



# Youth to Youth Violence:

A Guide for Adults Working with Youth

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*“It’s hard for young people to find people to speak to about their problems.”*

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.29)

# Did you know?



The effects of youth violence are many, and extend far beyond those who are victims and victimizers. Some of these effects include emotional and social harm in addition to the physical harm created by violence.

Although the number of youth participating in criminal activity is a small percentage of the total youth in the province, over the past decade, there has been an increase in violent acts and the level of violence among youth in the Lower Mainland (Tyakoff, 2006).

As adults working with youth, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves about youth violence. This booklet is intended to provide information and resources to those who work with youth.

In the past two decades, more than 100 youth were killed in the Lower Mainland as a result of criminal activity.

(Tyakoff, 2006)

In 2006, there were 590 350 individuals aged 15 to 25 living in British Columbia, which is approximately 15% of the total provincial population.

(Statistics Canada, 2006)

10% of male students reported having carried a weapon to school in the past month.

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009)

33% of male students and 15% of female students reported having been in a physical fight in the past year, with 4% of those requiring medical attention.

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009)

“Every year, approximately 1 in 10 youth comes into contact with the police for violations of the Criminal Code or other federal statutes.”

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005)

# What is it?



**Cyberbullying** is a form of bullying that takes place using an electronic medium or on the internet (Bullying.org, 2004).



**Youth Violence** is “intentional physical, sexual or psychological assault on another person (or persons) by one or more young people aged 12 to 19 years” (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005).

**Gang:** A general term used to describe a group of individuals, who are involved in criminal activity. Despite common usage, the term gang, can actually refer to different levels of groups as follows:

1. A **group of friends**, is based on the sharing of common interests, and usually does not involve criminal activity. Youth should be encouraged to form positive groups of friends.
2. **Spontaneous criminal activity groups** (Gang Level I) are socially based and commit crimes based on convenience. Members often have other options and are less committed to the group than in other gang types.
3. **Purposive groups** (Gang Level II) have a specific criminal purpose and may come from within a larger group.
4. **Youth street gangs** (Gang Level III) commit crimes in order to profit. Members are hard core, highly visible and have publicly identified themselves by name, common brands, specific colours, types of clothing, jewellery or tattoos.
5. **Structured criminal organizations** (Gang Level IV) tend to be highly organized networks that are run by adult criminals rather than youth.

## Did you know:

Youth are at greatest risk for violence after the regular school day.

(Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere, 2010)

(Mellor, MacRae, Pauls and Hornick, 2005)

# Types of Violence



**Physical:** Purposely causing physical harm, which may include behaviours ranging from pushing or scratching up to murder. A weapon may or may not be used.

**Emotional:** Intentionally causing emotional harm, including threatening violence, ridiculing, racism, sexism, homophobia, and bullying.

**Sexual:** Unwanted or forced sexual contact, which may include verbal pressure, threats of physical force or actual physical force.

## Contributors:

- ◆ Peer pressure
- ◆ Need for attention or respect
- ◆ Low self-worth
- ◆ Access to weapons

## Why are youth violent?

While the causes of youth violence are many and complex, individuals may act violently for one of the following reasons:

**Expression:** violent acts are used by some as a way to express feelings of anger or frustration, or as a way to regain control of their emotions.

**Manipulation:** violence is used as a tool to control others.

**Retaliation:** violence is a way of getting back at someone who has hurt the individual or someone he/she cares about.

**Learned behaviour:** violence is a learned behaviour. If an individual has not learned how to cope with his/her emotions or stressful situations he/she may behave violently because he/she feels like there are no other options.

(Striving to Prevent Youth Violence Everywhere, 2010)

# Cyberbullying

It can be a challenge for adults working with youth to address cyberbullying as it is difficult to keep up with technology and the ways in which it can be used to bully.

At present, cyberbullying happens via text message, email, instant messaging programs, social media sites (such as Facebook and Twitter), websites and blogs.

In addition to sending mean or threatening messages, bullies use technology to exclude, ridicule or rate others. The emotional impact of cyberbullying can be huge, which is why it is important for professionals to talk about it with youth.

(Bullying.org, 2004)

*15 year-old boy from undisclosed location:*

“Well, the only reason I bullied is because the same person I was doing it to, did it to me like a week before. It wasn't the right thing to do but at the time it felt like I was getting revenge.”

