

## **Preventing Intentional Injury: From Bullying to Homicide**

Youth violence is an ongoing national problem, and except for prominent media coverage of homicides, it is a problem that is largely hidden from public view.

### **HOW DOES YOUTH VIOLENCE START?**

According to a national Attorney General Report, many answers to this question lie with parents and youth themselves. Children and youth who grow up with violence in the home are at greater risk for using violence to solve problems outside of the home. Bullying or other aggressive behavior begun in elementary school often escalates into violence in middle or high school.

### **TENNESSEE DATA**

While overall rates have declined, homicide remains the second leading cause of death for Tennessee teens and young adults. Homicide deaths represent only a fraction of youth physical violence. The following data were obtained from the Tennessee Deaths 2008 Report, the Tennessee Department of Health of Health Information Tennessee site, and the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

- Overall, homicide rates for youth ages 10-24 has increased from 13.9% in 1994 to 32.1% in 2006 according to the Tennessee Deaths 2008 Report.
- According to the Tennessee Deaths 2008 Report Shelby and Davidson counties had the highest mortality rate in 2006. These two counties had a combined rate of 49.6% of Tennessee's total number of deaths by homicide/assault.
- The Tennessee Deaths 2008 Report reflected African-American males ages 10-24 were more than 5 times more likely to die from homicide than white males.
- Homicide rates are significantly higher among the 20-24 age group (20.7 per 100,000) compared to the 15-19 age group (10.4 per 100,000) and the 10-14 age group (1.0 per 100,000).
- The Tennessee Deaths 2008 Report revealed the rate of deaths from homicide/assault for African-Americans in 2006 (23.7 per 100,000) was five times that of whites (4.7 per 100,000).
- According to Health Information Tennessee, the average rate of African-American males 10-24 to die from firearms discharge from 2004-2006 was 55.29%. Their white counterparts died at an average rate 4.53% for the same years and ages and other races died at a rate of 8.82%.

- The 2007 YRBS reflected that during the past 12 months, 14.3% of high school students were you in at least one physical fight. Ten per cent had been in two or three fights during the past 12 months.
- Since 1993, a significant decline has occurred in the percent of high school students who reported carrying weapons on school property (from 18.2% in 1993 to 5.6% in 2007). High school males (8.6%) were more likely to engage in such activities as females (2.7%) in 2007.

## **BEST PRACTICES**

- **Parents** – Parents are their children’s first teachers. Raising young children to be adolescents who are able to resolve conflicts peacefully starts by talking to kids about violence and listening to them when disagreements arise.
- **School** – Successful violence prevention programs for teens have several common traits: define aggression broadly; promote a positive school climate; promote social competence through interaction, practice through role-playing and rehearsal; and insist on a climate that will not tolerate bullying, violence or aggression.
- **Sexual Violence** – Successful prevention strategies include prevention education for youth and parents; training for health care professionals and teachers; and implementing intensive programs for youth at higher risk for becoming victims or perpetrators of sexual violence.

## **PREVENTION PAYS**

Youth violence is expensive. Researchers estimate that in Tennessee incurred costs of more than \$3 million per year are related to youth violence. (Source: Children’s Safety Network (CSN) Economics and Insurance Resource Center, at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.)

### **Tips for Talking With Youth About Violence**

- Talk with your adolescent: start early, listen, and talk some more
- Monitor the media
- Acknowledge your children’s fears and reassure them of their safety

- Take a stand – parents need to be clear and consistent about the values they want to instill
- Control your own behavior
- Set limits regarding children’s actions toward others
- Hold family meetings to talk about complaints, share opinions and practice effective problem-solving and negotiation skills
- Convey strict rules about weapons
- Talk about gangs and cliques
- Talk with other parents. Pay particular attention to boys. Ask the schools to get involved. Get additional support and information from professionals. (Source: Talking with Kids about Violence, Talking with Kids about Tough Issues, [www.talkingwithkids.org](http://www.talkingwithkids.org).)

## **2010 Objectives**

### **REDUCE HOMICIDE DEATHS**

- BY 2010, reduce the homicide rate among adolescents ages 10-14 from a 2003 baseline rate of 0.7 per 100,000 to 0 per 100,000.
- By 2010, reduce the homicide rate among adolescents aged 15-19 from the 2003 baseline rate of 7.2 per 100,000 to 5.2 per 100,000.
- By 2010, reduce the homicide rate among young adults ages 20-24 from the 2003 baseline rate of 20.2 per 100,000 to 16 per 100,000.

### **REDUCE TEEN VIOLENCE**

- By 2010, reduce the proportion of high school students who had been in a physical fight in the last 12 months from a 2005 baseline of 31% to 26%.
- By 2010, reduce the proportion of high school students who carried a weapon on school property in the last 30 days from a 2005 baseline of 8% to 4.9%.

## **Websites**

2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

[http://tennessee.gov/education/yrbs/07/07\\_detail\\_tables.pdf](http://tennessee.gov/education/yrbs/07/07_detail_tables.pdf)

Children’s Safety Network:

[www.childrensafetynetwork.org](http://www.childrensafetynetwork.org)

Health Information of Tennessee (HIT)

<http://hit.state.tn.us/Home.aspx>

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

[www.cdc.gov/ncipc](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc)

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect  
[www.calib.com/nccanch](http://www.calib.com/nccanch)

National Crime Prevention Council  
[www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)

National Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Project  
[www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)

Tennessee Department of Health- Health Statistics  
Tennessee Death 2008  
<http://health.state.tn.us/statistics/PdfFiles/TnDeaths06.pdf>