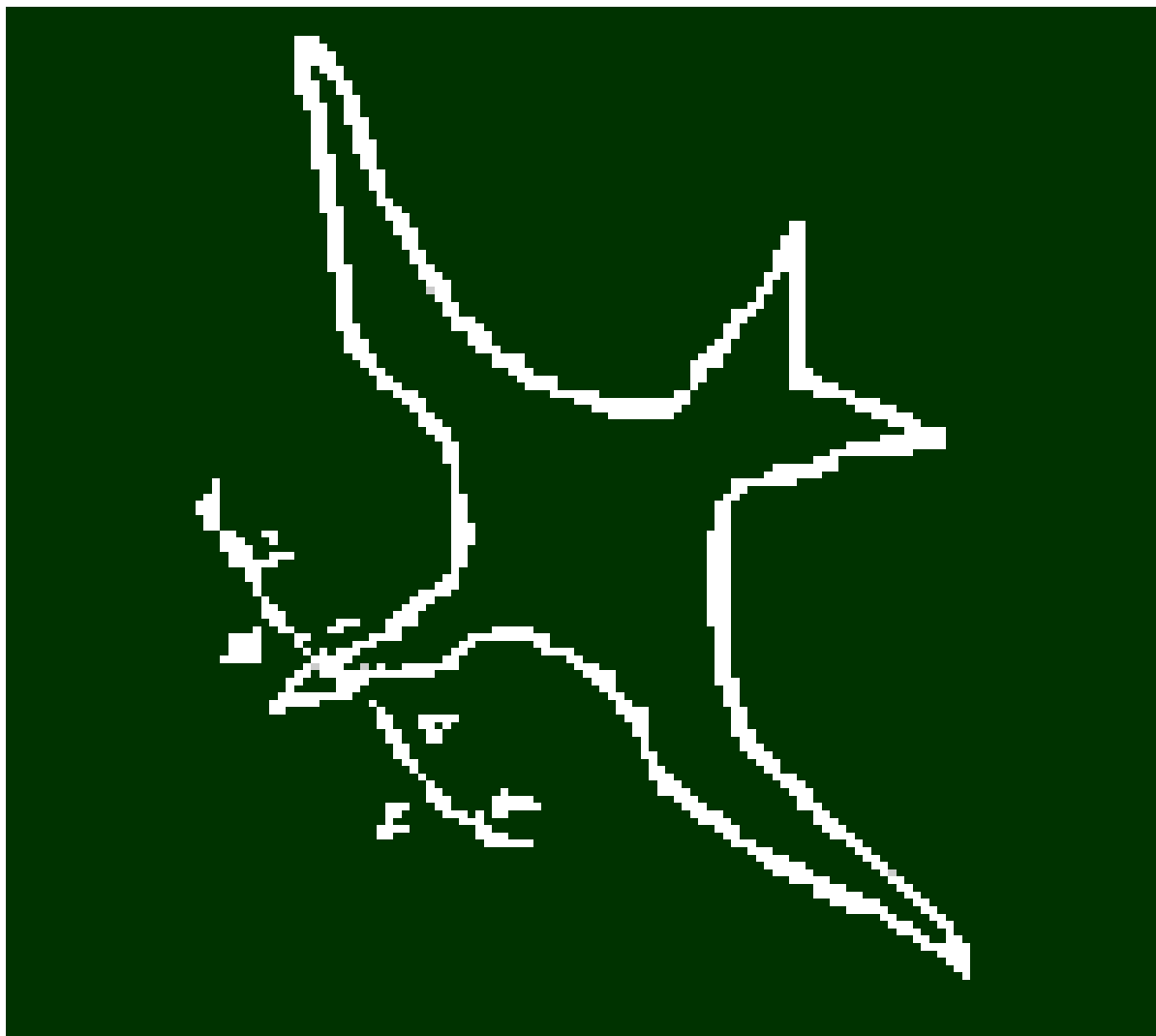


A Program Planning Guide for Youth Violence Prevention: A Risk-Focused Approach

Nancy G. Guerra and Kirk R. Williams



Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence

A Program Planning Guide for Youth Violence Prevention: A Risk-Focused Approach

Nancy G. Guerra
University of Illinois at Chicago

and

Kirk R. Williams
University of Colorado at Boulder

December 1996

Note:

Development of this Program Planning Guide was made possible with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Printing and dissemination was made possible with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

CSPV-010

Copyright © 1996

by the Institute of Behavioral Science, Regents of the University of Colorado

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence

Institute of Behavioral Science

University of Colorado, Boulder

1440 15th Street

Boulder, CO 80302

Phone: (303) 492-1032 Fax: (303) 492-2151

E-mail: cspv@colorado.edu

www.colorado.edu/cspv

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1 - 6
Key Facts About Youth Violence	7 - 16
Approaches to Community Collaboration.....	17 - 26
Promising Programs	27 - 30
Social Development Programs	31 - 34
Youth Development Programs	35 - 38
Peer Mediation Programs	39 - 40
Multi-Component Gang Prevention Programs.....	41 - 42
Behavioral Parent Training Programs	43 - 44
Family Therapy & Family Problem Solving Programs.....	45-47
Family Interventions for Young Children.....	48
Programs to Improve Social Organization and Increase Parent and Student Involvement	49 - 50
Programs to Change Teacher Practices and Promote Cooperative Learning	51 - 52
Programs to Enhance Community Services	53 - 54
Community Development, Neighborhood Mobilization and Public Information Campaigns.....	55 - 57
Summary of Programs.....	58
Program Implementation and Evaluation	59 - 63

INTRODUCTION

“There’s been more killings this year than I can ever remember, and I came to Chicago in ’51,” he said. He was a 61-year-old grandfather whose son, Andre, had just been beaten to death by five young men, apparently because he had chided one of them for taunting a young woman in the neighborhood. “We can go to the moon, but we can’t do anything about these gangs and drugs and violence. Why? Why?,” he asked insistently. “We’ve got a brain, and it is greater than any machine ever built, but we can’t fix this,” he said. “Why? If I could read, I’d read every book in the library until I found an answer.” (*The Chicago Tribune*, September 9, 1992)

The weekend of Andre’s killing, 28 people were killed in the City of Chicago, most of them young, poor and from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, where killings have become commonplace. These killings rarely make the news, because they are not news but rather facts of life in some urban settings. Many killings result from seemingly trivial events, such as the exchange of insults in “face-saving” contests. Others appear even more senseless, as when bystanders meet their fate in crossfire during a lethal clash between rival gangs. The seriousness as well as the apparent senselessness of such violence shocks and bewilders us. Why would anyone kill someone over a few words? Why has violence overtaken some communities, creating a web of aggression and retaliation whereby more and more adolescents and young adults believe their possessions, their status and their standing in the community depend on their willingness to use violence?

