Youth violence refers to harmful behaviors that can start early and continue into young adulthood. The young person can be a victim, an offender, or a witness to the violence.

Youth violence includes various behaviors. Some violent acts—such as bullying, slapping, or hitting—can cause more emotional harm than physical harm. Others, such as robbery and assault (with or without weapons), can lead to serious injury or even death.

**Why is youth violence a public health problem?**

Youth violence is widespread in the United States (U.S.). It is the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24.1

- In 2012, 4,787 young people aged 10 to 24 years were victims of homicide—an average of 13 each day.1
- Over 599,000 young people aged 10 to 24 years had physical assault injuries treated in U.S. emergency departments—an average of 1642 each day.1
- In a 2013 nationwide survey, about 24.7% of high school students reported being in a physical fight in the 12 months before the survey.2
- About 17.9% of high school students in 2013 reported taking a weapon to school in the 30 days before the survey.2
- In 2013, 19.6% of high school students reported being bullied on school property and 14.8% reported being bullied electronically.2
- Each year, youth homicides and assault-related injuries result in an estimated $16 billion in combined medical and work loss costs.1

**How does youth violence affect health?**

Deaths resulting from youth violence are only part of the problem. Many young people need medical care for violence-related injuries. These injuries can include cuts, bruises, broken bones, and gunshot wounds. Some injuries, like gunshot wounds, can lead to lasting disabilities.

Violence can also affect the health of communities. It can increase health care costs, decrease property values, and disrupt social services.3

**Who is at risk for youth violence?**

A number of factors can increase the risk of a youth engaging in violence. However, the presence of these factors does not always mean that a young person will become an offender.

Risk factors for youth violence include:

- Prior history of violence
- Drug, alcohol, or tobacco use
- Association with delinquent peers
- Poor family functioning
- Poor grades in school
- Poverty in the community

*Note: This is a partial list of risk factors. For more information, see www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention.*
How can we prevent youth violence?

The ultimate goal is to stop youth violence before it starts. Several prevention strategies have been identified.

- Parent- and family-based programs improve family relations. Parents receive training on child development. They also learn skills for talking with their kids and solving problems in nonviolent ways.

- Social-development strategies teach children how to handle tough social situations. They learn how to resolve problems without using violence.

- Mentoring programs pair an adult with a young person. The adult serves as a positive role model and helps guide the young person’s behavior.

- Changes can be made to the physical and social environment. These changes address the social and economic causes of violence.

For more information about how you can prevent youth violence in your community, see Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action.

Where can I learn more?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention

CDC Facebook Page on Violence Prevention
www.facebook.com/vetoviolence

STRYVE
www.vetoviolence.org/stryve/home.html

Stop Bullying
www.stopbullying.gov

Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action

References

