

INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES FOR YOUTH ON WEAPONS AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

- ncjrs.gov/yviolence/gunviolence (National Criminal Justice)
- cpyn.org (The Center To Prevent Youth Violence)
- preventviolence.org
- dcjp.org/gun_violence (Detroit Community Justice Partnership)
- jhsph.edu/centerforpreventionofyouthviolence (Center For The Prevention of Youth Violence)
- vetoviolence.cdc.gov (Striving To Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere)
- nsvrc.org (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center)
- sandyhookpromise.org
- whitehouse.gov/issues/preventing-gun-violence
- bradycenter.org (Brady Center To Prevent Gun Violence)
- teenhelp.com
- Common Sense About Kids and Guns
- Hands Without Guns
- gunfreekids.org
- joycefdn.org (Joyce Foundation For Gun Violence Prevention)

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Wyoming Valley Alcohol and Drug Services, Inc. is a 501 C-3 charitable organization in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is licensed by the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
Member, United Way of Wyoming Valley
Member, Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Drug & Alcohol Program

WEAPONS DETERRENT PROGRAM FOR YOUTH



WYOMING VALLEY ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICES, INC.

wvadsinc.com

WHY HAS WVADS, INC. DEVELOPED A WEAPONS DETERRENT PROGRAM FOR YOUTH?

Children are our most important gift. A culture who cherishes its young, nurtures its young, and protects its young will forever remain magnificent. Gun violence in the United States has become epidemic. Now is the time for all of America to stop this deadly trend. We must search for answers and we must include our children and youth in this process of change. Together, we can and will make a difference, and when we do, this ugly stain of violence toward one another will be replaced by dignity, respect, kindness, compassion, and sensitivity toward one another. Wyoming Valley Alcohol and Drug Services, Inc. is committed to our youth and community. The agency believes that it has a role in identifying programs and services to counter gun violence in our society. The dictionary states the definition of deter or deterrence is to prevent, discourage, or restrain from acting or proceeding. In other words, this is the goal of the Weapons Deterrent Program. We are hopeful that your generation of youth will begin to think non-violently and behave non-violently, which will go a long way in reversing our current “culture of violence”. We believe that change happens one person at a time and we are confident that it will begin with you. Think about it!

Every child is special, unique, and wonderful. Kids are our future; when we are surrounded by children, there is wonderment and magic. To have even one taken from us by gun violence is unacceptable. This booklet has been developed to provide our youth the opportunity to see gun violence for what it is, “UNACCEPTABLE”; and to encourage our youth to play a greater role in keeping our community a safer place for all of us to live.

NOTE: Judge Tina Polachek Gartley, Luzerne County Juvenile Judge, was the catalyst who inspired WVADS, Inc. to develop this program. On behalf of our children, special thanks to you.

8. When you play video games that portray violence, listen to music with violent lyrics, or watch videos and movies with violent scenes, they may have the potential to influence you negatively. This is called “desensitization”. This is a big word that means that we lose the reality that violence in real life is never acceptable. When you hit the reset button on the video game, the characters reappear. In real life, people do not reappear when weapon violence is used. They are gone forever. Think about that. For one split second of poor decision making, some people discharge a gun or use a knife and wipe out the life of another human being forever.
9. A note about bullying....No one deserves to be bullied by another human being. It hurts deeply and should never be tolerated. With that said, sometimes other people don't get the message. Because they have no respect for themselves, they may not have any for you as well. Because they may not love themselves, they may walk around bullying others. When and if bullying occurs, please make sure you do not respond with a solution of violence. There is an old saying, “Two Wrongs Don't Make A Right”. Because you were bullied and responded violently with a weapon, doesn't make your actions acceptable...and often times, many innocent lives are lost in the process. Go to parents, school authorities, grandparents, aunts and uncles, police, guidance counselors or friends. Bullying hurts terribly but violence hurts even more. I challenge you to develop non-violent answers to any problem you are facing.