Although rates of violence are highest in large urban centers, cities and towns across the United States are increasingly experiencing this destructive problem that especially has an impact on youth. Teenagers repeatedly tell stories about how violence has entered their lives—at school dances where blood often mixes with confetti, in their homes and neighborhoods when they take cover at the sound of a car backfiring, in their hearts and minds when they learn how to cope with ever present fear. These experiences create a sense of urgency about the problem. Heartfelt pleas to stop the bloodshed are met by questions about what can be done. How can we stem this rising tide of youth violence?

In response to this growing concern, communities across the country are mobilizing their efforts to combat youth violence and provide constructive opportunities for youth development. Many communities have engaged in extensive planning and coordination of services and have developed detailed action plans. Other communities are beginning this process, taking a critical look at their own youth violence problem and identifying promising local solutions.

An important first step for all communities is to acknowledge that violence is a complex problem with many underlying causes. It is clear that this problem cannot be solved through a single activity. Rather, it is necessary for communities to build youth violence prevention **strategies** that incorporate a number of **promising programs**. In turn, these programs should be comprised of specific **activities** that have been shown to be effective and that relate to specific “risk factors” for youth violence. These programs may be provided for all youth in a given population to foster **youth development**, to at-risk youth through **targeted violence prevention**, or for youth who are already involved in violent behavior through **anti-violence interventions**.

Communities must determine how best to address youth violence at the local level. However, these efforts can be strengthened by helping communities learn more about promising programs and how to adapt these programs to meet local needs. This Program Planning Guide has been developed to help communities plan and implement strategic responses to their youth violence problem.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS YOUTH VIOLENCE REQUIRE:

- ③ Understanding the youth violence problem both nationally and locally.
- ③ Understanding local community needs and optimizing use of community resources.
- ③ Identifying promising programs and activities and tailoring them to meet local community needs.
- ③ Developing effective program implementation and documenting program outcomes.

THE PROGRAM PLANNING GUIDE IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR SECTIONS

- ③ **Section 1: Key Facts About Youth Violence.** Provides information about the youth violence problem that can help communities craft a local response.
- ③ **Section 2: Approaches to Community Collaboration.** Reviews different approaches to assessing community needs and resources, and how to mobilize the community to meet those needs.
- ③ **Section 3: Promising Programs.** Focuses on how to develop community-based violence prevention, intervention and youth development strategies, including a “menu” of programs and activities that are promising and can be incorporated into local efforts.
- ③ **Section 4: Program Implementation and Evaluation.** Provides a discussion of how to implement programs effectively and how to evaluate their impact.

COMMUNITY WORKSHEETS are provided as appendices at the end of the program planning guide to help communities think about the local youth violence problem. These worksheets are designed as a tool to help communities with planning and implementation efforts, if needed.

The Program Planning Guide is Designed to Help Communities Answer *Eight Important Questions* about Efforts to Address Youth Violence:

- How can a community accurately describe youth violence locally and use this information to address the problem?
- What approaches can be used to build a community organizational structure to address youth violence, and how should “community” be defined in order to develop a response that is most sensitive to local needs?
- How can adequate representation of community participants be accomplished and collaborative planning occur?
- Who is the identified target group for programs to address youth violence, and what are the likely risk factors to be addressed for that group?
- What settings are appropriate for reaching the target group, where are services most needed, and are participants and these settings “ready” for intervention?
- What types of programs are promising for reducing risk in the selected target group and what programs are ineffective?
- How can program implementation be optimized and programs be integrated into existing service systems to ensure continuation?
- What are realistic goals and objectives, and how can these be measured?



KEY FACTS ABOUT YOUTH VIOLENCE

An understanding of the **nature** and **scope** of the local youth violence problem is necessary to build effective community-based prevention strategies. An important question to ask is:

How can a community accurately describe youth violence locally and use this information address the problem?

As a first step, it is useful to look at national trends. Many of these trends will mirror what is happening in communities nationwide. However, patterns of youth violence may also vary from community to community. There are two important sources of variation that communities should consider.

SOURCES OF VARIATION IN YOUTH VIOLENCE

- ③ **Seriousness and Type of Violence.** Violence varies in both severity and type. For example, youth homicide may be confined primarily to gangs in some cities, but in others it may be more pervasive among non-gang involved teenagers. Some communities may not suffer from a high frequency of youth homicide, but may be contending with other violence problems, such as less serious assaultive behaviors. In any case, although documenting national patterns and trends reveals the general patterns of youth violence and stimulates thinking about the problem, communities should determine whether such “facts” apply at the local level.
- ③ **Risk for Violence.** Certain groups have been found to be more at risk for violent behavior. In addition, specific risk factors associated with individuals, families, peers, schools and communities have been identified. Although many studies have been conducted on representative samples, local community patterns of risk may vary.

Three type of information are used in both official reports and related research, and may be available locally. Each type has advantages and limitations.

