

SCHOOL VIOLENCE:
THE ROLE OF FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES,
EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**School Violence:
The Role of Families, Communities,
Educators and School Counsellors**

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Abstract

School violence is defined as anything that makes a student afraid to come to, and stay at school (Macdonald, 1996). Media reports of the suicides of children who were the victims of bullying, school shooting rampages in Littleton, Colorado and Tabor, Alberta, and the beating death of Rena Virk have brought the problem of school violence to the forefront. What follows is a series of three papers that attempt to inform school counsellors, and others working in the school system, about school violence and the actions that may be taken to ensure that every student is provided a safe learning environment. Paper one describes the current views held about youth and school violence. This includes a discussion of the forms, perpetrators, incidence, and risk factors for violence. Paper two concentrates on the prevention and intervention measures that can be implemented at the family, community and school levels. Finally, paper three focuses on the role the guidance counsellor can play in the school environment to help make it a safer place for students to learn.

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FOLIO 1

**SCHOOL VIOLENCE:
AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW**

School Violence: An Introductory Overview

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Introduction

Violence is defined as the intentional use of physical force against another person or against oneself, which either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury or death (Ollendick, 1996). Human beings have a long history of violence. When humans first appeared on the earth, violence was a necessary act that helped in self-preservation. These first humans had to compete with others for important resources needed for survival. Later on in human history conflicts were based upon religious persecution, world domination, and general intolerance for others. We learned about these incidents of violence through history courses , textbooks, and documentaries. Today, we need only watch the evening news to witness first-hand the atrocities of violence perpetrated against individuals who are different or have different opinions from the aggressors. As we move into the 21st Century, the stresses of an ever-increasing human population may affect the incidence of violence in society. There seems to be a growing perception that violence seems to be escalating in the general population, both in occurrence and severity.

Unfortunately, schools are not insulated against the incidence of violence. Although many incidents of violence occur outside of the school system, teachers and students are experiencing physical and verbal threats and direct violence during or after school hours in response to school occurrences. It is not uncommon for violent incidents to occur in hallways, cafeterias, restrooms, schoolyards, and even classrooms. The threat of violence has changed our centers of learning into dangerous places where people fear for their safety. As a consequence of school violence, energy and resources have been diverted from instruction to dealing with

disruptive and violent students. Unfortunately, the term “school violence” leaves the impression that teachers, administration and counsellors should only focus on violent acts that occur within the auspices of the school building, however, experiencing other forms of violence such as suicide, rape, murder, accidental death, or physical/sexual abuse can and will affect the behavior, self-esteem, and academic performance of students. It is, therefore, important that all school personnel be trained in appropriate violence prevention programs and crisis intervention procedures.

What is School Violence?

From an educator’s perspective, school violence encompasses those behaviors that seriously disrupt the safe learning environments of a classroom or school. For students, school violence is anything that makes them afraid to come to and stay at school (Macdonald, 1996). According to Capozzoli and McVey (2000), there are three types of school violence:

- the violence that originates at school and occurs in the school;
 - the violence that originates in the school but occurs outside the school; and
 - the violence that originates outside the school and occurs inside the school
- (adapted from p. 18).

Controversy exists over the cause of school violence. Day, Golench, MacDougall, and Beals-Gonzales (1995) believe that many children commit antisocial and delinquent acts sometime during their youth. Such manifestations of risk-taking, rebellion and rejection of traditional values are often seen as a part of normal development. Roy and Boivin (1989) see school violence merely as a reflection of the violence that exists in society that occurs every day.

Epp (1996) believes that the school system itself must accept some of the blame for violent youth. Epp proposes that the propensity toward violence in some students may be blamed upon the use of authoritative administrative structures, inappropriate discipline, and discriminatory practices employed within the school system which may or may not be overt. Many education professionals, however, feel that school violence is not caused by the school. Instead, it reflects the behaviors displayed outside school, such as societal changes, the breakdown of family relationships, violent role models in the media, and media-modeled violent behavior (Pietrzak, Peterson, and Speaker 1998).

Regardless of the underlying cause, violence has existed and does exist in our school system. Youth violence is nothing new. Children have exhibited delinquent and violent behaviors of various degrees throughout history. However, the perception held by many adults is that youths are becoming more violent and the types of violent acts they perpetrate are getting more severe. In addition, these types of behaviors, it seems, are being committed more often by females. Are the youth of today truly more violent compared to previous generations or can the perceived increase in violence be explained simply as a result of increased reporting by victims and the media? Understanding the causes, effects and prevention of delinquent and violent behaviors in youth will enable educators to reduce the incidence of violence in the school system, to ameliorate the risk factors associated with the development of aggressive, delinquent and violent behaviors, to assist the victims of violence, and to create a violence-free learning environment for all children.

Forms of Violence

According to Lawrence (1998), teachers act *in loco parentis* (in place of a parent) and as such, are responsible for the conduct and well-being of every student. Educators must be able to recognize violence that is perpetrated against others and effectively respond to each case in an appropriate manner. According to Curcio and First (1993), violence in students ranges from potentially serious to gravely serious. Following is a list of behavior categories cited by these authors:

Potentially Serious and Violent Behaviors:

- fist-fighting
- taunting and intimidation
- boys mistreating and harassing girls
- bullying
- gang membership and activity
- group hazing
- property damage and theft
- use of drugs and alcohol

Serious Violent Acts

- sexual assault
- extortion
- vandalism
- drug dealing and drug abuse

Gravely Serious Violent Acts

- suicide
- rape, murder, drive-by shootings
- firing a gun at school
- possession of a weapon at school
- stabbing fatally or wounding
- hate crimes (p. 8-9)

In another attempt to categorize violent behaviors in youth, the information document “*Preventing and Controlling Violence in the Schools*” published by the Government of Quebec (Roy and Boivin, 1989), cites the following examples:

- violence in sports and games;
- verbal violence toward students, teachers and parents;
- discrimination based upon race, religion, physical characteristics, intelligence or grades, ethnic or social background, gender, or even personal style;
- sexual harassment and assault;
- physical fights between students, with or without the use of weapons;
- vandalism;
- theft and extortion; and
- self-destructive or self-directed violence such as self-mutilation, suicide, drug abuse, prostitution, or dropping out of school (adapted from p. 18-28).

A similar study was conducted by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The report entitled “*What do You Think? A Youth Peer Information Package on Violence*” (2000), identifies the following types of violent acts perpetrated by and against students in Newfoundland schools:

- *peer abuse or bullying*: spitting, pushing, pinching, weapon use, breaking and stealing someone’s possessions, name calling, swearing at others, making fun of others and saying things to make them feel stupid, spreading gossip, coercing others into doing things, and intentionally isolating someone from an activity or group;

- *sexual harassment*: touching and grabbing, catcalls and name calling, sexual graffiti, pressure for sexual contact, sexual intimidation, and stalking;
- *dating violence*: physical, psychological, or sexual abuse and date rape;
- *sexual assault*; and
- *abuse based upon sexual orientation* (adapted from p. 33-54)

Although these authors categorize behaviors differently, the behaviors identified are the same. Newfoundlanders seem to believe that they are insulated against the types of aggressive, delinquent and violent behaviors seen in larger North American cities (Felt, 1987). However, as evidenced by the above study, it is obvious that Newfoundland youth are experiencing and perpetrating the same violent acts. We often hear about the use of weapons in American schools and think that it will never happen here. Unfortunately, our students have cited weapon use as one form of abuse they suffer at the hands of their peers (Khumalo, 1998). Identification of the types of violent behaviors that our students have to deal with helps us, as teachers, guidance counsellors and administrators, recognize and deal with the behaviors in a more timely and appropriate manner.

Delinquent vs. Violent Behavior

A juvenile delinquent, according to Wasserman and Miller (1998), is any youth who has committed an illegal act. Juvenile delinquents may also be described as antisocial, aggressive, disruptive, or conduct disordered. Conduct disordered children, according to the classification system used by psychologists and psychiatrists (DSM - IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994), display many physically aggressive and violent behaviors, such as stealing, rape, and

arson. Although not all children who exhibit delinquent behaviors become adult criminals, most serious violent adult offenders have a history of juvenile delinquency. Therefore, this risk factor must be considered relevant to the development of any violence prevention program (Wasserman and Miller, 1998).

The Incidence of Violence

It is not uncommon to hear community members complaining about “today’s youth” or the media mentioning yet another crime committed by an adolescent, or group of adolescents, with the implication that the incidence of youth crime is becoming more frequent and serious. Are they correct?

A report by Day et al. (1995) cites a Statistics Canada document (1993) which states that only 3% of the Canadian youth population aged 12-17 were seen in youth court in 1992-1993. While 54% of the cases heard in youth court that year were for property crimes such as theft and break and enter, only 19% of the cases involved more violent offences. Arrest reports from police indicated that the number of youths who were arrested in Canada rose 18% between 1986 and 1992, however, the number charged with a violent crime rose 75% from 8% to 14% during the above time period. Therefore, it may be concluded that the incidence of violent crimes committed by youths in Canada is increasing. But is it?

A report published by Statistics Canada (2000) indicates that the number of youths charged with a violent criminal code offence in 1998 increased 93% since 1988. However, that rate remained steady for the four years previous to the report. An increase in the type of charge is also evident. In 1998, violent crimes accounted for 20% of the total criminal charges compared

to 9% ten years earlier. While the incidence of violent criminal charges has increased, the incidence of property crime offences decreased from 69% to 51% in the same time period. This shows a clear shift in the type of crime committed by youths. Therefore, statistics indicate a drop in youth crime, but an increase in youth violence. The trend toward referring non-violent young offenders to alternative programs or toward the issuing of informal warnings, according to Statistics Canada (2000), should be investigated further with regard to the extent of youth crime.

According to Doob and Sprott (1998), there is no evidence of Canadian youth becoming more violent. In this view, evidence indicates that the rate of violent cases being brought to youth court is increasing, but these are by and large minor assault cases rather than violent crimes. What was once considered a problem that could be handled outside of the criminal justice system is now considered criminal behavior. Today, criminal justice systems are bringing more and more of these cases to court as a result of “zero tolerance” policies (i.e. youths are held accountable for their actions immediately upon their first offence). In addition, more victims of crime are reporting violence. Doob and Sprott conclude that these changes in societal attitudes toward violence help to explain the increase in the reported rates of youth violence.

Increased reporting by the media has also been blamed for the apparent increase in youth violence. Youth crime is now publicized in newspapers, on the evening news and in magazines. In addition, the media tends to sensationalize their reports so that they can increase their viewing audience. This type of activity increases the viewing audience’s awareness of incidents they would otherwise not hear about, therefore, it is only natural for people to think that youth crime is becoming more prevalent in society. According to the John Howard Society of Newfoundland, incomplete information and extensive media coverage of isolated, high profile crimes, often

committed in another province or country, leads people to believe that youth crime has reached epidemic proportions in their own communities (1998).

Schools are also reporting more incidents of youth crime, including minor violations such as vandalism, as well as violent offences. However, whether or not youths act out their aggressions in school (Pietrzak et al., 1998) or the school experience creates the frustrations leading to delinquent behavior (Epp, 1996) may be a moot point. School violence is, unfortunately, a real concern for teachers and administrators. Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, it is not a new phenomenon. Day et al. (1995) mention an incident of violence that occurred during a Mardi Gras festival in 1646 by the students of Le Collège de La Flèche. In this case, teachers had to use firearms to resist the student attack.

A study conducted by Pietrzak et al. (1998) involving American educators indicates that school personnel are extremely concerned about the trend toward increased violence in American schools. The surveys polled 134 teachers, 38 administrators, 2 district personnel, and 6 individuals who did not indicate their position from 12 states representing different geographical areas of the United States. Of those surveyed, 90 were employed at the elementary level while the remaining individuals were employed at the junior high school level. Results indicated that 36% of teachers polled were concerned about verbal threats or attacks from students and 14% were afraid of physical attacks. When asked about the frequency and types of violence they had experienced in one year, 66% of the teachers indicated that they had been verbally attacked and 11% had been physically attacked. Reports by Canadian educators contradict the American statistics. According to Day et al. (1995), violence in Canadian schools is considered to be a “non-issue” in many regions of Canada. With respect to Newfoundland, a report published by

Fitzpatrick in 1994 (Day et al., 1995) indicates a low incidence of youth crime and school violence in Newfoundland schools. In fact, according to the John Howard Society of Newfoundland (1998), the incidence of youth violence decreased by 5.6% from 1986 to 1996. In addition, only one in five youth court cases heard are for violent crimes, and about half of those are for minor assaults.

Gender Differences

There is no doubt that much of the research on youth violence has focused mainly on delinquency among males. According to Farrington (1996), most research has concentrated on male offenders because their offending is more frequent and serious than females. Farrington cites a Cambridge study that describes the typical offender as a male, born into a low-income, large-sized family, with criminal parents who have poor supervision skills, use harsh, erratic child-rearing techniques and are either in constant conflict or have separated. In addition, these males are characterized as having low intelligence and school attainment, as troublesome, hyperactive and impulsive, often truant, and associating with other delinquents. Clearly, these same conditions could be present for females as well as males. Does the exclusion of females in these studies mean that females are somehow immune to these conditions or could it be that females have been under-represented in the data because of stereotypical views about girls or the socialization and treatment of girls by family, teachers, and other community members?

The phenomenon of female delinquency was not even recognized until the 1970's. Freda Adler (1975), as cited in Lawrence (1998, p. 81), believed that the increase in female crime could be explained by a 'liberation hypothesis.' This is the idea that, as women become more active

and avail of more opportunities outside of the home, they engage in more crimes. Giordano and Cernkovich (as cited in Lawrence, 1998) disagree. They found that delinquent females were less liberated and held more traditional values of marriage and children. Rankin (1980), following interviews of 385 high school students in Detroit, Michigan, concluded that negative attitudes towards school and school performance were associated with delinquency involving both boys and girls, however, the relationship was stronger with the girls. In this view, if the incidence of violence perpetrated by females (as well as males) is to be reduced, schools have to foster positive school attitudes and focus on increasing student performances.

