



Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action

Youth violence is a significant public health problem that causes tremendous harm to young people, families, and communities. It's a leading cause of death and injury among youth and damages the physical, mental, and economic health of all residents.

But it's not inevitable or unavoidable. Evidence from research and experience shows that we can prevent youth violence.

All of us—community leaders and members, public health professionals, caregivers, adults who work with youth, and young people—can take steps today to make real and lasting differences in our communities.

The Problem of Youth Violence

- Youth violence is a leading cause of death and injuries for young people aged 10 to 24 years.
- Youth violence harms families, neighbors, schools, and entire communities.
- Each day, 13 young people are victims of homicide and more than 1,600 are treated in emergency departments for nonfatal injuries.
- Each year, youth homicides and nonfatal physical assault-related injuries result in an estimated \$17.5 billion in combined medical and lost productivity costs.

Causes

- Multiple factors influence whether youth violence occurs, not any one issue in isolation.
- Factors that influence youth violence—experiences, relationships with friends and family, and community characteristics—vary as kids grow older and can increase or decrease risk.

Prevention Opportunities

- A public health approach that includes multiple, evidence-based prevention strategies can result in community-wide and sustained reductions in youth violence.
- Strategies that develop skills of youth and build the health and safety of families, schools, and neighborhoods can help stop youth violence before it starts.
- Every member of a community has a role to play in preventing youth violence.
- CDC's *Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action* and *Taking Action to Prevent Youth Violence: A Companion Guide* give strategies that strengthen individuals, families, and communities, plus action steps everyone can take.

Summary of Actions to Prevent Youth Violence

CDC's *Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action* and its companion guide make what's known about effectively preventing youth violence accessible to all members of a community and identify actions each of us can take to stop it before it starts.

Community Leaders and Members

Action 1. Enhance the skills and experiences of individual youth.

- Serve as a mentor, tutor, or volunteer at schools and youth-serving organizations to support the healthy development of all young people.
- Provide meaningful and appropriate opportunities through businesses and social/civic groups for youth to develop their interests, skills, and talents.
- Praise good behavior and take immediate action to stop youth violence when it occurs.

Action 2. Use and promote youth violence prevention strategies that are based on evidence to benefit the entire community.

- Support local action by joining or starting a youth violence prevention coalition that works across groups and sectors.
- Make prevention a community priority.
- Insist on the use of data to make decisions and put in place evidence-based approaches.
- Use a comprehensive set of approaches to support and strengthen youth, families, schools, and communities.
- Seek out and use existing resources to learn about effective youth violence prevention activities and programs.
- Share progress and successes to raise awareness that youth violence is a preventable public health problem.

Public Health Professionals

Action 3. Help communities build their capacity to prevent youth violence.

- Actively disseminate the latest information about what works.
- Join with partners to strategically plan and support widespread implementation of evidence-based youth violence prevention approaches.
- Expand and enhance data systems on youth violence and risk/protective factors and improve data integration and dissemination.
- Establish and maintain dedicated youth violence prevention staff.
- Enhance public health leadership for youth violence prevention.

Action 4. Continue innovative research to address gaps.

- Continue research about factors that protect youth, families, and neighborhoods from violence.
- Rigorously evaluate promising youth violence prevention strategies.
- Study ways to strengthen communities' ability to implement youth violence prevention strategies well.

Families, Caregivers, and Other Adults

Action 5. Reduce the risk for violence and promote the strengths of young people.

- Be a consistent model for how to respond nonviolently to conflict, stress, and fear.
- Pay attention when youth behave well and help them see the benefits that come from their good choices.
- Build a connection with young people that allows them to feel comfortable discussing violence and related concerns.
- Carefully monitor youth's activities and behavior, help youth make safe choices, and talk with others who have a strong influence on young people.
- Prevent minors from getting unsupervised access to firearms at home, from family, and from friends.
- Take advantage of help and share information and resources with others.

Young People

Action 6. Make choices that promote safety and opportunities to thrive.

- Stop and think before saying or doing anything that could hurt others, act in nonviolent ways, and get help from a trusted adult or safe place.
- Spend time with people and in places that are at low risk for violence.

Action 7. Help others be violence-free.

- Help others be violence-free, and support those who have been hurt by violence.
- Show others how to stay safe.
- Get involved in violence prevention work.

Everyone has an important role in stopping youth violence before it starts. CDC's [Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action](#) and its [companion guide](#) provide information and action steps to help each of us be a part of the solution. For more information on youth violence, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/Violenceprevention/youthviolence/index.html>.