Young people can and will play a vital role in changing America from a culture of violence to a culture of tolerance. One person can begin to make a difference today by saying no to gun violence. We hope that will be you!



develop in order to get along with and interact with others. Instead of getting angry, frustrated, and easily overwhelmed, you can instead find effective ways or methods of coping with and responding to difficult situations. Try working on enhancing these skills and you will find that effective problem solving is the way to go.

4. You need to be aware that it is important to maintain healthy peer associations at all times. Healthy friends are an important part of good decision making. Remember the 3 P's: "When you hang around with unhealthy **Playmates**, they will introduce you to unhealthy **Playpens** and you will end up using unhealthy **Playthings**." In other words, there are certain activities that are very risky and your health and welfare and your own safety will be on the line.....***drug use, drug possession, drug dealing, gang involvement of any type***. By the way, guns and knives are a factor in many drug and gang activities.
5. As a young person, having a gun or knife is never a "cool thing". It is not a symbol of power. As a matter of fact, a symbol of power is maturity, making good decisions, handling your problems non-violently, doing good for others, making a positive difference in your life and the life of others. This is true power.
6. Do not follow the crowd if it is heading the wrong way. You have a right to protect who you are at all times. Don't be easily led by others. Make your own decisions. Don't let others make them for you.
7. If you are visiting a friend's home and a gun or knife is available or not locked up, leave the situation immediately. Guns and knives are not play toys. They are lethal and that means deadly. You have to remind yourself that gun use is a "forever thing". When a gun is discharged or fired, or a knife used against another person, it is too late to say I'm sorry or we were only fooling around. Take every precaution you can to insure that gun violence is never a part of your life.

WE MUST STOP THE MADNESS! THE FACTS TELL THE TRUTH

- *Homicides (murders) are the second leading cause of death for American youth, ages 16-24 years old, according to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.*
- *more than 100,000 people in America are shot or killed by a gun every year*
- *Since 1968, over 1 million people have been killed with guns in the United States*
- *Among 23 high population, high income countries worldwide, 80% of all firearm deaths occurred in the United States*
- *According to the Harvard Injury Control Center, higher household gun ownership correlates with higher rates of homicides, suicides, and unintentional shootings*
- *According to the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, the United States has the highest rate of youth murders and suicides among the 26 wealthiest nations.*
- *On average, 2,900 kids are killed from gun violence every year in the United States (murders, suicides, accidental shootings)*
- *On average, over 15,000 kids survive gun injuries annually in the United States*
- *Every day, 282 people in America are shot in murders, assaults, suicides, and suicide attempts*
- *Every day, 8 children and teens die from gun violence; 5 are murdered and 2 kill themselves*
- *According to the Center To Prevent Handgun Violence: over 18% of all weapons in school incidents are drug or gang related....15% involve long standing disagreements.....13% involve playing with or cleaning guns....10% involve fights and material possessions*
- *According to the National Center For Injury Prevention and Control (Center For Disease Control), among homicide victims age 10 to 24 years old in 2010, 82.8% were killed with a firearm.*
- *In a 2011 nationally representative sample of youth in grades 9-12....16.6% reported carrying a weapon (gun, knife, or club) on one or more days in the 30 days preceding the survey.....20.1% reported being bullied on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey and 16.2% reported being bullied electronically (email, chat room, website, texting)*
- *Among 10 to 24 year olds, homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans; the second leading cause of death for Hispanics; and the third leading cause of death of American Indians and Alaskan natives.*

WILL WVADS, INC. BE OFFERING PREVENTION/ EDUCATION AND INFORMATION PROGRAMS FOR WEAPONS DETERRENCE IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY?

Yes! That is why we have created this booklet. Additionally, we will be developing other materials and programs to assist young people in making healthy choices regarding gun violence. Our clinical and prevention/education staff are committed to augmenting and enhancing their knowledge and skills so we will be better prepared to offer youth healthy alternatives to conflict resolution in their life. Additionally, we will develop programs for the juvenile system to deal with young people who have made poor choices that have caused serious disruptive consequences in their life. Often times, the fascination with weapons has been a key ingredient in their life which has resulted in criminal charges. Through our efforts, we will work with these youngsters to hopefully assist them in changing this mind set.