THREE TYPES OF DATA ON YOUTH VIOLENCE

- ③ **Official records** are kept by many public agencies that deal with youth problems, such as hospital emergency rooms, youth service agencies, law enforcement and the juvenile court. The most commonly used data come from police records. For example, arrest rates are calculated by dividing the number of youth arrests made in year by the number of youth living in the area, and are usually available at law enforcement agencies. However, they are influenced by many factors including the attitudes of citizens towards crime, law enforcement policies and practices and number of nonresident juveniles.
- ③ **Self-reports** require individuals to report their own level of violent or delinquent behavior. Although these reports are related to actual behavior, individuals may inflate or underreport their involvement. Such data are usually not available through official agencies but more frequently are collected by researchers studying a specific problem. Self-report measures also are used to assess risk factors (such as attitudes about violence or parenting practices) in a given population.
- ③ **Victimization Surveys** require individuals to report their own level of violent or criminal victimization. Such surveys often reveal higher rates of violence than other sources of data. These are usually done at the national level. For example, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) provides data from a nationally representative sample of the U.S. population.

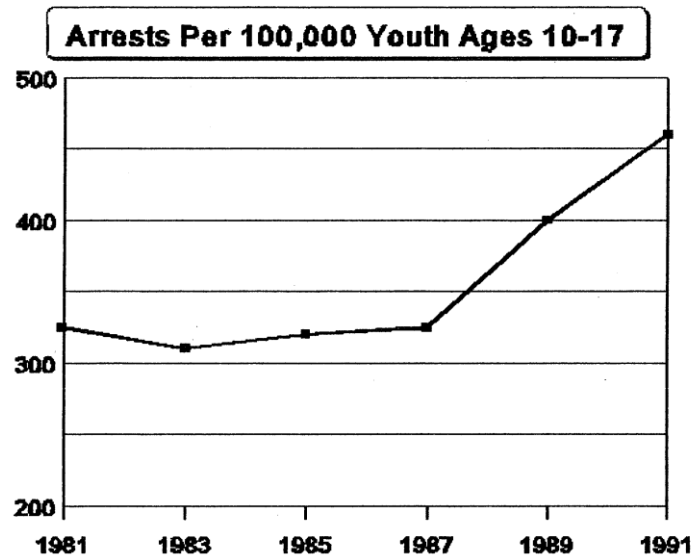
Communities should explore the availability of these sources of data to document the nature and scope of their youth violence problem. **Focusing on specific types of violence that present the greatest local concern and identifying associated risk factors are vital steps in developing strategies to address youth violence.**

Many communities have convened a special task force to address youth violence. These groups may have compiled information about the local youth violence problem that can be useful to community agencies. In some cases, it will be helpful to get even more information. Or, if such information has not been collected, community groups can begin to identify key indicators and sources of information that will help guide youth development efforts and violence prevention and intervention programs.

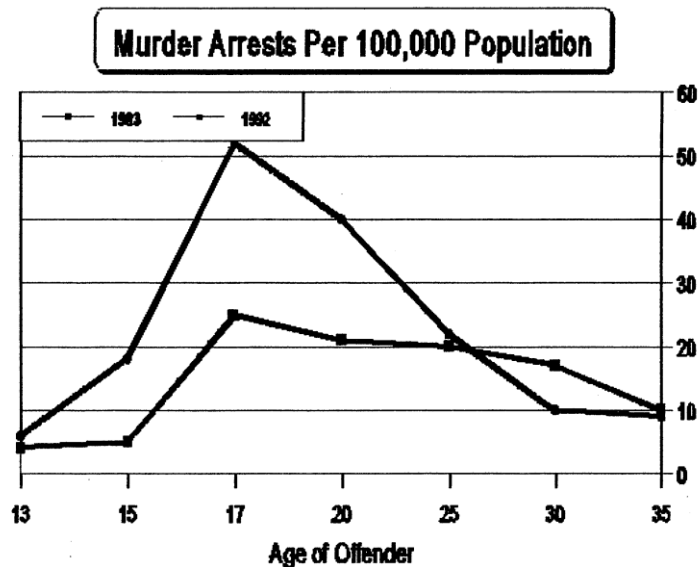
- More details about trends in youth violence, types of violence and population and individual risk factors are provided in the following **FACT SHEETS.**

FACT SHEET: THE YOUTH VIOLENCE PROBLEM

After more than a decade of very little change, the youth violent crime arrest rate in the U.S. increased dramatically between 1988 and 1992. This increase was found in all racial groups.

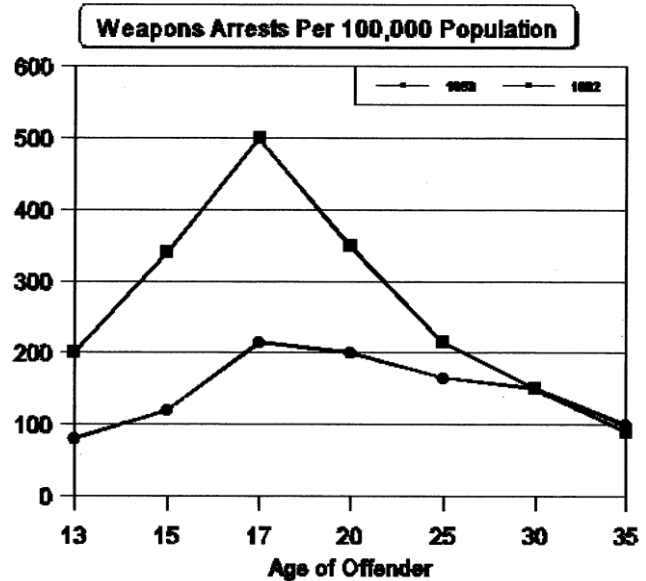


For most violent offenses, arrest rates increased for both teenagers and adults. From 1983 to 1992, murder rates declined among older age groups but soared for youth, with increases far greater than any other type of violent crime.



FACT SHEET: SERIOUS, VIOLENT AND CHRONIC YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS

The pattern of age-related growth in murder arrest rates was mirrored by a similar growth in weapons arrests. In 1992, there were more youth arrests for weapons law violations than for murder, forcible rape and robbery combined. Approximately 80 percent of youthful homicide offenders use a handgun.



