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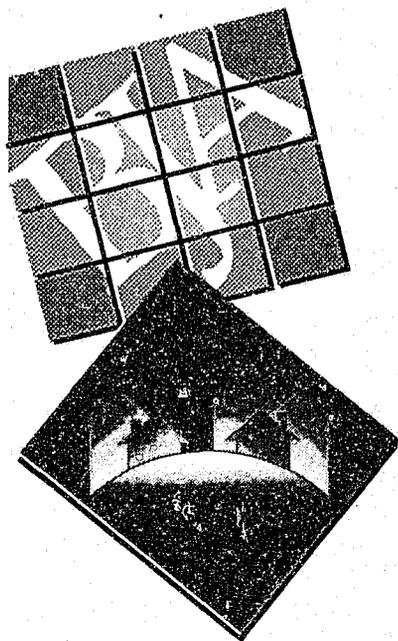


ACQUISITIONS

BJA Community Partnerships Bulletin
August 1994

Partnerships To Prevent Youth Violence

National Crime Prevention Council



Bulletin

Community Partnerships

Across the country, virtually no community has been untouched by the increasing number of incidents of youth violence; such incidents can involve gang member against gang member, student against teacher, or drug "lord" against underling. Law enforcement officials are widening the scope of their cooperation with citizens to combat causes of youth violence such as economic instability, weak parental and community controls, lack of recognition and stake in the community, and disconnection from support systems. The shared goals of drastically reducing, if not eliminating, youth violence and of creating climates in which it cannot flourish can cement partnerships that reduce crime and advance positive long-term police-community relationships. This bulletin provides information on a variety of collaborative programs that should help law enforcement support and encourage similar partnerships nationwide.

The alliances against youth violence complement the movement within policing toward greater collaboration between law enforcement and residents of the community. Fruitful partnerships between law enforcement and citizens are promoted by community policing, with law enforcement becoming acquainted with community residents, learning about problems in the neighborhoods, and enlisting support for preventing crime and improving neighborhood safety. Such partnerships can be particularly important for dealing with youth violence, its underlying causes, and the conditions that foster violent behavior.

No single program will prevent youth violence: The causes are diverse, and solutions must involve many individuals and groups. To develop educational, recreational, and anticrime programs and activities that will help youth understand and resist violence, police can actively seek and promote connections with existing institutions such as schools, parent groups, neighborhood associations, professional groups, and service organizations.

Partnerships against youth violence have two related objectives: to keep young people from being perpetrators of violence and to keep them from being victims of violence. To reach the first objective, partnerships focus on strategies that deflect young people from violence, teach them peaceful means of resolving conflict, and heighten their awareness of the effects and consequences of violent behavior. The second objective is furthered



How much violence? How many victims?

National figures show that teens are victimized more than any other age group by crimes of violence, including rape, robbery, and assault.* On average, young people ages 12 to 19 are victims of 1.9 million violent crimes annually, but fewer than half the violent crimes against young people are reported. Victimization rates for teens are twice as high as those for adults. Statistics also show that youth commit violent crimes out of proportion to their number in the population.

* Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Teenage Victims*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 1991.

by showing young people ways to avoid conflict and dangerous places or situations. Some partnerships are formed after a violent event has traumatized the community, enabling young people and their parents and teachers to form supportive bonds and work with police to prevent future recurrences of violence. All partnerships that bring together law enforcement officials and the community are founded on common concerns and goals and on a shared belief that everyone must play a role in preventing violence.

Partnerships With Schools

Schools offer many opportunities for effective partnerships. Youth clubs may be eager to present information that teaches youth effective skills in avoiding dangerous situations at home and away from home, how to be observant and aware of their surroundings at all times, and how and when to notify someone in authority when they feel threatened. Law enforcement can be an integral part of such personal safety programs, not only by

teaching personal safety skills but also by emphasizing positive alternatives to illegal behavior, peer pressure resistance skills, and youth's importance as people who can help make the community crime free.

