Preventing Youth Violence

What is youth violence?

Youth violence is a serious public health problem and an adverse childhood experience (ACE) that can have long-term impact on health and wellbeing. Youth Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24.[1] Youth violence can include fighting, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence. A young person can be involved with youth violence as a victim, offender, or witness. The good news is violence is preventable, and we can all help young people grow up violence-free.

How big is the problem?

Thousands of people experience youth violence every day. While the extent and types of youth violence vary across communities and demographic groups, youth violence negatively impacts youth in all communities—urban, suburban, rural, and tribal.

- **Youth violence is common.** Homicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24 and the leading cause of death for non-Hispanic Black or African American youth.[2,3] Each day, more than 1,000 youth are treated in emergency departments for physical assault-related injuries.[2]

- **Some youth are at greater risk than others.** Research shows:

  - Sexual minority teens are more likely to experience multiple forms of violence compared to their heterosexual peers.[2]

  - Youth violence disproportionately impacts Black or African American youth and young adults. Black or African American youth and young adults are at higher risk for the most physically harmful forms of violence (e.g., homicides, fights with injuries, aggravated assaults) compared with White youth and young adults.[3]

- **Youth violence is costly.** Youth homicides and nonfatal physical assault-related injuries result in nearly $21 billion annually in combined medical and lost productivity costs alone, not including costs associated with the criminal justice system, psychological and social consequences for victims, perpetrators and their families, or costs incurred by communities.[4]

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Estimated Cost of Youth Violence

Nearly **$21 Billion** annually*

*Medical and lost productivity costs associated with youth homicides and nonfatal physical assault-related injuries

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What are the consequences?

Experiencing youth violence can harm development and contribute to impaired decision-making, learning challenges, decreased connections to peers and adults, and trouble coping with stress. Youth violence can have serious and lasting effects on young people's physical, mental, and social health.

Adverse childhood experiences, like youth violence, are associated with negative health and well-being outcomes across the life course and disproportionately impact communities of color.[2] Youth violence increases the risk for behavioral and mental health difficulties, including future violence perpetration and victimization, smoking, substance use, obesity, high-risk sexual behavior, depression, academic difficulties, school dropout, and suicide.[1,2]

Violence increases health care costs, decreases property value, negatively impacts school attendance, and access to community support services. Addressing the short- and long-term consequences of violence strains community resources and limits the resources that states, and communities have to address other needs.[1]
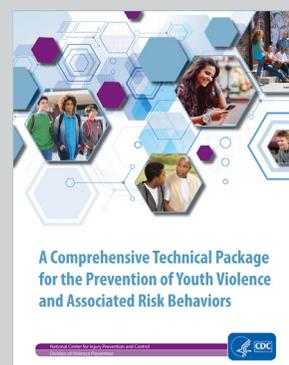
How can we prevent youth violence?

We can protect youth and support their growth into healthy adults by preventing violence. There are a number of factors that may increase or decrease the risk of youth experiencing or perpetrating violence. To prevent youth violence, we must understand and address the factors that put people at risk for or protect them from violence.

CDC developed a resource, *A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors*, to help communities take advantage of the best available evidence to prevent youth violence. This resource is available in English and Spanish. The strategies in the technical package are intended to shape individual behaviors and the relationship, family, school, community, and societal factors that influence violence's risk and protective factors.

Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of violence. It is important for prevention efforts to consider societal conditions disproportionately experienced by Black or African American youth and young adults, including concentrated poverty, residential segregation, and other forms of racism that limit opportunities to grow up in healthy, violence-free environments. Addressing the root causes of violence is critical to reducing high rates of violence in communities of color.[3]

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

A Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence

A **technical package** is a collection of strategies based on the best available evidence to prevent or reduce public health problems. The **strategy** lays out the direction and actions to prevent youth violence. The **approach** includes the specific ways to advance the strategy through programs, policies and practices. The **evidence** for each of the approaches in preventing youth violence and associated risk factors is also included.

A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors

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References

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