflict
- Reductions in child abuse and neglect
- Reductions in parental depression and stress
- Increases in compliance to caregiver's directions
- Increases in prosocial behavior (e.g., social skills, such as concern for others, empathy, and cooperation)
- Increases in parent-child connection, communication, and relationship quality
- Increases in positive parenting practices, such as monitoring and supervision of youth's activities, use of consistent and nonviolent discipline, and involvement and support of youth

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