WHAT ARE THE CORE TEACHING POINTS THE AGENCY WILL UTILIZE IN BOTH THE SCHOOL BASED AND JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAM?

WVADS, Inc. has met with many community experts in the development of this program. Special thanks to all of these individuals for their input:

- Judge Tina Polachek Gartley, Luzerne County Juvenile Judge
- Luzerne County District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis
- PA State Trooper Tom Kelly
- Tom Roccograndi, Weapons Expert and Law Enforcement Trainer
- Officer Phil Myers, Wilkes-Barre Police Department
- Luzerne County Sheriff's Department
- Dr. Vito Forlenza, WVADS, Inc. Consultant

when one is troubled. We are a civilized nation who needs to spend more time on developing its communication skills. You will be surprised at the solutions that you can identify that are non-violent. America has a plague that has infiltrated every fiber of our community and society. It is called RAGE....more and more people are venom filled and it takes just one small incident to set them off into a temper tantrum. ROAD RAGE, FAMILY RAGE, JOB SITE RAGE, COMMUNITY RAGE....Think about the scenes you have heard and witnessed in restaurants, stores, sporting events, and on the highways. The screaming, yelling, threatening, name calling and the rest. Our attitude plays a major role in our behaviors. If people are on the verge of having an emotional meltdown or temper tantrum, then, rest assured, our violence incidents and statistics will continue to be at epidemic levels. Mother Theresa said, "BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD."

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT VIOLENCE?

1. Make a decision not to carry, play with, or use a gun or knife for any reason. (NOTE: Certainly if you are a hunter and supervised by a responsible adult and also following safety protocols and procedures, this is an exception.)
2. If you have a grudge, resentment, or issue with another human being, never use a firearm or knife to solve the dispute. Talk to someone you know and trust and they will help you identify a peaceful method of resolving the issue. Sometimes, you may think that personal disputes with another student or young person can never be resolved. That is not true. You will be surprised at how many non-violent ways there are to correcting a situation. If you are being bullied, picked on, or being mistreated by some-one, notify your parents, teachers, or other responsible adult.
3. Work on developing effective problem solving skills and coping skills. These are internal skills that people must

ARE THERE PREVENTATIVE SOLUTIONS TO WEAPONS VIOLENCE?

Yes. There are some practical things you can do, beginning today, to do your fair share on reducing and eliminating weapons violence. Here are a few suggestions.....

1. Work on Your Self-Esteem.....when we feel good about who we are, this is power. A strong self-esteem produces confidence, meaning in one's life, positive thoughts, inspired living, a sense of being productive, strong sense of humor; generally, when you feel better about yourself, you are less likely to act out in a negative manner.
2. Remember this statement for the rest of your life....."HURT PEOPLE, HURT PEOPLE"...when people hurt or are troubled, they may have a tendency to hurt themselves and others. The key to good mental health is to work on it daily. Similar to your physical health, you must work on your mental health as well. When we do not, we begin to feel isolated, misunderstood, distant, disconnected, unloved and unappreciated. Therefore, we become vulnerable and susceptible to negative influences and temptations and, at times, acting out violently or criminally become an option. When we work on our mental health daily, we will enjoy a strong self-esteem, effective decision-making skills, strong coping skills, strong problem solving skills, meaning in our life, drive, motivation, and a strong sense of well-being. We will feel loved, a part of other people's lives, connected to school, family, and community.
3. If Your Friend Is Hurting, Reach Out To Them.....You can be a powerful influence on your friends, even if they are hurting. Talk to them, more importantly, listen to them, and do your best to link them with community agencies and resources who can help them. Please understand that we can solve all problems if we work together in helping those in need. Violence to oneself or others is never an option

A. School-Based Teaching Points

- Conflict Resolution
- Peer Mediation
- Problem Solving
- Effective Decision Making
- Alternatives To Violence and Acting Out
- Handling and Defusing Stressful Life Events
- Think Before You Act Techniques
- Communication Skills
- How To Reach Out To School and Community Resources
- Resolving Problems Non-Emotionally
- Problem Oriented Solutions

B. Juvenile Justice Referrals

This service involves court-ordered referrals to our agency on youth that are enamored with or fixated with weapons possession. In some cases, they would have already had a weapons charge before the Juvenile Court. In addition to the teaching points listed above, we will also utilize a pre-and post-test, attitude sensing survey relative to weapons possession/use and discussion with incarcerated inmates who have violated weapons laws. Additionally, we will have discussion topics centering on alternatives to weapons violence.

