

## Youth Violence Week: Breaking the Cycle in Ohio

March 23, 2015

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Youth violence is preventable say many health and education leaders as schools and organizations around Ohio observe National Youth Violence Prevention Week.

The Ohio Violence Prevention Academy provides training to combat violence in schools and neighborhoods.

The group's CEO, Charles Traylor, says violence is a learned behavior, and to change behavior you must change the way a person thinks.

"It is unmistakable that the way we think is reflected in the way that we act," he stresses. "It is very difficult to break that cycle of violence because of the learned behavior that starts with how they think."



**PHOTO: It's National Youth Violence Prevention Week, and health and education leaders in Ohio say everyone in a community plays role in preventing violence before it occurs. Photo credit: hilarycl/Morguefile.**

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

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

Debra Seltzer, program director of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Program at the Ohio Department of Health, says youth violence includes harassment, assault, bullying and date crimes. She says it is more prevalent than many people may think.

"It definitely happens across all demographics, and awareness is definitely the route to go to address the problem," she states. "And there's a lot that can be done to encourage conversations on what they can do to have better, healthy relationships."

Seltzer adds while awareness is critical in addressing the problem, children need adults in their lives who can teach and model appropriate behavior.

"Not just talking to youth about how to stay safe and not be victims," she says. "But also how they might be harming people in their lives and what they can do, you know, as a good partner or friend to be sure that they are treating people respectfully."