

National Academic Centers of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention



The Cost of Youth Violence

Youth violence is a widespread public health problem with many negative effects on youths, families, and communities. **Currently, homicide is the second leading cause of death for youths between ages 10 and 24, and each year, more than 650,000 youths are treated in United States emergency rooms due to violence-related injuries.** In the United States, the lifetime costs associated with assault injuries among youth ages 15 to 24 in the year 2000, including medical care, lost work, and household productivity, were estimated to exceed **\$13 billion dollars.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is in the forefront of youth violence prevention research. CDC collects data on the prevalence of youth violence, assesses factors that increase risk and factors that protect youth, evaluates programs and strategies aimed at preventing violence before it begins, and supports adoption of evidence-based programs and practices in communities. Focusing on prevention allows communities the opportunity to tackle youth violence before it starts.

Applying What Works to Prevent Youth Violence

Youth violence affects youth and communities in all walks of life, and putting an end to youth violence is not simple or quick. Comprehensive prevention strategies are needed to address the complex factors that lead to violence among youths in communities. Such comprehensive strategies must address and promote: (1) skills youths need to avoid violence, (2) supportive relationships for youths, (3) health and safety of the communities in which they live.

Over the last several decades, research in youth violence prevention has made tremendous strides in identifying what works to prevent violence. In order to truly change patterns of violence in communities, comprehensive strategies must make use of the best scientific findings about effective programs. We must evaluate these strategies to find out whether what communities are doing results in real changes in public health.

CDC has funded the **National Academic Centers of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (ACE) Program** since 2000. Over 10 years and three separate funding cycles, the ACE Program has funded

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16 academic institutions across the country. In 2010, four new ACE sites were funded for a 5-year cycle, and in 2011 two additional ACE sites were funded. Their primary goals are to partner with high-risk communities to implement comprehensive strategies to prevent violence. These strategies must rely on the best evidence about effective violence prevention programs and evaluate the effect of the comprehensive prevention strategies on youth violence in communities.

About the 2010 ACE Program

Researchers funded through the ACE Program are:

- Partnering with community organizations, leaders, and stakeholders, including their local health department. These partnerships have the common goal of reducing youth interpersonal violence.
- Working with communities to use comprehensive youth violence prevention strategies that build skills and opportunities for youths in the community, promote supportive relationships, and address community health and safety.
- Implementing proven youth violence prevention strategies, which include programs for all youths as well as programs that target youths at highest risk for engaging in violence.



ACE sites are also evaluating their work in communities, so they can determine whether the strategies prevent violence and promote safe communities. ACE evaluation approaches look at whether the strategies result in lower rates of violence in communities, such as lower rates of youth arrests for violent crime and lower rates of youth injuries due to interpersonal violence. The work of the ACE sites can inform violence prevention efforts nationally, because effective strategies can serve as models for youth violence prevention in communities.

Reducing youth violence is not an easy task. It involves giving communities the resources and technical expertise to create, implement, and monitor a youth violence prevention strategy. **The ACE Program is designed to help communities benefit from scientific advances and research about what works to promote thriving youth and create safer environments.** The emphasis on evaluation ensures that we continue to learn from our violence prevention efforts and build the knowledge needed to address the public health challenges of youth violence.

Visit www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/ACE for more information about the ACE Program and its history.
Visit www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention to learn more about CDC and youth violence prevention.