



Murdoch Childrens
Research Institute

Youth violence prevention approaches: Which ones work? How do we know?

Sheryl Hemphill
School of Psychology
Australian Catholic University

Rachel Smith
Centre for Adolescent Health
The University of Melbourne
Murdoch Childrens Research Institute



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

The **Royal Children's**
Hospital Melbourne



Youth violence prevention approaches:

Which ones work? How do we know?

Sheryl Hemphill

School of Psychology

Australian Catholic University

Rachel Smith

Centre for Adolescent Health

Department of Paediatrics, The
University of Melbourne

Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

Today's presentation

- What doesn't work and why?
- What does work and why?
- What's needed for effective prevention

Introduction

- Presentation based on report commissioned by ARACY
- **Focus is on young people aged 10–14 years (ie. in the early adolescent years)**
 - before violent & antisocial behaviours have become entrenched
- **This developmental period provides a potent opportunity for positive intervention**
 - Biological changes
 - Important transitions

What doesn't work and why?

Research shows that while some prevention approaches show no evidence of a reduction in violence and antisocial behaviour, others have negative effects.



What doesn't work and why?

(1) Individual and relationship approaches

- Group programs & therapies restricted to high-risk only YP, such as:
 - Group administered psychotherapy
 - Social skills training
 - School-based therapy programs
 - Community-based peer group interventions

SOURCE: see review Dodge et al, 2006



What doesn't work and why?

Individual approaches – how to minimise negative effects

- YP at risk for antisocial or violent behaviour should not be placed together in groups
- Minimise time spent in such groups
- Minimise unstructured interaction
- Create and maintain a prosocial peer culture
- Groups highly structured
- Well-trained group leaders

What doesn't work and why?

(2) Proximal settings approaches

School policies that group high-risk YP together

- academic streaming (or 'tracking')
- grade retention
- self-contained classrooms for students with emotional or behavioural disorders
- disciplinary practices that involve suspension, expulsion, or placement into alternative schools.

What doesn't work and why?

Minimising impact of school suspension

- only use these approaches for the most severe behavioural transgressions
- allow flexibility in use of these approaches (consider circumstance, teacher expertise)
- work with parents to ensure the student is supervised by an adult while excluded from school
- provide and monitor school work for young people excluded from school
- assist young people to reintegrate back into the school after the suspension has been completed

What doesn't work and why?

(3) Ineffective and harmful approaches for young offenders

- Boot camps
- Shock probation or parole
- Trying young offenders in adult court

SOURCE: see review - US Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General.

A note on naming and shaming

- Lack of research on effects
- Possible negative effects are
 - Stigmatisation (& may increase antisocial behaviour)
 - misuse of the concept of 'shaming' (restorative practice vs public shaming)
 - the potential for vigilante action
 - generating a false sense of community protection
 - interference with rehabilitative efforts

What does work and why?



Focus

- Primary and secondary prevention
 - *Most likely to prevent violent & antisocial behaviour before it starts*
 - *Primary prevention → universal programs*
 - *Secondary prevention → higher risk YP*
- Early adolescent years: young people aged 10 – 14 years

Key Sources

- **Blueprints for Violence Prevention: Center for the Study and Prevention of violence**, University of Colorado (US)
- **World Health Organization**
 - * *World Report on Violence and Health (2002)*;
 - * *Preventing violence: a guide to implementing the recommendations of the World Report on Violence and Health (2004)*
- **US Dep't of Health & Human Services (2001): Youth Violence: A report of the Surgeon General Report**
- **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Model Programs Guide (US)**
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: National Registry of Effective Programs (US)**
- **Dodge, K et al (2006): Deviant Peer Influence in Intervention and Public Policy for Youth. Michigan: Society for Research in Child Development.**
- **Meta-analytic reviews (see ARACY report)**



Principles for effective prevention

Nation et al. (2003) – meta-review of prevention studies identified 9 key principles

Program characteristics

1. Comprehensive
2. Varied teaching methods
3. Sufficient dosage (enough intervention) to produce effects
4. Theory driven
5. Promote positive relationships

Matching program to target group

6. Appropriately timed
7. Socioculturally relevant

Implementation and evaluation

8. Outcome evaluation
9. Well-trained staff

Criteria for evaluating programs

Effective:	rigorously evaluated; consistently demonstrated significant positive effects in reducing violence and antisocial behaviour; showing replication across sites with demonstrated results; showing sustainability of effects.
Promising:	rigorously evaluated; positive effects in reducing violence and/or antisocial behaviour in at least one site.
Requiring more research:	includes common approaches to prevention of violent and antisocial behaviour and/or approaches that target known risk and protective factors for which the evidence on effectiveness is limited.
Ineffective:	rigorously evaluated; negative or null effects.



Effective approaches

(1) Individual level approaches

- **Social development training (E)**
 - *Responding in Peaceful & Positive Ways (RIPP)*
 - *Too Good for Violence*



Effective approaches

(2) Relationship level approaches:

a. Family

- **Family therapy (E)**

- *Functional Family Therapy; Brief Strategic Family Therapy*

- **Parent training (E)**

- *Strengthening families program; Parenting Adolescents: A Creative Experience*

b. Other adults

- **Mentoring (E)**

- *Big Brothers Big Sisters*



Effective approaches

(3) Proximal level approaches:

a. School

- **Teacher training in Behaviour m'ment (E)**
 - *Incredible Years Teaching*

b. Community

- **Co-ordinated multi-level interventions (E)**
 - *Communities that care*



Effective approaches

(4) Multi-level approaches

- **Multi-component school-based violence prevention programs (E)**
 - *Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT)*
 - *Fast-track*
- **Bullying prevention (E)**
 - *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*
 - *Friendly Schools & Families* (promising)

* Promising approaches

* Approaches requiring more research

	Promising	Requires more Research
Individual	Violence prevention curriculum (P&S) Behavioural monitoring and reinforcement (S)	
Relationship (Peer & Family)		Restorative practice (S)
Proximal social settings (School & Community)	Structured programs and activities open to all youth (P&S)	School wide reform (P) Reduce alcohol availability (P) Naming and Shaming approaches (T)
Societal		Reduce media violence (P) De-concentrate poverty and reduce marginalisation (S) Change social norms (P)

P = Population based primary prevention strategies, aimed at all youth

S = Secondary prevention strategies, aimed at high-risk youth

T = Tertiary level prevention strategies, aimed at antisocial youth or juvenile offenders



Cost-effectiveness

- well implemented and rigorously evaluated (**‘blue-chip’**) programs can achieve significantly more benefits than costs to the community
- reduced crime rates; increased school completion; reduced grade repetition

HOWEVER:

- some programs fail to generate more benefits than costs;
- lack of rigorous evaluation for many programs

REFERENCE: Benefits & Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth - Aos, Lieb, Mayfield, Miller, & Pennucci, 2004

To do violence prevention well ..

- **conduct research** on the effects of different levels and types of implementation of the most promising interventions
- **disseminate** the evidence on what is known
- **develop and broadly apply** practical procedures for monitoring implementation

Effective action requires

- prioritisation of prevention and early intervention
- adoption of a developmental pathways approach
- multi-level approaches to address influences across the multiple contexts
- identification of factors most important in particular communities (using local data)

Preventing youth violence

What does and doesn't work and why?

An overview of the evidence on approaches and programs



Australian Research Alliance
for Children & Youth



Contact details

Sheryl Hemphill & Rachel Smith

Ph: 9953 3119 (SH), 9345 4521 (RS)

Email: sheryl.hemphill@acu.edu.au

Email: rachel.smith@mcri.edu.au