

Preventing Youth Violence – Opportunities for Action

[A CDC report](#)

A published report by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) demonstrates youth violence is a significant problem, a critical reality. A glance at any news source reports the same truth. So what can we do?

***Working together with purposeful focus, communities can intervene building student leaders for a Bright Future!
That is the focus of 4Kids and Leadership Academy!***

First though let's understand the facts and recommended solutions from the CDC.

Overview of the facts: All forms of violence, including youth violence, suicidal behavior, child maltreatment, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse, negatively affect the health and well-being of our country. Youth violence, in particular, is a significant public health problem. Noteworthy facts include:

- Each and every day, approximately 13 young people in the United States are victims of homicide and an additional 1,642 visit our hospital emergency departments because of physical assault-related injuries.
- Youth who are victims of violence also have a higher risk for many other poor physical and mental health problems, including smoking, obesity, high-risk sexual behavior, asthma, depression, academic problems, and suicide.
- Young people are frequently the ones hurting other youth and commit a significant proportion of the violence in communities—youth aged 10–24 years represented 40% of all arrests for violent crimes in 2012.

Many of our young people and communities view the grim facts about youth violence as unavoidable and have accepted youth violence as a societal norm. However, the truth is that youth violence is not inevitable. *Youth violence is preventable! Our communities can be safe and productive again if we will respond.*

If Not, the Costs Are and Will Be High: In addition to the physical, emotional, social and societal consequences of violence for youth, their families, schools, and communities, violence has a range of financial costs to society. The full costs of youth violence are difficult to quantify, but there are known short-term as well as long-term impacts on the health, social, educational, employment and judicial systems.

Even when looking at narrow descriptions of cost, a picture of the huge burden of youth violence begins to emerge. In 2010, the combined cost from just medical care and lost work due to homicide among youth aged 10–24 years was an estimated \$9 billion. Nonfatal injuries among youth that result from physical assaults and are treated in hospitals and emergency departments were another \$8.5 billion in medical and work

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loss costs. The combined total of \$17.5 billion is an underestimate of the true toll of youth violence because it does not include the costs associated with the criminal justice system, including arrest, prosecution, incarceration, and re- entry. It also does not include costs associated with addressing the psychological and social consequences for victims, perpetrators, and their families.

These estimates also do not reflect the effects of youth violence on social service agencies, functioning of schools, and property values, which can be negatively impacted by the direct or indirect effects of youth violence. Financial losses and required expenditures to address youth violence reduce the resources that are available to support other community needs and goals. The cost of arresting, prosecuting, incarcerating, and rehabilitating offenders is the fastest growing part of most state budgets and runs into the billions of dollars per year.

Also, there is strong evidence that exposure to violence contributes to a range of physical and mental health consequences, including smoking, high-risk sexual behavior, depression, obesity, asthma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, and suicide. The financial toll associated with these consequences exponentially increases the costs associated with youth violence.

What Can We Do? The CDC research says ...

We often begin our prevention activities by identifying youth, families, and communities that are at relatively higher risk for youth violence and putting into place prevention approaches to address their needs.

“Our success will be limited, though, if we only implement prevention activities that meet the needs of the more obvious at-risk groups.”

Broad prevention approaches that positively affect all youth, their relationships, and the environments in which they grow and learn *are the most likely to be effective in eliminating youth violence and other adolescent health problems.*

Broad prevention strategies help all individuals or groups regardless of their level of risk and are important to achieving widespread and sustained reductions in youth violence.

For example, universal youth violence prevention activities include providing information and skill development to all children in a school rather than only to students who have been aggressive or have other risk factors.

Prevention approaches that can benefit all members of a community also include changing norms about the acceptability of violence and addressing the physical characteristics of housing, communities, and schools to improve perceived and actual safety, to reduce opportunities for crime and violence, and to promote positive behaviors and interactions.

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Here are the Key Prevention Strategies from the CDC –

Evidence-based youth violence prevention strategies have become more evident as our research has grown.

Rather than focusing on the problems that need to be reduced, these broad and overlapping strategies emphasize how the strengths within individuals, families, communities, and society can be enhanced – A pro-active solution is needed!

The implementation of a combination of these strategies is likely to result in stronger and more sustainable improvements in health and safety than the implementation of a single strategy.

- **Build children’s and adolescents’ skills and competencies to choose nonviolent, safe behaviors.**
- **Foster safe, stable, nurturing relationships between young people and their parents and caregivers.**
- **Build and maintain positive relationships between young people and caring adults in their community.**
- **Develop and implement school-wide activities and policies to foster social connectedness and a positive environment.**
- **Improve and sustain a safe physical environment in communities and create spaces to strengthen social relationships.**
- **Build viable and stable communities by promoting economic opportunities and growth.**
- **Businesses can take action by engaging in public- private partnerships that collect resources from businesses and invest them in local services and activities for youth.**
- **Facilitate the social cohesion and collective efficacy of the community. Build uncommon bonds.**
- **Change societal norms about the acceptability of violence and willingness to intervene.**
- **Change the social and structural conditions that affect youth violence and lead to health inequities.**

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Now, the Leading to Learn and 4Kids solution.

Realizing the problem with increasing specificity, we have spent the past six years developing a pro-active community engagement solution. Today, we are seeing great results. The next step is to scale the pilot across our county.

So who are we and what do we do?

Learning to Learn is the consultant group who has produced the curriculum and programming strategy used to empower community engagement. A comprehensive outcomes focused model, it is designed to bring adults of all ages together with kids and build bonds of support for students within the middle school setting. Our goals are to teach Social Intelligence, Emotional Management while helping kids develop LifeSkill Habits that will move us forward as the Nation we set out to be.

4Kids is a partnership of the faith community committed to supporting all of our kids and pursuing collaboratively a brighter tomorrow. We stand together in recognition of our differences and commonalities and choosing love we are united to be one in our service to schools, to kids and to God! One Nation under God, with a chosen trust in the Sovereign Divine, our inclusion of all people does not deny faith, or deny God but actively embraces both as The Beloved Community! We frequently say, we are the activation of Martin Luther King's dream. We are responders to the United States Pledge of Allegiance, trusting in God's leadership!

Our distinctive is an overall programmatic structure that is organized to listen to the Students, Teachers and Administrators of a school and respond. Working from a menu of optional programs within a pre-established structure, we are guided by the needs of the specific community. Kids and staff alike identify the challenges they face and our Lead Team staff is trained to respond with programmatic suggestions. We are both flexible and intentional as any good consultant should be!

The one program which is essential to our outcomes model is Leadership Academy (LA). This training program involves every 6th grade student in a school with our volunteer team through an in-class citizen development curriculum. We seek to build appreciation for the history of our United States and once again become morally responsible citizens looking out for each others welfare.

Our research shows middle school students are at a critical stage in their development. Learning to think for themselves they are meant to develop social and emotional responses equipping them to thrive in life while finding their path to success and contribution. To this end LA targets the development of: (1) *a positive growth mindset*, (2) *the internal grit and determination to strive for excellence, never giving up*, and (3) *the formation of habits embracing the Beloved Community Citizen Initiative*.

We can become a Nation once again known for its Freedom and Prosperity as we each choose wisely who will be and collectively determine to help all our citizens take responsibility for self-development. We can know Life, Liberty and the Happiness that comes purposeful living for the common good of all humanity!