(Cyberbullying Research Center, 2010)

*12 year-old girl from Michigan:*

“The internet is supposed to be a place that is safe and fun for people, not a place to be criticized or harassed...One girl actually told me she would come and murder my parents and kill me personally. She made me cry so hard that I threw up. So, I know firsthand what its like to be bullied beyond your imagination.”

(Cyberbullying Research Center, 2010)



## Tech tips for youth

- ◆ Never share passwords with peers
- ◆ Protect personal information (ex: birth date, address)
- ◆ Before clicking send, ask yourself how you would feel receiving that message
- ◆ If someone sends a mean message, don't respond
- ◆ Don't put anything online that you don't want peers to see
- ◆ Avoid participating in cyberbullying or rating peers
- ◆ Talk to an adult if you witness or experience cyberbullying
- ◆ Contact police if messages or websites are threatening



# Risk Factors

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## Peer & Social

- ◆ Association with delinquent peers
- ◆ Peer rejection
- ◆ Peer pressure
- ◆ Involvement in gangs
- ◆ Poor academic performance
- ◆ Low commitment to school
- ◆ Does not participate in conventional activities

## Individual

- ◆ History of violent victimization
- ◆ History of early aggression
- ◆ Poor behavioural control
- ◆ Attention deficits, hyperactivity or learning disorders
- ◆ High emotional distress
- ◆ Exposure to family violence
- ◆ Drug, alcohol or tobacco use
- ◆ Antisocial beliefs & attitudes
- ◆ History of treatment for emotional problems

## Family

- ◆ Poor family functioning
- ◆ Strict childrearing attitudes
- ◆ Harsh, lax or inconsistent discipline
- ◆ Low parental involvement
- ◆ Low child monitoring & supervision
- ◆ Low emotional attachment
- ◆ Low parental education
- ◆ Low family income
- ◆ Parental substance abuse
- ◆ Parental criminality

## Community

- ◆ Decreased economic opportunities
- ◆ High number of poor residents
- ◆ High level of transiency
- ◆ High level of family disruption
- ◆ Low community participation
- ◆ Socially disorganized neighbourhoods

(Striving to Prevent Youth Violence Everywhere, 2010)

# Protective Factors

Protective factors are those things in a youth's life that protect him or her from becoming involved in youth violence.

Helping youth to build upon protective factors "can assist even the most vulnerable youth to overcome negative experiences, can

assist young people to make healthier choices and can contribute to more positive health outcomes for all youth in BC" (McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.7).

As professionals, we can assist youth to identify, and strengthen these factors in their lives.

## Family

- ◆ Family connection
- ◆ Parental involvement
- ◆ Positive environment
- ◆ Stable environment

## Individual

- ◆ Resiliency
- ◆ Compassion
- ◆ School connection
- ◆ Has someone to talk to
- ◆ Participation in after-school activities
- ◆ Positive self-worth
- ◆ Positive coping strategies
- ◆ Positive peer group

## School & Community

- ◆ Accessible after-school activities
- ◆ Cultural connectedness
- ◆ Community connectedness
- ◆ Youth friendly programs
- ◆ Empowering & respectful toward youth
- ◆ Encourage youth involvement

(McCreary Centre Society, 2002)



*"I don't have any health concerns, but I could talk to someone about how much I miss India."*

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.11)

# What to look for...



*“I have considered suicide, because of all the bullying some people do to me.”*

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.28)

Although each youth is different, adults may notice the following if a youth is involved in or has been a victim of violence:

- ◆ A change in behaviour especially with violent or aggressive outbursts
- ◆ Injuries with no reasonable explanation
- ◆ Suicide attempts or threats
- ◆ Does not follow rules at home or school
- ◆ Disciplinary problems at school or in the community
- ◆ Bullying or intimidating peers or younger children
- ◆ Poor peer relationships and/or isolating himself/herself
- ◆ Carries a weapon
- ◆ Involvement in a gang
- ◆ Past violent behaviour
- ◆ Past destruction of property or vandalism
- ◆ Use of drugs and/or alcohol
- ◆ Recent experience of humiliation, shame, loss or rejection
- ◆ Themes of death repeatedly evident in conversation, artwork, writing or reading choices
- ◆ Preoccupation with themes/acts of violence in entertainment or internet sites visited



(Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere, 2010)

## Did you know:

“Perpetrators are often younger, and violence is becoming more prevalent in elementary schools” (Public Safety Canada, 2002).

