

# Preventing Youth Violence

## What is youth violence?

Youth violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24.<sup>1</sup> It typically involves young people hurting other peers who are unrelated to them and who they may or may not know well. Youth violence can take different forms. Examples include fights, bullying, threats with weapons, and gang-related violence. A young person can be involved with youth violence as a victim, offender, or witness.

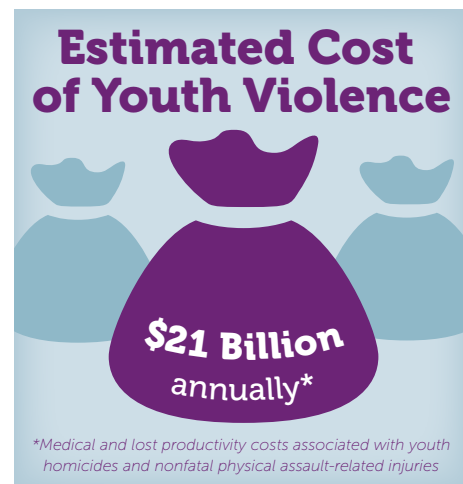
Youth violence starts early. Physical aggression can be common among toddlers, but most children learn alternatives to using violence to solve problems and express their emotions before starting school. Some children may remain aggressive and become more violent. Other early childhood risk factors include impulsive behavior, poor emotional control, and lack of social and problem-solving skills.<sup>1</sup> Many risk factors are the result of experiencing chronic stress,\* which can alter and/or harm the brain development of children and youth.

Youth violence is an adverse childhood experience and is connected to other forms of violence, including child abuse and neglect, teen dating violence, adult intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and suicide. Different forms of violence have common risk and protective factors, and victims of one form of violence are more likely to experience other forms of violence.

## How big is the problem?

Thousands of people experience youth violence every day. While the magnitude 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.** Nearly 1 in 5 high school students reported being bullied on school property in the last year.<sup>2</sup>
- **Youth violence kills and injures.** Homicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24. Each day, about 14 young people are victims of homicide and almost 1,400 are treated in emergency departments for nonfatal assault-related injuries.<sup>3</sup>
- **Youth violence is costly.** Youth homicides and nonfatal physical assault-related injuries result in more than \$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.<sup>3</sup>



\* Chronic stress includes such issues as living in impoverished neighborhoods, living in dilapidated housing, frequently moving, experiencing food insecurity, experiencing racism, limited access to support and medical services, and living in homes with violence, mental health problems, substance abuse, and other instability.

## What are the consequences?

Youth violence has serious and lasting effects on the physical, mental, and social health of young people. It is a leading cause of death for young people and results in more than 500,000 nonfatal injuries each year.<sup>2</sup> The impact of youth violence goes beyond physical consequences. Adverse childhood experiences, like youth violence, are associated with negative health and well-being outcomes across the life course. 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.<sup>1</sup>

Youth violence affects entire communities. Violence increases health care costs, decreases property value, and disrupts social services. Youth violence negatively impacts perceived and actual safety, participation in community events, youth's school attendance, and viability of businesses. 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 and goals.

## How can we stop youth violence before it starts?

The good news is youth violence is preventable. CDC's technical package for preventing youth violence helps communities and states prioritize prevention strategies based on the best available evidence.<sup>1</sup> The strategies and approaches in the technical package are intended to shape individual behaviors as well as the relationship, family, school, community, and societal factors that influence risk and protective factors for violence. They are meant to work together and to be used in combination in a multi-level, multi-sector effort to prevent violence.



### Promote family environments that support healthy development

- Promote family environments that support healthy development
- Parenting skill and family relationship programs



### Provide quality education early in life

- Preschool enrichment with family engagement



### Strengthen youth's skills

- Universal school-based programs



### Connect youth to caring adults and activities

- Mentoring programs
- After-school programs



### Create protective community environments

- Modify the physical and social environment
- Reduce exposure to community-level risks
- Street outreach and community norm change

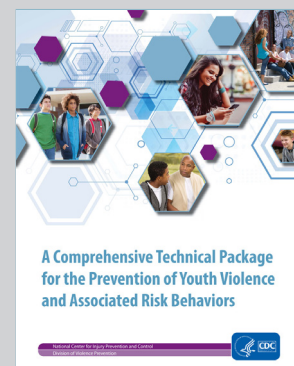


### Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk

- Treatment to lessen the harms of violence exposures
- Treatment to prevent problem behavior and further involvement in violence
- Hospital-community partnerships

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

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.



## References

1. David-Ferdon C, Vivolo-Kantor AM, Dahlberg LL, Marshall KJ, Rainford N, Hall JE. *A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>.
2. Kann L, McManus T, Harris WA, et al. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2015. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report--Surveillance Summaries* 2016; 65(SS-06):1-174. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/ss/pdfs/ss6506.pdf>.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online] 2016; [cited 2018 Aug 6] Available from [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury).