



**Murdoch Childrens**  
Research Institute

# Youth violence prevention approaches: Which ones work? How do we know?

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# Youth violence prevention approaches:

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# Today's presentation

- What doesn't work and why?
- What does work and why?
- What's needed for effective prevention

# Introduction

- Presentation based on report commissioned by ARACY
- **Focus is on young people aged 10–14 years (ie. in the early adolescent years)**
  - before violent & antisocial behaviours have become entrenched
- **This developmental period provides a potent opportunity for positive intervention**
  - Biological changes
  - Important transitions

# What doesn't work and why?

*Research shows that while some prevention approaches show no evidence of a reduction in violence and antisocial behaviour, others have negative effects.*



# What doesn't work and why?

## (1) Individual and relationship approaches

- Group programs & therapies restricted to high-risk only YP, such as:
  - Group administered psychotherapy
  - Social skills training
  - School-based therapy programs
  - Community-based peer group interventions

*SOURCE: see review Dodge et al, 2006*



# What doesn't work and why?

## Individual approaches – how to minimise negative effects

- YP at risk for antisocial or violent behaviour should not be placed together in groups
- Minimise time spent in such groups
- Minimise unstructured interaction
- Create and maintain a prosocial peer culture
- Groups highly structured
- Well-trained group leaders

# What doesn't work and why?

## (2) Proximal settings approaches

School policies that group high-risk YP together

- academic streaming (or 'tracking')
- grade retention
- self-contained classrooms for students with emotional or behavioural disorders
- disciplinary practices that involve suspension, expulsion, or placement into alternative schools.

# What doesn't work and why?

## Minimising impact of school suspension

- only use these approaches for the most severe behavioural transgressions
- allow flexibility in use of these approaches (consider circumstance, teacher expertise)
- work with parents to ensure the student is supervised by an adult while excluded from school
- provide and monitor school work for young people excluded from school
- assist young people to reintegrate back into the school after the suspension has been completed

# What doesn't work and why?

## (3) Ineffective and harmful approaches for young offenders

- Boot camps
- Shock probation or parole
- Trying young offenders in adult court

*SOURCE: see review - US Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General.*

# A note on naming and shaming

- Lack of research on effects
- Possible negative effects are
  - Stigmatisation (& may increase antisocial behaviour)
  - misuse of the concept of 'shaming' (restorative practice vs public shaming)
  - the potential for vigilante action
  - generating a false sense of community protection
  - interference with rehabilitative efforts

# What does work and why?



# Focus

- Primary and secondary prevention
  - *Most likely to prevent violent & antisocial behaviour before it starts*
  - *Primary prevention → universal programs*
  - *Secondary prevention → higher risk YP*
- Early adolescent years: young people aged 10 – 14 years

# Key Sources

- **Blueprints for Violence Prevention: Center for the Study and Prevention of violence**, University of Colorado (US)
- **World Health Organization**
  - \* *World Report on Violence and Health (2002)*;
  - \* *Preventing violence: a guide to implementing the recommendations of the World Report on Violence and Health (2004)*
- **US Dep't of Health & Human Services (2001): Youth Violence: A report of the Surgeon General Report**
- **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Model Programs Guide (US)**
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: National Registry of Effective Programs (US)**
- **Dodge, K et al (2006): Deviant Peer Influence in Intervention and Public Policy for Youth. Michigan: Society for Research in Child Development.**
- **Meta-analytic reviews (see ARACY report)**



# Principles for effective prevention

*Nation et al. (2003) – meta-review of prevention studies identified 9 key principles*

## Program characteristics

1. Comprehensive
2. Varied teaching methods
3. Sufficient dosage (enough intervention) to produce effects
4. Theory driven
5. Promote positive relationships

## Matching program to target group

6. Appropriately timed
7. Socioculturally relevant

## Implementation and evaluation

8. Outcome evaluation
9. Well-trained staff

# Criteria for evaluating programs

<b>Effective:</b>	rigorously evaluated; consistently demonstrated significant positive effects in reducing violence and antisocial behaviour; showing replication across sites with demonstrated results; showing sustainability of effects.
<b>Promising:</b>	rigorously evaluated; positive effects in reducing violence and/or antisocial behaviour in at least one site.
<b>Requiring more research:</b>	includes common approaches to prevention of violent and antisocial behaviour and/or approaches that target known risk and protective factors for which the evidence on effectiveness is limited.
<b>Ineffective:</b>	rigorously evaluated; negative or null effects.



# Effective approaches

## (1) Individual level approaches

- **Social development training (E)**
  - *Responding in Peaceful & Positive Ways (RIPP)*
  - *Too Good for Violence*



# Effective approaches

## (2) Relationship level approaches:

### a. Family

- **Family therapy (E)**
  - *Functional Family Therapy; Brief Strategic Family Therapy*
- **Parent training (E)**
  - *Strengthening families program; Parenting Adolescents: A Creative Experience*

### b. Other adults

- **Mentoring (E)**
  - *Big Brothers Big Sisters*



# Effective approaches

## (3) Proximal level approaches:

### a. School

- **Teacher training in Behaviour m'ment (E)**
  - *Incredible Years Teaching*

### b. Community

- **Co-ordinated multi-level interventions (E)**
  - *Communities that care*



# Effective approaches

## (4) Multi-level approaches

- **Multi-component school-based violence prevention programs (E)**
  - *Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT)*
  - *Fast-track*
- **Bullying prevention (E)**
  - *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*
  - *Friendly Schools & Families* (promising)

## \* Promising approaches

## \* Approaches requiring more research

	Promising	Requires more Research
<b>Individual</b>	Violence prevention curriculum (P&S) Behavioural monitoring and reinforcement (S)	
<b>Relationship (Peer &amp; Family)</b>		Restorative practice (S)
<b>Proximal social settings (School &amp; Community)</b>	Structured programs and activities open to all youth (P&S)	School wide reform (P) Reduce alcohol availability (P) Naming and Shaming approaches (T)
<b>Societal</b>		Reduce media violence (P) De-concentrate poverty and reduce marginalisation (S) Change social norms (P)

P = Population based primary prevention strategies, aimed at all youth

S = Secondary prevention strategies, aimed at high-risk youth

T = Tertiary level prevention strategies, aimed at antisocial youth or juvenile offenders

# Cost-effectiveness

- well implemented and rigorously evaluated (**'blue-chip'**) programs can achieve significantly more benefits than costs to the community
- reduced crime rates; increased school completion; reduced grade repetition

## HOWEVER:

- some programs fail to generate more benefits than costs;
- lack of rigorous evaluation for many programs

*REFERENCE: Benefits & Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth - Aos, Lieb, Mayfield, Miller, & Pennucci, 2004*

# To do violence prevention well ..

- **conduct research** on the effects of different levels and types of implementation of the most promising interventions
- **disseminate** the evidence on what is known
- **develop and broadly apply** practical procedures for monitoring implementation

# Effective action requires .....

- prioritisation of prevention and early intervention
- adoption of a developmental pathways approach
- multi-level approaches to address influences across the multiple contexts
- identification of factors most important in particular communities (using local data)

# Preventing youth violence

## What does and doesn't work and why?

An overview of the evidence on approaches and programs



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