

Youth and Violence: What We Can Do About It

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Some Facts to Ponder

- In 1933, 75% of deaths among youth between 15 and 19 stemmed from natural causes. Sixty years later, in 1993, 80% came from homicide and unintentional injury. [AMA, *Youth and Violence*, December 2000]
- Among boys, 43% of high schoolers and 37% of middle schoolers believe it is okay to hit or threaten a person who makes them angry. Nearly one in five (19%) of the girls agrees. [Josephson Institute, 2000 *Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth*]
- An even higher percentage resorts to violence: 75% of all boys and over 60% of girls surveyed said they hit someone in the past 12 months because they were angry. [Josephson Institute, 2000 *Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth*]
- In study after study, about 30-40 percent of boys and 15-30 percent of girls reports having committed a serious violent offense by age 17. [*Youth and Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*, January 2001]
- More than one in five (21%) high school boys and 15% of middle school males took a weapon to school at least once in the past year. [Josephson Institute, 2000 *Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth*]
- Among boys, 60% of high schoolers and 31% of middle schoolers said they could get a gun if they wanted to. [Josephson Institute, 2000 *Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth*]
- In the United States, almost 16 million adolescents -- including 70% to 95% of children in our inner cities -- have witnessed some form of violent assault, including robbery, stabbing, shooting, murder, or domestic abuse. [AMA, *Youth and Violence*]
- Juveniles murder almost ten people every day. That's nearly a quarter of all murders committed. [AMA, *Youth and Violence*]
- Though gun use and lethal violence among young people has declined since the peak year of 1993, nonfatal violence has not. [*Youth and Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*]
- The proportion of students injured by a weapon at school has not declined since 1993. [*Youth and Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*]
- The number of youths involved with gangs has not declined and remains near the peak levels of 1996. [*Youth and Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*]

I. THE PERSISTING EPIDEMIC

Violence is the most serious of moral issues, and youth violence is especially sobering. It can set adolescents on a wrong track, scar bodies and minds, and poison environments. It almost always shows a breakdown of ethical thinking. At the same time, it is remarkably prevalent. In study after study, about 30-40 percent of boys and 15-30 percent of girls reports having committed a serious violent offense by age 17.

Many people think youth violence is declining. And indeed statistics seem to show that it peaked in 1993. Arrest records, victimization data, and hospital emergency room records all suggest it has steadily decreased since then.

But actually it remains as widespread as ever. How do we know? Young people tell us themselves, in confidential reports of their own violent behavior. It is a reliable research method, and since 1993 the proportion of youths who have physically injured others has not changed. The ferocity of violence has waned—probably because fewer young people carry guns—but the amount has not.

Why has youth violence persisted? A major reason may be that we treat it incorrectly. Common tools of the justice system, such as casework, have no impact on violence. Some of the best-publicized programs have no effect or even make the problem worse.

Yet we can reduce youth violence. An arsenal of effective strategies now exists, like behavior monitoring and home visitation. Many programs, like Multisystemic Training and especially **CHARACTER COUNTS!**, can yield remarkable savings to society.

Of all of them, **CHARACTER COUNTS!** may be the easiest program to use, and it is clearly the least expensive per student. In one university study, it dramatically reduced both violence and the risk factors for it. It has proven itself with perhaps the greatest sample size of any effective program. And like most programs that work, it acts on the family, school, and neighborhood levels at once.

Violence takes a huge toll on our society. A 1999 study estimated the yearly cost in death and injury from all crime at \$575 billion, and that figure does not include the vast expense for security, the criminal justice system, and lost productivity and quality of life. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 2000 persons under 18 committed about 16 percent of all violent crimes, and persons under 25, 44 percent. They are clearly responsible for immense damage to society. Indeed, ultimately we can't measure it, because of the impossibility of assigning dollar figures to death, pain, fear, and grief.

Yet we have weapons against violence today. Twenty years ago we didn't. We simply have to use them.

Rough Cascade: The Risk Factors

What causes youthful violence? The question is almost like asking what determines the wind patterns on earth. There is no single answer, or even three or four. In fact, the influences can be so hard to tease out that analysts speak of "risk factors," traits that both predict future violence and have some reasonable causal relation to it.

Risk factors have some important qualities.

First, the presence of just one rarely leads to violence. Hence some abused

children grow up to commit violence; most do not. Some alcoholics are violent; most are not.

Second, risk factors add to each other. They are like tributaries to a river. The more there are, and the stronger they are, the more likely the river will overflow its banks. For instance, one study found that a 10-year-old exposed to six or more risk factors is ten times more likely to show violence by age 18 than a child exposed to just a single factor.

Third, despite a general consensus, no one agrees on all the risk factors or on their relative importance

Fourth, risk factors change as children grow into young adolescents. For instance, substance abuse is one of the best predictors of future violence for children 6-11; it is one of the worst for children 12-14. The two best predictors for the 12-14 age group are interpersonal: the lack of links to conventional peers and the presence of ties to antisocial peers. The same two are relatively weak for 6-11 year olds.

According to the 2001 Surgeon General's Report on Youth and Violence, the strongest hazards between ages 6 and 11 are:

- Involvement in serious but not necessarily violent criminal behavior
- Substance abuse
- Being male
- Physical aggression
- Poverty or low family socioeconomic status
- Antisocial parents

The strongest between 12 and 14 are:

- Weak links to conventional peers

- Ties to antisocial or delinquent peers
- Gang membership
- Commission of other criminal acts

What are the other predictors? A report by the Bloomington, Minnesota Public Health Division lists far more, though it fails to distinguish them by age or importance. Published studies, it says, have established the following as risk factors:

Individual

- A history of aggression at a young age, usually before 15
- Being male
- Drug-dealing
- Personal beliefs that support violence
- Weak internal controls, with a low commitment to accepted morality
- An anti-social personality, caused by such factors as attention deficit disorder, a bold and impulsive temperament, exposure to lead and other neurotoxins, and serious head injury
- The feeling that violence provides power and nothing else available does

Family

- Violence in the home. Suffering child abuse, enduring child neglect, or witnessing domestic violence can boost the risk of youth violence by up to 40%.
- Poverty and social isolation. (According to the AMA, in all ethnic groups the violence rates are highest for boys and men at the lowest economic level. At

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any given economic level, few differences exist among racial groups.)

- Family beliefs or actions that support the use of violence
- Heavy exposure to TV violence, without strong family bonding and modeling of non-violent behavior. Families must teach children decent behavior, values, and norms.
- Weak emotional attachment to parents
- Poor parental supervision

feelings of anger, rejection and alienation

- A low commitment to school
- Perception of youth that authorities cannot protect them in the neighborhood or at school

Guns

- Availability of firearms

Neighborhood

- Poverty
- A high rate of community violence, drug abuse and crime. Such environments expose children to violence, violent role models, and rewards for serious violence.
- High levels of transiency and family disruption

School and peer

- Involvement in a delinquent peer group or gang. Gang members provide role-models for violent behavior, and justify and reward it.
- Failure to meet expectations of school, peers, and self (such as high grades, peer approval, friendships, a sense of self-worth)
- Problems with the social hierarchy that develops in middle and high school, especially cliques
- Poor monitoring of youth activities by adults
- Grouping troublemakers with poor students. This tactic creates peer groups that reinforce

II. HOW TO CURB YOUTH VIOLENCE

Professionals treat violence as a public health matter and this approach means more than extracting lead and suturing skin. It means stopping the bullets from ever entering, keeping the guns from ever being fired. The reasoning is simple: Preventing harm is more humane, more effective and cheaper than healing it after it has occurred.

There are three prevention levels, and Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith of the Harvard School of Public Health describes them using the analogy of lung cancer: 1) Risk prevention: Discourage people from beginning to smoke, 2) Risk treatment: Help smokers quit, and 3) Disease treatment: Treat the lung cancer patient.

The three tiers to stopping violence are:

Risk prevention — Stop the initial slide to violence, with blanket strategies aimed at a whole population.

Risk treatment — Address people at risk for violence or involved in it, such as children neglected in the home.

Violence treatment — Target youths who have already committed violent acts. Strategies here include imprisonment, but also wraparound services, therapy, and other approaches.

Medical treatment alone won't reduce the rate of lung cancer. It is also costly and risky, since the ailment has already taken hold. Exactly the same applies to youth violence. Tactics like harsher sentences should be a last resort, since by then the violence and suffering have happened. Indeed, many purported violence treatments, like trying juveniles as adults, simply worsen the problem. In one way or

another, most genuine solutions help young people develop a high regard for human life and a strong moral character.

a) The Success of CHARACTER COUNTS!

CHARACTER COUNTS! is a character education strategy that reduces both violence and its risk factors. It emphasizes basic, noncontroversial virtues called the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. The program is very flexible, and can vary from the mere hanging of a poster to a full range of character-building activities, including family discussions. **CC!** is most common in schools, but other organizations like 4-H clubs use it too, and the Six Pillars often appear throughout the community in store windows, on billboards, on shopping bags, even on personal checks and town welcome signs.

