

## Youth Violence in Illinois Considered Preventable, Not Inevitable



**March 23, 2015**

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – It's National Youth Violence Prevention Week, and health and education leaders in Illinois say families, schools and communities each play a role in preventing violence before it occurs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), youth violence is the second-leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 24.

Rebecca Levin, director of [Strengthening Chicago's Youth](#), says it occurs in many forms including harassment, assault, bullying and mental anguish.

"Too often when we hear about violence in Illinois it's with this sense that violence is something inevitable, that just happens

in communities," she says. "But we know that violence is preventable."

Levin says schools, churches, law enforcement, medical providers and social service programs can be a part of the solution by creating a safe community.

And at the policy level, she adds, strategies that reduce youth violence include ensuring children have access to high quality educational and recreational programs, equitable access to mental health services and common sense approaches to gun violence prevention.

Carleen Wray, executive director of the [National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere](#), says starting at an early age children should be taught respect, anger management and effective conflict resolution.

"So many times they are desensitized to the violence that's happening because they've grown up with it," Wray states. "Whether it be through the media and TV, through music, violence in their own home and they need some guidance on what is appropriate behavior and what's not appropriate behavior."

Levin points out young people learn what they see, so it's important for parents, educators and other adults to be good role models.

And she says the more trusted adults a child has in his or her life, setting high expectations and showing support, the better the child will do.

"We want all children to have multiple people in their lives they can turn to, not just in time of crisis but just there in their lives everyday supporting them, telling them they can do it, cheering them on," she stresses.

Schools and organizations around Illinois are holding National Youth Violence Prevention Week events.