



National Prevention Science Coalition

To improve lives

Position Statement on Violence Prevention

To address youth violence, the National Prevention Science Committee (NPSC) facilitates the systematic use of evidence-based preventive interventions to build capacity and aid in rigorous implementation and data-driven accountability. There is overwhelming empirical evidence that prevention strategies can both reduce violence and improve positive youth development while increasing individual earning potential and saving tax dollars. Effective prevention involves a continuum of coordinated, developmentally-appropriate interventions that are based on the needs identified by community stakeholders and that include them in monitoring implementation to achieve desired outcomes; e.g., reduced violence and risk behaviors and increased well-being. Prevention science supports efforts to align federal, state, and local policies and practices.

Effective prevention of violence requires fostering environments from the prenatal period onward that nurture successful child and adolescent development. Prevention science has established that targeting a broad range of functional domains—from child and adolescent development, parenting and family functioning to community supports and system change—has the greatest potential to ensure youth meet their developmental milestones and avoid serious behavioral problems. In particular, recent research emphasizes that, to prevent the development of problems that often precede violent behavior, there is a need to reduce exposure to adversity and traumatic experiences and to increase resiliency by addressing their negative effects on brain development, cognitive functioning, and academic performance.

The considerable plasticity and experience-dependence of the brain throughout childhood and adolescence affords an optimal opportunity to intervene and shift development toward more normative trajectories. Likewise, we find that communities have greater resiliency when structural constraints are reduced or eliminated. Research consistently demonstrates that those exposed to risk factors and/or who show early signs of behavioral health problems have the greatest potential to benefit from evidence-based approaches to reduce the impacts of adversity and bolster neurological pathways that support self-regulation.

Components of an overarching strategy are outlined below. Maximum outcomes require that the strategy must be coordinated across multiple systems designed to promote healthy development and well-being.

- Several evidence-based programs designed to support parents, promote children’s socio-emotional and behavioral control, enhance self-efficacy, and improve school climate and educational quality have documented levels of effectiveness (e.g. [Results First](#)).
- Data-driven approaches have a particularly high return-on-investment using comprehensive assessments of youths’ needs, strengths, social conditions, etc. to identify youth who would most benefit from specific interventions, or inform the use of services and supports for youth already involved in service systems. There is increase use of “open data” strategies for both targeting needs and monitoring progress.
- Child- and family-serving agencies must work closely with researchers, community organizations and residents (including youth themselves) to orchestrate a rigorous and sustainable effort to develop new infrastructure, systems and prevention programs.
- By focusing on prevention and earlier intervention in collaboration with education, primary care, workforce development, public health and juvenile and adult justice systems, the number of lifelong offenders can be reduced.
- Creating a continuum of trauma-informed systems and programming to prevent retraumatization is

essential.

- Consultation with judges and attorneys should incorporate NCTSN strategies (see http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/trauma_20bulletin.pdf).
- Successful reentry of violent youth and adults into the community should be aided by quality case management, facilitating pre-release discharge planning, support and supervision during readjustment, coordinated services, family engagement, and permanency planning.

In summary, an interdisciplinary, interagency, intergenerational approach is needed to drive and sustain change at all levels and sectors of the community. The NPSC's membership has expertise in violence prevention from multiple perspectives. We look forward to continuing and expanding our consultation, resources, referrals, and other tasks required to implement and scale effective programming. Please see our website www.npscoalition.org, our [Board of Directors](#) or contact one of us in our [Violence Prevention Working Group](#) for further information.

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