A five-year study has been taking place in South Dakota since 1997-98, and it offers solid evidence for the success of **CC!**. The study uses an extensive questionnaire covering demographics, attitudes, and behavior. Each year researchers based at South Dakota State University collect the evaluation forms from large numbers of students and teachers. The student sample comprises as many as 8,419 respondents. The results show that **CHARACTER COUNTS!** cut crime and drug use sharply from 1998 to 2000. Students who said they had:

- Used physical force against someone who insulted them dropped 33 percent.
- Broken into another's property dropped 50 percent.

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- Used a fake ID dropped 56 percent.
- Taken something without paying dropped 46 percent.
- Drunk alcoholic beverages dropped 31 percent.
- Taken illegal drugs dropped 32 percent.
- Defaced or vandalized property dropped 46 percent.

The program led to many other improvements. For example, students who said they had:

- Borrowed money without repaying it dropped 34 percent.
- Cheated on an exam dropped 30 percent.
- Received a detention or suspension dropped 28 percent.
- Missed class without a legitimate excuse dropped 39 percent.
- Teased someone because of race or ethnicity dropped 45 percent.

Among the other findings:

- Students reported improvement in every category of misdeed assessed.
- Teachers reported better student behavior toward others and authority.
- **CHARACTER COUNTS!** especially affected students in grades 1-6.
- The more exposures per month students had to **CHARACTER COUNTS!**, the better they behaved.

North Dakota State University has commenced a similar study, using the same questionnaire. After 2000-2001 the results were parallel, with teachers

noticing clear improvements in student behavior.

CHARACTER COUNTS! works at the level of risk prevention and treatment, and as yet there is no evidence of its success as violence treatment. The South Dakota State 4-H Foundation funded the research, and Rachelle Walsh-Vetter, Marcey Moss, and Bill Wright carried it out.

Contact: Josephson Institute of Ethics, 4640 Admiralty Way, Marina del Rey, CA 90262. (800) 711-2670, (310) 306-1868. For much more information on the results of the study, and CC! in general, go to www.charactercounts.org.

b) Strategies That Work (and Don't)

Youth violence is a world of many dimensions—individual, family, societal—and hence demands a variety of solutions. There is no single, magic bullet. The 2001 Surgeon General's Report, which appeared before the South Dakota study of **CHARACTER COUNTS!**, identifies the following strategies as effective:

Risk Prevention

Skills Training

Some programs teach young people useful skills, such as problem-solving and social competence. These are among the most effective ways to reduce youth violence and its risk factors. They can also work in tandem with parenting programs.

Behavior Monitoring and Reinforcement

Schools can foster decent behavior. By using consistent rewards and monitoring to enhance positive student behavior, attendance, and academic attainment, schools can not only boost these qualities, but also reduce drug use, arrests, and self-reported criminal activity. In one study, for example, students exposed to this type of program were far less likely than controls to have a delinquency record five years later. **CHARACTER COUNTS!** programs often use aspects of this strategy.

Classroom Management Techniques

The right classroom atmosphere can cut the risk factors. According to one 1977 review, the best ways to cultivate good classroom behavior are: setting clear rules and directions, using praise and approval, modeling good behavior, proffering token reinforcement, and behavior shaping. Effective tactics for reducing student misbehavior are: ignoring it, reinforcing those acts incompatible with negative behavior, relaxation methods, and disciplinary techniques such as soft reprimands, timeouts, and point loss and fines in token economies. Again, **CHARACTER COUNTS!** programs commonly employ such approaches.

Building School Capacity

Approaches that focus on boosting a school's capacity to plan, effect, and sustain positive changes can significantly cut student delinquency and drug use. One program which gave students power to address school safety problems resulted in significant reductions in fighting and teacher victimization.

Continuous Progress Programs

Academic failure is a risk factor for late-onset youth violence. Continuous progress programs help prevent it by letting students proceed step-by-step up a hierarchy of skills, mastering one level before they progress to the next. Hence they learn everything they need to advance smoothly, and don't risk falling behind. In seven separate evaluations, this approach has improved academic achievement in elementary school students.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning programs also address academic failure, but in a very different way. They place students of varying skill levels together in small groups, allowing students to help each other learn. Studies show that this approach improves academic achievement, race relations, and attitudes toward both school and mainstreamed special-education students.

Positive Youth Development Programs

Community-based tactics can also reduce youth violence. One such strategy is positive youth development programs, as seen in the Boys and Girls Clubs and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. The Surgeon General's Report deemed the evidence insufficient to recommend either, though the AMA cites the latter as a Model program. But the Surgeon General did note that the approach itself reduces youth violence. Both programs are members of the **CHARACTER COUNTS!** Coalition, and **CC!** itself is congruent with a variety of community strategies.

Risk Treatment

Moral Reasoning

Much violence represents a failure of moral reasoning. And moral reasoning is crucial to developing good character and living with integrity. The Surgeon General cites one study in which a moral reasoning approach with “behavior-disordered” high school students showed lasting good effects, reducing police contacts and school disciplinary actions. **CHARACTER COUNTS!** programs often use this strategy too. The book *Making Ethical Decisions*, written by **CC!** founder Michael Josephson, describes the steps of moral reasoning in detail and is often a key part of **CC!** programs.

Social Problem Solving

Sometimes violence erupts simply because children don’t know any other way to resolve disputes. Social problem solving teaches them nonviolent methods. In one study of children and young adolescents referred for treatment of antisocial behavior; these youths showed significantly lower aggression scores one year after treatment.

Thinking Skills

In small group sessions, thinking skills programs teach youths how to take perspective, solve social problems, and manage their lives better in general. These programs have led to reduced drug and alcohol abuse, large drops in disruptive behavior, and better grades. Researchers speculate that social skills interventions such as this one and the two above may succeed partly because they are often broader in scope than other types of cognitive-behavioral approaches.

Parent Training

Child abuse and neglect can clearly breed violence. A less obvious culprit is inept parenting. Parents can fail their children by not setting clear expectations, not monitoring their children’s behavior, and punishing them excessively or erratically. Hence one successful approach is training parents to be parents. In individual studies with disruptive boys and girls, parent training has reduced aggressive behavior, lowered arrest rates and overall delinquency; and boosted academic performance.

Home Visitation

In home visitation a nurse or other professional goes to the child’s home and provides training, support, and monitoring to mothers at risk. In numerous studies, home visitation has shown significant long-term effects on violence, delinquency, and related risk factors. Three criteria determine the degree of success: 1) Length. Only long-term programs have shown consistent effects. 2) Type of visitor. Nurses do best. 3) Timing. The earlier the program begins, the better.

Compensatory Education

Compensatory education is simply extra attention for students struggling in school. Its strategies such as cross-age or adult tutoring may involve pulling students out of their regular classes to receive extra assistance in reading and math, and can improve long-term academic performance for all students, regardless of their achievement level. Moreover, when older students tutor younger ones, both groups show academic gains.

Violence Treatment

Behavioral and Skill Development Strategies

At every tier, behavioral and skills-oriented strategies are among the most effective approaches. In studies of male serious offenders, treatment stressing a broader social perspective and role-taking has reduced serious delinquent behavior for at least 18 months afterward. This finding is consistent with other studies, which indicate that multi-pronged, behavioral, and skills approaches work better than counseling and other less-structured tactics.

Family Clinical Interventions

Family-oriented tactics can help reduce violence in delinquent youths. One effective approach is marital and family therapy by clinical staff. It can include several different strategies, but a common thread is the focus on changing poor patterns of family interaction and communication, including negative parenting behaviors. Long-term studies show that clinical family therapy can have positive effects lasting up to nine years.

Wraparound Services

The justice system prevents youth violence more effectively with services than harsher penalties. One promising approach is wraparound services, in which officials shape comprehensive services to the needs of individuals, instead of trying to fit them into rigid, cookie-cutter programs. Evaluations of Wraparound Milwaukee, for instance, have shown reductions in recidivism and arrests during the year following participation.

Ineffective Strategies

Risk Prevention

Peer-led Services

Peer-led programs—including peer counseling, peer mediation and peer leaders—have consistently failed in scientific studies. One 1987 review concluded that there is no evidence of a positive effect and that these strategies can actually harm high school students. Results of a meta-analysis confirmed this finding, adding that adult-led programs are as effective as, or more effective than, peer-led programs in reducing youth violence and risk factors.

Nonpromotion to Succeeding Grades

Nonpromotion to succeeding grades can harm students. Studies show it has negative effects on student achievement, attendance, behavior, and attitudes toward school.

DARE

Drug Abuse Resistance Education, or DARE, is the most widespread youth drug prevention program in the United States. Parents, teachers, police, and government funding agencies all support it liberally, and its bumper stickers are ubiquitous. The program teaches fifth and sixth graders to resist peer pressure to take drugs. Numerous evaluations show that it has little or no impact, and children who participate are just as likely to use drugs as those who don't. Why? One problem may be that DARE uses little social skills training. Another may be that its audience is too young. It is hard to teach children who have not gone through puberty how to deal with the peer pressure to use drugs that they will encounter in middle school. In 2000 DARE's president stated, "I'm not saying it was effective,"

and asked critics to help redesign the program.

