

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE SCHOOL, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1995
 Reviewed and deemed relevant November 2017

- WHEREAS,** Since its inception in 1897, PTA has been a leader in advocacy for Child Health and Safety; and
- WHEREAS,** Violence in America has escalated to epidemic proportions. For example, violence resulting in interpersonal, intentional physical injury is the leading cause of death and disability for the under 44 years of age population in Los Angeles County. Every day in America 14 children are killed by gunfire. In 1992, in California, there were 603 handgun injury deaths among youth aged 19 and under. Willful handgun homicides of juveniles (ages 17 and under) were reported in half of the counties in California; and
- WHEREAS,** For children to learn and teachers to teach, schools must be safe. Children across the country reasonably hold the grim view that school violence is spiraling from bad to worse; and
- WHEREAS,** To help combat youth violence in America, there are numerous strategies and programs being used successfully in schools, communities and families throughout the nation. Among these strategies are conflict resolution, peer counseling, anger management, media campaigns, student community work, family/home support programs and other preventive interventions involving students, families, and communities; and
- WHEREAS,** PTA is in an ideal and unique position to raise awareness, mobilize schools, parents and communities to conduct training and promote the use of violence prevention and reduction programs and strategies; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to promote an awareness and educational campaign* urging the use of violence prevention and intervention strategies and also urge them to collaborate with appropriate agencies; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That PTA units, councils and districts urge local school districts and community organizations to work collaboratively to develop and implement a comprehensive, sustainable curricula to reduce the incidence of all forms of violence; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA submit this resolution to the National PTA for consideration at its convention.

* Such a campaign could include the use of workshops, parent education programs, training programs, conferences, studies and symposiums.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

There has been a dramatic increase of violence within our communities during the last two decades. Attorney General Janet Reno says youth violence is the greatest single crime problem in America today. Between 1987 and 1991, the number of teenagers arrested for murder around the country increased by an unprecedented 85% according to the Department of Justice. Many young people not only experience violent acts within the home neighborhood, but have become witnesses to violent acts against family members and friends. This direct exposure to violence very likely has an effect on the student's functioning in the school setting.

The National School Safety Center says 1-5 students carries a weapon to school; 135,000 students carry a gun on campus every day.

Our young people are being killed and maimed in record numbers. They are victims in a culture characterized by guns, poverty and parental and community neglect, as the National Research Council concluded in its massive study of violence two years ago. . . “A successful intervention at just one point in a long causal chain can prevent some events or reduce their consequences.”

Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., Assistant Dean for Government and Community Programs, Harvard School of Public Health, states that primary violence prevention efforts seek to redefine the “hero,” create alternative problem solving strategies and reward nonviolent problem solving. These types of violence prevention programs may include mass media messages, classroom education, peer counseling, leadership and community based training programs, and anger management.

Among the most comprehensive and innovative school-based programs for violence prevention is the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), a K-12 conflict resolution and mediation program that began in New York City in 1985 and has since expanded to four other school systems across the country.

Conflict resolution is one of the more widely used educational approaches in violence prevention programs. One example is Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith's **Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents**, developed in collaboration with Education Development Center, Inc. (Center for Violence Prevention and Control, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02160, (617) 969-7100). This 10-session curriculum develops adolescents' understanding of the risk factors for violence, of anger's role in interpersonal conflict, how anger can be channeled constructively, and how to resolve issues once a conflict has taken place. Developed in 1987, it is one of the few violence prevention programs targeted to high risk urban youth. It was evaluated under a contract from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) as having a positive impact on adolescents.

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We have come a long way in the last decade. Politicians are listening to the logic of prevention. Existing violence prevention programs are expanding. New programs are being developed. More and more people and communities are demanding a different response to the violence in our society. New anti-violence television programming, curricula, and other educational tools are being developed. Collaborative programmatic efforts will help to establish concrete working relationships across the disciplines. Model programs across the country have charted new ground in their responses to the community violence. The California State PTA recognizes the social pressures facing today's youths and believes concerned individuals, agencies and organizations must join together to address the needs of all children. Together, families, schools and communities can effectively strengthen and enhance the growing-up process of our children, resulting in emotionally secure, healthy and socially responsible adults.