Conflict resolution, peacemaking, and anger management training are also topics of potential interest to youth who have not previously thought about nonviolent ways to handle disputes. In San Francisco, many elementary schools "let the kids settle it." Children who have been trained as mediators use their skills to help classmates peacefully resolve playground disputes. The mediation training, conducted by Community Boards of San Francisco, involves youth as young as fourth graders in learning how to help keep playground disputes from escalating into physical confrontations. Teachers and administrators credit the program with substantially improving the climate of the whole school, not just the playground area.

Partnerships between law enforcement and the educational community are not new. Project D.A.R.E.

(Drug Abuse Resistance Education) has been implemented in communities around the country, using police officers to teach elementary school students in classrooms how to resist peer pressure to use drugs. In addition to achieving this important purpose, Project D.A.R.E. has shown thousands of children that police officers are knowledgeable, understanding members of the community and their allies in dealing with violence and its consequences. The D.A.R.E. program can include antiviolence and positive self-esteem training along with assertiveness, stress management, and resistance to negative peer pressure.

Police can work with schools in developing anticrime curriculums for older children, too, such as the Teens, Crime, and the Community curriculum, now in use in a number of schools.¹ They can lend their support to educators in infusing existing courses with anticrime messages and personal protection strategies and encouraging community anticrime action by the students. School and community policies that declare school campuses and public places (e.g., parks, recreation centers) where youth tend to congregate as "drug-free, gun-free, violence-free zones" send clear messages about expected and tolerated behavior.

Law enforcement personnel and teachers, as well as others who care for youth, can also become

1. A curriculum for secondary schools developed by the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law and the National Crime Prevention Council, with substantial support from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.



effective educators on gun safety and violence prevention, as programs such as the STAR (Straight Talk About Risks) curriculum² have shown. Schools, recreation centers, and other places that attract young people can provide opportunities to teach youth about the personal and community consequences of violence, about alternative ways to settle disputes, and about legal and safety restrictions on handguns.

The Southeastern Michigan Spinal Cord Injury Center has developed a highly effective program in which youthful victims of gun violence, now paraplegic or quadriplegic, go before groups of students to show them, by personal example, the consequences of using guns. Their testimonials touch students as no classroom text or lecture can, but the schools can work with police, victim groups, and the victims themselves to make such presentations possible.

In Dade County, Florida, several groups came together to cosponsor a Gun Safety Program following a report of 137 handgun incidents in the public school system during the school year. The K-12 program features a comprehensive curriculum, teacher training, youth crime watch, parent education, and media involvement. The partners include the national Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, the Dade County School Board, Youth Crime Watch of Dade County, local agencies, and the police department.

Youth violence was a growing concern in affluent Montgomery County, Maryland, bordering Washington, D.C. There were 1,400 reported cases of child abuse and

1,021 reported incidents of attacks against students in 1990. The county's Mental Health Association organized an antiviolenence conference with the school system, other county agencies, and the Police Department's Youth Division. The conference led to improved coordination among agencies serving children, and the group subsequently sponsored a "Voices Vs. Violence" competition for young people to express their antiviolenence messages to peers in stories, poems, and posters. This has grown into a year-round campaign.

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Law enforcement agencies, in partnership with parents, teachers, students, and school administrators, can promote similar programs in their own communities.

Colleges and universities, too, have a stake in working with police. After a rash of five murders near the University of Florida, the Alachua County Sheriff's Department and the Gainesville Police Department established a partnership with the university to address students' fears about the murders and to raise awareness about crime prevention and personal safety. The student government spearheaded a "Think Smart: Together for a Safe

Community" campaign, displaying "Think Smart" posters and distributing brochures with a do-it-yourself personal security checklist. In the months following the murders, students made dramatic changes in their conduct. They increased their requests for student escorts, stopped jogging alone at night, and were more careful about securing their residences. Violent crime on campus plunged 26 percent in 5 months. The police crime prevention unit could barely meet the demand for presentations.