Risk Treatment

Gun Buyback Programs

Some government bodies have passed laws letting them buy up firearms from citizens. Studies consistently find that this costly strategy has no effect whatever on gun violence. These programs do take guns off the street, but the guns removed usually don't work, so governments are buying scrap. Moreover, most persons turning them in have other guns at home. Two less popular strategies, mandatory gun ownership and firearm training, have also shown no significant impact on gun-related crimes. Proponents expected these tactics to reduce gun violence by increasing the number of citizens who owned firearms and could use them properly.

Redirecting Youth Behavior and Shifting Peer Group Norms

Some programs, like the popular Midnight Basketball, aim to redirect high-risk youth toward conventional recreational and enrichment activities. Others focus on shifting peer group norms and have attempted to turn youth gangs into harmless clubs. These two strategies have had no positive effect. In fact, since both tend to bring high-risk youths together, they can strengthen delinquent peer groups, and thus advance their education in crime and increase violence overall.

Violence Treatment

Boot Camps

Boot camps are among the best known of violence treatment strategies. They put youthful offenders through high-discipline regimens modeled after basic training in the military. Four separate evaluations have taken place. Compared to imprisonment, boot camps produced no significant effects on recidivism in three, though two showed trends toward increased recidivism. The fourth evaluation showed significant harm to youths, with a significant rise in recidivism. Why the problems? Boot camps typically focus narrowly on physical discipline, instead of providing a broad range of skills as effective programs do. Boot camps also pool delinquent youths together, so they can form new friendships and reinforce their violent tendencies.

Residential Programs

Residential programs are programs that take place in psychiatric or correctional institutions. Some appear to have good effect on youths as long as they remain in institution, but research consistently shows that the impact wanes once young people leave. Evaluations of two residential programs showed that participating youths were actually more likely to be rearrested and to report they had committed serious offenses during follow-up.

Milieu Treatment and Behavioral Token Programs

Milieu treatment and behavioral token programs are both popular in institutional settings. In milieu treatment, residents take an active role in decision-making. When the program stresses individual responsibility, some improvements may occur, but more often it focuses on group decision-

making, which has no positive effect on recidivism after release. And for serious juvenile offenders, milieu treatment is one of the least effective approaches. In behavioral token programs, youths receive rewards for following rules, behaving decently, and not being antisocial or violent. Such programs can work as long as youths remain in the institution, but the effects vanish when they leave.

Waivers to Adult Court

This popular tactic, “adult time for adult crime,” can be particularly harmful. It won broad acceptance in the 1990s, as youth violence escalated. Yet evaluations suggest the strategy actually increases future crime. Moreover, it exposes youths to harm. According to a series of reports, young people placed in adult jails, as opposed to youth institutions, are eight times more likely to commit suicide, five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, twice as likely to be beaten by staff, and 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon.

Social Casework

The scientific literature indicates that several counseling, therapy, and social work approaches are ineffective. For instance, social casework combines individual psychotherapy or counseling with close supervision of youths and coordination of social services. It is a mainstay of the juvenile justice system. Yet even when performed carefully, social casework does not reduce recidivism. In fact, in one long-term follow-up, treated youths showed significant negative effects, including increases in alcoholism, unemployment, marital difficulties, and premature death. Individual counseling is also ineffective, at least for general delinquents and institutionalized

seriously delinquent youths. However, it does seem to work for noninstitutionalized seriously delinquent youths. Reasons for the difference are unclear.

Shock Programs

Shock programs don’t work. For instance, Scared Straight is a shock probation or parole program in which inmates describe the brutality of prison life or youths endure brief incarceration. The intent is to burn a frightening vision of jail into the minds of youths, and hence deter them from committing crimes. Numerous studies have demonstrated that Scared Straight is ineffective. In some, Scared Straight graduates actually had higher rates of rearrest than controls. Studies of other shock probation programs have yielded similar results. According to a 2001 study by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Scared Straight ultimately costs taxpayers and victims \$24,531 for each participant.

c) Programs That Work

A number of youth violence programs are effective. In January 2001, the Surgeon General issued a report that cited several programs as either “model” or “promising,” based on scientific studies. “Model” programs show high effectiveness, while “promising” ones meet minimal standards.

We at the Josephson Institute have not examined the Surgeon General’s recommendations directly, and do not necessarily endorse them. However, the choices enjoy a general respect in the field. They are not at all arbitrary or controversial. For instance, the American Medical Association has also

issued a list of model programs, and it closely parallels the Surgeon General's. An asterisk below marks an AMA model program.

The successful programs have a core in common: a multi-tiered approach. Since violence arises from many sources, they address both individual and environmental risk factors. They especially tend to focus on building individual skills, training parents, improving the climate of schools, and altering youths' involvement in peer groups. Often they use several strategies at once.

The research suggests that the programs below have a statistically significant effect, that is, that using them produces better results than not using them. Some of the improvements are large while others aren't, and a community often benefits most by employing several programs at once.

The list is not complete, and likely not close to complete. As the Surgeon General's Report states, "The fact that a program is not identified in this report as Promising or Model does not mean it is ineffective; in most cases it means only that it has not been rigorously evaluated." There is a great vacancy in the research here, and we need far more careful assessments of the many youth violence programs in the country.

The Surgeon General divides the programs below into those that directly reduce violence or serious delinquency (Level 1) and those that reduce risk factors, such as drug use, weak social ties, antisocial peers, and gang membership (Level 2). (Though delinquency is really just a risk factor, the Surgeon General felt compelled to include it with violence because of the structure of existing research.) In the Level 1 programs, the tie to reduced violence or delinquency is sometimes long-term, as with the Prenatal and

Infancy Home Visitation by Nurses, but it is always there. In contrast, Level 2 programs show a decline in risk factors only. They may also reduce violence, but no one has yet shown the link.

Model Programs

Level 1 — Violence or Delinquency Reduction

Seattle Social Development Project
Prenatal and Infancy Home Visitation by Nurses*
Functional Family Therapy*
Multisystemic Therapy*
Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care*

Level 2 — Risk Reduction

Life Skills Training*
The Midwestern Prevention Project*

Promising Programs

Level 1 — Violence or Delinquency Reduction

School Transitional Environmental Program
Montreal Longitudinal Study/Preventive Treatment Program
Syracuse Family Development Research Program
Perry Preschool Program
Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows
Intensive Protective Supervision Project

Level 2 — Risk Reduction

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies*
I Can Problem Solve
Iowa Strengthening Families Program

Preparing for the Drug-Free Years
Linking the Interests of Families and
Teachers
Bullying Prevention Program*
Good Behavior Game
Parent Child Development Center
Programs
Parent-Child Interaction Training
Yale Child Welfare Project
Families and Schools Together
The Incredible Years Series
Preventive Intervention
The Quantum Opportunities Program*

Model Programs

*Level 1 — Violence or Delinquency
Reduction*

SEATTLE SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
Target: Elementary school children

The Seattle Social Development Project began in 1981 as a long-term study, and ever since its researchers have explored ways to cut the risk in childhood for later problems like school failure, drug abuse, and delinquency. In 1985, when the original first graders entered the fifth grade, the study expanded to 808 students from 18 elementary schools. Researchers have interviewed these participants and their parents regularly since 1985. The original subjects are now 26 and remain under study.

Like other Model programs, the Seattle Social Development Project is multi-faceted. It has three basic segments: 1) classroom behavior management, 2) child skills training, and 3) parent training. The Project reduces the initiation of alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco use by grade six—a key risk factor—and improves

commitment to school. At 18, youths who participate in the full five-year version of this program have lower rates of violence, heavy drinking, and sexual activity (including multiple sexual partners and pregnancy), and better academic performance than controls. The Seattle Social Development Project has succeeded in both the general youth population and among high-risk children.

How economical is it? In a 2001 study, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy analyzed the cost-effectiveness of the Seattle Social Development Project and other programs. It found that the five-year Seattle program cost \$4,355 per participant. With the reduced criminal justice expenses, taxpayers paid just \$456 per participant, and considering the costs to victims, it saved society \$14,169 per participant overall.

<http://depts.washington.edu/ssdp/>

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PRENATAL AND INFANCY HOME VISITATION BY NURSES*

Target: First-time mothers at risk

Prenatal and Infancy Home Visitation by Nurses began in 1977 in Elmira, New York, with 400 families, and has since expanded to Memphis and Denver. It embodies the best traits for home visitation: 1) Nurses deliver it, 2) It begins before childbirth, and 3) It is long-term, lasting through age two. It also offers comprehensive services. It was a pioneer home visitation program,

but many other efforts have failed because they lacked these features. Prenatal and Infancy Home Visitation by Nurses focuses on low-income, at-risk mothers bearing first children. Researchers felt first-time mothers would be more receptive to the program, could give more attention on the child, and could use the lessons learned with subsequent children. In general, the program seeks to improve the outcome of the pregnancy and the health of the child, to build a social support network around the family, and to enhance mothers' own education, employment, and personal competency. Prenatal and Infancy Home Visitation by Nurses has a number of long-term, positive effects on youth violence and other aspects of life, including fewer arrests, less alcohol use by youths at age 15, and lower rates of child abuse and neglect. It will soon expand to between 15 and 20 new locations.

