

The Top Ten Things Policy-Makers Can Do to Reduce Adolescent Crime and Violence: A Behavioral Science Research-Informed List

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This outline describes ten broad strategies and targets with empirical scientific support for reducing the risk of crime and violence in adolescents.

1. Adopt a **public health perspective**
 - a. Risk factors and protective factors
 - b. Different policies for low, moderate, and high risk youth
 - c. Interventions targeted to
 - i. Reducing dynamic risk factors
 - ii. Strengthening protective factors
2. Make **policies developmentally informed**
 - a. Adolescents differ from adults in
 - i. Importance of peer influence
 - ii. Impulsivity
 - iii. Risk-taking (although not risk recognition)
 - iv. Time perspective
 - b. Most adolescents “age out” of risk for committing crime and violence
3. Promote **school** policies and practices
 - a. Discourage and reduce bullying
 - b. Address student problems with
 - i. Learning disorders
 - ii. Behavior
 - c. Retention
 - i. Avoid zero tolerance policies
 - ii. Formal threat assessment process w/graduated outcomes
 - iii. Use suspension/expulsion only as genuinely needed
 1. Increase risk for justice involvement
 2. Increase risk for school drop-out
 - d. Support high school completion, and college if possible
4. Strengthen **families** and reduce dysfunction
 - a. Poor parental management
 - b. Abuse and neglect
 - c. High conflict
 - d. Poor modeling
 - e. Parent is overwhelmed

- f. Basic needs not met
 - i. Food
 - ii. Housing
 - iii. Safety

- 5. Minimize **substance abuse** problems
 - a. Use
 - b. Involvement in selling

- 6. Identify and change relevant **personal characteristics**
 - a. Anger management problems
 - b. Impulsivity
 - c. Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
 - d. Criminal thinking

- 7. Recognize impact of **trauma/adverse experience**
 - a. Violence victimization
 - i. Physical
 - ii. Sexual

- 8. Promote availability of **prosocial activity**
 - a. Sports, clubs, interest groups
 - b. Prosocial peers
 - c. Responsible, prosocial adults

- 9. Reduce **community disorganization**
 - a. Violence
 - b. Poverty

- 10. Provide youth with **reason to hope**
 - a. Extra-familial prosocial adults who can be trusted and provide good models
 - i. Teachers
 - ii. Coaches
 - iii. Big Brother/Big Sister
 - iv. Minister/imam/rabbi
 - b. Public figures who are good models
 - i. Sports
 - ii. Entertainment
 - iii. Political