Studies conducted by Doob and Sprott (1998) indicate that there is no difference between the trend toward increasing violence among females or youths in general. According to Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998), although females are involved with the same types of delinquent acts, they are accused of these acts less frequently than their male counterparts. Statistically, females constitute 49% of all young offenders, but are under-represented in all assault categories (Doob and Sprott, 1998). This contradiction, according to Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998), may be explained by the strength of a person's moral beliefs. Apparently, moral beliefs are a significantly better inhibitor of females' delinquency than that of males. In addition, according to Farrington (1996), gender differences in offending may be explained on the basis of different socialization methods used by parents with boys and girls, or different opportunities of males and females for offending. This view is supported by studies conducted by Hagan, Gillis, and Simpson (1985), which suggest that gender differences result because girls, more than boys, are taught to avoid risks in general, and illegal behavior in particular. Therefore, girls would be deterred by the threat of legal consequences of their actions. In families where females are

encouraged to be more decisive and willing to take control and assume responsibility, girls are more likely to partake in delinquent activities. Mathews (2000) maintains that girls are inherently non-violent and resort to the use of force only in “self-defense” or as resistance to power imbalances and inequities in social relations.

The Risk of Violence

Risk factors can be defined, according to Leukefeld et al. (1998) and Farrington (1996), as individual attributes, individual characteristics, situational conditions, or environmental contexts that increase the risk of occurrence of events such as the onset, frequency, persistence or duration of offending. According to Ollendick (1996), some mental health professionals are of the opinion that violence is an innate, instinctive phenomenon and some suggest that it is an acquired, learned phenomenon, while others suggest that both the environment and our biology influence the way individuals deal with people and situations. According to Gorman-Smith and Tolan (1996) and Ollendick (1996), it is important to understand that participation in delinquent and violent behavior is determined by many interacting factors: biological, physiological, chemical, behavioral, psychological, sociological, economical and political. Importantly, they also note that aggression and violence show a developmental progression throughout the life of the child. In this view, it is important to understand the various biological and environmental conditions that children experience so that appropriate intervention and prevention programs can be developed to better serve our youth.

I. Biological Risk Factors

As any parent of more than one child can attest, each child has his/her own individual personality and approach to dealing with people and situations. These traits are apparent sometimes from birth. Parents have a tendency to compare their children, especially when it comes to behavior and performance. Common points of comparison may include differences in pleasantness, compliance, tantrum behavior and aggression. When one considers that each child is raised in the same family, with the same parents, it may be concluded that individual differences between siblings must be biologically based. Cole (1995) suggests that children at risk for behavioral problems often exhibit low tolerance for frustration in early childhood, tend to be more impulsive and angry when their wishes are not met in social situations, often resent authority figures, over-perceive hostility in others and habitually blame others for wrongdoing. Cole concludes, however, that the effect of child temperament on the development of childhood aggression seems to be linked with the way their parents cope with the child's behavior. Parents who feel that they are unable to deal with the child's behavior are likely to become less involved in directing the child's behavior. This could have long-term implications leading to poor social development in the child (Day et al., 1995).

Researchers who have studied the biological bases of aggression have examined a range of risk factors. One such factor is the influence of genetics on the development of aggressive behavior in children. In this view, all of the traits that humans possess are determined ultimately by their genetics. Scientists have learned through twin studies (studies of twins separated at birth), that certain traits are inherited and displayed regardless of the environment in which a child resides. This can apply to aggressive behavior as well. In the opinion of Lytton (1990)

children are more likely to engage in criminal behaviors when their biological parents are also criminals.

The study of genetics has also been used to try to explain the higher incidence of aggressive behaviors exhibited by males compared to females. Genetically, females have two X chromosomes (chromosomes that determine sex) while males have an X and a Y chromosome. It is the Y chromosome that scientists believe is instrumental in the production of testosterone and other “male characteristics.” Some researchers have indicated that overt conduct disorders are more consistently linked to high levels of testosterone, but the direction of the effects is not clear. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1998) state that testosterone may be indirectly associated with aggression through its inhibition of the enzyme monoamine oxidase which metabolizes several neurotransmitters. Low levels of monoamine oxidase are associated with a disinhibitory temperament which is characteristic of aggression. Since males are seen as being more aggressive by nature than females, Suzuki and Knudtson (1990) proposed that individuals with two Y chromosomes would be more aggressive and, therefore, commit more crimes. Yet, research conducted on inmates in prisons has failed to prove conclusively that an extra Y chromosome would lead to increased aggression. In addition, some researchers are investigating the effects of serotonin, an inhibitory neurotransmitter. It appears that low levels of monoamine oxidase correlates with low levels of a serotonin metabolite and that low levels of the metabolite correlates with aggression in children (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998).

Although many biological characteristics are inherited, some are attained through biological deficits attained through prenatal, labor and birthing, and post-natal complications. Farrington (1996) states that a history of pregnancy and birth complications is more common in

antisocial adolescents than in their siblings. As well, a lack of proper nutrients during critical periods of prenatal development and exposure to toxic chemicals such as alcohol and other drugs may lead to mild or severe deficits in cognition and behavior. Hawkins, Laub and Lauritsen (1998) also suggest that prenatal trauma and delivery complications may result in damage to brain mechanisms that inhibit violent behavior. These deficits may lead to a wide range of conditions such as poor motor coordination, low intelligence, hyperactivity, language impairment, self-control problems, poor frustration tolerance, social information-processing deficits, and learning disabilities, all features considered to be markers of aggressive behavior in children (Day et al., 1995).

According to Farrington (1996), hyperactivity is an important psychological construct that predicts later delinquency. It usually begins before age 5 and tends to persist into adolescence. It is associated with restlessness, impulsivity, and a short attention span. Farrington proposes that hyperactivity in children may be related to a low level of physiological arousal. It has been suggested that antisocial individuals have a lower level of autonomic arousal (such as heart rate or galvanic skin response). Adolescents with lower levels of autonomic arousal may have a fearless temperament (Hawkins, Laub, and Lauritsen, 1998), may be more aggressive, and may fight and bully more at school (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998).

Many of the biological risk factors discussed have an effect upon a child's intelligence. This is significant because, as Farrington (1996) claims, delinquent children exhibit poor school performance, are frequently truant and leave school at the earliest possible age. Children exhibiting these behaviors are more than likely to experience school failure, another risk factor for delinquent behavior. Farrington also proposes that these children, because of their low ability

to understand abstract concepts, have a poor ability to foresee the consequences of their behavior or to appreciate the feelings of their victims. Borduin and Shaeffer (1998) agree that aggressive youth have poor abstract reasoning and problem-solving abilities and, therefore, have lower moral reasoning maturity compared to nondelinquents.

II Environmental Risk Factors

Although some biological conditions can be cited as predictors and contributors to violent behavior in children, most researchers are aware that biology cannot explain violence occurring in all children. For example, a child who has been diagnosed with an attention deficit problem may have an increased probability of developing violent behaviors, however, if that child is raised in a family that understands the condition and provides family as well as professional support for the child, he/she may never exhibit the behaviors. According to the American Psychological Association (Ollendick, 1996), violence is mostly learned. Ollendick states that individual characteristics of the youths, family experiences, peer relationships, involvement with alcohol and drugs, exposure to media violence and larger societal factors play important roles in moderating and mediating violent behavior among youths. Therefore, to understand delinquent and violent behavior in youth, the environmental factors that may play a role in the development of these types of behaviors should also be identified.

The Family

Cole (1995) includes the following family characteristics as risk factors associated with early onset antisocial child behavior: poor parental management, unclear family boundaries, poor

parental communications, adults modeling poor self-control, inconsistent roles and rules of discipline, contradictory behavioral standards, erratic exercise of control, lack of family cohesiveness, negative interactions including physical threats and assaults, drug and alcohol abuse, and mistrust in school-home communication. She further states that abused or neglected children are at increased risk for the development of antisocial disorders in adulthood regardless of gender, race, age or socioeconomic status. According to Borduin and Shaeffer (1998), low levels of family warmth and supportiveness and high rates of marital and family conflict are associated with violent juvenile offenders.

The quality of the parent-child relationship is very important in mediating any aggressive tendencies in the child, especially in early childhood. The responsible parent provides for the child's physical development as well as his/her social development. Modeling of appropriate behaviors and correction of inappropriate behaviors by the parent should occur early in the child's life. Absence of an early supportive parent-child relationship, such as one characterized by a neglectful, unresponsive, inattentive, or overly protective parent, may develop maladaptive behaviors in the child (Day et al., 1995). A study of adult offenders conducted by Hawkins, Laub and Lauritsen (1998) indicates that children who have been neglected are more likely to commit violent acts than those who have been physically abused. This conclusion was reinforced through self-reports from adolescents who had been abused or neglected in childhood.

Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998) state that parental rejection is the most powerful predictor of delinquency. However, delinquency rates are higher in adolescents who are not only rejected by their parents, but who have, in turn, rejected their parents. When children are attached to their parents, they communicate more effectively, seek parental approval and accept appropriate

discipline. This helps to reduce delinquent behaviors and exposure to delinquent peers. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1998) believe that parents who neglect their children fail to instill values such as honesty and respect for the property of others, thus providing a weak moral upbringing and increasing the child's tendency toward delinquency and violence. The child's attachment to his/her parents helps the child develop a sense of inner confidence, efficacy, and self-worth, as well as the ability to become emotionally close to others (Sroufe, as cited in Day et al., 1995). Children who do not develop confidence or positive self-worth from the relationship with their parents, according to Bushman and Baumeister (1998), may act out with violence against others as a means of gaining esteem.

Delinquency in children can also be correlated with the methods parents use to discipline their children. According to Farrington (1996) and Day et al. (1995), poor parental supervision and erratic, inconsistent, or harsh parental discipline are important predictors of youthful offending. Clearly, appropriate and adequate parental supervision is needed to discipline a child effectively (Kinnear, 1995). If parents do not know what their children are doing and where they are, they will be unable to alter successfully any inappropriate behaviors. In addition, discipline needs to be applied at appropriate time intervals for any learning and behavior modification to take place (Farrington, 1996). Parents who discipline long after the event may not effectively instill in their child the reasons why the behavior was inappropriate. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1998) suggest that parents who try to reduce their own discomfort by ignoring or avoiding the child's behavior may be seen by the aggressive child as "giving in" to the child. This type of response by the parent only helps reinforce the idea that it pays to use aggression.

Sometimes, parents may resort to coercion to try to control a child's inappropriate

behavior. Ollendick (1996) has shown that a lot of antisocial behaviors are learned within the context of family interactional processes which may be characterized as coercive. Coercion may be seen as the use of material goods to try to control a child's behavior, or it may involve the manipulation of the child to act in a way that the parent wants. Parents often model these behaviors to their children and fail to correct their children when they exhibit the same types of behavior. This causes the behavior to escalate and serves as a basis for the development of coercive and aggressive behavior in the child. Unfortunately, this coercive and noncompliant behavior places the child at risk for peer rejection and academic failure at school, and parental rejection at home.

Family conflict and parental violence has also been cited as a factor that will increase delinquency (Seydlitz and Jenkins, 1998). Several studies, according to Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1998), have found that parental conflict and aggression or a conflictual atmosphere in the home is related to the commission of violent crimes by children. Violent juvenile delinquents are likely to have been physically abused by a parent or to have witnessed violence between their parents (Borduin and Shaeffer, 1998). These studies also point to the chronicity of the violence, as opposed to the severity of the violence, as being more closely linked to the child's aggressive tendency. A report published by Statistics Canada (2001) indicate that children who have been exposed to familial violence are more likely to commit delinquent acts and display emotional disorders and hyperactivity than children who have not been exposed. However, Haugaard and Feerick (1996) note that researchers have not been able to isolate the specific influence of physical abuse on aggression, claiming that other factors such as parenting behaviors, parental substance abuse, and chaotic home conditions may work in concert with physical abuse to

increase the risk that a child will become aggressive.

When considering the influence of the family on the development of aggressive behavior in children, understanding the role family structure plays in that development is important. According to Eichler (1997), single parenthood has become an important variation of the typical family since the beginning of the twentieth century. Since that time, the percentage of children in the United States being raised in single-parent homes has increased from 8.5% in 1900 to 12.3% in 1960, a figure that continues to increase. Today, divorce, as opposed to the death of a spouse, accounts for the majority of single-parent families. In Canada, the divorce rates have increased approximately 19% since 1968. Similarly, the percentage of unmarried mothers has increased from 6% in 1974 to 27% in 1990. It is not uncommon to have a child being raised by a single mother (or father) who struggles to maintain a reasonable standard of living. More often than not, many single-parent families do not make enough money to supply the basic requirements to their children. For instance, according to Eichler (1997), in 1993, 59.6% of single-parent families headed by a female were poor, as compared to 12.5% of dual-parent families with children

Childhood poverty is an important environmental risk factor for the development of aggressive and violent behavior in children. Poverty and family dependence upon welfare significantly increases the incidence of delinquent and violent behavior in youth (Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano, and Harachi, 1998). However, whether it is poverty per se or a combination of factors that contributes to violence is debatable. Smith and Jarjoura (1998), for example, found that communities characterized by poverty and rapid population turnover showed higher violent crime rates than more stable poor areas. This suggests that

inconsistency in community organization compounds the effects of poverty on delinquency and violence in youth. According to Coleman (1996), children who live in poor communities may be exposed to multiple risk factors such as low birthweight, unmarried mothers, teenage mothers, lax child-rearing practices, increased child abuse, and family violence.

Unfortunately, according to Day et al. (1995), more children are growing up in situations characterized by economic deprivation, inadequate housing, and inadequate supervision (in both single-parent and dual-parent families). It is likely then, that there will continue to be children who are ill-prepared to deal with the social, emotional, behavioral and academic demands placed on them in school, a situation which may lead to increased delinquency in these children. The literature does indicate a correlation between single-parent homes and delinquency. However, according to Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998), children would be less likely to engage in delinquent acts in a stable single-parent family than in a two-parent family experiencing marital discord, low parental esteem, parental alcoholism and criminality. Therefore, stability in the family, whether in single-parent or two-parent families, seems to be an important insulating factor against delinquency in youth.