The program may not be widely applicable. The developers of Prenatal and Infant Home Visitation by Nurses state, "We wish to emphasize that we do not believe that we can disseminate this program on a large scale in a short period of time without compromising its effectiveness. We believe that it makes sense to develop a larger number of demonstration sites only once we have learned from our first set how to develop the program successfully in a variety of new contexts."

<http://www.welfareacademy.org/conf/papers/olds/prenatal.htm>

Contact: David L. Olds, Ph.D., Director, Prevention Research Center for Family and Child Health, 1825 Marion Street, Denver, CO 80218. (303) 864-5200.

FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY (FFT)*

Target: Adolescents with serious problems and their families

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a psychological treatment program, offering 8 to 30 hours of direct services for adolescents and their families. Therapists usually work with families in a clinic, though occasionally they visit the home. The program has several phases: 1) engagement, to keep participants from dropping out early, 2) motivation, to change counterproductive beliefs and behaviors, 3) assessment, to clarify personal relationships, 4) behavior change, including skills training for youths and parents, and 5) generalization, to make sure participants apply these new skills to family needs. FFT has reduced recidivism 50-75% among less serious offenders, and 35% among very severe cases. Intriguingly, siblings have also shown lower offense rates. FFT has a training program for community agencies wishing to use it.

The cost of the 90-day program ranges between \$1,350 and \$3,750 per family for an average of 12 visits. According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, FFT saves \$14,149 in judicial system costs for each participant, and \$59,067 in combined judicial and victim costs.

http://www.strengtheningfamilies.org/html/programs_1999/01_FFT.html

Contact: James F. Alexander, Ph.D., University of Utah, Department of Psychology, SBS 502, Salt Lake City, UT 84121. (801) 581-6538.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL
TREATMENT
FOSTER CARE (MTFC)*

Target: Juvenile offenders and their families

Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) is a special foster home program. It actually trains selected foster families, so they can offer youths treatment and intensive supervision at home, in school and in the community. This program temporarily places juvenile offenders in these high-caliber foster homes, and gives youths behavior management and skill-focused therapy. It also coaches parents and offers other services to the biological families of youths, helping improve family relationships. After an average of seven months, the youths return home. In the 12 months after treatment, participants in MTFC spent 60 percent fewer days incarcerated. They also had significantly fewer arrests, ran away from their programs a third less often, and had significantly less hard drug use.

The cost per youth is \$2,691 per month. According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, MTFC saves \$21,836 in judicial system costs for each participant, and \$87,622 in combined judicial and victim costs.

http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/ten_multidim.htm

Contact: Patricia Chamberlain, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator; Clinic Director;
Oregon Social Learning Center, 207
East 5th Street, Suite 202, Eugene, OR
97401 (541) 485-2711

MULTISYSTEMIC
THERAPY (MST)*

Target: Juvenile offenders and their families

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a skills-training program for parents and teenagers. It helps parents handle the difficulties of raising teenagers, and helps young people cope with family, peer, school, and neighborhood problems. MST uses therapists who act as problem-solvers, working closely with parents in a spectrum of areas from a child's school attendance to marital discord. Practitioners seek to enhance family relationships, strengthen parental authority and effectiveness, and improve children's behavior. Typically, the therapist begins by visiting the family several times a week for sessions ranging from 15 to 90 minutes, and later gradually reduces contacts. Practitioners must adhere to MST principles and procedures; a recent study found that MST effectiveness declined when therapists strayed from the model.

The program reduces long-term rates of rearrest, out-of-home placements, family dysfunction, and mental health problems among treated youths. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy estimated that MST alone could lower the rate of recidivism among participants by 44 percent.

Except perhaps for CHARACTER COUNTS!, no other program here repays the investment so lavishly. The program costs about \$4,743 for each young person enrolled, and according to the Washington Institute, the reduction in crime would save taxpayers \$31,611 per participant in judicial system costs. Crime victims would save more than \$100,000, for a total savings to society of \$131, 918 per participant.

<http://www.mstservices.com/>

Contact: Scott W. Henggeler, Ph.D.,
Director, Family Services Research
Center, Medical University of South
Carolina, Department of Psychiatry and
Behavioral Sciences, 171 Ashley
Avenue, Annex III, Charleston, SC
29425-0742. (843) 876-1800.

Level 2 — Risk Prevention

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING (LST)*

Target: Students in middle school

Life Skills Training (LST) reduces drug use. It offers its first sessions in grades six and seven and boosters in the next two years. The curriculum has three major parts: self-management, social adroitness, and drug-related information and skills. To enhance students' abilities in these areas, teachers use instruction, demonstration, feedback, reinforcement, and practice. More than a dozen studies have shown the effectiveness of LST. On average, it reduces tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use by 50 to 75 percent. Long-term follow-up of students six years later demonstrates that LST also reduces multiple drug use by 66 percent, cuts pack-a-day cigarette smoking by 25 percent, and decreases the use of inhalants, narcotics, and hallucinogens.

<http://www.lifeskillstraining.com>

Contact: Gilbert Botvin, Ph.D.,
Principal Investigator, Institute for
Prevention Research, Cornell University
Medical College, 411 East 69th Street,
KB-201, New York, NY 10021. (212)
746-1270.

Target: Students in middle school

Like LST, the Midwestern Prevention Project cuts drug use in middle school students. It has five major phases and introduces them one-by-one over four years: mass media program, school program, parent education and organization, community organization, and local health policy. The mass media program lasts throughout the entirety, while the others commence at a rate of one per year. This Project has reduced daily smoking and marijuana use, and lessened marijuana use, hard drug use, and smoking through age 23. In addition, it has improved parent-child communication about drug use and helped in the development of prevention programs, activities, and services within communities.

Contact: Mary Ann Pentz, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator, Sadina Rothspan,
Ph.D., Project Manager, University of
Southern California, Department of
Preventive Medicine, School of
Medicine, U.S.C. Norris
Comprehensive Cancer Center, 1441
Eastlake Avenue, MS-44, Los Angeles,
CA 90033-0800. (213) 764-0325.

**THE MIDWESTERN
PREVENTION PROJECT***

Promising Programs

Level 1 — Violence or Delinquency Prevention

SCHOOL TRANSITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM (STEP)

Target: Young people in transition, as between schools

The School Transitional Environmental Program (STEP) focuses on stressful life events for children, like moving to a new school, which may breed worse behavior. The program aims to lower such strains by redefining the role of homeroom teachers. It improves their ability to manage kids, so teachers can foster an environment that favors academic achievement and reduces misbehavior and absenteeism. STEP cuts drug use, delinquency, and dropout rates, while improving scholastic attainment. It has been most successful with students entering junior and senior high schools in urban, predominantly nonwhite communities. It also works with students at high risk of behavioral problems.

Contact: Robert D. Felner, Ph.D.,
University of Rhode Island, School of
Education, Kingston, RI 02881. (401)
277-5045.

MONTREAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY (PREVENTIVE TREATMENT PROGRAM)

Target: Disruptive youths from low-income families

The Montreal Longitudinal Study is a two-year anti-delinquency program. It has a pair of prongs: social skills training for kids (19 sessions) and

parent training (17 sessions). The parent-training sessions, provided every two weeks, teach adults to read with their children, reward their kids' good behavior appropriately, use discipline effectively, and handle family crises. A long-term follow-up of Canadian boys in this program found positive effects on academic achievement and avoidance of gang involvement, drug and alcohol use, and delinquency up to age 15.

<http://www.prevention.psu.edu/MLES.htm>

Contact: Richard E. Tremblay,
University de Montreal, Faculte des
Arts et des Sciences, GRIP, 3050
Boulevard Eduoard-Monpetit, C.P.
6128, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C
317. (514) 343-6963.

PERRY PRESCHOOL PROJECT

Target: Pre-schoolers

The students of the Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan may be the most studied group of children in history. This project commenced in 1962 when a classroom of three- and four-year-old youngsters began receiving a high-quality early education. They were children with below average IQ scores from low-income African-American families in a poor neighborhood. The teacher met once a week with parent and child and encouraged the mother to do activities at home that enhanced the curriculum. The study tracked the children well into young adulthood. The group did better academically, was more likely to complete school, and had a higher employment rate than the control group. Only 31 percent had been

arrested or charged with a crime by age 19, compared to 51 percent of the control group. Other results were fewer teen pregnancies and fewer participants on public assistance. It seems highly cost-effective. According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, the Perry Preschool saves \$16,221 in judicial and victim costs for each participant.