Partnerships With Neighborhood Residents

Neighborhood block watches have for a long time supplied another good example of police-citizen partnership. Block watches empower residents to take responsibility for keeping their homes and neighborhoods safe from crime and violence. Particular magnets for crime and violence are inner-city neighborhoods that have been plagued with both crime and physical deterioration, seen in abandoned cars and buildings, broken outdoor lighting, and littered parks and other public places. Many communities have recognized the connection between neighborhood deterioration and crime and have worked with government regulatory agencies (such as transportation, housing, health, sanitation, and public utilities) and the police department to clean up neighborhoods, making them inhospitable to would-be

2. The STAR curriculum, now in use in a number of school systems around the country, was developed by the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, Washington, D.C.



criminals. Young people have participated and even taken the lead in cleanups.

Community police officers in Dade County, Florida; Lansing, Michigan; and Norfolk, Virginia have teamed up with social workers, school officials, public health professionals, and other human service providers on site in selected neighborhoods. Together, they are addressing community and family issues that contribute to delinquency and violence.³

In Seattle off-duty police officers joined Saturday afternoon graffiti "paintout parties," using materials

donated by the city's sanitation department.⁴ This kind of visible working together of police and citizenry to improve their neighborhoods sends a message to young people that the community belongs to its residents.

Working with law enforcement agencies, some municipalities such as Oakland, California, have even worked with residents to use non-criminal codes and statutes such as health, fire, building, and sanitation regulations to shut down or discourage criminal activity and to promote local renovation and civic improvements.

Other communities have educated their young people and adults about gangs, racism, family and personal stress, economic pressures, substance abuse, and guns and other weapons through:

- School assembly programs.
- Youth-led projects.
- Health fairs and job fairs.
- Communitywide media campaigns.
- Youth counseling sessions.
- Drug-free, gun-free school zones.

Law enforcement personnel can encourage and participate in such community efforts on a variety of levels: by providing support and encouragement, participating in planning, or serving as official or unofficial representatives in community groups that sponsor such activities. They can help enlist youth as both peer and community educators.

In Lakewood, a Denver suburb, police took the lead. A Citizens Police Academy was established to teach citizens such as neighborhood leaders, active retired persons, young people, and business owners how the police department operates and how citizens can cooperate with the police to reduce incidents of crime and gang activity. When a young Lakewood boy

Ten Things To Teach Kids

These 10 ideas for children are at the heart of many police-community partnerships to reduce youth violence.

- Settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons. Don't stand around and form an audience when others are arguing. A group makes a good target for violence.
- Learn safe routes for walking in the neighborhood, and know good places to seek help. Trust feelings, and if there's a sense of danger, get away fast.
- Report any crimes or suspicious activities to the police, school authorities, and parents. Be willing to testify if needed.
- Don't open the door to anyone you don't know and trust.
- Never go anywhere with someone you don't know and trust.
- If someone tries to abuse you, say no, get away, and tell a trusted adult. Remember, it's not the victim's fault.
- Don't use alcohol or other drugs, and stay away from places and people associated with them.
- Stick with friends who are also against violence and drugs, and stay away from known trouble spots.
- Get involved to make school safer and better—having poster contests against violence, holding antidrug rallies, counseling peers, settling disputes peacefully. If there's no program, help start one!
- Help younger children learn to avoid being crime victims. Set a good example and volunteer to help with community efforts to stop crime.

3. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *Innovative Community Partnerships: Working Together for Change*. NCJ 147483. OJJDP Summary. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. May 1994.

4. National Institute of Justice. *Community Policing in Seattle: A Model Partnership Between Citizens and Police*. NCJ 136608. Research in Brief. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. August 1992.



was murdered, the police recruited Citizens Academy graduates to help search for evidence. The Academy has also encouraged better understanding between police and both adult and young citizens in the community.

Providing Youth With Positive Alternatives

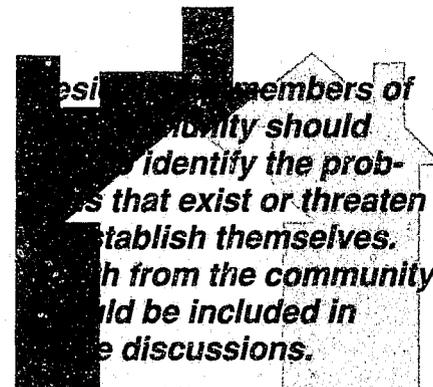
Youth violence sometimes occurs in areas where idle groups of youths congregate. Youth departments and private organizations have developed programs to entice such young people off the streets and into healthy activities.

