



NEWSLETTER

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MARCH CELEBRATES NATIONAL YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION WEEK

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March 23-27, 2009 marks National Youth Violence Prevention Week. The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness and to educate youth, teachers, school administrators, counselors, school resource officers, school staff, youth serving organizations, parents, and the public on effective ways to prevent or reduce youth violence.

Youth violence is an unbiased phenomenon that occurs across socio-economical and racial boundaries therefore both local and national initiatives to prevent violence amongst youth would help alleviate the issue. During this week-long national education initiative, various activities will demonstrate the positive role young people can have in making their schools and communities safer. With the support of several national premier youth-serving organizations, each day of the week will focus on a specific violence prevention strategy. These include promoting respect and tolerance, anger management, resolving conflicts peacefully, supporting safety, and uniting in action.

Any school district or community organization can participate in National Youth Violence Prevention Week. Participation can vary from a simple acknowledgement of the weeks' importance to organizing an event for each days theme.

DAY ONE: Promote Respect and Tolerance: This day provides an opportunity to address common challenges facing today's youth such as prejudice, bullying and disrespect. You could:

- Reach out to the unreached. Challenge all youth to get to know at least one person they do not know.
- Kick off the week by talking about the impact of bullying. Guide youth to the "Stop Bullying Now! Campaign" website for webisodes, games, surveys, and more!
- Use teambuilding activities that emphasize sharing and group participation.

DAY TWO: Manage Your Anger: This strategy an effective way to prevent anger from leading to violence. You can also incorporate such important skills as emotional literacy and stress management, as such skills help kids to keep a cool head when facing a potentially violent situation. You could:

- Create drawings, posters or other signs showing that anger is a natural and normal part of life -- but violence is not!
- Have older students create children's books that demonstrate positive ways to manage anger. Then read them to elementary school students or donate them to the local library.
- Review poetry and other literature that examines anger and how it can be released in healthy ways.

DAY THREE: Resolve Conflicts Peacefully: This strategy prevents violence by enabling young people to deal with conflict in a productive way. By teaching kids how to manage their conflicts, they will learn how to de-escalate potentially violent situations before they get out of control. You could:

- Establish a peer mediation program and use this day as a kickoff for the program by running mediation role-plays at a school assembly.
- Create a public service announcement on the importance of managing conflicts peacefully.
- Create a Peacemakers Wall pays tribute to local, national, and international figures who have resolved conflicts peacefully.

DAY FOUR: Support Safety: This day provides an opportunity to teach students, staff and the community about specific safety initiatives. Some of the issues that can fall under this strategy include preventing school violence by informing adults about specific threats, avoiding risky behaviors such as playing with guns, and stranger safety. You could:

- Conduct a safety-themed poster contest. Display and let other youth or faculty judge.
- Develop a suggestion box or phone line asking for ways to improve safety or provide anonymous tips.
- Coordinate a safety day with local rescue agencies providing exhibits and activities.

DAY FIVE: Unite in Action: This day's strategy focuses on bringing communities together in service. By creating a positive sense of community and developing concern for others, students will learn that they can break the chain of violence. You could:

- Coordinate a community-wide conference on violence prevention with workshops and recognition awards for those working to reduce violence. Use this opportunity to establish a local community roundtable to address youth violence in your community.
- Paint a peaceful mural over graffiti on the school or around the community.
- Organize a service project where all students and members of the community can come together and make a large impact in the school or community.

The campaign also strives to unite communities in their efforts to address youth violence. In Jefferson County, several agencies have collaborated to make delinquency prevention a number one priority. Using a Restorative Justice approach to juvenile delinquency, Jefferson County encourages reparative responses to crime, in an effort to reduce and ultimately eliminate youth violence. According to the 2008 Annual Report, since the Delinquency Prevention Councils inception in 1996, police referrals for juvenile offenses in Jefferson County has decreased by 39.2%! Additionally, when comparing juvenile battery and weapon related crimes during that same time period, the rate of violent crimes has decreased from 21.5% in 1996 to 19.0% in 2007. Keep up the good work Jefferson County!

For more information on National Youth Violence Prevention Week, go to www.nyvvpw.org. For more information on the Delinquency Prevention Council, contact Monica Wagner at 920-675-4630 or visit the DPC website at www.helpingkidsnow.com.