<http://www.highscope.org/research/RES PER.HTM>

Contact: David Weikart, Ph.D., High Scope Educational Research Foundation, 600 North River Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48198-0704. (734) 485-2000.

STRIVING TOGETHER TO
ACHIEVE REWARDING
TOMORROWS
(CASASTART, formerly Children At
Risk)

Target: At-risk youths 11 to 13

Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows, or CASASTART, is a San Antonio program that helps at-risk youths age 11 to 13 in severely distressed neighborhoods. The program has eight core aspects, each aimed at a different sphere: community-enhanced policing, case management for youth and families, juvenile justice intervention, family services, after-school and summer activities, educational services, mentoring, and incentives for participation. CASASTART has shown positive effects on early drug use, violent crime, and drug sales, and the impact has lasted at least one year after participation.

<http://leroy-gallery.com/ysd/start.html>

Contact: Adele Harrell, The Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037. (202) 261-5709

SYRACUSE FAMILY
DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH
PROGRAM

Target: Deprived families

The Syracuse Family Development Research Program recruited 108 deprived families and tracked them for 15 years. All had incomes of less than \$20,000 (in 1996 dollars) and most were African-American. The mothers were young, with an average age of 18, and 85 percent were single heads of households. The program gave them home visits, parenting education, and activities to improve their youngsters' intellectual growth, along with child care and a library with books and toys. In a follow-up study, 22 percent of children in the control group had juvenile records, but only 6 percent in the program. Five in the control group had serious delinquent records, just one in the program.

Contact: J. Ronald Lally, Program Director; Peter L. Mangione, Senior Research Scientist, Center for Child and Family Studies, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development; Alice S. Honig, Syracuse University, 201 Slocum Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244. (315) 443-4296.

INTENSIVE PROTECTIVE
SUPERVISION PROJECT
Target: Juvenile offenders

The justice system uses many ineffective approaches to youth violence, such as casework. But one promising strategy is wraparound services, in which officials tailor an array of services to each youth, rather than trying to fit them all into the same scheme. One wraparound program is the Intensive Protective Supervision Project. It removes delinquents under 16 from corrective institutions and gives them active, extensive community supervision. This program deters referrals to juvenile court more effectively than standard methods.

Contact: Kathy Dudley, Juvenile Services Division, Administrative Office of the Courts, P.O. Box 2448, Raleigh, NC 27602. (919) 662-4738.

Level 2 — Risk Prevention

GOOD BEHAVIOR GAME
Target: Elementary school children

The Good Behavior Game uses behavior management to brighten the classroom experience. It works with primary grade youngsters, seeking to improve their psychological well-being and decrease aggression or shyness. This approach has shown positive effects, as measured by teacher reports of first-graders' behavior. Long-term evaluations reveal sustained declines in aggression among boys rated most aggressive in first grade.

See:
<http://www.bpp.jhu.edu/publish/Manuals/gbg.html>

Contact: Sheppard G. Kellam, The Prevention Program, Mason F. Lord Building, Suite 500, 5200 Eastern Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21224. (410) 550-3445.

BULLYING PREVENTION
PROGRAM*
See Part IV below.

LINKING THE INTERESTS OF
FAMILIES AND TEACHERS (LIFT)
Target: Elementary school children and
their parents

Like the two programs below, Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT) trains both children (in social skills) and parents (in child-rearing). The classroom portion targets first- and fifth-graders and includes 20 one-hour sessions delivered over ten weeks. In the adult half of LIFT, parent groups meet weekly for six weeks. Children who participate in LIFT exhibit less physical aggression on the playground, better social skills, and, in the long term, less chance of associating with delinquent peers, using alcohol, or being arrested.

Contact: John B. Reid, Oregon Social Learning Center, 160 East 4th Avenue, Eugene, OR 97401. (541) 485-2711.

IOWA STRENGTHENING
FAMILIES PROGRAM
Target: Sixth-graders and their families

The Iowa Strengthening Families Program takes place in seven weekly sessions of parent and child training, designed to improve parenting skills and family communication. The program has helped cut alcohol initiation by 30 to 60 percent after two years and lowered rates of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use and drunkenness after four. It also improves parenting, parent-child communication and family bonding.

<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu>

Contact: Richard Spoth, Social and Behavioral Research Center for Rural Health, ISU Research Park, Building 2, Suite 500, 2625 North Loop Drive, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50010. (515) 294-4518.

PREPARING FOR THE
DRUG-FREE YEARS
Target: Parents and students

Preparing for the Drug-Free Years is a family training program that promotes healthy, protective parent-child interactions. It takes place in five sessions. Both students and parents attend the one on peer pressure, while the remaining four include only parents and focus on: risk factors for adolescent drug use, effective parenting skills, managing anger and family conflict, and involving children in family activities. These programs have improved child-family relationships and reduced alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use for up to four years after participation.

Contact: J. David Hawkins, Ph.D., University of Washington, Social Development Research Group, 9725 3rd Avenue N.E., Suite 402, Seattle, WA 98115. (206) 685-1997.

PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE
THINKING STRATEGIES (PATHS)
Target: Elementary school children

There are two school programs that focus on teaching social skills to students: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) and I Can Problem Solve. PATHS begins in kindergarten and continues through fifth grade. Three times a week, PATHS personnel deliver lessons on emotional competence—that is, expressing, understanding and regulating feelings—as well as overall self-control, social dexterity, and interpersonal problem-solving. The program has reduced several risk factors, such as aggression, anxiety and depression, conduct problems, and lack of self-control. It works for both regular and special-education students.

Contact: Mark T. Greenberg, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Health and Human Development, Pennsylvania State University, 110 Henderson Building, South University Park, PA 16802-6504. (814) 863-0112.

I CAN PROBLEM SOLVE
Target: Elementary school children

Developed over 35 years of research, I Can Problem Solve has succeeded with students in nursery school, kindergarten, and grades five

and six. In 12 small-group sessions over three months, it teaches children to spot problems, recognize the feelings and perspectives of others, consider the consequences of alternative courses of action, and then choose the best. In evaluations, I Can Problem Solve has improved classroom behavior and children's problem-solving skills for up to four years afterwards. It works for all children, though it has been most effective with youngsters in poor, urban neighborhoods.

Contact: Myrna B. Shure, MCP-Hahnemann University, Clinical and Health Psychology Department, Broad and Vine Streets, MS 626, Philadelphia, PA 19102-1192. (215) 762-7205. For ICPS materials, contact Research Press (217-352-3275).

FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS TOGETHER (FAST Track)

Target: Disruptive kindergarten children and their parents

Families and Schools Together, or the FAST Track project, is a full slate of strategies—all aimed at preventing severe behavior problems among kindergartners by increasing communication and strengthening bonds between the school, home and child. It thereby seeks to enhance kids' social lives, problem-solving abilities, and general well-being. FAST Track improves several risk factors associated with youth violence, including academic achievement and parent-child relationships.

Contacts: Karen Bierman, Pennsylvania State University; John Coie and John Lochman, Duke University; Kenneth Dodge, Vanderbilt University; Mark

Greenberg and Robert McMahon, University of Washington, 110 Henderson Building South, University Park, PA, 16802-6504. (814) 863-0112.

THE INCREDIBLE YEARS SERIES

Target: At-risk young children 3 to 8 and their parents

Another bundle of strategies, The Incredible Years Series is a trio of curricula, one each for parents, teachers and children. Together, they aim to promote social skills in children at risk. Parents learn how to raise their kids better, teachers learn to manage their students more effectively, and children learn how to handle anger, resolve conflicts, and generally deal with others more skillfully. Instructors use videotapes in each curriculum. Evaluations of The Incredible Years Series reveal positive effects on child conduct at home and cognitive problem solving with peers. The impact lasts for at least a year.

Contact: Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Ph.D., Parenting Clinic, School of Nursing, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195. (206) 285-7565. <http://www.incredibleyears.com/>

PARENT CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER PROGRAMS

Target: Low-income families with infants

Parent training is one of a broad array of family services offered through Parent Child Development Center Programs. The parent-training segment focuses on mothers and addresses infant

and child development, home management, and family communication. These programs improve mother-child relationships and reduce a variety of risk factors, including child antisocial behavior and fighting.

Contact: Dale Johnson-Stone,
Department of Psychology, University
of Houston-University Park, Houston,
TX 77004. (713) 743-8612.

PARENT-CHILD
INTERACTION TRAINING

Target: Low-income parents with
disturbed preschoolers

The Parent-Child Interaction Training program addresses impoverished families whose preschool children have at least one behavioral or emotional problem. Parents participate in four to five small-group sessions in which they learn parenting skills such as management of child behavior. This intervention does in fact improve their skills and reduces children's antisocial behaviors, including aggression and anxiety.

Contact: Joseph Strayhorn, Ph.D., Early
Childhood Behavior Disorders Clinic, 1
Allegheny Square, Suite 414,
Pittsburgh, PA 15212.

