



# Factors that Make a Difference in Preventing Youth Violence

In 2002, violence injured more than 877,700 young people ages 10 to 24. Today, homicide is the second leading cause of death for all  young people in the United States. On average, 15 young people are murdered every day. A number of specific factors influence young people's involvement in violence—both negatively and positively.

Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health,  the largest survey ever conducted with teens in the United States, have highlighted the following risk and protective factors for youth violence.

## Inside the *Power of Protective Factors*

Research suggests that the presence of protective factors can reduce the impact of risk factors on young people. So, by increasing the presence of protective factors in young people's lives, we can help keep them from becoming involved in violence. To that end, we need to make better use of resources that:

- Strengthen and support families,
- Enhance positive relationships between young people and adults,
- Encourage a sense of connection between students and their schools, and
- Improve academic performance.

## At the *Family* Level:

Boys and girls are **less likely** to be involved in violent behavior when they:

- Can discuss problems with their parents,
- Believe their parents have high expectations for school performance,
- Feel connected to their family,
- Report frequent shared activities with parents,
- Have at least one parent is consistently present during at least one of the following times: when awakening, arriving home from school, evening mealtime, or at bedtime.

But they are **more likely** to be involved in violence when there is:

- A suicide attempt of a family member, and
- Easy access to firearms in the home (for boys).

## At the *Community* Level:

Boys and girls are **less likely** to be involved in violent behavior when they:

- Feel connected to their school,
- Feel connected to adults outside their immediate family, and
- Feel safe in their neighborhood.

But they are **more likely** to be involved in violence when they:

- Perceive prejudice among students in their school, and
- Have a friend who has attempted or committed suicide.

## At the *Individual* Level:

Boys and girls are **less likely** to be involved in violent behavior when they:

- Identify themselves as being religious, and
- Have a higher grade point average.

But they are **more likely** to be involved in violence when they:

- Have previous involvement in violent behavior,
- Have a history of violence victimization,
- Carry a weapon to school,
- Have learning problems,
- Skip school,
- Repeat a grade,
- Have high level of complaints about not feeling well or poor health,
- Have a history of treatment for emotional problems, and
- Have high levels of emotional distress.

### References

Resnick, MD, Rinehart, PM. 2004. Influencing Behavior: The Power of Protective Factors in Reducing Youth Violence. Center for Adolescent Health and Development, University of Minnesota.

Resnick, MD, Ireland, M., Borowsky, I. (2004). Youth violence perpetration: What protects? What predicts? Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Journal of Adolescent Health Vol. 35: 424.e1-424.e10.

# Adolescent Health Resources

Center for Adolescent Health and Development, University of Minnesota

**H**oused in the University of Minnesota's Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, the Center for Adolescent Health and Development provides research, training and clinical services. Reaching beyond a narrow focus on medicine, the Division focuses on promoting the healthy development of children and youth.

The Division is home to dozens of programs and projects that frequently include community outreach, advocacy and dissemination activities.

## The Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health

Providing information, programs and policy support to the youth-serving community.

[www.konopka.umn.edu](http://www.konopka.umn.edu)

## The Healthy Youth Development Prevention Research Center

Collaborating with community-based, youth serving organizations to promote youth development through research, training and advocacy.

[www.prc.umn.edu](http://www.prc.umn.edu)

## The State Adolescent Health Resource Center

Working to strengthen the knowledge, skills and capacities of state adolescent health coordinators across the country.

[www.konopka.umn.edu/sahrc](http://www.konopka.umn.edu/sahrc)

## The Leadership Education in Adolescent Health Program

Applying an interdisciplinary approach to prepare health professionals for leadership roles in adolescent health.

<http://www.allaboutkids.umn.edu/cfahad/index.htm>

## The Add Health Series

**I**nfluencing Behavior: The Power of Protective Factors in Reducing Youth Violence is one in a series of five reports based on the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health).

A comprehensive school-based study of the health-related behaviors of adolescents in the United States, Add Health was the first national study of adolescent health designed to measure the social settings of adolescent lives, the ways in which adolescents connect to their social world, and the influence of these social settings and connections on health. Add Health is unique among studies of adolescent health because it includes rich measures of the influences that can protect young people from harm or, conversely, predispose them to risk.

Given the national significance of the study, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded the Center for Adolescent Health and Development to analyze the data provided and disseminate their findings. These reports include:

- Reducing the Risk: Connections that Make a Difference in the Lives of Youth (1997)
- Protecting Teens: Beyond Race, Ethnicity and Family Structure (2000)
- Improving the Odds: The Untapped Power of Schools to Improve the Health of Teens (2002)
- Mothers' Influence on Teen Sex: Connections that Promote Postponing Sexual Intercourse (2003)

These reports are all available for free download at [www.allaboutkids.umn.edu](http://www.allaboutkids.umn.edu), click on "publications."

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