Peers

As a child ages, the family becomes less important and the influence of peers and the school environment becomes more important in determining behavior. Some children allow peers to influence their behavior in a positive way, while others are affected negatively by their peers. For example, one child may study hard to be considered smart by a certain group in school while another child may shoplift to be accepted by a different group. Peer pressure becomes a

significant factor as the search for an identity and a desire to fit in becomes essential to the child's existence. This desire to fit in becomes even more important when the child has experienced poor academic and social competence, poor self-concept, disruptions in the home and family life, and early aggressive behavior (Day et al., 1995). Such a child may be more likely to associate with delinquent peers. In fact, according to Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998), when incarcerated delinquents were asked what they thought caused delinquency, they ranked the influence of their peers very high.

An additional aspect of peer pressure and its relationship to delinquency is the question of whether or not the behavior is more pronounced in a group or when the youth is alone. Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998) refer to studies that support the suggestion that delinquent acts are often committed by adolescents in groups. Whether or not this delinquency is caused by peer pressure or the fact that many activities of youths are committed in groups is debatable. According to Elliott and Menard (1996), social learning theory implies that exposure to delinquent friends leads to delinquent behavior, whereas social control theory suggests that delinquent behavior leads to the acquisition of delinquent friends. Farrington (1996) believes that when youths offend, they tend to associate with other offenders they may have met through the various agencies they have been exposed to. Therefore, these groups may have developed from the youth's need for understanding by individuals who have had the same experiences.

The tendency of youths to come together in such a supportive collective can lead to the development of "gang behavior". By definition, a gang is no different from another social group of adolescents. The characteristic that sets the two apart, however, is the participation of the members in delinquent acts (Flannery, Huff, and Manos, 1998). It is not uncommon to hear

about gang violence in the media, especially from the United States, however, Newfoundland is not insulated from that activity. A few years ago, new students attending a junior high school in the St. John's area were harassed by other students from the school. This harassment escalated to violence when groups of students physically attacked the new students. Unfortunately, gangs are appearing in more cities and smaller communities and they are recruiting children at a much younger age, some as young as 5 years of age (Flannery et al.,1998).

Although many adolescents may have friends who are delinquents, only a few have joined delinquent gangs. Therefore, it cannot be conclusively stated that knowing or befriending a delinquent will undoubtably lead to delinquency in a previously non-aggressive teen. In addition, gang members usually commit offences before they join a gang. This seems to imply that gang membership does not make a person delinquent. However, it is significant that once the adolescent is a member of a gang, the number of offences committed by the teen does increase (Seydlitz and Jenkins, 1998).

Another aspect of gang life and consequent delinquent behavior in general is substance abuse. According to Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998), substance abuse appears to be the most consistent and strongest effect of gang membership. Adolescents who are more peer-oriented and have drug-using friends are more likely to use drugs. In addition, the risk factors for the development of delinquent behavior in youth are the same risk factors that predict drug use (Leukefeld et al.,1998).

The School

It is within the school system that a child is given the opportunity to employ some of the aggressive skills he or she has learned and to learn new skills from other students. As well, it is often here that many children at risk for developing violent behaviors meet the delinquent peers described above. In addition, the positive or negative experiences the child has with school in general can increase his or her susceptibility to violent behavior. Hawkins, Laub, and Lauritsen (1998) believe that children who experience academic failure, low bonding to school, frequent truancy or dropping out of school, those who change schools frequently, or attend schools with high delinquency rates are at a higher risk for developing delinquent behaviors. Cole (1995) asserts that schools which have clear expectations for student behavior and learning and frequently monitor students' performance help contribute to a cooperative climate and a sense of ownership of the school by students, thereby reducing aggressive and violent behaviors in the school.

Unfortunately, in the opinion of Epp (1996), the policies and practices associated with standardization, exclusive pedagogy (how the teacher teaches) and punishment in the school system prevent learning, contribute to dehumanization, stratification and abuse, and cause students to respond in violent ways (p. 16). These violent behaviors include: defiance, withdrawal, addiction, self-destructive behaviors, harassment of teachers and peers, and vandalism, as well as verbal and physical attacks on teachers and administrators (p. 20). It is hard to place blame for this "systemic violence". Teachers and administrators follow protocol and help maintain standards in the belief that they do so in the students' best interest (Miller, 1990). Unfortunately, when teachers impose unrealistic demands, use unfair disciplinary

measures, or avoid developing healthy relationships with their students (Roy and Boivin, 1989, adapted from p. 35-36), some students act out in inappropriate and violent ways.

The Media

The effect that the media plays in the development of violent behaviors in children is controversial. One camp proposes that the media helps to promote violent activities in youth while another camp disagrees with this assumption, believing that violence in the media serves as a vicarious outlet for people's pent-up aggressions (Roy and Boivin, 1989). With the advent of television, movie and video technology, the depiction of violence is becoming more realistic and more accessible to children. In many instances, the TV substitutes as a babysitter for parents who must work and may not have the time or, in some cases, the energy to properly supervise their children. Access to movies that are made for more adult audiences has been increased through the ability to rent videos unsupervised. Children are also exposed to more realistic examples of violence when they listen to the evening news. I can remember when cable TV first came to Newfoundland and being shocked at the number of violent reports coming from the US stations. Prior to this, violence occurring in the small cities, towns and communities of Newfoundland was rarely heard of. Children today have been raised with these channels and witnessing violence is now the norm. This raises the question whether it is hard for some children to make a distinction between fictional violence and real violence and the consequences of violence when it is sensationalized and glorified in the media.

Statistics provided by Derksen and Strasburger (1996) indicate that the average child will spend twelve thousand hours in formal classroom instruction from Kindergarten to high school

graduation, but fifteen thousand hours will be spent in front of a television. Unfortunately, through media violence, children may learn to value rather than devalue the use of violence to solve problems, and they may not learn how to use prosocial responses to express feelings and deal with conflict. The child may learn to deal with conflict from the characters seen on TV rather than learning appropriate behaviors from the other significant adults in their lives (Day et al., 1995).

Some studies have shown a link between aggressive behavior and television violence. Derksen and Strasburger (1996) believe that television has a powerful effect on the development of unhealthy activities, negative attitudes and antisocial behaviors. Sege (1998) claims that a preference for violent programs at a young age results in increased viewing of these programs, which leads to the learning of the behavior, which is, in turn, related to aggressive behavior. Studies cited by Ollendick (1996) further state that men who preferred violent programs as boys were more likely than other men to have been convicted of a serious criminal offence by the time they were 30. On the other hand, Danish and Donohue (1996) argue that media violence does not make a “normal” child violent, it merely reinforces preexisting attitudes, behaviors and tastes.

Unfortunately, violence is often portrayed as an appropriate means to solve problems and the “hero” is seldom hurt or punished for using violence. A study by Bandura (1963), cited by Sege, concluded that children who watched a person get punished for an act of violence were less likely to mimic the violent act. In addition, the apparent lack of pain experienced by the hero may lead the child to believe that violence doesn’t hurt. Sege refers to a teen who, after receiving a gunshot wound complained that it didn’t look like it would hurt on TV, suggesting that a child

who does not fully understand the reality of violence may not be deterred from acting out in a violent manner. However, according to Danish and Donohue (1996), children can learn both positive and negative behaviors from visual media. In addition, prosocial and antisocial messages can cancel each other out in viewer's repositories of potential actions. Thus, the use of anti-violence messages in the media could ameliorate the effects of viewing media violence in youth.

In addition to TV and movies, children are exposed to sex and violence through the music they listen to and the music videos that they watch. Many of their role models are dressed scantily and depict graphic sexual and violent scenes. It appears as though musical groups are trying to go as far as they can to upset societal norms. And, as with other generations, all it takes is complaining by parents to make a child listen more attentively to what is forbidden.

Adolescents often try to emulate their heroes by dressing and acting according to the images they see. Sometimes, this may have tragic consequences. For instance, when Kurt Cobain of Nirvana committed suicide, several copycat attempts occurred, and at least one was successful (Derksen and Strasburger, 1996). In fact, any reported incident of suicide in the media may have the same impact upon suicide rates in adolescents. Reported suicides in the media have the most impact upon adolescents who perceive some similarity between themselves and the person who has committed suicide. Perhaps not understanding the finality of the decision, they try to end their pain in the same way.

Today's video and computer games are also very violent. While watching the Canadian Parliamentary Channel recently, I learned that the marines use video games to train their cadets for hand-eye coordination and fighting techniques, implying that these games were doing the

same thing for children except they were not getting the discipline training that a marine obtains that tells him or her when to use appropriate force. Children also have more access to potentially harmful and uncensored materials through Internet access. Children have learned how to construct bombs and have even been able to order potentially harmful weapons and supplies through the Internet. Unfortunately, in April 1999, two students from Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, armed with several weapons, including home-made bombs and guns obtained illegally from friends, went on a rampage in the school killing 12 students and a teacher before they took their own lives. Investigations into the incident revealed that the boys learned how to make these bombs from Internet sites. According to media reports, many people blamed the parents for insufficient supervision of their children's Internet activities. Generally the youth of today are more technologically literate than their parents and, if they wish to, they can successfully visit and hide sites that they know their parents would disapprove of. However, one cannot ignore the importance of parents when it comes to media violence. The more impact a parent or family has on a child, the less impact television and other media have (Danish and Donohue, 1996). By blaming the media for an increase in youth violence society is, in fact, ignoring the responsibility of parents for monitoring what their children watch, listen to or play with, and explaining unacceptable behaviors in relationship to the morals that parents want their children to have. In the end, good parenting and healthy familial relationships appear to be the best buffers between what a child sees and how the child behaves.

Conclusion

Historically, violence has been an important part of society. The types of violent activities perpetrated by youths range from potentially serious behaviors such as fist-fighting, bullying, and property damage to gravely serious violent behaviors such as suicide, rape and murder. The incidence of violent behaviors may be perceived by communities as increasing or becoming more severe over the past number of years, but statistics indicate that crime rates, in general, have decreased in Canada. What has changed is the frequency of reporting violence and the charging of youths with minor assaults. Although males have been the focus of many studies conducted on youth violence, females also commit the same types of delinquent acts, however, it appears that they are charged less frequently.

The causes of youth violence are varied. Children are susceptible to a variety of environmental influences such as poor familial relationships, inconsistent and harsh discipline, poor supervision, violence in the home, substance abuse, divorce and separation, poverty, delinquent peers, and the media as well as biological influences such as genetics, prenatal and postnatal complications and chemical imbalances. Which of these factors exerts the most influence over the development of violent tendencies in a child will vary for each child. Researchers tend to agree that a combination of these factors is the best predictor of youth violence. It is important to note, however, that there are individuals who experience many of these predictors of violence, but never exhibit any type of violent behavior, implying that a child's biology and environment can be overcome if the right intervention and prevention programs are put in place.

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FOLIO 2

PREVENTING SCHOOL VIOLENCE: FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND SCHOOL INITIATIVES

Preventing School Violence: Family, Community, and School Initiatives

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Introduction

Violence. We learn to accept it. We try to adapt our lives so that we are not victims of it. We avoid walking alone at night, especially in dimly-lit streets and alleys, we cross the street to avoid clusters of individuals who may not “look right,” we avoid dressing in certain clothes, we use deadbolts and chains to lock our doors, we even install security systems to help us feel safe in our own homes. We imprison ourselves in our protective cocoon, avoiding the problem, but never solving it. Ending violence must be the goal of every citizen. We are ultimately the victims of crime, our tax dollars spent trying to capture, prosecute and imprison the violators.

Schools have no immunity when it comes to violence. Teachers and administrators are faced with the very real problem of juvenile delinquency and youth violence occurring on and off school property. These acts are committed by students and are experienced by students and staff. Through the media, society is privy to the details of many examples of school violence including bullying, vandalism, assault, rape, suicide and shooting “rampages.” Ignoring the problem ultimately puts the school community at further risk for experiencing violence, and the need for precautions will become greater. It is not enough to suspend or expel the student(s), employ security guards, or install metal detectors. These types of strategies, according to Futrell (1996), are designed to respond to violence after it has occurred, not to prevent its occurrence in the first place. Eradication of violence depends upon identification of those individuals who are at an increased risk of developing violent behaviors and employing prevention strategies before these behaviors are manifested.

Just as the causes of violence in youth are multifaceted, so too are the stakeholders that are affected. Trying to deal with youth violence through the justice system is not working.

According to Lawrence (1998), in many cases, the justice system may promote delinquency and contribute to the maturation of youth into more sophisticated perpetrators. It is for this reason that effective intervention and prevention programs must involve members from the entire community. If violence prevention is an important goal, appropriate resources, such as money, personnel, training, and program development, must be allocated. In addition, all stakeholders, such as the family, schools and school districts, government, justice and health care agencies must take an active role in any intervention plan. Furthermore, if violence prevention is to work, programs need to be developed to intervene as early as possible in a child's life. Stakeholders need to be more proactive and less reactive when it comes to youth violence.

The Public Health Model for the Prevention of Violence

Many researchers indicate that violence is now as much of a public health concern as is smoking, heart disease, cancer, and infectious diseases (Lapidus and Braddock, 1996).

According to the public health model (Weiss, 1996), the occurrence of violent behavior can be measured and monitored, and groups at risk can be identified. This belief implies that the adverse outcomes associated with violence can be predicted and prevented. The public health approach aims to establish the prevalence and incidence of violent offending. It also focuses on the identification and reduction of risk factors and the identification and promotion of protective factors (Loeber and Farrington, 1998). The public health approach to violence prevention is similar, according to Prothrow-Stith and Quaday (1996), to the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention methods used to stop people from smoking.

Primary prevention seeks to reduce the incidence of new cases of violence, or first-time

violent behavior (Weiss,1996) by identifying individuals at risk for delinquent activity before the behavior has occurred (Corvo, 1997). According to Day et al. (1995), primary prevention initiatives help to eliminate the cause and change the environment or conditions that encourage the delinquent and violent behavior. These measures help to discourage violent attitudes, promote redefining the “hero” and non-violent problem-solving, realistically portray the effects of violence (Prothrow-Stith and Quaday, 1996), and promote pro-social skills through learning alternatives to antisocial behaviors (Cole, 1995). This type of prevention can be implemented by various community agencies as well as the school system. However, in order for any prevention program to be effective, implementers must try to intervene as early as possible in the child’s life. Early prevention programs, according to Cole (1995), can help children deal with developmental challenges and transitions as they age, thus helping to prevent future violent behaviors. According to Guetzloe (1992, as cited in Day et al., 1995), primary prevention of violence consists of:

- public education as to the origins and preventions of violence;
- providing food, jobs, child-care and medical care for all;
- encouraging prosocial behavior in all children;
- regulating the media to reduce or eliminate the representation of violence, and
- reducing the availability of illegal drugs (adapted from p. 48).