PREVENTIVE INTERVENTION
Target: Troubled middle-schoolers

Preventive Intervention is a two-year program that reinforces good behavior in school. It begins in seventh grade and focuses on students with

family difficulties, feeble academic motivation, or disciplinary records. In addition to rewarding classroom actions, the program improves communication between teachers, students and parents about behavior and attendance at school. It has shown both short- and long-term effectiveness on a variety of risk factors.

See:
<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/promise/preventf.htm>

Contact: Brenna H. Bry, Ph.D.,
Graduate School of Applied and
Professional Psychology, Rutgers
University, Box 819, Piscataway, NJ
08854.

THE QUANTUM
OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM*
Target: High school students

The Quantum Opportunities Program offers a variety of aids to students and—unusually—spurs motivation with monetary bonuses. Students receive up to 250 hours of services that enhance academic skills, provide opportunities in the community, and target personal development, life skills, career planning, and other areas. The program rewards students with modest cash and scholarship incentives. It significantly increased high-school graduation and enrollment in college among the participants. Arrests for participants were only three-tenths those of students in a control group.

In 2001 the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found this program cost taxpayers \$8,855 per participant, but saved a total of \$16,428 per participant in judicial system and victim costs.

<http://www.open.org/~westcapt/bp63.htm>

Contacts: C. Benjamin Lattimore, Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Inc., 1415 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122. (212) 236-4500, ext. 251; Andrew Hahn, Brandeis University, Heller Graduate School, The Center for Human† Resources, Waltham, MA 02254-9110. (617) 736-3851.

YALE CHILD WELFARE PROJECT
Target: Low-income mothers with first-born infants

In the Yale Child Welfare Project, social workers visit homes to train parents and deliver other services. Like Prenatal and Infancy Home Visitation by Nurses, it focuses on the healthy, first-born infants of poverty-level mothers in the inner cities. The 30-month program includes not only weekly home visits, but also pediatric medical care, psychological services and early day-care education for children. Ten-year follow-ups of families involved in the Project show that the program has positive effects on parent involvement in their children's education, academic achievement and antisocial behavior.

Contact: Victoria Seitz, Yale University, Department of Psychology, Box 11a, Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520.

III. WHAT TO TELL KIDS ABOUT GUNS

Horrors like April 1999 massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado suggest that our schools are dangerous, when they are not. In fact they are among the safest places for kids. Each week close to 40 young people die violently in the United States, but fewer than one percent of these deaths occur at schools. The chance of one's child dying from a gun at school each year is minuscule, around 1 in 2 million. The late afternoon is much more dangerous. Yet school violence shocks us more, and with reason. Adults run schools and our tax dollars fund them. They should be havens.

Guns remain a threat, despite the drop in weapons-carrying. The United States leads the developed world in the firearm-related murders of children, and its rate is twice that of the next highest nation, Finland. Sixty percent of youths jailed in the United States see nothing wrong with shooting someone to "get what you want." Overall, guns cause most of the worst violence.

And they are amazingly common. Some 192 million guns are in private hands today. At least 25 million households have handguns and 50 percent of owners keep them loaded. People typically cite self-defense as their key reason for owning guns, yet suicides, homicides, and accidental deaths from guns in the home outnumber deaths linked to self-defense by 40 to 1. Moreover, this vast pool of armaments is the prime source of guns for young people. Most get them from family and friends. Only five percent have asked someone else to purchase a gun for them.

Guns are dangerous, and everyone who works with young people must teach them how to act if they see or hear about someone with a gun. Women Against Gun Violence, an organization based in Los Angeles, California, offers these suggestions:

TELL CHILDREN AGES 3-8:

If you see a gun at a friend's house . . .

Get away from the gun.
Tell a grown-up.
Tell your friend not to touch the gun.
Call your mom or dad and/or go home.

If you're in a house and hear shots . . .

Duck and cover.
Stay away from windows.

TELL CHILDREN AGES 8-10:

If you're at school and a friend or another student takes out a gun . . .

Don't touch the gun.
Try to get away safely.
Tell an adult whom you trust.
Tell your friend that you don't want to be around guns because someone could get hurt or killed.
Talk about ways to solve fights without violence of any kind.

TELL JUNIOR OR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

If a friend carries a gun . . .

It puts you in danger. Too many things can go wrong, especially in the presence of drugs or alcohol, or if an argument erupts. The result can be

deadly. The best thing to do is separate yourself from any person with a gun. About 80% of people killed with a gun knew the person who pulled the trigger. Make sure your friend knows you're not foolish enough to think that carrying a gun is smart.

If you feel you are in danger and think about getting a gun for protection . . .

Realize that a gun is more a threat to you than a safeguard. If you carry a gun, it will more likely injure you or someone you know than an unknown attacker. And understand that you can protect yourself in other ways. Walk in well-lit areas after dark and avoid walking alone. Take a self-defense class. Carry a personal/body alarm.

To stay safe . . .

Avoid people and places where you suspect violence might flare up, such as parties where there will be a lot of drugs and alcohol or hangouts where violence has erupted before.

Have willpower. If you become involved in a dispute, don't resort to violence to resolve it. Learn about conflict resolution and mediation. Take a course, then teach your friends.

NOTE: It may be difficult to talk to teenagers about this subject. Here are some suggestions to make it easier:

Take a firm stand, but don't be self-righteous and overly judgmental.
Be patient. Don't rush it.
Learn from them about their experience, feelings and about gun violence.
Be persuasive rather than demanding and overbearing.
If they tell you something in confidence, keep it confidential. If you

feel that you can't, let them know before you pass on the information. Remember that it is especially important to protect the confidentiality of someone who has told you about a gun-related incident.

Some discussion questions you might use with teenagers:

Do they know about anyone who has been shot, or have they heard about anyone? What happened?
Do they know about kids at school having guns or taking part in violent activities? What are these kids like? What are their own fears and opinions about guns?
Has anyone ever approached them to buy a gun? How did they respond? How did they feel?
Have they ever seen a real gun? How did that feel and under what circumstances did this occur?
Do they feel any pressure to get involved with gun activity?

IV. BULLYING: A SPECIAL LOOK

Bullying is a disease of the schoolyard. The Columbine killers endured it. Charles Andy Williams, who on March 5, 2001 murdered two people and injured 13 at the high school in Santee, California, had often been the butt of jokes. These are rare and spectacular cases, but bullying is an everyday problem in many places.

It is a distinct kind of violence, somewhat like child abuse continued in the wider world. The powerful torment the helpless. Bullies harm others both physically—as by hitting, kicking, pushing, and choking—and emotionally—as by threatening, taunting, teasing, and spreading vicious rumors. This is violence itself, and it can provoke violence when its victims finally retaliate. As Eli H. Newberger, of Harvard Medical School, says, “The ‘victim-to-victimizer’ transition is a familiar notion to people who work in battered women’s shelters, child abuse treatment programs, and adult prisons. Stated simply, the offending persons have themselves previously suffered serious abuse, often in childhood, and have stored up horrible feelings of not being able to stop the unacceptable from happening to them and their dearest intimates.”

Bullies don’t just appear spontaneously. They arise from numerous causes, like violence itself. Individual, family, and school factors all combine to breed a bully.

Individual traits are important, and not every child is equally likely to become a bully, not matter what the environment. The best-documented individual quality is temperament: Bullies are usually active and impulsive.

Among boys, they also tend to be strong and well-coordinated. Though some reports assert that bullies lack self-esteem, it isn’t true. They are usually average or above average in this quality.

Certain child-rearing practices predict whether children will become bullies. The perfect incubator includes inattention and a lack of warmth toward the child, along with poor supervision and aggressive parental behavior. The latter trait may include physical and verbal aggression by parents toward the child, or toward each other.

Schools can also inadvertently nurture bullying, mainly through lax supervision and a tolerance of playground tyranny. Supervision is critical at school as it is at home, and teachers should intervene when they see or hear of bullying. In addition, the school social climate should be warm and accepting of all students.

Who Becomes a Victim?

Victims tend to have a very different temperament from bullies. They are often shy and quiet, with few friends and little social support at the school. They may be physically weak or may not feel confident of their strength. Hence they rarely stand up to the bully or retaliate.

Most victims do nothing to provoke their tormentors. Their helplessness does it for them. But one subgroup is different: “provocative victims.” Such children are impulsive and socially maladroit, and they often show annoying and inappropriate behavior. These youngsters may also try to bully others, so they become both victims and bullies.

What Are the Consequences?

Bullying can be a terrible affliction to its victims. They tend to be unhappy children in the first place, and it

worsens their anxiety, fear, and self-esteem. To escape the torture, they often try to avoid school and social interaction itself. Some victims commit suicide.

They can also display long-term effects, especially if the bullying persists. In one follow-up study, former male victims were fairly well-adjusted by their early twenties. However, they were also more likely to be depressed and they had lower self-esteem than a control group. In general, the less bullying the child had endured, the better the outcome.

Bullies face consequences too. They tend to become aggressive adults with a much higher chance of receiving multiple criminal convictions. This finding partly reflects the fact that physical aggression among children is a risk factor for future violence.

