



CSPV FACT SHEET

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The Youth Violence Problem

Youth violence is a pervasive problem in our society that affects our communities, our institutions, our families and, most of all, our children. Since the nearly epidemic surge of youth violence in the 80's and 90's, there are some indications that it is declining—arrest records, victimization data, and hospital emergency room records. But, these official records reveal only a small part of the whole picture. Self-report data indicate a high prevalence of violent behavior reported by adolescents and the percentage of adolescents involved in violent behavior remains high. Youth violence is a problem which impacts large cities and small rural areas, males and females, and all racial and ethnic groups. The following statistics provide an overview of the problem of youth violence in the United States today.

- 5,686 young people age 10 to 24 were murdered—an average of 16 each day—in 2005.
- Males are overwhelmingly the perpetrators in homicides involving youth, accounting for more than 90% of incidents involving those 10-17 years of age.
- Although adults, not juveniles, represent 84.9% of all violent crime arrests, youth are three times more likely than adults to be victims of violence.
- The United States has the highest rate of youth firearm-related violence in the industrialized world. A firearm is used in one quarter of the violent victimizations involving youth.
- Homicide and suicide are the second and third leading causes of death among those 15-34 yrs old and third and fourth among those 10-14 years old.
- In the United States, males ages 15 to 24 are almost 9 times as likely as their female peers to die as a result of gun violence.
- Black, Hispanic and Native American males ages 15 to 24 have a disproportionately higher firearm-related death rate than their White and Asian peers.
- School shootings committed by a young person involving multiple victims are atypical of youth violence. Although these shootings have increased public concern for school safety, school-related violent deaths account for less than 1% of homicides among school-aged youth.
- In 2007, 5.5% of students reported that they did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.
- 5.9% of students reported that they carried a weapon on school property in 2007. This number has been gradually decreasing since 1993.
- Violent crime in schools has declined dramatically since 1994. The observed decline in school violence is part of a larger national trend. There are likely multiple factors responsible for the drop,

including declining violence associated with drug gangs, effective community-oriented law enforcement efforts, as well as numerous school and community-based efforts to prevent violence.

- Research relates the following risk factors to the perpetration of youth violence:
 - Prior history of violence
 - Drug, alcohol, or tobacco use
 - Association with delinquent peers
 - Poor family functioning
 - Poor grades in school
 - Poverty in the community
 - Socially disorganized neighborhoods
 - History of early aggressive behavior
 - Low IQ
 - Poor behavioral control
 - High emotional distress
 - Antisocial beliefs and attitudes

- Protective factors* for youth violence include:
 - Intolerant attitude toward deviance
 - Commitment to school
 - Positive social orientation
 - Involvement in social activities
 - High IQ
 - High grade point average
 - Connection to family and other adults
 - Religiosity
 - Ability to discuss problems with parents
 - High perceived parental expectations about school performance
 - Frequent shared activities with parents
 - Involvement in social activities

(*According to the Surgeon General's report on youth violence, the evidence regarding protective factors against violence has not met the standards established for risk factors. Most research is preliminary but there are two factors with substantial evidence that they have a buffering effect on the risk of violence: an intolerant attitude toward deviance and commitment to school. The others listed show promise and need to be investigated further.)

Successful violence prevention efforts center on identifying risk and protective factors, determining when in the course of development they emerge and in what environmental context (individual, family, school, peer group, community) they occur. The most effective programs have met the standards of a rigorous research-based process evaluation. Through continued research into risk and protective factors and preventative programs that are effective, youth violence is a behavior that we can increasingly understand, prevent and remedy.

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