Secondary prevention programs seek to identify those children who display delinquent and violent behaviors (Day et al., 1995), and help to improve the behavior, cognitive and affective skills of those children who are at risk for later adolescent antisocial conduct (Cole,1995). The emphasis, according to Corvo (1997), is to modify the existing behavior

problems before they lead to more criminal behavior. Guetzloe (1992, as cited in Day et al., 1995) views secondary prevention as one of the responsibilities of the school system, with collaboration from parents and other stakeholders. These types of programs include behavior modification programs, mentoring programs (Prothrow-Stith and Quaday, 1996), anger coping interventions, social skills training, parent management training and family, child or group counselling (Cole, 1995).

Tertiary prevention measures are reactive in nature and are implemented after a violent act has occurred to restore as much functioning as possible to the individual and the community (Weiss, 1996). These types of measures are used with chronic serious offenders (Corvo, 1997) who may not have been identified for early interventions or who failed to respond to previously employed programs, and thus exhibit a history of aggressive behaviors (Cole, 1995). Examples or such treatments would be rehabilitation programs for incarcerated youths (Prothrow-Stith and Quaday, 1996).

Early vs. Late Intervention

There is little doubt that there is a need to ameliorate or prevent the risk factors for violence that exist for our youth. Several longitudinal studies (Eron and Huesmann, 1984; Farrington, 1991; Olweus, 1991) have shown that children as young as 6 who are rated as aggressive or antisocial by parents, teachers, or peers continue to exhibit these characteristics into adulthood. In fact, aggressive behavior in children is the single best indicator of aggression in later life (Eron, Huesmann, and Zelli, 1991). According to Andrews and Trawick-Smith (1996), a child's early years present opportunities for positive physical, mental and social development.

The type of familial environment the child is exposed to during this time has a great impact upon the child's behavior during those years and the years that follow. Family factors associated with violent behavior (e.g. child abuse, neglect, domestic violence, family conflict and criminal behavior by family members) can place a child at high risk for exhibiting delinquent and violent behavior (Andrews and Trawick-Smith, 1996). Adolescence, the transition from childhood to adulthood, is one of the most challenging and crucial stages of life. It is a time, according to Hamburg (1997), when biological, physical, behavioral, and social transformations can shape a child's entire lifespan. Approximately one-quarter of all adolescents will have engaged in delinquent behaviors such as taking drugs and taking part in antisocial by the time they are 17 years old. It is for this reason that Futrell (1996) suggests that violence prevention strategies be established during pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade level, ideally, before adolescence.

Mulvey, Arthur, and Reppucci (1993), states that family interventions are among the most successful in affecting behavior in younger children. Hamburg (1997) agrees, stating that the use of interventions in early adolescence affords the child a better opportunity to develop healthy behaviors that will have short-term and long-term benefits in the prevention of violence. If intervention and prevention programs are employed later on in adolescence, it may not be possible to undo or ameliorate the effects of deficits in high-risk children (McCord, 1996). Consequently, according to Gardner and Resnik (1996), prevention of youth violence must begin with family interventions that will help to strengthen protective factors that may help these children become more resistant to negative influences they may encounter in life.

Family-focused Interventions

Children at higher risk for developing violent behaviors are often raised in non-cohesive families that lack rules and parental supervision (Pietrzak , Peterson, and Speaker, 1998; McCord, 1996). According to social learning theory, these types of families may demonstrate inappropriate behaviors that children observe and imitate, leading to inappropriate and, possibly, aggressive behaviors (Gardner and Resnik, 1996). In addition, children exposed to alcohol and other drugs during their prenatal development are at a higher risk for developing neurodevelopmental impairments (deficits in problem-solving, receptive language, attention regulation, and impulse control) which may lead to delinquent behaviors later in life (Olds et al., 1998). Haugaard and Feerick (1996) believe that the child's attachment to the parent(s) affects the child's behaviors with others. If the child does not get the proper attention s/he may feel unworthy and, therefore, view others as untrustworthy, inaccessible and unresponsive. This may affect the child's relationship with others in the community.

Dodge (1991) has hypothesized that nurturing, consistent care giver interactions with children lead to more accurate encoding and interpretation of social cues by children. Likewise, parents who model various pro-social, non-coercive approaches to problem solving may contribute to a broader repertoire of social strategies in their children, thus leading to a decrease in aggressive behaviors. This hypothesis is supported by longitudinal research (30 years) of adolescent participants conducted by McCord (1996). McCord concluded that negative family interaction and socialization practices cause violence. Borduin and Henggeler (1987) also demonstrated that violent offending is associated with low levels of family warmth and supportiveness. Thus, parenting programs that educate and model these skills would be an

important first step in the prevention of youth violence. Additional aspects to any parenting program would be the availability of a support system that the parents could rely on and seek advice from. Harrington and Dubowitz (1999), maintain that increasing a parent's social support through parent support groups and supportive relationships with child-care providers (Andrews and Trawick-Smith, 1996) may help to relieve stressors that can contribute to negative parent-child interactions and family conflict and disorganization. Family interventions attempt to affect youth violence through altering family organization, functioning, relationships, or parenting styles (Corvo, 1997).

Parent Management Training

Parent management training (PMT), according to Ollendick (1996), is based upon social learning theory which suggests that aggressive behavior is developed and sustained in the home by maladaptive parent-child interactions. PMT attempts to change social contingencies in the family environment so that children are positively reinforced for their pro-social behaviors, and child-aversive and anti-social behaviors are ignored or punished. Ultimately, families should use less physical punishment and more pro-active forms of discipline (Wasserman and Miller, 1998). Components of the training, described by Farrington (1996), include monitoring a child's behavior over long periods of time, clearly stating house rules, making rewards and punishment contingent upon behavior, and negotiating disagreements so that conflicts and crises don't escalate. Most importantly, in the opinion of Wasserman and Miller (1998), parents are taught to anticipate problems so that they can prevent and manage future problems on their own.

Studies cited by Christenson, Hirsch, and Hurley (1997) have shown a substantial short-term reduction in child aggressive behaviors after PMT. However, follow-up studies indicate that 25% - 40% of children continue to have significant behavior problems in the long run. Unfortunately, families who have limited economic and personal resources, parental psychopathology, low social support, and/or marital conflict (Wasserman and Miller, 1998), or families with extremely conduct-disordered children (Christenson et al., 1997) are less likely to benefit from PMT. These limitations have led to an expansion of PMT. Expanded PMT (Christenson et al., 1997) seeks to alter the external and internal conditions that interfere with parents' abilities to interact effectively with their children. The underlying assumption is that stress reduction in the family environment will increase the parental use of PMT strategies. Studies indicate that extended PMT interventions improve the success rates of multi-stressed families in the prevention of aggressive behaviors (Webster-Stratton and Herbert, 1994; Greist, Forehand, Rogers, Breiner, Furey, and Williams, 1982). In spite of this success, PMT results appear to be short-term and not generalizable to other settings outside of the home, such as the school setting (Wasserman and Miller, 1998).

Functional Family Therapy

Family therapy focuses on the interrelationships among family members in relation to the child's aggressive behavior, rather than focusing solely on parenting skills as PMT does. Family therapy examines factors such as marital discord, and parental cognitions that affect family functioning. In addition, family systems therapists view a child's acting-out behavior as a contributor to marital conflict and family tension (Christenson et al., 1997). Functional family

therapy, according to Wasserman and Miller (1998), uses behavioral techniques such as clear specification of rules and consequences, contingency contracting, use of social reinforcement, and token economy (rewards), as well as cognitive-based interventions to increase communication and mutual problem-solving. In addition, Christenson et al. (1997) include helping the family overcome resistance to change as an important role of the family therapist. Studies by Alexander and Parsons (1973) and Klein, Alexander and Parsons (1977) have shown that functional family therapy results in positive family interactions and lower recidivism rates, as well as decreases in the severity of adolescent offences.

Parents and the Media

Exposure of children to increased violence through the media has been included as a high risk factor that may determine violent behavior in youth (Goldstein and Conoley, 1997). However, the influence of the media need not be negative. As a primary prevention measure, parents can monitor and control their child's exposure to violence by (Derksen and Strasburger, 1996, P. 71):

- Limiting television viewing.
- Controlling which programs children watch.
- Discussing objectionable scenes with the child.
- Not using the TV as a babysitter.
- Encouraging after-school activities.
- Lobbying for policy changes to reduce the number of scenes with gratuitous violence on TV.

- Referring to ratings used for music, videos, television programs, video games and movies, and adhere to them.

Community-focused Interventions

Although it may be said that a child's family is, perhaps, the most important determinant in the development of aggressive and violent behaviors, according to Stanton and Meyer (1998), the community the child resides in also plays a significant role. Children are products, not only of their family environment, but also of the communities in which they live. Therefore communities must care for and take responsibility for their youth. Historically, punishment and segregation into adult facilities were used to "rehabilitate" youth and to protect society. Considerable debate has developed around the question of whether correctional programs have been effective in changing the serious behaviors of juvenile delinquents. Murray and Cox (1979) have argued that juvenile institutions are more effective at suppressing delinquent behaviors, whereas Lundman (1986) believes that community-based treatments are just as effective. Institutionalization results in the treatment of teenagers as criminals rather than as minors, depriving them of normal familial and environmental settings, stigmatizing them with a lasting label, and socializing them toward delinquent and criminal habits (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). In short, they were becoming better offenders.

Alternatives to the incarceration of youthful offenders may be found in the form of community-based violence prevention programs. These programs, to be successful, must include a thorough assessment of local problems, identification of target issues, and selection of a range of interventions for employment by the community, as well as encouraging collaboration among

civic groups, juvenile justice, local leaders, and youth themselves (Howell, 1995). According to Becker and Rickel (1998), successful programs are able to address risk factors effectively for individual youths, strengthen those factors that provide protection and enhance resiliency, provide sufficient support and effective supervision, and increase prosocial attitudes by providing youth with a sense of having an increased stake in society. In the opinion of Stanton and Meyer (1998), any technique that addresses behavior, cognition and attitude may be effective in eliciting significant changes that will last.

Residential Treatment Programs

Many children, regardless of family interventions, may still reside in environments where one or both parents are abusing drugs or are involved in illegal activities of their own, thus providing inappropriate supervision and role modeling. Residential treatment programs and community-based corrections for juvenile offenders provide an alternative living arrangement for youths whose home environments are unsafe or inappropriate (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). These programs include foster care placements or group homes that provide intensive intervention in a restricted setting. Individual, group and family therapy, combined with behavior modification programs are usually part of this treatment approach (Becker and Rickel, 1998).

Although Stewart, Vockell and Ray (1986) found a significant reduction in the delinquent behavior and recidivism rates of juvenile offenders while in a behavioral change, familial-type group home, nearly all evaluations indicated that behavioral improvements disappeared once the youths left the home and the success experienced in the home did not always transfer to the community.

Diversionary Programs

For youths who have committed minor offences, such as minor property offences (Lawrence, 1998), some form of diversionary program to prevent the development of more serious delinquent behavior is preferable to incarceration (Becker and Rickel, 1998). Police diversion programs, informal probation, runaway shelters, prisoner-run delinquency prevention programs and alternative schools seek to provide services that meet the needs of at-risk children (Lawrence, 1998) by educating and working with troubled youths outside the formal process of the juvenile courts (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). There is some research which shows that diversionary and alternatives to detention programs have been effective in reducing juvenile delinquency. Schneider (1985), conducted a comprehensive evaluation of deinstitutionalization of status offenders (DSO) programs in the United States and found that they were successful in significantly reducing the number of juvenile offenders in detention and institutions. Holden and Kapler (1995), maintain that shelters and foster care are as effective and less expensive than detention and juvenile institutions.

Cognitive-behavioral Interventions

Cognitive-behavioral approaches begin with the assumption that an angry, aggressive state is mediated through a person's expectations and appraisals, and that the likelihood of violence is increased or decreased as a result of this cognitive process along with a learning history that reinforces antisocial behaviors (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). According to Becker and Rickel (1998), cognitive-behavioral interventions appear to be more effective than psychodynamic approaches or life skills programs. Cognitive-behavioral treatments focus on

skill building, social skills training, anger management and problem-solving (Stanton and Meyer, 1998).

Skills Training

Proponents of skills training, according to Borduin and Schaeffer (1998), assume that aggressive juvenile offenders often lack cognitive and interpersonal skills for managing challenges in family, peer and school situations. As such, juveniles are exposed to several different techniques for improving their social skills. These include modeling and behavioral rehearsal, problem-solving strategies, moral reasoning, anger control and interpersonal relations training. A 9 month study conducted by Leonardi, Roberts and Wasok (2001) on 12 elementary school students who exhibited emotional and behavioral disorders resulted in improved listening skills, fewer inappropriate interruptions, and the ability to describe events in greater detail with increased maturity. In addition, the researchers noted a reduction of student visits to the Principal's office from 1 per day to 3 per week and a reduction of suspensions from 1 per week to none for the entire study period. They concluded that the program could help provide children with the chance to learn the social skills that would enable them to become good and productive citizens. Borduin and Schaeffer (1998) agree that evaluation of skills training techniques indicate improvements in social problem-solving skills, however, they found that juveniles exhibited very little change in behavior outside of the treatment setting. In the long-term, juveniles showed no difference in aggressive behaviors two years after the treatment.

Anger Management Training

Many children who exhibit aggressive behaviors have a problem with anger control.