Although youth violent crime is increasing, only about 5 percent of all youth are arrested, and even fewer are arrested for violent offenses—about 9 percent of those arrested. However, between 50 percent to 80 percent of youth victimizations are not reported to authorities.



FACT SHEET: VARIATIONS IN SERIOUSNESS AND TYPE OF VIOLENCE

The Serious harm caused by crimes such as murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault is evident. However, less serious forms of aggression such as insults, teasing, pushing, shoving and fighting are also harmful and may lead to more serious violence. Prevention efforts may be linked to reductions in these less extreme forms of violence which, in turn, may prevent escalation into more serious violence.

Certain youth development, violence prevention and anti-violence intervention strategies may be most appropriate for different types of violence.

FOUR TYPES OF VIOLENCE

- ③ **Situational Violence** occurs in response to temporary events. For example, violence rates increase during extreme heat, on weekends and when sanctions are less likely. Situational factors may also increase an individual's willingness to use violence or increase the seriousness of the violence that occurs.
- ③ **Relationship Violence** arises from disputes between persons with ongoing relationships. It accounts for a large portion of violence for all age groups including adolescents.
- ③ **Predatory Violence** is perpetrated intentionally to obtain some gain. This type of violence includes muggings, robbery and gang assaults. Predatory violence is frequently part of a pattern of serious antisocial behavior.
- ③ **Psychopathological Violence** is characterized by extreme forms of violence such as serial killings. It is most likely the result of individual pathology, such as severe trauma.

FACT SHEET: POPULATIONS AT RISK FOR YOUTH VIOLENCE

- Youth violence is disproportionately committed by males.
- Males between the ages of 12 to 19 are approximately twice as likely as females of that age to be victims of a violent crime, although until the teenage years, boys and girls are equally likely to be murdered.
- For all violent crimes, offending peaks between ages 16 and 18, with 18-year-olds showing the highest arrest rates for all violent offenses.
- Data from the early 1990s show that African-American males living in urban areas have homicide victimization rates seven times that of African-American females, eight times that of white males and 29 times that of white females.
- Youth arrests for serious violent crime are approximately four to ten times higher in large urban centers.
- It is estimated that there are almost 4,000 gangs in the United States with more than 200,000 members. Gang activity has extended beyond large urban centers to smaller communities. There is a significant connection between firearms, gang involvement and serious violence.
- Youth who have been physically abused or neglected by their families are more than twice as likely as other youth to commit violent offenses.
- Children whose parents have criminal records are more likely to be involved in aggressive and violent acts.

FACT SHEET: VIOLENCE RISK ACROSS DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

- Although there is not single “cause of violence, a number of “risk factors” have been identified that increase the likelihood of violence. These risk factors include characteristics of individuals, peers, families, schools and communities.
- The importance of these risk factors varies by age. Family influences are strongest for younger children and peer influences emerge particularly during adolescence.
- Recent studies show that risk factors may also vary by gender and culture, although less is known about these influences.
- Risk for violence is related to the number of risk factors present. However, the presence of risk factors only predicts an increased chance of violent behavior and many “at-risk” youth will not exhibit behavior problems.
- Youth development, prevention and intervention strategies designed to prevent or reduce violence can have the greatest impact by seeking to identify and involve youth at greatest risk.
- Using a risk-focused approach, programs should aim to reduce likely risk and promote factors that foster healthy youth development.

FACT SHEET: SPECIFIC RISK FACTORS FOR YOUTH VIOLENCE

INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS

- Poor academic skills
- Impulsivity
- Substance use
- Poor social problem solving skills
- Inability to understand the perspective of others
- Poor conflict resolution skills
- Difficulties in understanding the moral consequences of actions

PEER RISK FACTORS

- Low social status
- Rejection by peers
- Gang involvement
- Shared deviant peer norms
- Association with delinquent peer groups

FAMILY RISK FACTORS

- Inconsistent discipline
- Reliance on coercion
- Harsh or abusive discipline
- Poor monitoring of activities
- Insecure attachments
- Defensive communication
- Deviant shared values
- A high percentage of negative interactions
- Low levels of emotional closeness
- Inefficient use of family resources

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS

- Lack of student/parent involvement
- Low academic achievement
- Lack of social organization and social support
- Few opportunities for recreation
- Unemployment and economic disparities
- High levels of community crime
- Availability of firearms

Additional References

The following publications are available for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention through:

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849
(800) 638-8736
<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

Allen-Hagen, B., Sickmund, M., & Snyder, H. (1994). *Juveniles and Violence: Juvenile Offending and Victimization*. **FS 09419**

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (1994). *Crime in the United States, 1993: Uniform Crime Reports*. **NCJ 151712**

Howell, J. (1995). *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders*. **NCJ 153681**

Moone, J. (1994). *Juvenile Victimization: 1987-1992*. **FS 009417**

Pope, C., & Feyerherm, W. (1993). *Minorities and the Juvenile Justice System: Research Summary*. **NCJ 145849**

Snyder, H. (1994). *Are Juveniles Driving the Violent Crime Trends?* **FS 009416**

Snyder, H., & Sickmund, M. (1995). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A Focus on Violence*. **NCJ 153570**



Additional resource materials include:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1991). *Weapon Carrying Among High School Students: United States, 1990. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 40*, 681-684.

Fagan, J. (1996). *What Do We Know About Gun Use Among Adolescents?* Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado.

Juvenile Justice and Public Policy: Toward a National Agenda. (1992). New York: Macmillan.

APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Efforts to address youth violence will be most successful if a community takes responsibility for the problem and is vested in its solution. The level of community organization varies greatly from place to place. Some cities have a well-organized community board or task force and have developed a comprehensive and strategic local action plan. In some areas, little planning has occurred and an organizational structure to address youth violence must be developed.

