Reducing Violence: Schools Can Take a Lead

When it comes to school violence, many think individual students — delinquents — are the source of the problem. They believe if you punish the teen, work at correcting the delinquent behavior, the problem will be solved.

What's wrong?

Recent studies indicate that isolating violent or disruptive students, suspending them, or dealing solely with delinquent behaviors, are unlikely to be successful strategies for controlling behavior. Programs targeted solely at the individuals committing violent acts just don’t work.

The Solution: Working with Youth, Families, Schools and Communities

Adolescent violence is a complex issue. Schools can’t solve the problem alone. Poverty, witnessing violence and experiencing abuse in the home, accessibility of guns, and exposure to violence in the media are just some of the things that contribute to violent behavior.

Children, youth, families, schools and communities are parts of the solution. Combinations of strategies in each area are most likely to work when they target both risk and protective factors. Schools can play a leading role.

The Research: “What We Know”

From reviews of the literature, databases and phone interviews with Minnesota prevention workers and school principals, we know that prevention programs that are most likely to work capitalize on protective factors:

- Opportunities for youth participation
- Good communication
- School achievement
- Family connectedness
- Connectedness to other adults
- High expectations for school achievement
- Emotional health

For More Information

If you want to know more about school violence or issues of significance and concern in the lives of Minnesota teens, contact:

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