Finally, bullying poisons the learning environment, and youngsters who simply see bullying also suffer. Bystanders can feel fear or anxiety at the sight of one peer tormenting another, especially if no one intervenes to stop it. Moreover, children who see bullies get away with their abuse are more apt to use aggression themselves in the future.

How to Stop Bullying

In late 1982, a newspaper reported that three 10-14 year old boys from northern Norway had committed suicide, probably as a result of severe bullying. This event provoked outrage in the Norwegian media and public, and caused the government to launch a nationwide campaign against bullying in the schools. This effort in turn led to the research of Dan Olweus, and ultimately to the most successful anti-bullying program on earth: the Bullying Prevention Program.

This program targets students in elementary and middle school. It begins with an anonymous student questionnaire designed to reveal the contours of the problem. Armed with this information, parents and teachers intervene at the school, classroom, and individual levels to address the bullying problems identified in the questionnaire. At the classroom level, for instance, teachers and students devise and enforce simple rules about bullying. At the individual level, parents and teachers directly confront bullies and victims.

In Bergen, Norway, this approach cut bullying by 50 percent in two years. Theft, vandalism, and truancy also fell, and the social climate improved. Studies of the program in England, Germany, Canada, Belgium, and the United States have yielded similar results.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/chapt/BullyExec.htm>

V. FURTHER PROGRAMS

People in communities across the country are pulling together to prevent youth violence, often with promising results. They are taking various approaches. Some emphasize teaching kids how to deal with guns. Others stress nonviolent conflict resolution. Still others try to establish alternative family-like environments, or offer vocational education or mentoring. Below are organizations that may assist you in your efforts to help young people call on character for answers to life's problems.

AL WOOTEN JR.
HERITAGE CENTER
Los Angeles, CA (323) 756-7203

In 1990 a grieving mother wanted to “help the next generation of children” after her son was killed in a drive-by shooting. She opened this nonprofit center. Located in the heart of South Central Los Angeles, it offers more than just a diversion from the streets. Its programs include a diverse array of classes, from reading to African-American history to “entrepreneur workshops” where volunteers explain the mechanics of running a small business. Though not a licensed school, the center offers these volunteer-taught classes free to area youths to combat the high school dropout rate. Since 1990, the center has serviced over 500 young people and their families, curbing violence by offering constructive programs, such as:

- Mentoring with Big Brothers of LA.
- Field trips to museums and parks; sports programs.

- Alley and graffiti clean-up, tree-planting.
- Parenting workshops.

ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT
Los Angeles, CA (818) 788-2662
www.irol.com/avc/
E-mail: IHERC@hotmail.com

This program began with an epidemiologist who believes violence is an epidemic disease we must prevent by education—not merely treat in the emergency rooms. The project encourages parents and children to relinquish toy guns for two reasons: 1) to help prevent the accidental deaths of children who mistake real guns for toy ones, and 2) to make children less likely to resolve disputes with firearms when they are adults. The project assembles elementary school children at community centers and schools where:

- Instructors teach that guns should never be the means to resolve personal conflicts.
- They ask children to donate their toy weapons to create a piece of art or a billboard advertising the dangers of guns. For their contributions, the youngsters are awarded a certificate and a T-shirt.

BERKELEY DISPUTE
RESOLUTION SERVICE (BDRS)
Berkeley, CA (510) 428-1811
www.bdrs.org/

BDRS offers neighbors, friends, family, landlords and tenants a neutral forum in which to peacefully settle disputes. The

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center boasts an 80% resolution rate among disputants, most of whom are referred by city officials and police. BDRS has a number of youth programs geared towards curbing gang and teen violence by teaching conflict-resolution skills.

- BDRS provides outreach and training services to schools.
- Its Young Adult Project makes presentations about conflict resolution to the Spanish speaking community.
- Its Youth Employment Opportunity Program teaches at-risk kids how to deal with anger and frustration and emphasizes the importance of staying in school.
- Through peer panels, youth mediate disputes in schools.

CENTER FOR CONFLICT
RESOLUTION
Chicago, IL (312) 922-6464
E-mail: mccrcnyack@aol.com

The Center has offered mediation services to Chicago residents since 1979. Its school program covers elementary, middle and secondary levels, teaching children communication and problem-solving skills along with effective mediation.

CHARACTER COMICS
Albuquerque, NM (505) 275-1773

Started by an artistic teenager who wanted to do something about the violence and other social ills afflicting his community, this enterprise helps

teens express themselves through the creation of socially-conscious comic books they distribute to elementary schools.

- The group first gathers to discuss story ideas. Once the teens settle on a story, they assign writing, drawing and printing duties.
- The teens also visit classrooms to make presentations to the young readers.

COMMUNITY BOARD PROGRAM
San Francisco, CA (415) 920-3820
www.communityboards.org/
E-mail: mcembrds@conflict.net

This organization focuses on developing conflict-resolution skills and provides a neighborhood forum where people can use these skills. Currently, nearly 300 diverse individuals, aged 14 to 17, serve as conciliators/mediators. The Board works with schools to create an environment where nonviolence is popular — and violent behavior doesn't impress others. This "whole school" approach seeks to train and counsel as many students, parents and staff as possible. Program staff choose well-respected and mature students to be "conflict managers" who receive specialized and ongoing training so they can help other students think of creative ways to work out problems among themselves. The Community Board offers conflict-resolution curricular materials for classrooms at both the primary and secondary school levels.

CREATIVE RESPONSE
TO CONFLICT

Nyack, NY (845) 353-1796

E-mail: ccrcnyack@aol.com

Founded in 1972 as Children's Creative Response to Conflict, this organization boasts over 30 branches throughout the world, making it one of the oldest and largest organizations of its kind. Recognizing that the "seeds of violence are planted in children at an early age," the center offers workshops for educators on conflict management, communication and mediation, and also conducts in-class workshops. It emphasizes four themes: communication, affirmation, cooperation and conflict resolution. The group's handbook, *The Friendly Classroom*, is available in English, Spanish, Arabic and Serbo-Croatian.

FATHER FLANAGAN'S
BOYS' HOME

Boys Town, NE (800) 282-6657

www.ffbh.boystown.org/

E-mail: mhelpkids@boystown.org

Also known as Boys Town USA, this organization began 1917 as a home for abused, orphaned and handicapped children. Boys Town, an official municipality of the state of Nebraska, has its own elementary and secondary schools, a post office, and elected city officials comprised of the juvenile residents. Boys Town services include a variety of programs aimed at helping at-risk boys and girls:

- The Boys Town National Hotline — (800) 545-5771 — is a referral service for parents and

children. Staffers fielded over 350,000 calls in 1997.

- Nationwide, the program sponsors emergency shelters, foster care services and residential treatment facilities.
- Common Sense Parenting is a six-part class teaching effective parenting skills.

GANG PREVENTION THROUGH
TARGETED OUTREACH

Atlanta, GA (404) 815-5763

Which young people are at high risk for violence? This program seeks to identify both potential perpetrators and victims, and recruit them into a Boys and Girls Club mentoring program. It targets young people through direct outreach and a referral network involving courts, police, social service agencies and other community organizations. It then pairs each recruited youth with a mentor who provides academic and social counseling to help him or her resist negative peer pressure. The program uses truancy, vandalism and close contact with gang members (older siblings or other relatives) as criteria to identify at-risk youngsters.

HANDGUN EPIDEMIC LOWERING
PLAN NETWORK

Chicago, IL (773) 880-3826

www.helpnetwork.org

E-mail: contact@helpnetwork.org

This group serves as a resource center, gathering ideas and data about the

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national plague of handgun-related injuries and deaths. “HELP” disseminates information by way of articles, slides and statistics. It also connects concerned individuals and groups with local organizations that provide positive alternatives for young people.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUES

West Palm Beach, FL

(561) 844-1823

www.nationalpal.org/

E-mail: mcopnkid1@aol.com

To provide alternatives to juvenile delinquency and foster a positive relationship with police officers, “PAL” sponsors athletic and other recreational activities in which young people participate with local police officers. PAL programs reach more than three million youths throughout North America. Activities include archery, baseball, tennis, martial arts, golf, football and track and field.

- PAL also sponsors national sports tournaments.
- For youth and those involved in law enforcement, this group and its regional affiliates conduct workshops, training seminars and research projects.
- PAL also sponsors music, dance, photography and drama programs.

A member of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, the association uses the Six Pillars to teach values to their young athletes.

OAKLAND MEN’S PROJECT

Oakland, CA (510) 835-2433

The Oakland Men’s Project is a nonprofit community education and organizing program that teaches the causes of violence and specific steps individuals can take to stop violent crime. The group sponsors after-school youth programs on leadership training and nonviolent conflict resolution.