Police organizations have traditionally involved themselves in youth activities, recognizing that children and youth, particularly in inner-city neighborhoods, need safe recreational activities that can engage their energy and enthusiasm. Participating in such activities enables police officers to know (and be known by) the young people on their police beats before they get into trouble with the law. Partnerships with other groups interested in the welfare of youth maximizes these efforts.

For instance, if young people are frustrated and even getting into trouble because they have no safe place to "hang out," the community's crime prevention officer and the manager of the local building supplies company can organize a work party of youth to transform an abandoned store into a social club for alcohol- and drug-free weekend parties. A well-known example is the Midnight Basketball League, which has chapters in 38 communities across the country. The League gives older youth (17 to 21), particularly residents of pub-

lic housing, a safe and positive environment during the potentially violent hours of 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Schools provide the gym facilities, businesses and service groups provide uniforms and equipment, and individuals volunteer to be coaches and lead other activities such as workshops on education, employment, and health issues in conjunction with the league. In many communities, law enforcement plays an active role.

The Police Athletic League (PAL) in Houston, Texas, provides a wide range of positive alternatives for



700 to 900 young Houstonians each year. Sports like track, basketball, and soccer are combined with educational field trips and community service (e.g., helping elders with housework, planting trees in the community park) to provide a range of interesting, nonviolent, drug-free options for youth ages 10 to 17. The program's list of partners includes the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Chicano Family Center, Parks and Recreation Department, Exchange Clubs of Houston, and local churches. Sports teams from Rice University and the University of Houston provide tickets to their games and encourage their athletes to counsel PAL youth on the importance of education.

Other Partnership Opportunities

Law enforcement officials can establish partnerships with a multitude of community residents or groups: religious leaders, Boys & Girls Club members, business people, health professionals, social service providers, coaches, pharmacists, parents, and youth themselves. Innovative ways in which police and community groups have worked together in cities and towns around the country include:

- Provision of organized recreation, tutoring programs, part-time work, and volunteer opportunities.
- Provision of training in anger management and conflict resolution for youth (and adults).
- Establishment of mediation and counseling programs in which trained youth play key roles in reaching their peers.
- Development of a phone list of local organizations that can provide counseling, job training, guidance, and other services for youth, to be shared with individuals and groups that need the services.
- Implementation of Court Watch to help support youthful victims and witnesses and see to it that criminals get fairly punished.
- Enforcement of local drug-free clauses in rental leases, anti-noise and anti-nuisance laws, and housing, health, and fire codes.
- Organization of rallies, marches, and other group activities against drugs, crime, and violence.
- Establishment of drug-free, gun-free parks and schools, working with recreation officials.



Steps to Partnering

Law enforcement personnel and others who have embarked on a working relationship against youth violence, whether with a local school, neighborhood association, service club, or youth group, have found several steps to be helpful in achieving success.

Learning what the problems really are. Residents or members of the community should help to identify the problems that exist or threaten to establish themselves. Youth from the community should be included in these discussions. Facts and opinions should be assembled, with discussion incorporating everyone's concerns and culminating in consensus on several approaches toward solution. For example, if young children walking home from school are being taunted, bullied, and even physically hurt by a group of older teens, neighbors can establish a block parent program: to help the youngsters arrive home safely. The high school service club might be enlisted to help patrol key walking routes. In addition, the presence of police officers along the young children's route could be increased.

Selecting strategies that will work. Having identified the problem, the community partners should select one or more strategies that will alleviate the problem or deal with its causes. For maximum success, roles should be clearly assigned to each group, ensuring broad support and participation. If direct intervention would endanger community residents, law enforcement representatives can help identify safer alternatives. Strategies need to be based on experience and accurate information.

They may reach toward indirect causes as well as direct ones.