Therefore, helping children control their anger and teaching them techniques that help them deal with and express anger in a more socially acceptable manner is very important, especially with youths who commit serious crimes (McGuire, 1997). Anger management programs, according to Stanton and Meyer (1998), can be used with aggressive youths in any setting. These programs generally include a psychoeducational curriculum of prosocial behaviors, anger-control training, and moral reasoning training. Anger management training, as described by Keller and Tapasak (1997), focuses upon the identification of:

- triggers - external events and internal interpretations that serve to provoke anger arousal;
- cues - internal psychological experiences that uniquely signal anger arousal in the youth; and
- reminders and reducers - self-control strategies for reducing anger arousal in any situation (adapted from p. 117).

Youths are then taught to conduct a self-evaluation to determine how well they applied their self-control strategies.

Research conducted to examine the effects of anger management training on aggressive children indicates that the training is successful (Schlichter and Horan, 1981; Dangel, Deschner, and Rasp, 1989). However, studies conducted by Feindler and Ecton (1986) and Feindler, Ecton, Kingsley, and Dubey (1986) indicate that anger management combined with social skills training yields the best results with approximately 90% of study participants being successfully treated.

Cognitive Problem-solving Interventions

Perhaps the most promising cognitive-behavioral approach involves cognitive problem-solving techniques. These types of interventions are based upon the belief that aggressive behavior patterns result from both external social events experienced by the juvenile and his or her cognitive resources (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). Juveniles who received cognitive mediation training showed increased problem-solving skills in social situations, decreased aggression-supporting beliefs, and decreased aggressive, impulsive and inflexible behaviors. However, the youth studied showed no differences in recidivism rates (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). These results indicate that these types of interventions can alter social behavior, but they are less effective when trying to change criminal behavior in youth.

Peer Group Interventions

The peer group is important to psycho-social development because it provides individuals with a sense of belonging, emotional support, and behavioral norms. Within the peer group of violent adolescents, the sense of belonging and emotional support are evident (Borduin and Schaeffer, 1998). In fact, a youth's involvement with deviant peers is a powerful predictor of both the frequency and seriousness of his or her antisocial behavior (Lyon, Henggeler, and Hall, 1992). As such, peer group interventions may be helpful in changing the negative behaviors of some adolescents. These types of programs are currently being used in both residential and school settings to help prevent or decrease delinquent behaviors (Stanton and Meyer, 1998).

The most commonly used peer group interventions are the Guided Group Interaction (GGI) and its derivatives, such as positive peer culture and peer group counselling (Borduin and

Schaeffer, 1998). The GGI treatment model consists of daily group discussions aimed at confronting negative behavior and reinforcing positive behavior (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). Unfortunately, there is little support for these types of programs. Gottfredson (1987) reviewed studies of the effects of peer group interventions such as the ones mentioned above. He found no difference in juvenile delinquency rates between adolescents who had participated in peer group interventions and those who were not involved in these types of programs. In fact, Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton (1985) suggest that treatment approaches that use adolescent peer groups may actually have the unintended effect of contributing to closer delinquent friendships. They further state that it is not reasonable to expect prosocial values and norms to result from group processes involving serious juvenile delinquents. A study by Feldman, Caplinger, and Wodarski (1983) also showed that behavior of aggressive adolescents did deteriorate when they were placed in groups with similar youths, however, behavior improved in those students placed in groups with prosocial peers.

Multisystemic Therapy

Although the aforementioned programs appear to have been somewhat successful in changing certain aspects of delinquent behaviors and thought patterns in youth, studies of effectiveness show mixed results. Many of the programs fail to address the multi-factor aspect of juvenile aggression. According to Stanton and Meyer (1998), more promising programs are those that include a strong ecological approach with cognitive-behavioral training, individualized contracts and family therapy. Multisystemic therapy seems to be an effective treatment for youthful offenders because it is both child-focused and family-oriented, thus meeting the criteria

for intervention at multiple levels (Borduin and Schaeffer, 1998).

Multisystemic therapy, as defined by Borduin and Schaeffer (1998), is “an intensive, time-limited, home- and family-based treatment approach that is predicated on a social-ecological view of behavior, in which criminal behavior is maintained by characteristics of the individual youth and the key social systems in which the youths are embedded (i.e., family, peer, school and community)” (p. 163). It is described as a flexible, individualized, comprehensive program that helps to empower families and communities towards the prevention of youth violence (Becker and Rickel, 1998). MST treatment strategies are derived from strategic family therapy, structural family therapy, behavioral parent training, and cognitive-behavioral therapy. In this way, MST directly addresses intrapersonal, familial and extrafamilial factors that are known to be associated with adolescent crime (Borduin and Schaeffer, 1998). In comparison to other types of youth violence intervention strategies, MST helps promote generalization by providing services in both the home and in the community (Stanton and Meyer, 1998).

Henggeler, Cunningham, Pickrel, Schoenwald, and Brondino (1996) state the following key features of MST:

1. it identifies the relationship between the youth’s antisocial behavior and the broader social context. Factors that may promote or attenuate irresponsible behavior on the part of the youth or the family are identified so that the treatment plan can best serve the family;
2. it is implemented using home-based, family-focused services that are intensive, time limited and goal oriented. These services are delivered in home and community settings to maintain youths in their natural environment;

3. treatment plans are individualized and tailored to meet the needs of each family;
4. it empowers families by providing skills and resources needed to deal effectively and independently with problems that arise;
5. it develops working alliances with extra-familial systems that can directly or indirectly mediate the course of treatment; and
6. therapists and treatment teams are accountable for outcomes based on tangible evidence of behavioral change (adapted from p. 50-53).

In comparison to all other types of intervention programs, MST has received the most empirical support as an effective treatment of serious and violent behavior in adolescents (Borduin and Schaeffer, 1998), with indications of both short-term and long-term success in reducing antisocial and violent behaviors in youth (Becker and Rickel, 1998). Youths who had received MST had fewer arrests and self-reported offences than youths who had received other services. In addition, families reported increased family cohesion and decreased youth aggression in peer relations (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). Greater adaptability and support, and less father-mother and father-adolescent conflict is also cited by Wasserman and Miller (1998) as a positive result of MST in addition to improved family cohesiveness. Compared to other intervention programs, another benefit of MST lies in its cost-effectiveness in the treatment of youth aggression (Stanton and Meyer, 1998).

Long-term studies of youths who have been treated with MST indicate that MST reduces recidivism for drug-related crimes (Borduin and Schaeffer, 1998), antisocial behavior and re-arrest rates (Stanton and Meyer, 1998). A follow-up study conducted by Henggeler et al. (1993) at 2.4 years after treatment, demonstrated the capacity of MST to interrupt criminal careers and

maintain reduced arrest rates. Similarly, a study by Henggeler and Blaske (1990) showed that approximately 4 years after treatment, MST adolescents had fewer and less serious arrests than those treated with individual therapy. Therefore treatment gains from MST appear to be maintained.

School-focused Interventions

A colleague of mine, in response to an article about youth violence in the newspaper, stated, “As teachers, we meet and deal with all of the deviants in society.” His comment at the time seemed a bit negative and harsh, however, it was a legitimate observation. Although many of our students are non-delinquents, we also teach those students who end up in trouble with the law, incarcerated in group homes and, in some cases, prison. Once children enter school, they spend a lot of time with their teachers, both in formal teaching situations and informal extra-curricular activities. Teachers are, therefore, perhaps the first people outside the family and neighborhood to witness a child’s propensity toward delinquent behavior through fighting, vandalism, bullying, and verbal abuse, for example. Unfortunately, teachers, administrators, etc., may contribute to some students’ behaviors by being insensitive, having inappropriate expectations, being inconsistent in management, using destructive reinforcement, and/or by failing to model appropriate behaviors (Braaten, 1997). It is, therefore, important that all educators be trained in violence intervention strategies that range from the identification of students who are at risk to the implementation of the strategies themselves. Obviously, teachers cannot be responsible for this awesome task alone. As discussed previously, violence prevention requires the cooperation of many community agencies. Thus, our success depends by and large

upon the value that government, school districts and administrators place upon violence prevention in families and the wider community.

School Districts

Violence in a school building or within a school system demands consistent and continuous acts that are intended to restore or keep what makes learning possible - a safe, orderly, and healthy school environment (Curcio and First, 1993). Some school districts seem to approach problems such as school violence in a piece-meal way. In the opinion of Pietrzak et al. (1998), districts tend to implement programs just for the sake having a program in place to cover their legal responsibilities. This does not mean that the programs are the most efficient or that they accommodate all of the intervening factors in school violence. Pietrzak believes that, to be effective, districts need to utilize many different violence intervention programs. Futrell (1996) further states that school districts should implement counselling programs, role-modeling and mentoring programs, and anti-violence or safety programs for students at the formative level of a child's life. This means that the programs need to be introduced early and resources should be committed to sustain them at all levels of the school system. Unfortunately, in a climate of ever decreasing funding to schools, districts may not be able to fund or sustain quality programming. Therefore, it is incumbent upon government to allocate sufficient money to the development and long-term implementation and revision of violence prevention programs.

School-Based Violence Prevention in Canada: Results of a National Survey of Policies and Programs (1995) surveyed 126 school districts in Canada. According to Laird (1999), this publication recommends that board policies:

1. be internally consistent and related to each other;
2. be congruent with violence prevention programs in each of the district's schools;
3. be comprehensive and multi-faceted;
4. have a community focus;
5. provide supplemental programs for aggressive, violent students using a supportive, corrective approach; and
6. address the root causes of student violence, e.g. family, biological, environmental, social and academic issues (p. 93).

Perhaps an important first step in violence prevention is the development of a district-wide discipline code. Since this may be accomplished by the educational and psychological professionals already employed by the district, discipline codes are cost-effective and can be revised quite easily as the need arises. Discipline policies usually deal with the expectations and behaviors of students within the school, such as classroom behavior, and altercations with other students, but they can also address such things as drug use, possession and sales, and gang activity (Trump, 1997). Futrell (1996) maintains that a clearly defined discipline code should deal with discipline in a positive rather than a negative way. Capozzoli and McVey (2000) suggest the teachers and administrators use the following guidelines for positive correction:

- focus on the behavior of the student rather than on his/her character;
- do not let the disciplinary session with the student become an argument;
- listen to the student's point of view; and
- follow up with increased surveillance of the situation to make sure the student is correcting the behavior for which s/he was disciplined. If the behavior is

corrected, s/he should be applauded for the new behavior (adapted from p. 33).

When an appropriate discipline code has been developed, it is important that the code be shared with both the students and their parents and that it be enforced consistently, firmly and fairly. Firm enforcement of school policies does not mean that schools should be run in an authoritarian way or use sanctions that deny students their dignity and expect them to conform; this may actually cause students to become disruptive and violent (Lawrence, 1998). When the rules are known and where they are firmly and fairly enforced, less disruption and less violence occurs, thus allowing better relationships between the students and their peers, teachers and administrators. In addition, teachers feel more confidence in the ability of the administration to back them up, thus allowing a better relationship to exist between the teachers and the administration (Lawrence, 1998). Clear expectations for student behavior and learning, as well as, frequent monitoring of performance contribute to a cooperative climate and a sense of ownership of the school (Cole, 1995). As an educator myself, I have taught in schools with and without a discipline code. By my observation, in the schools with the discipline code, students are far more respectful to other students and teachers, and they understand and accept the consequences of negative and delinquent behavior. Although the discipline code may not be the main reason for the difference, it can be argued that it helps the students develop and show respect for each other and their teachers, thus leading to a more productive learning environment.

Discipline codes by their very nature are more reactive than proactive. On the one hand, they are important because they outline acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for students and the consequences of unacceptable behaviors. On the other hand, counteracting violence in the school more effectively will require the provision of educational programs where students learn

how to prevent violence and use more pro-social skills and behaviors (Day et al., 1995). Again, government cooperation with the school districts is an important factor in the development and implementation of such programs. For any educational program to be effective, government and the districts must ensure teachers and other school personnel are sufficiently trained in the program and that parental involvement is maintained.

Day et al. (1995), in a critical examination of several district-wide violence prevention programs, discuss the relatively low frequency of staff development in relation to violence intervention. They allege that many school boards are missing the consensus-building opportunities that exist when staff are provided with the support needed to familiarize themselves with their board's policies and programs. In addition, many staff are unaware of the relationship between a student's developmental history and family circumstance to poor academic performance and disruptive behavior. In many instances, teachers may not even be privy to information regarding a student's home life. Although this information could be used by the teachers to help at-risk students in the classroom, it can be argued that this knowledge may actually create, rather than solve disruptive situations in classrooms. According to Epp (1996), there is a tendency to label students when they have been identified as being "different" from the rest of their peers. Although labels do serve some positive functions (such as academic needs), the act of labeling, according to Braaten (1997), may foster misbeliefs about the labeled students themselves, especially those with very challenging behaviors. Unfortunately, some teachers may focus on the behavior rather than the child's basic needs, wants and developmental processes. The bias that the teacher consciously or subconsciously feels can actually affect how the teacher acts and what the teacher expects. Therefore, rather than reducing disruptions and violence, the

teacher may actually cause disruptive and violent behaviors. Lawrence (1998) believes that teachers should at least be made aware of discipline problems, including any act of violence or threat of violence that has occurred in the school. In his opinion, the more teachers know about what is happening in the school, the more help they will be in the solution.

Day et al. (1995) suggest that comprehensive policies and programs developed by school districts include the following: conflict resolution, curriculum-based programs, promotion of a positive school climate and academic excellence, staff development, counselling and support services, social skills development, alternatives to suspension, aftermath services, protocols for responding to emergency situations, police liaison programs, and community involvement. In addition, any program used should adequately address the causes of violence such as the biological, familial, environmental, social and academic factors that place a child at high risk for aggressive behavior, and be appropriate to the developmental level of the child. Cole (1995), asserts that programs employed on a school-wide basis can be effective in reducing levels of antisocial behavior and improving the school climate. However, according to Pietrzak et al. (1998), the implementation of a program does not guarantee that the issue of violence will be addressed adequately in a school system.

