

Reducing Violence: Schools Can Take a Lead

When it comes to school violence, many think individual students—delinquents—are *the* source of the problem. They believe if you punish the teen, work at correcting the delinquent behavior, the problem will be solved.

What's wrong?

Recent studies indicate that isolating violent or disruptive students, suspending them, or dealing solely with delinquent behaviors, are unlikely to be successful strategies for controlling behavior. Programs targeted solely at the individuals committing violent acts just don't work.

The Solution: Working with Youth, Families, Schools and Communities

Adolescent violence is a complex issue. Schools can't solve the problem alone. Poverty, witnessing violence and experiencing abuse in the home, accessibility of guns, and exposure to violence in the media are just some of the things that contribute to violent behavior.

Children, youth, families, schools and communities are parts of the solution. Combinations of strategies in each area are most likely to work when they target both risk and protective factors. Schools can play a leading role.

The Research: "What We Know"

From reviews of the literature, databases and phone interviews with Minnesota prevention workers and school principals, we know that prevention programs that are most likely to work capitalize on protective factors:

- Opportunities for youth participation

Strategies that Don't Work

Metal detectors

tell students they aren't trustworthy; they are unlikely to reduce violence and may actually encourage violence.

Segregating aggressive kids

increases the likelihood of acts of violence.

Individual counseling

to reduce violent behavior addresses only one of the behaviors that tend to cluster in these high risk teens.

Suspension

can increase the likelihood of poor academic performance and feeling disconnected from school.

- Good communication
- School achievement
- Family connectedness
- Connectedness to other adults
- High expectations for school achievement
- Emotional health

For More Information

If you want to know more about school violence or issues of significance and concern in the lives of Minnesota teens, contact:

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Best Bets

Promising strategies
that inform policy...

For individuals...

Some youth violence results from individual behavior. Promising programs include:

- Conflict resolution programs that are developmentally appropriate.
- Peer mediation programs that teach skills for real-life situations.

For Schools...

Safe schools support a culture of non-violence and fairness. Promising strategies include:

- Integrating peers who have good social skills with those who don't.
- Increasing teachers' ability to make students feel safe, welcome, and connected to school.
- Developing programs that allow youth at risk to contribute to the community.

Safe schools create a landscape of safety which include:

- Buildings and grounds that are clean and inviting.
- Halls and lunchrooms that are monitored.

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