

University of Louisville Youth Violence Prevention Research Center



YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION CENTERS



“Science tells us that social norms affect individual behavior. If we think people who are like us act a certain way, we’re more likely to act that way—whether we agree or not. But sometimes, our perceptions of those norms are inaccurate.”

– Dr. Monica Wendel, UofL YVPRC

THE TOLL OF YOUTH VIOLENCE


Youth violence is a serious public health problem. Homicide is a leading cause of death for youth aged 10–24 years. Each day, about 13 youth die from homicide and more than 1,300 are treated in emergency departments for nonfatal injuries. Youth violence has lasting harmful effects on young people, their families, and their communities.

Research by CDC’s National Centers of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (YVPCs) shows prevention is possible. In communities that are experiencing some of the nation’s highest rates of youth violence, the Centers are:

- Partnering with community organizations, schools, law enforcement, and other community stakeholders with the common goal of reducing youth violence
- Rigorously evaluating prevention strategies
- Working to ensure effective strategies can be adapted and used in other communities

THE MISSION

The University of Louisville Youth Violence Prevention Research Center (UofL YVPRC) brings together researchers, community



representatives, communication experts, residents, practitioners, and policymakers to reduce youth violence in high-burden communities in Louisville, KY. Its mission is to change social attitudes about violence through the development, implementation, and evaluation of a community-wide media campaign. They partnered with Vanderbilt University to strengthen the UofL YVPRC's infrastructure and rigor of its prevention evaluation. Using a community-informed approach involving local youth, the Louisville Youth Voices Against Violence Fellows contribute expertise and share in the decision making and ownership of the campaign.

THE COMMUNITY

The UofL YVPRC and its partners are focusing their prevention activities in West Louisville, a racially segregated predominantly African American community. This area experiences many challenges that increase the risk of youth violence, including limited employment opportunities, economic disadvantage, residential instability, and substance use. In 2014, 39 percent of all juvenile arrests for violent crimes in Louisville were among West Louisville youth. Some youth in the area consider violence an acceptable and normal behavior. UofL YVPRC is focused on shifting these attitudes by fostering community dialogue.

PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE

The UofL YVPRC is working with community partners to develop, implement, and evaluate a social and traditional media campaign to create community pride,

increase commitment of youth to use nonviolent solutions, and foster community norms that violence is preventable. UofL YVPRC conducted community discussion groups, youth interviews, a community readiness and leadership survey, and focus groups to inform the campaign's development. The campaign also integrates African American history and concepts of positive racial identity to raise critical consciousness and social action in an effort to reduce youth violence.

EVALUATING IMPACT

UofL YVPRC and its partners will evaluate the impact of the campaign on community norms and youth violence in West Louisville, KY relative to a city not receiving the campaign, East Nashville, TN. These activities will inform youth violence prevention in Louisville and Nashville, and will provide a roadmap for future replication in other communities across the country. UofL YVPRC will:

- Evaluate the impact of the social norming campaign on school and community crime and violence via community surveys, youth interviews, and archival crime records.
- Assess changes in perceived norms over time that support violence as acceptable and inevitable via student surveys and interviews.
- Analyze the cost-effectiveness of developing a social norming campaign to reduce incidents of violence among youth.
- Assess the relationship between community capacity/readiness and the implementation of a norming campaign and reductions in youth violence.



**U.S. Department of
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