School Administration

According to Capozzoli and McVey (2000), school administrators and teachers have legal and moral obligations for both violence prevention and student protection. All schools must take steps to ensure a safe and healthful learning environment for children. School administrators are important stakeholders in violence prevention. They are responsible for adopting and putting

into practice all of the school board policies (such as a discipline policy). Unfortunately, many schools operate on very tight budgets and can ill afford to implement many policies deemed too expensive. This need not be the case with violence prevention. There are many low cost violence prevention strategies school administrators can implement. Stephens (1997), identifies the following strategies:

- establishing clear behavior standards;
- providing adequate adult presence, supervision and involvement;
- enforcing rules fairly and consistently;
- closely supervising and sanctioning offenders;
- getting parents on the school's side;
- making schools physically safer;
- creating partnerships with outside agencies; and
- believing that the school can make a difference (p. 79).

Administrators also play an important, supportive role to both students and teachers. One of the main complaints teachers have of administrators is that they do not support teachers when they report students for disruptive or violent behaviors. If teachers are to teach effectively, they need to believe that their decision will be supported by their administration (Capozzoli and McVey, 2000). In addition, the way in which an administrator reacts to a situation should not be too extreme or too lax. Situations must be handled in an appropriate manner that is beneficial both to the students and the school (Capozzoli and McVey, 2000).

Undoubtably, there exists in any school both students and adults who will bring negative attitudes to the school that may breed aggression. It is the role of the administration to create a

climate that neutralizes and dissipates that condition for a safer school climate (Curcio and First, 1993). According to Stephens (1997), although the administration has the task of advocating for the students as well as the staff, they cannot be blamed for the shortcomings of board policies, board personnel, building staff or members of the community because it “takes a whole village” to help troubled children.

Guidance Counsellors

Guidance counsellors are an important element in the maintenance of a safe school environment. Guidance counsellors, in conjunction with school administrators and teachers, help develop and implement violence prevention initiatives, however, they also counsell perpetrators, victims and other students in one-on-one and group sessions. The guidance counsellor may be the only individual with whom a child feels comfortable discussing his/her experiences and feelings. In addition to in-school responsibilities, the guidance counsellor must also develop a rapport with external agencies that can better assist the counsellor in his/her violence prevention initiatives. According to Coleman (1996), counsellors should provide the following services:

- serve as a key resource on a crisis management team;
- develop a counselling/support plan for students and staff;
- provide support to the administrator related to prevention, intervention and postvention activities;
- serve as a liaison to parents; and
- refer students and parents to appropriate outside agencies (p. 211).

For a more in-depth description of the role of a guidance counsellor in violence prevention, refer to paper three of this folio.

Teachers

A teacher's responsibility in the classroom appears to have evolved from educator to mediator. Teachers are often on the front lines when it comes to dealing with student's disruptive behaviors, angry outbursts, interpersonal conflicts, off-task behaviors, and violent behaviors (Beland, 1996). They are responsible for the implementation of any violence prevention strategies, programs or curricula suggested by the school districts and administration. They must accept all children in their classes regardless of any inappropriate behavior or incompatibility. Yet, according to Curcio and First (1993), the teacher has significant power in determining the values, beliefs and attitudes in the school. To achieve a violence-free school, teachers need to respect the students as valuable and worth extraordinary effort, have a student focus, have confidence that their efforts can make a difference, and trust each other to get the job done.

The attitude teachers have towards their students is sometimes evident in their classroom management techniques. Teachers who respect their students as individuals tend to manage their classrooms in a manner that communicates that respect to the student. Generally, when students feel respected, they, in turn, respect others. This is not to say that such a teacher will not experience inappropriate and aggressive behaviors in his or her classroom, but it is one crucial step to achieving a violence-free school. Keller and Tapasak (1997) state that

effective prevention programs at the classroom level requires a focus on the teacher - the skills that he or she brings to the classroom, as well as the kinds

of supports available to the teacher in dealing with aggressive behaviors and the increasing numbers of challenging children in the classroom.... It is important that teachers acquire and continue to develop effective teaching, communication, classroom management, and problem-solving skills. These skills must be applied within the context of a caring and respectful interest in each individual student (p. 107).

Effective classroom management skills include the establishment of a set of classroom rules and consequences that are clearly defined and consistently and fairly implemented, and effective classroom arrangement (for example, seating plans).

According to Beland (1996), types of programming and teaching methodologies offer the most hope for reducing impulsive and aggressive behaviors in children. Moreover, according to the social learning theory (Beland, 1996), prosocial behaviors are best taught in the ways children naturally learn them - through observing a role model, practising the behavior and receiving feedback and reinforcement.

One method a teacher may use with disruptive and aggressive children is behavior modification. Behavior modification is an approach that can be used with a variety of behaviors, from those that are minor to those that are serious. However, it is most often used with children exhibiting more serious and persistent problematic behaviors (Savage, 1999). A basic assumption of behavior modification, as described by Hyman (1997), is that all behavior, thoughts and feelings are learned. This learning is the function of reinforcements and punishments or the associations that an individual makes with desirable or undesirable

consequences. Parents and educators more often than not use negative reinforcement with children who misbehave. To the children, this reinforcement is more akin to punishment and may actually strengthen the exhibition of the behavior. In the opinion of Henley (1997) punishment forces compliance rather than encouraging children to take responsibility for their own behavior. Savage (1999) believes that implementation of positive reinforcers will influence positive behaviors in children who will strive to attain some desirable reward. Some positive reinforcers that may be used by teachers include: the use of praise, words of approval, smiles, stickers, happy faces; earning extra free time; assisting the teacher, watching a movie; going to lunch early; and getting to play games or do puzzles (Savage, 1999, p. 198-199). The use of positive reinforcers can help improve the child's opinion of school and, thus, improve the child's scholastic performance. This is not to say that punishment should not be used. Henley (1997) states that punishment can work when used occasionally and when behavior rules and guidelines have been developed with student input. However, he warns that routine use of punishment will turn students and teachers into adversaries.

Many children who act out in school do so because they have negative feelings about school due to academic difficulties. Teachers can intervene with these students by using positive reinforcement in the classroom when the student performs well and by offering tutoring and other forms of remediation. Gagnon and Conoley (1997) state that various forms of tutoring have shown particular promise in promoting the academic performance of behaviorally disordered students, with some accompanying reductions in their deviant behaviors. Benefits of tutoring need not stop at the academic. Gagnon and Conoley (1997) suggest that tutoring may also help these students develop more appropriate social relationships and improved self-esteem. By

helping students at the classroom level, teachers can help at-risk students develop more socially and behaviorally appropriate characteristics.

Conclusions

The road to violence-free schools is through interventions that address conditions within both the schools and their communities (Curcio and First, 1993). According to the Public Health Model for violence prevention, at-risk children should be identified and appropriate primary prevention programs should be implemented, ideally before the child enters school. Identification and intervention at this stage affords the child a better opportunity to develop appropriate attitudes and behaviors that may help him or her avoid the consequences of an aggressive lifestyle. The prevention of violence in our youth is a complex task and must involve the children, their parents, the schools and other community agencies if it is to be successful.

Before children enter school, the focus of violence prevention is the family. Family-focused interventions such as parent management training and functional family training may help ameliorate some of the high-risk conditions that exist in the child's immediate environment. In addition, pre-natal and post-natal public health visits can help parents ensure that their children are taken care of physically and emotionally, a key factor in the healthy development of all children. Community-focused interventions can help augment the efforts of the family in violence prevention. Communities can offer support to at-risk families by providing appropriate and affordable day care, after school programs, affordable baby sitting services and mentoring programs. These programs can help strengthen factors that may provide protection against the development of violent behaviors in those children who avail of these services. For those

children who may have already had some experience with deviant behaviors, communities can offer residential treatment programs, diversionary programs, and cognitive-behavioral interventions through appropriate programs offered by different community agencies. The most promising community implemented program devised to deal with youth violence is multisystemic therapy. MST is individualized for each child and incorporates all the child's social systems in his or her treatment. Finally, school-focused interventions help the child learn appropriate social behaviors while at school, with the hope that the learned skills will be generalized to the world outside of school. The success of such interventions depends upon the cooperation of school districts, administrators and teachers. In addition, governments should take an active supportive role in violence prevention by providing proper funding for program development and personnel training. Their involvement will be an investment for the future. The more money spent in prevention, the less will need to be spent on incarceration.

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FOLIO 3

PREVENTING SCHOOL VIOLENCE: COUNSELLING, PROGRAMMING, AND CRISIS INTERVENTION

Preventing School Violence: Counselling, Programming, and Crisis Intervention

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Introduction

Guidance counsellors play an integral role in the healthy environment of the school. They are responsible for a variety of services intended to help students with their educational, vocational, emotional, and social development. The role of the counsellor may change depending upon the age levels of the students with which s/he is involved. For instance, a guidance counsellor in an elementary school may be involved with identifying aptitudes and learning difficulties, while a junior high school counsellor may spend almost all of his/her time counselling students about relationship problems, study habits, self-esteem, etc.. The senior high school counsellor is, perhaps, the individual with the most varied role. His/her primary responsibilities include helping students select the academic field that best meets their educational or vocational goals, helping students with school, personal, social, and family problems that affect classroom behavior and academic progress, providing counselling for teen parents, doing individual and small- and large-group counselling, and doing crisis intervention. In addition, senior high school counsellors spend much of their time scheduling students into classes, making sure students meet graduation or university (college) entrance requirements, reviewing transcripts to determine graduation eligibility, writing letters of recommendation, and, in many instances, teaching a class or several classes.

Given the many and varied tasks that a school counsellor must undertake, it is surprising that, in Newfoundland, the ratio of counsellors to students is 1:500. This ratio has just recently been reduced from a much higher one. Unfortunately, the geography of Newfoundland makes it very difficult for schools to have 500 students, therefore, many schools survive with part-time counsellors/teachers, by sharing counsellors with other schools or other communities, or in some

cases, have no counsellor at all. In addition, the rural nature of schooling in Newfoundland often prevents many students from having access to other mental health professionals. According to Srebalus, Schwartz, Vaughan, and Tunick (1996), this means that counsellors in rural schools become generalists because they must provide for all the emotional needs of their students. Unfortunately, in most cases s/he has neither the time nor the training to provide all needed services. Therefore, rural counsellors must network with any human services professionals that may be available. This may mean establishing, in this era of global communications, Internet sites that allow distance learning or linkages with youth specialists (Srebalus et al., 1996).

The Role of the Guidance Counsellor in Violence Prevention and Intervention

In spite of the already multifaceted role a guidance counsellor plays in the school and with the students, s/he has become increasingly important in violence prevention. Violence, a tangible expression of unresolved conflict (Stephens, 1997), has become a pervasive and regrettable reality. Both the amount and the severity of violence involving youth appear to have increased dramatically in the past decade or more (Dykeman et al., 1996). Professional school counsellors are in the unique position to use their knowledge to enhance their school's violence prevention efforts (Dykeman et al., 1996) and help students deal with the aftermath of violent events. According to Coleman (1996), counsellors should provide the following services:

1. serve as a key resource on a crisis management team;
2. develop a counselling/support plan for students and staff;

3. provide support to the administrator related to prevention, intervention and postvention activities;
4. serve as a liaison to parents; and
5. refer students and parents to appropriate outside agencies (p. 211).

Furthermore, guidance counsellors are expected to be instrumental in aiding teachers in the identification of at-risk youth through thorough assessment measures and by providing training programs for faculty members so that they will have the appropriate skills necessary to help troubled youths (Pietrzak, Peterson, and Speaker 1998). It is also important, in the opinion of Cole (1995), that school counsellors be prepared to deal with emerging issues, modifying their response as needed. In the long run, it is generally agreed that any action taken by guidance counsellors will be more effective, and the results more satisfactory, if the counsellor follows a well-planned approach. Generally, any well-developed plan of action will contain the following steps: an assessment of the school situation and identification of at-risk students; selection and implementation of an appropriate plan of action; the monitoring and evaluation of the results of the plan; and modification the plan if needed (Roy and Boivin, 1989).

Developing a School Safety Plan

A beginning point for school safety planning is the recognition that, although school violence necessitates the use of law enforcement strategies at some level, the core interest of educators is the provision of a nurturing and supportive school environment (Morrison, Furlong, and Morrison, 1997). The goal of safe school planning is to create and maintain a positive and welcoming school climate, free of drugs, violence, intimidation and fear - an environment in

which teachers can teach and students can learn in a climate which promotes the success and development of all children. The best safe school plans involve the entire community (Stephens, 1998). Allowing for, and responding to concern about school violence paves the way for the participants in school safety activities to take more productive steps toward creating safe school environments (Morrison et al., 1997).

Blauvelt (1999) believes that any plan implemented in schools today must be an active one that allows teachers and administrators to respond to daily issues such as fights, bullying, vandalism, etc., as well as incidents such as rape, drug abuse, arson, etc.. However, the measures implemented with regard to individuals acting out should not overshadow the needs of any victim involved. In addition, steps should be taken to ensure that adolescents take responsibility for their actions by making reparations to the victims (Roy and Boivin, 1989). Roy and Boivin believe that any action taken against violence in the schools will be more effective and the results more satisfactory if they are in keeping with a well-planned approach with carefully chosen objectives, predefined deadlines and an established method of evaluation. MacDonald (1996) adds that effective strategies for dealing with violence must become an on-going, daily part of the curriculum if schools are to develop a more peaceful and safe learning environment.

Establishing a School Safety Committee

According to the National Education Association (1996), school personnel can facilitate violence reduction by establishing a school safety committee comprised of school employees such as teachers, administrators, guidance counsellors and educational support personnel. The role of the committee is to assess the school's immediate problems by identifying aspects of the

problem and suggesting possible short-term solutions, and to select members from the community to create a larger School Safety Committee. These members may include social service agents, police, church groups, crime prevention committees, local media and celebrities, youth club leaders, parents and students (adapted from p. 9-10). This committee takes ownership of the rest of the Safe Schools Support Plan. The discussion that follows describes the steps the committee should follow in the development of their school plan.

Assessment

Schools need to conduct a site assessment before developing a safe school plan. Determining the specific issues and concerns the local community believes are most important begins the process of customizing a relevant and meaningful safe school plan (Stevens, 1998). Primary assessment involves gathering information about the community and schools with respect to crime and violence. This data should include information on the sociodemographic risk factors for violence (unemployment, poverty, etc.) and the incidence of violent acts such as homicides, robberies and thefts, gang violence, child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, assault, and vandalism. In addition, there should be an identification of the characteristics of the students involved (e.g. age), generally what they are doing, and when, where and why they are doing it (NEA, 1996, adapted from p. 14). Careful assessment allows for the development of comprehensive plans of action that will lead to more fundamental changes in student attitudes and emotions (Roy and Boivin, 1989).