NOTE: We will assess all referred juveniles to determine the need for addictions counseling and/or weapons deterrence counseling.

The key to an effective weapons deterrent program for youth lies in changing attitudes and beliefs about weapons. Learning alternative, non-violent techniques and strategies is pivotal in creating change in how young people react to difficult situations. We are convinced that this program is novel, innovative, and different in that it incorporates the ingredients that are the root of addressing this problem.

YOUTH GUN LAWS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Gun violence reduction legislation has been enacted by our federal government. The legislation makes a strong statement that guns in the hands of young people will not be tolerated. These laws are youth protective and have been enacted to insure that this epidemic of weapon violence end.

1. The Youth Handgun Safety Act...passed in August 1994—prohibits the possession of handgun or ammunition by a juvenile or the private transfer of a handgun or ammunition to a juvenile (the law includes a number of exceptions, such as possessing a firearm for hunting).
2. The Gun Free Schools Act....took effect on March 31, 1994—it requires schools who receive federal assistance dollars to expel a student for a period of not less than one (1) year who brings a firearm to school.
3. Second Gun Free Schools Act...enacted in October 1994—requires schools to refer students who bring a weapon to school to criminal justice or juvenile delinquency agencies. Additionally, the State of Pennsylvania, as well as other states, also have weapons laws that are as strict as the federal laws. The National Criminal Justice Association has produced a guide, “Compilation of State Firearm Codes That Affect Juveniles”, that contains laws per state.

ARE THERE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO YOUTH GUN VIOLENCE?

Yes! According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, there are significant factors that contribute to youth gun violence.

1. Access To Guns – Increased availability of guns makes youth violence more lethal according to the American Psychological Association. Homicides by juveniles using a firearm have significantly increased over the last 30+ years.

2. Deadly Use – Although guns are more available today, youth also now show an increasing tendency to use them to settle disputes. According to the American Psychological Assn., when youth who are already predisposed to violence have easy access to guns, they may be more likely to become violent. Low prices and technological innovations in firearms and ammunition have further increased the lethality (deadly) of gun violence.
3. Drugs and Firearms – Firearms, often times, go hand in hand with drug use, drug dealing, drug manufacturing and selling. Where there are drugs, there will be guns and knives. Therefore, not getting involved in the drug scene significantly improves your chances of not being injured or killed by a weapon. Additionally, it is important to note that violence and violent behaviors are consequences of some drugs; bath salts, phencyclidine (PCP), crack cocaine are some examples.
4. Violent Arguments – Firearm deaths occur more often as a result of violent arguments than as a result of robberies, fights, and rapes combined. One study conducted in King County, Washington, found that guns kept at home were involved in the death of a household member 18 times more often than in the death of a stranger.
5. Obtaining Guns From Gun Dealers – According to research, some youth gain access to weapons through gun dealers in the community or through the internet.
6. Maladjusted Youth – According to the American Psychological Association, handguns are more likely to be owned by socially maladjusted (troubled) youth, dropouts, drug dealers, and individuals with a prior record of violent behavior than by more socially adjusted youth.
7. Types of Guns – In one study of serious juvenile offenders and students from high risk areas in four (4) states, the firearms of choice were high quality, powerful revolvers, followed closely by automatic and semi-automatic handguns and shotguns.
8. Gun Socialization – For legal gun owners, socialization of gun use takes place in the family and for illegal gun owners, socialization comes from peer influences on the street. (research by Huzinga and Lizotte et al)