This section of the Program Planning Guide focuses on how to promote community organization and collaboration, including identification and prioritization of target groups and settings for efforts to address youth violence. This may not be necessary for communities that have developed a strategic plan; however, it may be useful in assessing the comprehensiveness of the plan. Four important questions in any planning process are:

- # What approaches can be used to build a community organizational structure to address youth violence, and how should “community” be defined in order to develop a response that is most sensitive to local needs?
- # How can adequate representation of community participants be accomplished and collaborative planning occur?
- # Who is the identified target group for programs to address youth violence, and what are the likely risk factors to be addressed for that group?
- # What settings are appropriate for reaching the target group, where are services most needed and are participants and settings “ready” for intervention?

Establishing an Organizational Structure

Efforts to address youth violence will be enhanced if they are part of an organized response to local problems. There are two primary approaches to community organization.

TWO MODELS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

- ③ **Top-down Comprehensive Planning.** Many communities have established a local task force, planning team or advisory board to craft a systematic response to youth violence. These groups typically are comprised of key community leaders, including government officials, judges, school superintendents, social service providers and civic and religious leaders. Key decision makers must be included. Some groups also have representation by parents and youth.

This type of planning has varied greatly across communities. Some groups have collected extensive data on the local youth violence problem, associated risk factors and existing programs and resources, and developed careful plans to implement and evaluated comprehensive strategies. Other groups have developed general plans and made suggestions for community responses. Additionally, some groups meet only for the duration of the planning process, while other groups continue to meet regularly to coordinate service delivery.

- ③ **Grassroots Neighborhood Mobilization.** This type of organization is often initiated by concerned citizens who step forward to address neighborhood problems. This can involve door-to-door campaigns, individual meetings with others in the community, town meetings or the development of neighborhood associations. Leadership and organization emerge out of the everyday life of concerned citizens rather than through a planning process spearheaded by public and private leaders. In some instances, professional community organizers may be hired by public or private groups to assist in this mobilization process at the grassroots level.

An organized response will be most effective if it helps build a comprehensive strategy to address youth violence tailored to local problems, needs and resources. Many communities have found it helpful to develop and **action plan** that describes the local strategy. These plans vary in many ways including length, level of detail, specific content, contributors and target audience. It is important for communities to determine their local planning needs and proceed accordingly. Collaborative efforts should focus on a variety of tasks that can be integrated into an action plan. Two different programs that provide collaborative planning are: **Communities That Care**, which uses a community-based model, and **Cities in Schools**, which primarily uses a school-based model (described on page 36). The general progression would include the following steps, although the specific sequence may vary by community.

- ▶ Mobilize community involvement and participation.
- ▶ Build collaboration and productive working relationships among individuals and organizations involved in addressing youth violence.
- ▶ Determine target groups and assess risk factors.
- ▶ Identify the most serious youth violence problems in a community and set priorities.
- ▶ Assess existing youth development and youth violence prevention and intervention resources and programs.
- ▶ Promote concentration of services and/or new programs to address priority needs.
- ▶ Foster coordination of activities across agencies.
- ▶ Locate additional resources for new/existing programs.
- ▶ Respond to implementation difficulties as they arise.
- ▶ Build in evaluation planning to assess effectiveness.

We often talk about “community” planning and “community” coordination without clearly defining what is meant by community. Is a community of two million residents the same as a community of 10,000? In less populated areas, the entire community may be the focus of planning and intervention. In more heavily populated areas, it is useful to develop an overall comprehensive plan that also targets specific neighborhoods.

Comprehensive plans serve as guides for neighborhood organization and coordination of services. It is important that planning and coordination efforts be evaluated in terms of their responsiveness to local neighborhoods and institutions within those neighborhoods. Neighborhoods within a geographic region are often very distinct, with unique problems and solutions.

At the planning level, it is critical that key decision makers are involved (e.g., community leaders including government and school officials). At the implementation level, the more local the coordination efforts, the more likely that the strategy to address youth violence will be accepted and effective within a specific setting.

Community Participation and Representation

A necessary ingredient of community collaboration is the participation of many different organizations and individuals concerned with youth violence. Representatives should be chosen in terms of their knowledge, commitment to addressing specific areas of concern and their willingness to participate in collaborative efforts. Regardless of the specific planning process utilized, support from key decision makers as well as participation of hands-on service providers and concerned residents are essential.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS INCLUDE:

- School personnel including superintendents, school board members, administrators, teachers and support staff
- Teenagers from local youth groups or individual youth
- Parents and concerned residents including grassroots leaders
- Local businesses
- Representatives from government agencies including health, mental health, social services, law enforcement, fire departments, juvenile courts and housing authorities
- Representatives from community organizations including youth service and other social service agencies, arts agencies and other cultural organizations, neighborhood associations, tenant councils and tribal councils
- Representatives from volunteer associations including civic groups and religious organizations
- Health care providers including local clinics, hospitals and medical associations
- Representatives from local newspapers, radio and television stations
- Local elected officials

Identifying Appropriate Target Groups for Violence Prevention Programs and Assessing Risk Factors

The selection of a specific target group depends on the particular youth violence problem and the specific age group. Activities may be planned for the general population of youth, or youth may be selected because of specific behavior problems or the presence of risk factors. There are three common approaches:

APPROACHES TO SELECTING TARGET GROUPS

- ❶ **Youth Development.** This approach emphasizes services to all youth who wish to participate, with a focus on providing opportunities for involvement that help children grow and develop. Because programs are provided to large groups, it is unlikely they will be of sufficient scope or intensity to impact significantly on serious violent offending, such as homicide or gang violence. Instead, they seek to help youth develop values and skills that would make them less inclined to violence and other problem behavior.
- ❷ **Targeted Violence Prevention.** This approach seeks to identify and involve youth at greatest risk of violence in specific programs or interventions. Although the types of services provided may be similar to youth development strategies, this approach is marked by a desire to identify “at-risk” youth and provide more focused services.
- ❸ **Anti-Violence Intervention.** This approach focuses on youth involved in violent offending who frequently have a juvenile record. The goal is to keep youth from further involvement in violence. Because this approach targets a small group of youthful offenders, programs can be tailored to the specific needs of the target population and are more likely to impact serious offending. Still, this approach may fall short if efforts are not comprehensive.