Counsellors, in cooperation with teachers, parents and administrators, help identify students who may be considered high-risk for developing aggressive and violent behaviors. The

presence of certain high-risk behaviors, such as violent drawings or writings, animal torture, low school interest, substance abuse, feelings of isolation, social withdrawal, actual use of verbal threats against another (Juhnke, 1999), truancy, lying and suicide threats and attempts (Srebalus et al., 1996) could indicate environmental turmoil or emotional stress in the child. Unless direct intervention occurs with these students, they may become violent toward their peers, their teachers, the community, or themselves. Thus, according to Juhnke (1999), adequate assessment is vital to the counselling process and critical to the establishment of pertinent treatment goals and objectives. This is especially true when counselling potentially violent and violent students.

The frequency, intensity, and the variety of aggressive behaviors are also important in determining the types of interventions that may be more effective for the individual student. In the opinion of Keller and Tapasak (1997),

the more frequently a child or youth engages in aggression, the more intense the aggressive behaviors, and the wider the variety of aggressive behaviors, the farther along the child is on the aggression continuum. The further along the aggression continuum the child has moved, the more intense the interventions to bring about changes in aggression must be (p. 116).

Thus, the guidance counsellor should become familiar with the child's behavioral history and compare that information with information supplied by faculty and students relative to the child's current behavior. This is seen to be an acceptable measure of the increase or decrease in the child's aggressive behaviors.

Assessment would also involve surveying the attitudes of staff toward violence.

According to Roy and Boivin (1989), violence triggers a variety of emotions in educators and

these emotions may effect the type of disciplinary actions taken against the child, and often, the reactions the child has to the teacher. It is important for teachers to realize that their attitudes and emotions in the classroom can engender aggression in their students, thus creating a vicious cycle in which aggression and violence is allowed to continue. Ultimately, educators are encouraged to establish relationships using, according to Roy and Boivin (1989):

- respect and courtesy, without a condescending attitude;
- leadership and authority, without the abuse of power;
- acceptance of individual differences and different rates of learning without defeatism;
- confidence in other's abilities, including students, to assume responsibilities; and
- an open attitude toward others' aspirations and ways of being (p. 45).

Although it is important for guidance counsellors to help colleagues understand their influence on aggression in the classroom by administering attitude surveys, they are also responsible for helping teachers modify their behaviors in the quest to reduce school violence. According to Keller and Tapasak (1997), without the knowledge, skills, resources, and supports in place for educators, the best-designed interventions for aggressive behavior are likely to fail.

Developing Strategies and Implementing Violence Prevention Programs to Address School Safety Concerns

When developing a plan of action to prevent or respond to school violence, counselling, provided by the guidance counsellor, school psychologist, or other mental health workers in the community, must be provided. According to Christenson, Hirsch and Hurley (1997), "the role of

school-based professionals is to make a difference in children's lives; the goal is not simply to predict or understand child behavior and performance" (p. 326). It is not sufficient for guidance counsellors only to identify attitudes and characteristics that contribute to the development and continuation of aggressive and violent behaviors, s/he must also intervene to help those individuals who exhibit aggressive tendencies, or who are affected by aggression and violence, and deal with aggressive individuals during the day.

Upon careful assessment of an individual school's needs with regards to violence intervention, an appropriate program can be implemented. It is important to understand that the same programs may not work with every student and every situation. Therefore, several different types of programs may be used simultaneously in the same school to help meet the needs of each student and situation. Regardless of the program used, it is always necessary to establish well-defined short-term and long-term goals with appropriate deadlines and expectations (Roy and Boivin, 1989). In addition, a guidance counsellor should also consider the relative costs of implementing the chosen program (Keller and Tapasak, 1997), especially in schools where funding may be at a minimum and the staff's ability to implement the program within the confines of the classroom may be reduced. Keller and Tapasak (1997) add that "in cases where the costs are too high in terms of energy, resources, supports, and potential impact upon other students, the interventions might be implemented most appropriately in more restrictive educational settings" such as smaller schools, one grade level, etc. (p. 121).

The NEA (1996) delineates three critical areas necessary for action plan development for safe schools. These include school management, curriculum and physical environment. School management concerns roles, behaviors and standards expected from the students and faculty.

This is accomplished through the development of a discipline code, reporting and monitoring of crime, violence, and vandalism, restricting access to visitors without proper identification, student participation in violence prevention, and, in some cases, alternative educational placements. The use of curriculum in the action plan inculcates in students the values and norms that lead to appropriate behavior in school as well as in their families and communities. Curriculum-based activities may include peer mediation and conflict resolution training for all students (further information provided below). Finally, improving the physical environment through increased lighting, improving the appearance of the school, and eliminating lockers can help create a safer building (adapted from p. 15-16).

In another attempt to identify important aspects of action planning, The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (1998), suggests the following strategies:

- establish a discipline code;
- include youth in positive, rewarding activities and relationships in the school,, control school access by establishing visitor screening procedures;
- keep accurate and detailed records of all school crime incidents;
- promote on-going relationships with local law enforcement and community organizations;
- provide a school hotline to report threats or pending violent actions;
- establish guidelines and procedures for identifying students at risk of violence toward themselves or others; and

- identify violence prevention programs that meet the needs of the school, including both in-school programs and community programs appropriate for referring students and families (adapted from p. 1-2).

Counselling Victims and Perpetrators of Violence

All children are affected by violence. Violent acts are experienced at home, on the television, on the street, in music and music videos, and in movies. However, children react differently to these experiences. Some children act out, becoming aggressive and violent themselves as a way of coping with their experiences, while other children become depressed or anxious. In either case, these methods of coping with violence are mal-adaptive to the child's social and emotional development, as well as their self-esteem. Counselling allows youth to discuss their experiences, express their fears and concerns, and understand their responses to conflict and how to respond in a more appropriate way. These goals may be accomplished in either individual or group counselling where the child discusses these matters with youth who have similar experiences. Group counselling may also involve participation of the violent student in group therapy sessions to help him/her develop more socially acceptable behavior patterns. In the opinion of Dykeman et al. (1996), group counselling is preferable to individual counselling because it allows the student a forum for acting out their intense feelings, conflicts and rivalries without fear of reprisal. In addition, small group counselling can help model appropriate behaviors to children who lack appropriate modeling from the family.

Social Skills Training

Many children resort to inappropriate and mal-adaptive methods of making friendships. According to Prothrow-Stith and Quaday (1996), prevention programs involving social skills training are designed to counteract the development of attitudes, cognitions and behaviors that lead to violence. They are used to train children and adolescents in the areas of stress management, problem-solving, communication and self-esteem development. In addition, students are taught the appropriate words and skills that may help them defuse verbal conflict and avoid volatile situations. Bryant (1992) contends that effective skills training programs may help children build more satisfying peer relations, however, even the most successful programs still leave 40 - 50% of the children trained unaffected. Although this statistic may indicate less than perfect results, it also indicates that 50 - 60% of the children benefitted from the program. This would suggest that the program is, indeed, effective at changing the social skills of a significant proportion of children. It is important to remember that one individual program alone may not produce the results required; ideally a multi-systemic approach using a variety of programs would be more appropriate.

Occasionally children have the appropriate pro-social behaviors, but still act in an aggressive manner. In this instance, guidance counsellors may opt to employ a pro-social values strategy to help modify the child's underlying values pertaining to regard for the needs and perspectives of others (Keller and Tapasak, 1997). This will hopefully alter the child's cognitions relative to how others deserve to be treated and allow him/her to appreciate other people's feelings before acting in a particular manner. If a child's behavior is more socially acceptable, s/he will in turn develop more appropriate, nonaggressive relationships.

Another aspect of social skills development is assertiveness training. Assertiveness is an important skill that allows people to resist unwanted pressures and intimidation, resolve conflicts nonviolently, and make sound decisions regarding the use of weapons (Hamburg, 1997). Peer pressure is an important determinant in any child's behavior. Most children want to be accepted by their peers and, as such, they may behave in a way that helps them gain friends and importance within their peer group. The focus of assertiveness training is to allow these "followers" to identify their own wants and needs and teach them appropriate methods of vocalizing this to their friends. Assertiveness training also helps boost the self-esteem of the child. Low self-esteem can lead to substance abuse, gang membership and violent behaviors (Bushman and Baumeister, 1998).

Second Step

Second Step, developed by the Seattle-based *Committee for Children*, is a school-based social skills curriculum for pre-school through junior high that teaches children to change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence (Committee for Children, n.d.). The goal of the Second Step curriculum is to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children and increase their level of social competency through empathy training, interpersonal problem solving, behavioral skills training, and anger management (Dykeman et al., 1996). Each Second Step lesson is based upon a story that demonstrates an important peer relations skill. This format makes it easier for students to discuss feelings, and gives them concrete ways to understand complex social skills concepts. The stories are used to teach affective, cognitive and behavioral social skills in a developmental sequence (Committee for Children, n.d.).

Early formative evaluations, according to Day et al. (1995), examined the impact of the Second Step program on children in grades 1-8 over a three-year period:

The curriculum was taught to students in select classes in one or more schools. Based upon student interviews conducted before and after the program, it was found that students' knowledge and skills on violence prevention increased significantly for those students who received the program relative to the students who did not receive the program. In addition, significant differences were observed on interview items pertaining to predicting consequences, anger management, and students' solutions to interpersonal problems. Moreover, teachers felt comfortable with the lessons and reported that students were interested and involved in the program (adapted from p. 145).

Grossman, Neckerman, Koepsell, Liu, Asher, Beland, Frey, and Rivara (1997), undertook a one-year evaluation to examine the impact of the Second Step curricula on aggression and positive social behavior among elementary school students. They paired 12 schools reflecting similar student bodies relative to socio-economic and ethnic makeup. One school from each pair was randomly assigned to a control group where second and third grade teachers were not trained to use the Second Step curricula or to an experimental group where teachers had received training. Observations indicated that physical aggression decreased among students exposed to the Second Step curricula and physical aggression increased among students in the control groups. In addition, prosocial and neutral interactions increased in students exposed to the Second Step program while there was no change in the control group.

According to MacDougall (1993), the Second Step program is used by many school

boards across Canada, especially in western Canada. A study conducted in western Canada by Madak and Bravi (1992), focused on the use of the program in an elementary school over a six-month period. Based upon teacher surveys and behavioral incident reports over a two-year period, their findings indicated a 20% *increase* in *behavioral* incidents after the program was implemented than before. Although the teachers rated the program as “average” or “very good,” they indicated that the program had little effect on student behavior. However, the teachers did feel that they were better able to manage student misbehavior. According to Jan Stipple (MacDougall, 1993), Second Step coordinator for Vancouver School District No. 39, the emphasis in their district is on staff training so that they can model prosocial skills in their interactions with students. In her opinion, Second Step “helps promote a healthy school environment by enhancing social and emotional health, and physical safety of students and staff” (p. 42).

Incredible Years

The Incredible Years Series is a set of three comprehensive, multi-faceted, and developmentally-based curricula for parents, teachers and children designed to prevent, reduce, and treat behavioral and emotional problems in young children (Webster-Stratton, Mihalic, Fagan, Arnold, Taylor, and Tingley, 2001). According to Webster-Stratton et al., the curriculum may be used in schools (e.g., preschool, daycare, and kindergarten through grade 3) as early prevention for high-risk children and their families. The programs are designed to build protective factors (e.g., anger management, empathy skills, positive discipline, and home-school collaboration) and reduce risk factors (e.g., early signs of aggression and peer rejection) that

research has shown to be related to later violence. Parents demonstrate an increased positive and nurturing parenting style, increased use of praise and effective discipline, and decreased parental stress. Teachers showed an increase in proactive and positive classroom management skills and a decrease in harsh and critical classroom management styles. Children demonstrated a decrease in negative behaviors, an increase in positive conflict management skills and social skills with peers, and decreased peer aggression and disruptive behaviors in the classroom (Webster-Stratton et al., 2001).

PATHS

The PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) Curriculum is a comprehensive program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behavior problems in elementary school-aged children while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom (Greenberg, Kusche, and Mihalic, 1998). According to Greenberg et al., the PATHS Curriculum provides teachers with systematic, developmentally-based lessons, materials, and instructions for teaching their students emotional literacy, self-control, social competence, positive peer relationships, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. Children exposed to this curriculum show improved self-control, increased ability to tolerate frustration, the use of effective conflict-resolution strategies, decreased conduct problems and aggression, and an improved understanding and recognition of emotions.

Stop and Think Social Skills Program

The Stop and Think Social Skills Program has been used in over 1500 schools and

districts in the United States over the past twelve years as one part of a comprehensive discipline, behavior management, and school safety system. According to Knoff (2001), it has consistently demonstrated its ability to decrease student discipline referrals to the principal's office, school suspensions, and expulsions; to improve positive school climates and students' prosocial interactions; and to increase students' ability to stay on task and improve their academic performance. Stop and Think uses a behavior/social learning process that involves the following five components:

- teaching the steps of the desired social skill;
- modeling the steps and the social skills language;
- roleplaying the steps and script with students;
- providing feedback to students when they use the new skill; and
- applying the skill as much as possible in different settings, with different people, and in different situations (adapted from p. 2).

Anger Management

Anger management strategies are based on the idea that individuals can learn how to manage their anger without resorting to episodes of violence. According to Keller and Tapasak (1997),

anger control training focuses upon ... the external events and internal interpretations or self-statements that serve to provoke anger arousal ... the internal physiological experiences that signal anger arousal for the individual ... self-control strategies for reducing anger in any situation ... and self-evaluation

to determine how well they apply the self-control strategies (adapted from p. 117).

Spivak, Platt, and Shure (1976) state that anger management programs help train students in problem-solving skills such as:

- identifying of the problem;
- generating alternative solutions;
- considering the consequences of each solution;
- selecting an effective response; and
- evaluating the outcomes of the response.