# If you suspect...

Youth may not openly talk about having been a victim of or involved in youth violence.

Although a youth may not raise the topic, this does not mean that violence is not a concern for him or her.

If you suspect a youth has been involved in youth violence raise the topic as part of your assessment.

Consider completing a HEADSS assessment (see page 12 for details).

It is important for adults to recognize that the presenting issue may not be the youth's real reason for seeking help and take the time to listen (McCreary Centre Society, 2002).

*"I didn't think anyone would take me seriously."*

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.17)



## Confidentiality & Professional Responsibility

Questions about confidentiality can arise when working with youth. Each discipline and workplace will have specific guidelines regarding confidentiality with clients. As such it is important to understand the confidentiality guidelines of your workplace and profession.

### General Tips:

- ◆ Review workplace confidentiality policy
- ◆ Review professional confidentiality policy (Most professional board websites will have this information. If not, contact your professional board.)
- ◆ When discussing confidentiality with youth, ask them to explain to you what you have told them regarding confidentiality to ensure they understand
- ◆ If appropriate, ask youth's permission before referring a youth to another service
- ◆ If unable to gain permission, provide contact information should he or she change his or her mind

# Talking to youth



Adults working with youth need to create an environment in which youth are willing to share. In order to do this, the youth needs to feel comfortable and safe.

In addition to creating an environment in which youth will share, adults need to consider the developmental stage of the youth (see below) and his or her personal experience.

## Developmental Characteristics of Youth:

- ◆ Peer group becomes important
- ◆ Sense of invincibility
- ◆ Need to establish identity
- ◆ Need to establish independence from parents
- ◆ Need for privacy
- ◆ Exploring new beliefs & values



## 7 Things to Ask Yourself

- ◆ What are my experiences with youth?
- ◆ What are my beliefs about youth?
- ◆ What are my beliefs about the issues youth face?
- ◆ How do my experiences impact my beliefs?
- ◆ Are my beliefs and assumptions accurate?
- ◆ How can I change my inaccurate perceptions?
- ◆ If I were a youth how would I want to be approached?



# HEADSS Interview



In many cases, health care providers focus on physiological assessment. While this may be appropriate, this type of assessment often fails to uncover psychosocial issues that could be greatly influencing a youth's wellbeing.

No matter the discipline, conducting a HEADSS interview can facilitate communication and create a safe place for a youth to share with adults.

## HEADSS Interview questions focus on:

Home & Environment

Education & Employment

Activities

Drugs

Sexuality

Suicide/Depression

## Tips for conducting a HEADSS interview

- ◆ Conduct interview one-on-one with youth unless he/she requests others be present
- ◆ Start by introducing yourself to the youth (If others are present, introducing yourself to the youth first sends a clear message that you are interested in him/her.)
- ◆ Be respectful
- ◆ Review confidentiality at the **beginning** of the interview
- ◆ Use open-ended questions that are non-judgemental
- ◆ Clarify anything you don't understand or terms you don't recognize
- ◆ Watch assumptions
- ◆ Give the youth time to talk about topics you have not raised, but are important to him/her
- ◆ Offer assistance within your abilities and given your profession.

### Useful Information:

To obtain the full HEADSS interview tool visit:

<http://www.bcchildrens.ca/NR/rdonlyres/6E51B8A4-8B88-4D4F-A7D9-13CB9F46E1D6/11051/headss20assessment20guide1.pdf>

# Intervention

When it comes to caring for youth who are involved in, victims of or at risk for youth violence, there is no one right answer.

Interventions must be tailored to the individual and his or her situation.

The first steps include taking the time to listen to and work with the youth.

Telling a youth what to do is not particularly helpful as it can lead the youth to rebel

against advice and withdraw from the relationship.

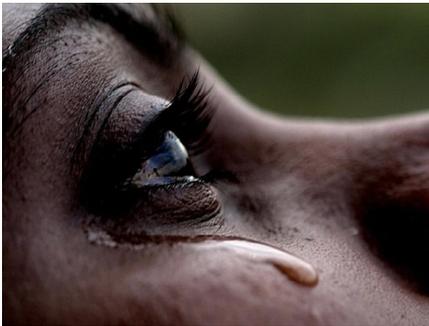
Successful interventions where youth are concerned require 3 components:

1. Respect for individual differences
2. Supporting the youth's emerging independence
3. A focus on the person's strengths

(Driessnack, 2006)

In addition to the three components listed above, successful interventions include follow through and flexibility.

