

Preventing Youth Violence: It takes a Community

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PHOTO: It's National Youth Violence Prevention Week. Experts say starting at an early age children should be taught respect, anger management and effective conflict resolution. Photo credit: USAG-Humphreys/Flickr.

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INDIANAPOLIS - It's National Youth Violence Prevention Week, and health and education leaders in Indiana say families, schools and communities each play a role in preventing violence before it occurs. Youth violence can take the form of harassment, assault, bullying and mental anguish.

Carleen Wray, executive director of the National Association of [Students Against Violence Everywhere](#), says students can't learn or feel safe without the cooperation of the community.

"Violence doesn't have to happen; it can be prevented, but it takes all of us working together to create a safer community and

safer schools for our youth to attend," says Wray.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, youth violence is the second-leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 24. Wray says churches, law enforcement, medical providers and social service programs can be a part of the solution by creating a safe community.

In Indiana, the businesses and volunteers involved in the Safe Place Program provide immediate help to teens facing abuse, bullying, or other crisis situations.

The Indiana Youth Services Association promotes programs that reduce youth violence and juvenile delinquency. CEO Robin Donaldson says young people learn what they see, so it's important for parents, educators and other adults to model behavior that helps a child develop good interpersonal skills.

"A lot of that is learned by watching adults. So, whether it's a parent, or it is a teacher, or a mentor who has kind of taken that young person under their wing, then they're modeling that type of control, those types of skills."

Wray 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. Whether it be through the media and TV, through music, violence in their own homes, and they need some help on the guidance on what is appropriate behavior and what's not appropriate behavior."

At the policy level, she says 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.