

Service Organizations

Non-profit service organizations can have a significant effect on reducing violence by offering quality programs that engage youth and adults positively; providing alternatives to violence; and providing activities which can also discourage destructive behavior. Being productive and creating an environment that is positive and supportive has an impact on violence prevention. Quality programs and services provide a way to engage its participants to intervene and challenge perspectives that lead to violent behavior. Other programs intervene more directly once the issue of violence has surfaced. In both cases, giving people hope and vision for a productive future becomes an incentive for people to avoid the cycle of violence. Therefore, service organizations should:

- **Coordinate** and collaborate with one another to avoid offering duplicative services and to fill in gaps in service. Collaborate on funding where possible and feasible. Sponsor and participate in ongoing consensus-oriented, democratic discussion/work groups to develop strategies and action plans for providing solutions.
- **Solicit** input from grassroots individuals, groups, and community collaborative efforts that may not be considered formal nonprofits or service organizations. Such entities may have strategies and action plans for providing solutions to the violence in our communities. These non-traditional resources can offer a unique and valuable perspective to such problems.
- **Apply** for funds that allow *needed* programs to be supported and expanded.
- **Create** opportunities for children and youth from different communities to come together in a safe environment. Keep facilities open late in the evenings and on Saturdays to give children a *safe* place to “hang out.”
- **Establish** and expand programs that expose children to a broader world-view, programs that take them out of their own communities. Provide a more holistic picture of the world around them. Expose youth to a wide range of experiences occurring in and out of the city.
- **Increase** the number of community events, which have the goal of eliminating fear and increasing opportunities for citizens to work together.
- **Support** youth centers where young people can go to hear speakers with messages that foster positive social, emotional, physical and spiritual growth. Introduce children, youth, and adults to successful people in their communities who have met and conquered many of the problems they have faced.
- **Promote** and expand programs that teach youth how to resolve issues in new and non-violent ways. Teach conflict resolution in a culturally sensitive manner. Develop and implement peer leadership programs that encourage youth, in partnership with adults, to take the lead in reducing violence.

- **Implement** sports programs that stress the importance of cooperation and teamwork. Offer opportunities beyond football and basketball. Provide more opportunities for physical activity and self-discovery such as soccer, rowing, boxing, swimming and hiking. These kinds of activities help to improve physical and emotional well-being, as well as providing healthy ways to channel anger and aggression.
- **Provide** resources for training programs and job search needs. Offer parenting skills classes and stress counseling with effective outreach to those who need it.
- **Provide** community-based extracurricular educational programs such as parent leadership skills, tutoring, GED preparation, computer skills, etc. for families with young children from birth to age five. Such programs prepare parents to get involved in their children's development and education from the start.
- **Provide** internships, apprenticeships and jobs for youth which can provide experience leading to wider career opportunities.
- **Initiate** and expand basic entrepreneur courses *and* help interested youth to create and develop small businesses.
- **Provide** community with information about available services of agencies and organizations. Such services should be offered on a sliding income scale.
- **Provide** adults with training for reaching and counseling youth in the community, in community organizations and in schools.
- **Work** to secure community funds for youth centers.
- **Hold** *all* political leaders accountable for their promises to support community-based, anti-violence initiatives and community enhancement programs.
- **Be** an advocate for youth whenever and wherever possible.

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Street Level Outreach

Anyone who works at the street level helps to reduce violence by providing outreach, activities and services. Therefore, they should:

- **Begin** by developing personal, individualized relationships with young people and adults who might benefit from their guidance and interaction.
- **Help** youth get the services they need by identifying support services and developing individualized goal-oriented plans.
- **Serve** as advocates for youth. Be a link between youth and community stakeholder groups by providing those organizations with solutions to current issues and problems and bringing youth to the appropriate resources for help.
- **Provide** crisis intervention by serving as a liaison to offset violent incidents both before youth get involved with the police and afterwards to begin the healing process. This could also include the involvement of street level workers in resolving conflicts between youth from various neighborhoods, preferably before police intervention becomes necessary.
- **Look** for opportunities to prevent or diffuse conflict and to help youth learn to resolve their issues in new and less violent ways. Special emphasis should be placed on introducing them to mediation and conflict resolution skills.
- **Support** the community restorative justice system. Assist mediators in developing relationships with members of the community.
- **Help** keep children and youth in school. Reach out to youth who may need extra help to stay in school and introduce them to appropriate resources such as medical services, mental health services, substance abuse services, and alternative education programs designed for youth.
- **Encourage** *all* adults to stop fearing our youth. Invite people from the various neighborhoods to join street level workers to gain a better understanding of the problems youth face. This could include forming neighborhood block watches; holding community celebrations and picnics; engaging youth constructively; or simply by coming out to stand on one's porch. Don't be afraid to talk with our youth.
- **Encourage** the community *at large* to talk with youth and bring to them one's concerns with understanding and respect
- **Show** youth how to use their "street skills" (hustling, etc.) in constructive, productive and legitimate ways. This will boost their self-esteem and validate their self-worth. Doing so contributes to preventing our youth from entering the criminal justice system.

- **Participate** in setting up and/or supporting family and youth hotlines and other emergency services.
- **Integrate** street-level initiatives with neighborhoods and families by connecting them with resources such as educational, vocational, legal services, and services provided by religious organizations.
- **Create** opportunities for youth who have overcome life obstacles to become role models for higher risk peers.
- **Identify** opportunities to educate youth about the ways in which emotions related to trauma and loss can be dealt with constructively.
- **Provide** community forums and educational opportunities for other adults to learn more about what they can actually do impact the violence that permeates the streets of *our* communities.
- **Conduct** voter registration and education programs. Organize the youth to vote and participate in positive political activities such as voter registration, flyer distribution, and making phone calls for getting out the vote. This provides an opportunity for youth *and* community empowerment.

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