A youth development approach is best for younger children and children who are not involved in serious problem behavior. Targeted violence prevention programs require selection of participants based on some judgment of an “at-risk” status (although efforts to predict future behavior from any early predictor have not been very successful). Anti-violence interventions are offered for adolescents who have shown more chronic antisocial behavior.

Once the target group is selected, it is important to think about the likely risk factors for the type of problem behavior or violence identified in that group. Although several individual, peer, family, school and community risk factors have been discussed (see page 15 of this Guide), local input, including feedback from likely program participants, is very important. This input is helpful in determining if those risk factors are significant for the specific target group selected (including whether they are culturally relevant), and in setting priorities for types of services that are most needed. Programs can then be selected that are likely to have an impact on specific risk factors in the chosen target group.

- ▶ For example, if communities are concerned because of increased fighting and hostility at a neighborhood school that is related to increasing rivalries among students, a schoolwide conflict resolution program may be offered as a **Youth Development** program for all youth.
- ▶ Or, if communities are concerned because of an increase in gang activity at a local high school in an area where there are few jobs and little opportunity for after-school recreation, youth with some gang affiliation may be selected for a **Targeted Violence Prevention** program that provides tutoring, recreation and employment alternatives to gang involvement for these youth.
- ▶ In communities with high drop-out rates and related youth violence, and **Anti-Violence Intervention** offering tutoring and job training may be offered to youth who have had contact with the law and are not in school.

Selecting Community Settings for Programs and Evaluating the “Readiness of Each Setting

Community setting should be selected that are suitable for the target population and risk factors, and where youth can be reached. Some programs often require specific settings. For instance, classroom-based social skills curricula are given to all children in the regular school classroom.

Just as it is important for communities to develop programs for different target groups, it is important to provide programs in multiple settings. One goal of an organized community response to youth violence is to identify settings where programs already exist and settings where programs are most needed. The following chart indicates settings for different target groups selected.

Setting	Youth Development	Targeted Violence Prevention	Anti-Violence Intervention
Schools	X	X	X
Community Centers	X	X	X
Recreation and Cultural Facilities	X	X	
Religious Centers	X	X	X
Mental Health Centers	X	X	X
Public Housing	X	X	X
Health Clinics	X	X	
Juvenile Institutions			X
Media	X	X	

In addition to selecting the most appropriate settings, it is also important to be sure that the selected participants and/or settings are “ready” for the planned activities. In order to be **ready** for a specific program, basic activities or competencies must be in place or established. Add-on programs or restructuring of services may be taxing if the setting or system is not running smoothly.

For instance, families who are out of work and struggling to make ends meet would be better served by a social service intervention to stabilize their living situation before participating in a family therapy program that emphasizes rule-setting and monitoring children’s behavior. Similarly, if new duties have recently been assigned to a school or a school is plagued by falling test scores, asking teachers to deliver a daily conflict resolution curriculum may prove unduly stressful.

Thus, settings should be evaluated to determine if they are ready for the planned intervention. Selecting settings in this manner should increase the chance of successful program implementation and positive outcomes.

Additional References

- Building a Cities In Schools Program: A Replication Process.* (1993). Alexandria, VA: Cities In Schools, Inc.
- Changing Perspectives: Youth as Resources.* (1990). Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council.
- Charting Success: A Workbook for Developing Crime Prevention and Other Community Service Projects.* (1989). Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council.
- Checkoway, B., & Finn, J., (1992). *Young People as Community Builders.* Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Study of Youth Policy, School of Social Work.
- Crime Prevention in American: Foundations for Action.* (1990). Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council.
- Finding Funds and Building Support for Community Crime Prevention.* (1993). Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council.
- Goldstein, A., et al. (1989). *Reducing Delinquency: Intervention in the Community.* New York: Pergamon Press.
- Hawkins, J.D., & Hawkins, R.F. (1992). *Communities that Care: Action for Drug Abuse Prevention.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Also contact Developmental Research and Programs, 130 Nickerson, Suite 107, Seattle, WA 98109, (206) 286-1805.
- Kids in Trouble: Coordinating Social and Correctional Service Systems for Youth.* (1991). Washington, DC: National Governors' Association.
- Reingold, J., & Frank, B. (1993). *Targeting Youth: The Sourcebook for Federal Policies and Programs.* Flint, MI: Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

PROMISING PROGRAMS

A variety of promising programs have been developed to address known risk factors for youth violence. These programs may provide **direct services**, such as teaching conflict resolution skills or parent education classes. Other activities may involve **changes in service delivery methods**, such as a change from traditional policing to community policing or the use of graduated sanctions in the juvenile justice system. In addition, **indirect activities**, such as installation of security systems or changes in public policies, may be implemented.

As discussed previously, efforts to address youth violence will be most successful if the local youth violence problem is clearly described and a community organizational structure is in place that includes identification of target groups and settings. Specific programs can then be developed and implemented as part of this coordinated strategy. Of course, it is necessary to select appropriate programs that are most likely to be effective in addressing youth violence in the identified settings.

This section of the Program Planning Guide addresses this question:

What types of programs are promising for reducing risk in the selected target group and what programs are ineffective?

Selecting Promising Programs

Schools, community service providers and public agencies often are asked to select promising violence prevention programs from a myriad of available offerings. Because youth violence is a complex problem with no “magic pill” to offer, this is a difficult task.

Available programs vary in **target population** served (youth development, violence prevention, anti-violence intervention), **setting** (schools, clinics, community centers, etc.) and **type of service** (direct services, change in service delivery methods, indirect activities).

They also vary in terms of the **group of risk factors** addressed (individual, peer, family, school and community) and the **specific risk factors** within each group, as well as the various **combinations of risk factors** included in the prevention or intervention program. Some programs should be more appropriate for certain **types of violence**, for instance, conflict resolution training should be more likely to help prevent relationship violence rather than predatory violence.