OMEGA BOYS CLUB

San Francisco, CA

(800) 765- 3437, (415) 826-8664

<http://www.street-soldiers.org/>

E-mail: obc@street-soldiers.org

Through mentoring and peer counseling, the Omega Boys Club targets African-American youths at risk for violence. Rather than allow gangs to serve as surrogate families, the Omega Boys Club seeks to provide an extended family to the boys and girls it recruits. Each youngster pledges to avoid violence and is paired with a mentor who provides academic as well as personal counseling. To replace gang codes and provide a constructive outlook, counselors working for this group teach the young people “four rules for living”:

1. Nothing is more precious than a person’s life.
2. “Friend” means, above all, “someone who would never lead you into trouble.”
3. Self-respect comes from doing the right thing — not from demonstrating one’s ability to harm others.

4. To change your situation, you need the self-discipline to change yourself.

PROYECTO PASTORAL

Los Angeles, CA (323) 881-0018

www.proyectopastoral.org/

This organization addresses the social and educational needs of the largest community of housing projects on the West Coast. Seeking to keep children from joining gangs and to offer gang members educational and vocational alternatives, Proyecto Pastoral's programs include:

- Jobs for a Future, a job placement program for at-risk youth. Believing that "the best way to stop a bullet is with a job," it links over 250 former gang members with employers every year.
- Homeboy Industries, where young people design and manufacture products like shirts and mugs for sale.
- Leadership Development Mentor Program, designed to reach girls who have been in gangs, or are at risk of joining them. Young women enroll in an eight-week course covering domestic violence, teen pregnancy, job preparation and other issues. When it ends, the program pairs girls with women mentors.

RESOLVING CONFLICT
CREATIVELY PROGRAM

Cambridge, MA (800) 370-2515,
(617) 492-1764

www.esrnational.org/about-rccp.html

E-mail: educators@esrnational.org

An initiative of Educators for Social Responsibility, this program seeks to create a school-wide environment of nonviolent conflict resolution. Its components include:

- Classroom lessons teaching young people problem-solving and negotiation skills (for kindergarten through grade 12). The "Kids' Conscious Acts of Peace Project," sponsored by Ben & Jerry's, which offers activity ideas for young people online (<http://euphoria.benjerry.com/esr/cap>).
- Student mediation programs.
- Parent, teacher and administrator training sessions that teach adults creative approaches to conflict resolution.

An intensive, three-year study of over 9,000 New York City students completed in 1998 by the National Center for Children in Poverty found that the RCCP curriculum helped reduce violent behavior in children.

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT
RISKS PROGRAM

Washington, DC (202) 289-7319
Los Angeles, CA (310) 475-6714

Developed by the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, the "STAR" curriculum teaches nonviolence with

strategies borrowed from substance abuse prevention. It emphasizes skills that enable young people from preschoolers to teenagers to resist negative peer pressure. Through role-playing, the young people rehearse skills for nonviolently managing conflict and peer pressure. The curriculum is also available in Spanish.

**TEENS, CRIME AND THE
COMMUNITY**
Washington, DC (202) 293-0088
<http://www.nationaltcc.org/>

Developed by the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Institute for Citizen Education and the Law, this program combines various community-service initiatives with a school-based antiviolence curriculum. It encourages students to design and carry out community projects aimed at cutting violent crime.

TEENS ON TARGET
Oakland, CA (510) 594-2588,
ext. 300
Los Angeles, CA (562) 401-8166

This program works to reduce violence (especially from firearms) by training youth (especially gunshot victims) to become health advocates for violence prevention. In presentations to peers and to adults who work with young people, these teens draw on personal experience to teach nonviolence. The teens develop their own curriculum and teach attendees advocacy skills to help combat violence. In addition to conducting workshops, these “peer

mentors” make themselves available for one-on-one interaction with other teens.

**TULARE COUNTY
COURT/COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**
Visalia, CA (559) 733-6785

The six schools in this Central California district serve young people expelled from “mainstream” schools for criminal behavior. Using the **CHARACTER COUNTS!** framework, these schools seek to forestall future problems by teaching ethical decision-making skills and nurturing a commitment in students to improve the community. Students at the larger schools must pass an intensive, nine-week “leadership class” focusing on the Six Pillars and case studies. Many high-risk youth participate in the Court/Community Schools’ “boot camp,” and director Angel Vasquez says it has the young people “really experiencing ethics.” It includes volunteer work at elementary schools and convalescent homes.

WEAPONS ARE REMOVED NOW!
Reseda, CA (818) 342-6186, ext. 355

Members of the student-initiated “WARN” bring their anti-weapons message to other students through raps, skits, speeches and question-and-answer sessions. The group teaches students that:

- Violence is an unacceptable way to settle disputes.
- Weapons don’t belong on campus.

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- “Blowing the whistle” on campus gun-toters is a moral obligation.

WARN has set up an anonymous hotline for reporting weapons on campus, making it easier for students to inform authorities if they spot a gun at school.

WOMEN AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE

Los Angeles, CA (310) 204-2348

www.wagv.org

This group brings together women concerned about the dangers children face in the world. They counsel young people at the California Youth Authority detention center and work to stop the proliferation of guns on the street. They make presentations to parents and students at local schools, often humanizing the issue by describing how gun violence has touched their lives. In addition, they advise parents, teachers and youth leaders how to talk to kids about guns. To heighten awareness of the problem, in 1996 the group launched The Victims Remembrance Project, a database chronicling the lives and tragic deaths of victims of violence.

YOUTH AS RESOURCES

Washington, DC (202) 261-4131

www.yar.org

E-mail: yar@ncpc.org

Research shows that young people involved in community service are less likely to commit or suffer violence. Hence the National Crime Prevention

Council founded this program to help young people design and implement local service projects. After assessing the needs of their community and deciding how they can address a specific problem, the young people draw up a budget, solicit the support of local businesses, then carry out the project.

YOUTHBUILD USA

Boston, MA (617) 623-9900

Oakland, CA (510) 663-4600

www.youthbuild.org

With over 100 programs nationwide, this agency involves unemployed, disenfranchised young people in renovating abandoned buildings to make affordable housing. A federally funded program with charter schools in several communities, YouthBuild offers educational assistance and personal counseling in addition to on-the-job vocational training. Those who receive high school diplomas through these schools and show responsibility on the construction site often go on to become peer leaders and mentors in the YouthBuild Teens Program as peer leaders and mentors, providing guidance and support to new members. An active alumni program helps these teens find gainful employment.

VI. INTERNET RESOURCES

The Internet abounds with information on youth violence. Among the best sites are:

The Bureau for At-Risk Youth

<http://www.at-risk.com>

This organization offers videos, publications and other products related to the education and development of at-risk youth. Their website includes a calendar of events (<http://www.at-risk.com/commun/calendar/calendar.htm>) and a list of other resources and links.

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence

<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/index.html>

Academic papers, online curricula and research projects are available on this University of Colorado site.

Children's Defense Fund

<http://www.childrensdefense.org>

Keyword search for "violence" to find statistics, parenting tips and information on pending federal legislation.

Common Sense about Kids and Guns

<http://www.kidsandguns.org>

An organization devoted to providing adults with information to protect kids from guns.

"Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools"

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Products/earlywrn.html>

Developed by the Department of Education and the Department of

Justice, this site helps people identify early indicators of potentially dangerous student behavior.

Gangs and At-Risk Kids

<http://home.netcom.com/~fjobrien/gangs.html>

With sections for parents and teachers on "Why Kids Join Gangs" and "How to Help Your Kid," this site also offers stories and poems submitted by former gang members.

MAD DADS

<http://www.maddadsnational.com>

"Men Against Destruction — Defending Against Drugs and Social Disorder" is a grassroots organization of concerned fathers whose projects include community policing and gang intervention.

National Center for Education Statistics Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/violence/index.html>

This report of March 18, 1998 presents findings from the Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence commissioned by NCES.

National Center for Injury Prevention & Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/dvp.htm>

Under "violence prevention" you'll find research reports, community-based projects and online publications. Sections specifically address family violence and firearm injuries.

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)

<http://www.ncjrs.org>

One of the most extensive sources of information on criminal and juvenile justice in the world, NCJRS is a

collection of clearinghouses supporting such agencies as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

National PTA's Community Violence Prevention Kit

<http://www.pta.org/events/violprev>

This kit includes a guide to organizing grassroots efforts and a community needs assessment checklist.

Pavnet (Partnership Against Violence)

<http://www.pavnet.org>

Includes information compiled from seven federal agencies, as well as a nationwide listing of programs, curricula and grants.

"Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising"

<http://www.ncjrs.org/works>

Prepared for the National Institute of Justice and presented to Congress, this report from the University of Maryland's Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice evaluates crime prevention strategies that are "family-based," "school-based," and "community-based."

Student Pledge Against Gun Violence

<http://www.pledge.org>

This pledge arose from the "Day of National Concern About Young People and Gun Violence," observed nationwide during the first week of October. You can print copies of the pledge from this site.

U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

Browse the section "Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention" for information on federal grants, conferences and training.

Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General (2001)

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/report.html>

A careful interpretation of the research and a mine of information in general.

Warning Signs: A Violence Prevention Guide for Youth

<http://helping.apa.org/warningsigns/index.html>

MTV and the American Psychological Association have teamed up to launch an anti-violence campaign aimed at young people.