

PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE PROMOTES ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Youth violence prevention is essential to ensure the economic strength of our nation. Leaders in public, private, and non-profit sectors are increasingly recognizing the importance of preventing youth violence. This recognition has led to investments in efforts that connect evidence-informed violence prevention strategies – such as substance abuse treatment services and mentoring programs – with initiatives that expand economic opportunity for individuals and communities.

Preventing youth violence makes communities more attractive for investment by businesses and homeowners.

Evidence shows that business viability, property values, and social services are negatively impacted by high rates of violence.¹ Fortunately, youth violence is preventable. **Public health approaches that are proactive, comprehensive, and inclusive – and prevent violence before it starts – can help bolster economic development.** Furthermore, the flipside is also true: Strengthening local economies improves the health of communities and helps keep our young people safe.

Preventing youth violence is key to building a strong American workforce.

Involvement in violence can disrupt a young person’s life trajectory in many ways. Being a victim of violence during adolescence has been shown to adversely impact academic performance, educational attainment, labor force participation, and future earning potential.² Additionally, the interplay between youth violence and substance abuse can be detrimental to workforce readiness.^{3,4} As the U.S. workforce ages, investments in youth violence prevention are increasingly important. These investments can help ensure that young people are ready and able to fully participate in the labor force, particularly in parts of the country where substance abuse and related issues are presenting major challenges for employers.^{5,6}

Preventing youth violence enhances comprehensive community and economic development.

Youth violence is often high in the same places where unemployment is high, commercial corridors are vacant or blighted, and other economic and social challenges exist. Failure to address youth violence undermines efforts to address these other community-wide challenges. Fortunately, youth violence prevention is possible, cost-effective, and allows empowered youth to be part of broader neighborhood revitalization efforts.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES & OUTCOMES

Communities across the nation have employed a variety of strategies to create environments of economic opportunity that support youth violence prevention. For instance, the STRYVE (Striving To Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere)⁷ initiative, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), supported local public health leadership for youth violence prevention. Through STRYVE, local health departments were able to implement a variety of youth violence prevention programs, including Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES!)⁸

YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Perspectives from Youth



“One of the successes we achieved was getting the [Wood Village] community involved with our lunch program. We provided free lunches to the families from the community, we got a chance to engage with them, and we got the opportunity to explain to them what STRYVE stands for and the different projects we were doing to reduce youth violence.”

Elvia Angel-Silva
Portland, OR



“We had food, games, and music in one of our neighborhoods called Madison Park Village that usually has drug dealers and all types of drugs in it.... [The YES! program] helped bring the neighborhood back up on its feet in a positive way.”

Neal Stanley
Boston, MA



“The YES Program was introduced to me during the summer of 2013... and I really wanted to learn great work experiences... Thanks to [STRYVE], I have secured a year-round job with the City of Houston Health Department implementing YES! in various sites.”

Robert Yanez
Houston, TX



– an initiative that empowers youth by engaging them in the planning and implementation of community improvement projects. Additional examples of evidence-informed strategies are described in the sections titled, “Place-Focused Community & Economic Development Strategies” and “Integrated Employment & Outreach Strategies.”

Place-Focused Community & Economic Development Strategies

Efforts that physically alter community environments can have profound positive impacts. For example, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and other similar approaches gather resources for commercial corridor cleaning and marketing.¹ Projects that employ principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)⁹ can reclaim blighted and vacant spaces, paving the way for beneficial uses, including business and homeowner investment. When youth are engaged in the planning and implementation of these activities, the positive outcomes for youth and their communities can multiply.

- The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC)¹⁰ is working with youth and adults to reclaim vacant properties in three cities: Flint, MI; Youngstown, OH; and Camden, NJ. Youth are engaging in a variety of greening activities, such as mowing and gardening, to test how these improvements affect rates of violence.
- Collaborations between neighborhood residents, community organizations, city officials, and police in Philadelphia, PA, Milwaukee, WI, and Providence, RI have reduced instances of violence and crime in these cities, creating environments where young people can work, play, and thrive.¹¹

Integrated Employment & Outreach Strategies

Approaches that involve neighborhood outreach and efforts to connect young people with jobs can positively benefit communities.

- **Three Baltimore communities experienced significant reductions in homicides and nonfatal shootings after implementing the Safe Streets program**, an initiative that connects youth to outreach workers that serve as role models and help to facilitate resolutions to conflicts before they escalate to violence.¹²
- **A study on “One Summer Chicago Plus”**– a jobs program designed to reduce violence and prepare youth from disadvantaged neighborhoods for the labor market – **saw a 43% drop in violent-crime arrests of participants.**¹³



The “One Summer Chicago Plus” program provides youth with work experience and reduces violent-crime arrests

Source: *The University of Chicago News*

The [STRIVE Action Council](#) is a multi-sector consortium of organizations that work at the national level to advance youth violence prevention efforts in states and communities. Action Council member organizations represent a variety of sectors, including public health, education, city and state leadership, and law enforcement, as well as youth-serving and social service sectors. Action Council organizations represent more than 1,000 affiliates and chapters and over 1 million fans and followers, all poised to champion youth violence prevention.

LEARN MORE: REFERENCES & RESOURCES

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