Every day new reports tell of growing violence among youth at younger and younger ages. This guide looks at current research, practices, and types of programs made to help parents and youth avoid violence. Parents can use this guide to support and protect their children, homes, and communities.

ROOTS OF VIOLENCE:

- Loss Of Feeling Connected
- No Family Support or Control
- Little or No Values
- Alcohol/Drug Use
- Problems in/with School
- Media Violence

IN NEVADA:

Nevada ranks 29th nationally (based on 1993 figures) in juvenile violent crime arrest rates. Between 1985-1993, there was a 53% increase for youth arrested for violent behavior between ages 10 - 17 years. Las Vegas, located in Clark County, Nevada, currently has a population of approximately one million residents. Over the last fifteen years, the population has more than doubled in Las Vegas (1980-1995), from 385,396 to 824,050. Along with the rapid growth of Las Vegas, there has been an increase in violent youth behavior. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department has identified at least 118 street gangs with over 5,916 confirmed members. These gangs were responsible for over 238 drive-by shootings and 16 murders in 1993. While certain crimes have decreased in Las Vegas between 1991 and 1996, crimes against persons have increased 16% for the same time period.

WHAT CAUSES VIOLENCE?

Research has found "factors" that cause, prevent, and protect children from becoming violent. Risk Factors that cause violence are:

- Poverty & Poor Health Care
- Child Abuse & Neglect
- Family Breakdown & Poor Parental Control
- Easy Access to Guns & Accepted Drug/Alcohol Use
- Poor Schools & Community Support

Protective Factors are safeguards that help children avoid violence by giving them tools to use. These include:

- Positive School Experiences
- Strong Family Bonds
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Supportive Communities
Close Relationships with Adults

WHAT KIND OF CHILD IS VIOLENT?

Parents should become concerned if their child(ren) have any of these behaviors:

- Cannot feel empathy (warmth) for others
- Very hyperactive & hasty to react
- Has a hard time paying attention
- Thinks of problems in a hostile way
- Wants to be a bully with others
- Acts violently before thinking
- Has limited solutions to problems
- Does not consider consequences of actions
- Glorifies aggressive behavior of others

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP!

Start Early - Children have been known to show signs of violent behavior as young as 2 or 3 years of age. Commit to spending time together, communicate personal faith and values, and show appreciation for effort and good behavior.

Don't Accept Violence - in the family, home, or community. Violence is an unhealthy way to respond to anger. Parents need to start prevention by setting clear rules for behavior, teaching positive ways to handle conflict, and being good role models for their children.

Teach Alternatives - Children need to see, experience, and learn alternate ways to express anger and frustration. Help children recognize the steps that lead to violence and the skills to walk away without losing self-esteem or “face”.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Most communities have programs provided by Congress to help avoid violence. Some examples are:

- Latchkey/After-School Programs - some serve meals (breakfast/afternoon snack), provide homework assistance, parenting classes, and activities
- Families First Programs - provide in-home services for crisis intervention, drug/alcohol abuse, conflict resolution to families & children
- Teen Drop-In Centers - help to develop positive peer groups and provide drug-free recreation
- Day Treatment Programs - school-based counseling for children with behavioral problems
- Health Screening & Immunization Programs - provide low- or no-cost health care for families & Children
- Anti-Gang/Anti-Drug Task Forces - provide help in organizing Neighborhood Watch Programs

REFERENCES


"Metro Crime Analysis", by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, 1985 - 1996.

"Population Growth Information", Nevada Business and Economic Indicators.


"Youth Violence in Middle America", by Peter L. Benson and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, September, 1992.