Most of the programs to address youth violence that have been evaluated carefully fall into the category of **direct services**. Some programs do not appear to be effective in preventing aggression or violence, while others are more promising. Although a number of programs have been shown to result in immediate benefits, these gains are often small, and studies rarely collect long-term, follow-up information.

In general, and particularly when working with at-risk youth, the most effective programs are those that **target multiple risk factors** across **multiple contexts** (peers, school, family, etc.) in **multiple settings** (schools, community centers, etc.). Although there is little research on the effects of improving direct services, service delivery methods and indirect services simultaneously, the most comprehensive efforts should have the most far reaching effects.

Therefore, it is important for programs to be offered for children of different ages. Violence is best understood as part of a life-course developmental learning process.

All programs must be developmentally appropriate. The timing of particular types of interventions must be relevant for the youth's stage of development. For instance, some types of parent training are inappropriate for parents of teenagers, but can be effective for parents of younger children.

One way to classify programs to address youth violence is by the particular types of risk factors addressed. Using this framework, **five categories of programs** can be described. Within each category, different risk factors can be linked with specific programs.

The following “menu” describes two promising types of programs within each of these five categories. These programs vary in appropriateness for specific ages and target groups. For each type of program, a **Program Description** is provided along with **Types of Programs and/or Program Examples**, **Available Evaluation Results**, and **Key Activities** that enhance program effectiveness and suggested national or local **Program Contacts**.

Based on community needs and resources, programs and activities from this menu can be provided alone or in various combinations. For many programs, pre-packaged curricula, guides and “how-to” books are available from educational publishers. Consultants from universities may also be helpful in tailoring programs to meet community needs (see **Program Contacts**).

PROMISING PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS YOUTH VIOLENCE

Improving Youth Skills and Competencies

- Social Development Programs (including training in anger management, perspective taking, moral development, social skills, social problem solving and conflict resolution)
- Youth Involvement Programs (including mentoring, volunteer service, academic enrichment and job training/employment)

Improving Peer Relations and Associations

- Peer Mediation Programs
- Multi-component Gang Prevention Programs

Improving Family Functioning and Family Relationships

- Behavioral Parent Training Programs
- Family Therapy and Family Problem Solving Programs

Improving Schools

- Programs to Improve School Organization and Increase Parent and Student Involvement
- Programs to Change Teacher Practices and Promote Cooperative Learning

Improving Communities and Increasing Opportunities

- Programs to Enhance Community Services (including recreation, arts and law enforcement enhancement, such as community policing)
- Community Development, Neighborhood Mobilization and Public Information Campaigns (including programs to stop gun violence)

Social Development Programs

Program Description

An important part of growing up is learning how to get along with others. Although many of these skills are learned in the context of family and friends, increasingly, a number of programs have been developed that focus on children's social development. There are several different types of programs that are intended to improve children's social skills with peers and others and to promote behavior that is positive, friendly and cooperative.

Social development programs are appropriate for children and youth from preschool through high school. They are suitable for youth development, violence prevention or anti-violence intervention.

Social development programs typically are offered in school settings and are integrated into classroom activities using pre-packaged curricula. They may also be offered in small group training in schools or other institutions. These programs use a range of intervention techniques including role-playing, discussion, modeling, rehearsal and practice. Typically, weekly sessions are conducted for periods ranging from two months to an entire school year.

Some social development programs emphasize skill acquisition, such as learning how to listen to others or work cooperatively. Other programs emphasize changes in attitudes and thought processes, such as changing norms or beliefs about when it is appropriate to use aggression against others.

Some programs provide training in a single component or skill. Other programs are more comprehensive (noted with an asterisk), and provide training that is intended to increase social competence across many different situations.

Types of Programs

There are many different types of social development programs. Examples:

Anger management programs are designed to help youth learn to control their anger and reduce impulsivity. Programs teach youth to stop and think before they act, using techniques such as verbal self-statements.

Perspective taking programs teach youth to consider the consequences of their actions for others and to develop a sense of empathy. These programs rely heavily on role-playing and/or use of film and video to portray differing perspectives.

Moral development programs aim to stimulate moral reasoning skills through guided discussions of dilemmas or specific character-building activities. Some moral development programs involve changes in governance policies to create a more "just" community based on democratic principles.

***Social skills** programs provide training in a variety of social interaction skills including communicating effectively, resisting peer pressure, making decisions and responding assertively. Although these skills may be applied to resolving conflicts, they are also applied to a variety of social tasks such as building friendships with peers and developing relationships with adults.

***Social problem solving** programs are similar to social skills training programs, although they place more emphasis on learning basic steps for solving social problems. These steps include identifying a problem, getting information, generating alternative solutions, considering consequences and choosing a decision. Some programs emphasize changing norms about aggression and violence. These steps can be applied to conflict situations, but most programs include a number of different social problem situations (such as joining a group or making new friends).

***Conflict resolution** programs are specifically designed to help youth solve conflicts with peers. There are many different programs, although most of these programs train children in a variety of skills (anger management, perspective taking, social skills and problem solving). In some programs, conflict resolution training is combined with a peer mediation program (discussed in detail on pages 39-40), to develop "peaceable settings."

Anger management programs are designed to help youth learn to control their anger and reduce impulsivity. Programs teach youth to stop and think before they act, using techniques such as verbal self-statements.

Perspective taking programs teach youth to consider the consequences of their actions for others and to develop a sense of empathy. These programs rely heavily on role-playing and/or use of film and video to portray differing perspectives.

***Social skills** programs provide training in a variety of social interaction skills including communicating effectively, resisting peer pressure, making decisions and responding assertively. Although these skills may be applied to resolving conflicts, they are also applied to a variety of social tasks such as building friendships with peers and developing relationships with adults.

Moral development programs aim to stimulate moral reasoning skills through guided discussions of dilemmas or specific character-building activities. Some moral development programs involve changes in governance policies to create a more “just” community based on democratic principles.

Social problem solving programs are similar to social skills training programs, although they place more emphasis on learning basic steps for solving social problems.