Enlisting others in the effort. Other neighborhood institutions and organizations that should be enlisted in the effort and whose activities should be coordinated and focused on fulfilling the partnership's goals include Boys & Girls Clubs, businesses, religious organizations, schools, civic associations, and social and fraternal groups.

Involving young people. The involvement of young people in community solutions to youth violence problems is essential. By this



means they find a role that will bring them a sense of self-worth and recognition and lead to their developing a stake in their community.

These steps were successfully followed by a comprehensive partnership between law enforcement and community groups in Memphis, Tennessee. There the Shelby County Sheriff's Department and the Memphis Police Department joined with the Memphis Area Neighborhood Watch and more than a dozen other groups and 53 professionals to conduct the Violence Reduction Project at the L.M. Graves Manor housing complex. In

a wide-ranging program that included tutoring, positive activities, cultural celebrations, and field trips, children in the neighborhood learned how to protect themselves against crime and drugs, handle schoolwork better, and express themselves in nonviolent ways. Parents had the opportunity to join their children during informal talks by volunteers from key local agencies on such subjects as health education, social services, the juvenile justice system, drug abuse prevention, and community services. A Junior Deputy Program and special Neighborhood Watch training helped both youth and adults meet and develop positive relationships with the sheriff's and police departments.

Creating Partnerships That Work

Coordinated prevention strategies will address significant causes of violence in a local context, working through the community institutions that interact with children and their families.

Partnerships work best if participants are willing to focus on the shared objective rather than on their own agendas, and if leadership is shared. In addition, partnerships have been most successful when the young people themselves join in the planning. Many successful programs simply give young people the attention they otherwise lack in the community.

The number of partnerships that link law enforcement and other community groups will increase as communities take steps to combat the violence that threatens their children and youth every day. As



U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, who has led the effort to break down barriers among disciplines and organizations in working to reduce crime, once observed, "Prevention is not a police, social work, or prosecutor's function. It is everyone's function."⁵

Resources

Tested youth antiviolence program ideas are available from many national and local resources, as are training programs in crime prevention, conflict resolution, youth involvement, volunteer recruiting, and funding. Resources that can offer helpful information include the following groups:

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

National Headquarters
100 Edgewood, Suite 700
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-527-7100

Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse

Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20850
800-688-4252

Center to Prevent Handgun Violence

1225 Eye St. NW., Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005
202-289-7319

D.A.R.E. America

P.O. Box 2090
Los Angeles, CA 90051
800-233-DARE

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse

Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20850
800-638-8736

Midnight Basketball League

HUD Drug Information & Strategy
Clearinghouse (DISC)
P.O. Box 6424
Rockville, MD 20850
800-578-DISC (3472)

National Crime Prevention Council

1700 K St. NW., 2d Floor
Washington, DC 20006-3817
202-466-6272

National Institute for Dispute Resolution

1901 L St. NW., Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
202-466-4764

National School Safety Center

4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, CA 91362
805-373-9977

National Victims Resource Center

Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20850
800-627-6872

Stop the Violence Clearinghouse

National Urban League, Inc.
500 East 62d St.
New York, NY 10021
212-310-9000

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5. Remarks to the National Forum on Preventing Crime and Violence, Washington, D.C., April 29, 1993.

For More Information

BJA has a range of publications related to law enforcement-community partnerships, including:

- *Problem-Oriented Drug Enforcement: A Community-Based Approach for Effective Policing*, NCJ 143710.
- *The Systems Approach to Crime and Drug Prevention: A Guide to Community Policing*, NCJ 143712.
- *Understanding Community Policing: A Framework for Action*, NCJ 148457.
- *Neighborhood-Oriented Policing in Urban Communities: A Planning Guide*, NCJ 143709.
- *A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens and Their Environment*, NCJ 143711.
- *National Service and Public Safety: Partnerships for Safer Communities*, NCJ 146842.
- *Working as Partners With Community Groups*, NCJ 148458.
- *An Introduction to DARE: Drug Abuse Resistance Education*, NCJ 129862.
- *An Introduction to the National DARE Parent Program*, NCJ 142422.

Call the BJA Clearinghouse at 800-688-4252
to order these publications.

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