Also, if part of the plan includes referring the youth and/or family to additional resources, ensure that those resources are appropriate, available and accessible.



*“I don't want to live with my family anymore because they don't know what my life is about and how much I hate it.”*

(McCreary Centre Society, 2009. p.13)

## Useful Information:

The following websites may be helpful resources:

- ◆ [www.youthagainstviolenceline.com](http://www.youthagainstviolenceline.com) ~ telephone and online support available 24/7
- ◆ [www.leaveoutviolence.com/english/index.htm](http://www.leaveoutviolence.com/english/index.htm) ~ LOVE offers a variety of youth programs across North America
- ◆ [www.pcrs.ca](http://www.pcrs.ca) ~ Pacific Community Resources offers a variety of youth and family programs in the Lower Mainland

# Resources

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## Emergency Situations

- ◆ 9-1-1
- ◆ Kids Help Phone
  - ~ 1-800-668-6868
  - ~ [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)
- ◆ Youth Against Violence Line
  - ~ [www.youthagainstviolenceline.com](http://www.youthagainstviolenceline.com)

## Prevention Programs

- ◆ Rock Solid Foundation
  - ~ [www.rocksolid.bc.ca/](http://www.rocksolid.bc.ca/)
- ◆ Psychosis Sucks
  - ~ [www.psychosissucks.ca](http://www.psychosissucks.ca)

## Youth Services

- ◆ Watari Day Youth Program
  - ~ [www.watari.org/](http://www.watari.org/)
- ◆ Covenant House (Vancouver)
  - ~ [www.covenanthousebc.org/](http://www.covenanthousebc.org/)
- ◆ Broadway Youth Resource Centre (Vancouver)
  - ~ <http://broadwayyouthresourcecentre.org/>
- ◆ Little Black Book (youth services in Surrey, Langley, Delta)
  - ~ <http://www.cjibc.org/PDFs/LittleBlackBook4thEd.pdf>

## More Information

- ◆ Cyberbullying Research Center
  - ~ [www.cyberbullying.us/](http://www.cyberbullying.us/)
- ◆ Striving to Reduce Violence Everywhere
  - ~ [www.safeyouth.gov/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.safeyouth.gov/Pages/Home.aspx)
- ◆ Canada's Police Information Portal
  - ~ [www.mypolice.ca/children\\_and\\_youth/home.html](http://www.mypolice.ca/children_and_youth/home.html)

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Tyakoff, A. (2006). South Asian-based group crime in British Columbia: (1993 – 2003) Focus group report review of findings (Reference: SRA-787, pp.1-75). Gatineau, QC: Department of Canadian Heritage.

## Websites Accessed:

Bullying.org: <http://www.bullying.org/>

Cyberbullying Research Center: <http://www.cyberbullying.us/shareyourstory.php>

Public Health Agency of Canada: [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfvvcnivf/familyviolence.html/nfntsyjviolence\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfvvcnivf/familyviolence.html/nfntsyjviolence_e.html)

Striving to Reduce Violence Everywhere: <http://www.safeyouth.gov/Pages/Home.aspx>

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## Images retrieved from the following websites:

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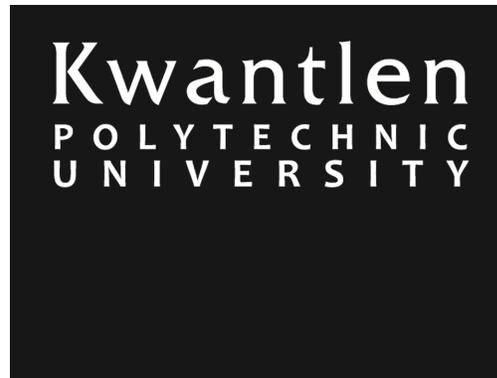
[3Fq%3DYouth%2Bin%2Bcircle%26hl%3Den%26biw%3D1280%26bih%](http://www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://www.medway.gov.uk/index/learning/t4c/80216/t4c_february_2008.htm&usg=__almSDbQ8NzRhAip8iQ)

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