Social development programs are appropriate for children and youth from preschool through high school. They are suitable for youth development, violence prevention or anti-violence intervention.

Social development programs are appropriate for children and youth from preschool through high school. They are suitable for youth development, violence prevention or anti-violence intervention.

Moral development programs aim to stimulate moral reasoning skills through guided discussions of dilemmas or specific character-building activities. Some moral development programs involve changes in governance policies to create a more “just” community based on democratic principles.

Available Evaluation Results

Most anger management, perspective taking or moral development programs have been conducted with small groups of at-risk adolescents in school or institutional settings. Overall, anger management alone **has not** been shown to prevent or reduce violence, although there is some evidence that perspective taking and moral development training can result in less antisocial and delinquent behavior among adolescents. More comprehensive social skills, social problem solving and conflict resolution programs have been offered for all age groups as early as preschool. In general, these programs have resulted in improved skills. However, studies that have examined their effects on violence prevention have reported mixed results.

Although conflict resolution programs have become increasingly popular in schools, there has been very little systematic evaluation of these programs. Available results suggest that they are promising, particularly when efforts are comprehensive. The best programs are directed at changing the total school environment by creating a “peaceable school,” where nonviolence and multicultural appreciation are stressed and where teachers, peers and parents are directly involved in this process.

Key Activities

- ▶ Using programs that are comprehensive in scope and include multiple components (self-control, social skills, etc.)
- ▶ Emphasizing changing individual and community norms about violence and appropriate behaviors
- ▶ Sensitivity to cultural differences in social interaction patterns and styles
- ▶ Providing practice in real-life situations and providing rewards for positive behavior
- ▶ Using multiple instructional techniques such as role-playing, modeling, direct information and feedback

For programs in schools, implementation and effectiveness are enhanced when programs:

- ▶ Are part of a schoolwide, K-12 strategy that is integrated into the school curricula rather than being an “add-on” program
- ▶ Provide ongoing training for teachers, including regular feedback and support services
- ▶ Are supported by the school principal and other key decision makers
- ▶ Involve parents through student-parent contact including homework and/or journal assignments

Program Contacts

Committee for Children, 2203 Airport Way South, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98134, (800) 634-4449.

Heartsprings (PeaceBuilders), P.O. Box 12158, Tucson, AZ 85732, (520)299-6770.

Peace Education Program, 318 West Kentucky St., Louisville, KY 40203, (502)589-6583.

Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), 163 Third Ave., Room 103, New York, NY 10003, (212)387-0225.

The Grace Contrino Abrams Peace Education Foundation, 1900 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, FL 33132-3106, (305)576-5075.

Additional References

At Risk Resources, P.O. Box 670, Huntington, NY 11743-0598, (800)999-6884.

Hazelden Press, 15251 Pleasant Valley Rd., Center City MN 55012, (800)328-9000.

Research Press, 2612 N. Mattis Ave., Champaign, IL 61821, (217)352-3273.

Youth Involvement Programs

Program Description

Several programs try to increase youth involvement and engagement in constructive activities. Some programs connect adolescents with supportive adults who act as role models, mentors or counselors. Others focus on increasing motivation to stay in school. Programs typically are offered in a variety of settings including schools, community centers and public housing.

Youth involvement programs are appropriate for children and youth from elementary through high school, although programs most frequently are offered as targeted violence prevention or anti-violence intervention during the middle and high school years.

Program Description

There are different types of youth involvement programs. The most common programs are **mentoring, volunteer service, academic enrichment** and **job training/employment**.

Mentoring programs match youth with an older peer or adult. Mentors may be older classmates, friends, teachers, counselors or simply members of the community. In some programs, mentors serve as academic tutors, and in other programs their role centers on promoting personal growth. Emphasis is placed on the relationship that is established between the youth and the mentor that involves regular contact over an extended period of time. Thus, the goals of mentoring are to assist youth in developing skills and to provide a sustained relationship with a more experienced person who serves as a role model and guide.

There have been a number of recent attempts to enhance the potential of mentoring programs. For example, “**Bigs in Blue**” in Warren County, New Jersey matches at-risk youth with police officer mentors. Culture-specific programs have become popular, with several programs providing role models for African-American youth. For example, the **Mentoring and Rites of Passage** program at a large public housing project in Chicago matches African-American youth and mentors to discuss areas such as self-concept, decision making and cultural heritage.

Volunteer service programs involve youth in specific school or community projects to increase their sense of personal competence, leadership skills and involvement in constructive activities. In most programs, youth meet to decide on appropriate volunteer activities. These usually include school and neighborhood improvements as well as specific crime prevention activities. The **National Crime Prevention Council** and the **Learn and Serve America** program have developed a variety of youth volunteer service programs.

Academic enrichment and **job training/employment** programs provide numerous opportunities for increased youth involvement. For younger children, programs generally focus on specialized tutoring in reading or other academic subjects to promote grade level accomplishments. For older children and adolescents, a number of specialized programs offering tutoring, alternative classes and job training have been developed for youth who are not doing well in school, drop out, are suspended or expelled, or get into trouble with the law. Such programs generally are not part of regular school activities, but are offered as “schools within schools” or at alternative schools or community centers for referred youth. Some programs also combine more traditional counseling with vocationally-oriented interventions, and creative arts have been used with both younger children and adolescents.

A number of different programs have been developed both at the national level and in local communities. For example, **Cities In Schools (CIS)** is one of the nation’s largest, most comprehensive dropout prevention programs. Currently serving over 173,000 students annually at more than 875 educational sites in 264 communities in 27 states, **CIS** helps at-risk students by repositioning education, health, social and other supportive service providers from existing community agencies to schools, where they bridge gaps in students’ personal development and free teachers to focus on their primary purpose: helping students to learn. The program works with families, develops public/private partnerships and coordinates volunteer involvement to address a wide range of issues affecting student performance, including school attendance, literacy, job preparedness, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol use, teen suicide and school violence.

YouthBuild is a program emphasizing academic and vocational training. This program helps adolescents who have dropped out of high school obtain employment and education skills,

