



The Role of Mental Health Providers and University-Based Professionals

Healthcare providers and university-based professionals must attend to the full range of interventions that may prevent violence and its mental health consequences. This requires integrating research and treatment with a full understanding of the complex and important interactions between social, community, and family realities. It is critical to consider their impact on individual's risk for: violence and self-injurious behavior; depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders; difficulties in emotional, cognitive and moral development; and impediments to educational and vocational opportunities. Therefore, these entities should collaborate to:

- **Affirm** support for the Surgeon General's assertion that youth violence is a public health issue of utmost importance; that youth violence is preventable; and all university health care resources should be carefully coordinated "to apply the science of public health to the treatment and prevention of violence." (Surgeon General's report)
- **Individualize** intervention strategies to the children, youth, and young adults at every stage of their development.
- **Screen** systematically and refer as indicated for violence related mental health problems and their associated problems (e.g. addiction, violence exposure, family conflict, trauma-related mental health issues).
- **Ensure** that available clinical services reflect the best understanding and the best application of evidence-based practice recommendations.
- **Evaluate** the effectiveness of current and future services to determine if goals are being achieved and if not, implement the changes that should be made to improve them.
- **Re-evaluate** ongoing services whose evidence base suggests they may not be effective. Request and implement appropriate changes.
- **Hire** experts in violence prevention who specialize in evaluating the effectiveness of ongoing interventions and research strategies; one specifically with the responsibility for oversight. (www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/evaluation_improvement-a.pdf)
- **Treat** identified individuals with effective, coordinated, ongoing interventions, making sure to integrate these services with an approach to individuals' immediate and extended family.
- **Expand** clinical interventions to as many as possible of the individuals' immediate and extended family.
- **Integrate** clinical services with long-term social services, especially those that address educational and vocational opportunities.

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Mentoring and the Impact on Youth Violence

Mentors and mentoring organizations can have an impact in reducing youth violence by creating an environment where our youth are motivated to achieve by empowering them to become self-sufficient shareholders in the economic and social fabric of the communities in which they live. Mentors provide strong and positive role models in the lives of our youth. One-on-one and/or group mentoring exposes our youth to caring role models who reinforce the adage that says, "What they see is what they can be". Mentors, through their examples of leadership, dedication, and friendship, can nurture our youth and compel them to carry out the tradition of a continuous quest for educational excellence and to re-invest in our communities. Mentors act as guides for our youth in life experiences, fostering positive self-perception and self-respect, cultural enrichment, and the pursuit of positive life-long goals.

Therefore, agencies, communities of faith, individuals and organizations should:

- **Cultivate** an environment of trust by removing the intergenerational and socio-cultural barriers to communication.
- **Demonstrate** the virtues and values of being a man or woman and the willingness to show empathy without being viewed as soft. Respect and responsibilities are essential
- **Create** an environment that is empathetic to all of the challenges the youth may be facing: hunger, poor hygiene, inadequate clothing, inadequate housing, lack of financial resources, etc.
- **Provide** a platform for youth that would build self-worth, self-awareness and self-esteem.
- **Talk** openly about one's experiences and how one's life is not unlike the youth being mentored; let no subject be taboo so trust can be built to help the youth get in touch with their true selves, not the self-inflated bravado displayed too often by our youth.
- **Support** youth by exposing them to educational and internship opportunities that will allow them a close-up view of realizing their dreams.
- **Collaborate** with businesses that will allow for exposure to real life jobs.
- **Teach** youth to have self-discipline by engaging them in motivational interviewing that allows them to uncover environmental and social triggers, such as peer pressure and bullying, that lead them into unhealthy behaviors such as drugs and violence.
- **Encourage** youth to disengage from situations that can lead to violence by instructing them to walk away and seek the advice from their mentors or family members who reflect the values to which they aspire.
- **Require** the youth to be accountable for their actions.

- **Instill** in the youth the value of maintaining personal grooming, proper bearing when in the company of professionals, proper speech and tone when engaging people outside of our community and how to speak respectfully to everyone at all times.
- **Provide** access to behavioral therapy if needed to break barriers that the mentor may not be equipped to handle.
- **Identify** educational deficiencies and provide appropriate follow-up and/or resources.
- **Collaborate** with local schools to provide tutoring or materials the mentor can use to tutor the youth in his or her charge to decrease deficiencies in reading and mathematics.
- **Display** “*Ductus Exempla*” Leadership by Example: Lead in the way you wish to be followed!

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