Bryant (1992) notes that three common responses that children have when confronted with anger are calm discussion, retaliation strategies and avoidance tactics. She claims that children who use retaliation and avoidance can be rejected by their peers, which can create a cyclic effect on the child's behavior. Also stating that children who used calm discussion are generally more popular with their peers, she claims that anger management programs can aid potentially aggressive children in the development of more acceptable peer relationships.

Results of a study conducted by Feindler, Marriot, and Iwata (1984) showed that students trained in anger management decreased their disruptive and aggressive behaviors both at home and in the classroom, and showed greater self-control. However, a study by Lochman (1992), conducted over a three-year period on aggressive elementary school boys showed decreased drug and alcohol involvement and improved self-esteem, but no change in delinquent behavior. Thus, in the short-term, anger management techniques have been shown to have positive effects on the delinquent and problem behaviors of aggressive students, however, long-term benefits still need to be proven. Examples of anger management programs include Aggression Replacement

Training (ART), Anger Control Training, Think First Curriculum and Anger Coping Program.

Aggression Replacement Training

Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a multi-modal intervention designed to alter the behavior of chronically aggressive youth. It consists of skillstreaming, designed to teach a broad curriculum of prosocial behavior, anger control training, a method for empowering youth to modify their own anger responsiveness, and moral reasoning training to help motivate youth to employ the skills learned via the other components (Goldstein and Glick, 1994).

The skillstreaming curriculum is implemented with small groups of children by modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and transfer training (encouraging the child to engage in activities that will increase the chances that the learned skills will be available for use when needed). According to Goldstein and Glick (1994), these skills include:

- beginning social skills (e.g., starting a conversation, giving a compliment);
- advanced social skills (e.g., asking for help, apologizing);
- skills for dealing with feelings (e.g., dealing with someone's anger, expressing affection, dealing with fear);
- alternatives to aggression (e.g., responding to teasing, negotiation);
- skills for dealing with stress (e.g., dealing with an accusation, dealing with being left out); and
- planning skills (e.g., goal setting, decision making, solving problems) (adapted from p. 10).

According to Bloom (1998), skillstreaming has been successful in enhancing prosocial skills

such as assertiveness, empathy, negotiation, perspective-taking and self control.

Anger control training requires the student to bring to each session a “hassle log” that describes an anger-rousing event. According to Goldstein and Glick, 1994), youth are trained to respond to their hassles with a chain of behaviors that include:

- identifying triggers (external events and internal self-statements that provoke an anger response);
- identifying cues (physical responses which let the child know s/he is experiencing anger);
- using reminders (“stay calm”, “chill out”, etc.);
- using reducers (deep breathing, counting, imagining a peaceful scene, etc.); and
- using self-evaluation (adapted from p. 11).

Moral reasoning training (Goldstein and Glick, 1994) is a set of procedures designed to raise a young person’s level of fairness, justice and concern with the needs and rights of others. Participants are exposed to a series of moral dilemmas (in discussion groups composed of individuals who reason at differing levels of morality) with the hope that their moral reasoning will advance to the level of those peers in the group with high moral reasoning. Using this technique in conjunction with skillstreaming and anger control management gives the youth the skills necessary to act more prosocially and inhibit antisocial and aggressive behaviors.

Evaluations of ART conducted in a couple of American institutions (Annsville Youth Center, MacCormick Youth Center), with gangs, as well as in the general community, indicate that ART is effective at promoting skills acquisition and performance, improving anger control, decreasing the frequency of acting-out behaviors, and increasing the frequency of constructive,

prosocial behaviors. In an 8 month follow-up, 13% of the ART group were rearrested compared to 52% of the control group (Goldstein and Glick, 1994).

Violence Prevention Programming

Counselling students is an important role of the guidance counsellor in the prevention and reduction of school violence, however, it caters, in most instances, to a small percentage of the school population who are immediately affected by violence and those who are at-risk for becoming violent. In order for violence prevention to be successful on a school-wide basis, programming must be implemented so that every student may be reached. Therefore, a guidance counsellor should include in his/her support plan a violence prevention program that may include aspects of peer helping, conflict resolution and peer mediation. These types of programs, in the opinion of MacDougall (1993), teach students communication and/or conflict management skills, help them feel more empowered, and encourage them to take more responsibility for their roles in a confrontation, thus weakening the chances it will happen again.

Conflict Resolution

Although conflicts occur continuously, students generally receive very little guidance in how to manage conflicts constructively (Johnson, Johnson, and Dudley, 1992). Young people need to learn how to identify and implement conflict resolution techniques instead of resorting to violence (Stephens, 1997). According to Johnson et al. (1992),

many students attempt to manage their conflicts either through the use of destructive strategies such as physical or verbal violence or by appealing to

their teachers... (A teacher's) time would be better spent by teaching students the procedures and skills required to constructively manage conflicts themselves (adapted from p. 90).

According to Hamburg (1997), research indicates that teaching conflict resolution skills to children can reduce the incidence of youth violence. However, for the program to be successful, it has to be conducted over the long-term and it must address the multiple risk factors that lead to violent behavior.

Conflict resolution, as described by Day et al. (1995), covers a range of activities from teaching specific skills, techniques, strategies, and language to deal with specific conflict situations to more general activities and curriculum-based topics that address related issues. Some of the issues are relationship-building, sharing feelings, good listening, self-discipline, effective decision-making, and exploration of nonviolent responses to conflict. Programs focus on the acquisition of strategies and skills that enable students to resolve disputes before they escalate to a physical level (p. 129).

In the end, students feel empowered to solve their own problems within the school environment and, therefore, become more responsive to education (Bodine and Crawford, 1998). In addition, students will generalize their conflict training by spontaneously applying their negotiation and mediation skills to situations outside of school (Johnson et al., 1992). According to Bodine and Crawford (1998), other benefits of conflict resolution include: improvement of the school climate; reduced violence, vandalism, chronic school absence, and suspension; greater understanding of self and others; the achievement of important life skills; reduced teacher time

spent on discipline; and improved student listening, critical thinking and problem-solving skills (p. 14).

Peer Mediation

In peer mediation programs, students trained in the basics of conflict mediation attempt to defuse conflict situations by offering mediation services to those involved (Day et al., 1995). Mediation follows a predictable course where ground rules are established and agreed to by the disputants beforehand (MacDougall, 1993). Mediators don't force a solution or mandate one, they simply assist the participants by modeling their own conflict resolution techniques. That way, the participants arrive at their own solutions and develop skills they will use again (Simpson, 1998). The goal of a peer mediation program, according to Thompson (1996), is to promote a positive school climate, to promote student empowerment and responsibility, to increase student self-esteem, to promote school safety, to learn effective communication skills, and to reduce discipline referrals to the administration.

It is the role of the guidance counsellor to select those individuals from the student body who demonstrate the skills necessary to become good mediators and to provide adequate training for them (Bodine and Crawford, 1998). Ideally, peer mediators should have different backgrounds and skills so that they will better match up with the varied student population. However, a good peer mediator would be one who can listen effectively and communicate well both verbally and nonverbally. In addition, they must be willing to suspend all judgements so that they can be impartial to the dispute. Finally, the mediator should be able to be encouraging to the disputants so that they will be honest with their feelings and frustrations (Simpson, 1998).

The role of the guidance counsellor does not stop with the selection and training of the peer mediators. S/he must also provide parental workshops and teacher in-services to help parents and teachers understand the process and contribute to the students training. In addition, the guidance counsellor must take responsibility for the operation of the program and supervise and serve as a resource for the student mediators (Bodine and Crawford, 1998). Thompson (1996) cautions that counsellors should not allow peer mediation to replace the regular counselling program, but rather, they should use it as a supplement to an existing counselling program.

Peer Helpers

Peer helper programs differ from peer mediation programs in that students are trained by mental health providers, such as the guidance counsellor, to offer support to troubled peers. They are trained to listen and make referrals when necessary. Peer helpers help their peers solve their own problems (MacDougall, 1993). This can help students become empathetic toward others, to see the other person's point of view and to listen to what is said so that misunderstandings, and as a result, conflicts, may be reduced.

Pair Counselling

Pair counselling involves pairing two children to help with moral development, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills. Pair counselling is for children who have a continual crisis that prevents them from being able to participate in group therapies or for those children who, because of interpersonal problems, cannot receive individual counselling (Moody, 1997).

A study by Selman, Shultz, Nakkula, Barr, Watts, and Richmond (1992) indicates that pair counselling provides opportunities for isolated or rejected children to learn and practice skills. They also suggest that the technique could be applied in the classroom to promote critical thinking skills and to engage children in the learning process.

Other Programs

Many other programs exist that may be used on a school-wide basis for the prevention of school violence. The guidance counsellor, along with teachers and administration, can select one or more of these programs to administer in his/her school. Some programs involve aspects of peer mediation and conflict resolution techniques and some teach social skills and anger management skills, while others focus on self-esteem development and behavior modification. The type of program selected would depend upon the results of a needs assessment conducted by the guidance counsellor and it should be incorporated into his/her support plan for the prevention of violence.

One program being offered in some Newfoundland schools is *ASAP (A School-Based Anti-Violence Program)*, which was developed by the London Family Court Clinic. This program addresses the importance of violence prevention in the schools, who should become involved in violence prevention, the causes of violence, and the development of an action plan (Sudermann, Jaffe and Hastings, 1994). In addition, ASAP covers ways to build a safe school environment, to handle disclosures of family violence and violence in dating relationships. As well it provides strategies to alter attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence (Day et al., 1995). The versatility of the program allows it to be used at any grade level and with many

different types of violence because it provides a variety of information and activities that can be used to help students understand the causes and effects of violence, allowing them to become actively involved with violence prevention (Day et al., 1995).

The *Anti-Bullying Program*, developed by the Toronto Board of Education (1994) is based upon the notion that bullying negatively impacts both students and school climate and that interventions are possible and effective (Day et al., 1995). According to Sudermann et al. (1994), the Anti-Bullying Program overlaps a great deal with the ASAP violence prevention programs. Based upon research conducted by Olweus (1993), the Anti-Bullying Program has four levels of interventions:

- school level initiatives such as increased adult supervision and bully-themed conference days for teachers;
- parent level efforts to encourage parental involvement through meetings and newsletters and to encourage them to talk with their children about bullying;
- classroom level initiatives such as curriculum units which focus on bullying, class discussions, mentoring, and conflict resolution programs; and
- individual level program components where teachers talk with bullies and victims individually and talk with parents about bullying and their role in disciplining aggressive behavior (Day et al., 1995, adapted from p. 162-163).

In one study of this program, Zeigler and Pepler (1993) collected data at 6 and 18 months after program implementation. Surveys conducted with students indicated that the act of bullying was reduced by approximately 44% and there was a decrease in the number of children who were considered “on-lookers” or “by-standers”. Unfortunately, there was no change in the number of

students who reported being bullied. They concluded that bullying intervention must be long-term so that the behavioral change is accompanied by attitudinal change.

Another program, *Positively Proactive*, is a holistic approach to school and school-yard behavioral management developed by the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board (Pankow and Iozzo, 1994). It promotes prosocial skills and aims to reduce the number of conflicts in the classroom and school-yard for primary and elementary school students. Program implementation involves raising awareness of what appropriate behavior is through prosocial behavior and conflict resolution/peer mediation techniques (Day et al., 1995). According to Day, et al., results from a study on one participating school showed that incidents decreased markedly after the program was introduced. In addition, students showed enthusiasm for the program and teachers found that integrating the program into the curriculum was very effective.

Crisis Management Plan

Safe school and community planning is intended to enrich the overall school climate and prevent potential crises. Crisis planning, on the other hand, is meant to ensure that the school and community are well prepared when a crisis, such as an accident, suicide, bomb threat, etc., does occur. Therefore, crisis planning is an essential component of a safe school plan (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1998). According to Elliott, Grady, Shaw, Aultman-Bettridge, and Beaulieu (2000), there are two distinct components to a crisis plan - emergency management which addresses physical safety, and crisis management which addresses the emotional support of the school community.

Blauvelt (1999) includes the following elements in a well-developed emergency

management plan:

- specific assignments for Emergency Management Team members;
- a chain of command to identify who is in charge and the next in command if the designated leader is not present;
- contact numbers for emergency response personnel;
- an established word or phrase to signal activation of the crisis plan;
- an established word or phrase to signal when the emergency has passed;
- a floor plan showing the locations of telephones, shut-off valves for water and electrical circuit breakers;
- identification of an evacuation site; and
- an emergency kit containing a portable telephone, flashlight, name tags, whistle, first aid supplies, class and staff lists, rubber gloves, and master keys (adapted from p. 128-129).

According to The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (1998), the following procedures should be in place for crisis management:

- have mental health professionals available to deliver tragic news to parents, students and teachers;
- create a “safe room” where grief counselling and pastoral care will be available for students after the tragedy;
- resume normal school activities as soon as possible;
- address parents’ and students’ concerns, fears and questions;
- incorporate strategies for media relations and information dissemination; and

- recognize that clergy, faculty, counsellors, and emergency teams may also experience emotional problems following the tragedy (adapted from p. 2).

Crisis Intervention

Violence is a crisis that many schools have to deal with. Some students are victims of violence, either from peers, friends, family, or in some cases, strangers, and some experience violence through tragedies such as accidents. In either case, children may have a hard time coping with the emotions they feel in relation to their experiences. According to the National Crisis Institute (1983), crisis intervention can help teachers de-escalate potentially violent situations that occur in the school. Poland (1994) believes that crisis planning in the schools should be organized by the school psychologist or counsellor following the public health model which includes three levels of response. These are:

- primary prevention activities which include conflict resolution, safe driving and suicide prevention programs;
- secondary interventions which include steps taken in the immediate aftermath of the crisis to minimize the effects of the crisis and keep it from escalating (e.g., evacuating students to a safe place, leading discussions on death and loss); and
- tertiary interventions which involve the provision of long-term, follow-up assistance to victims of a severe crisis (e.g., monitoring and supporting friends of a suicide victim) (p. 177).

In the opinion of Poland (1994), school counsellors must act as an advocate for the

students by demanding that administrators recognize the possibility of a crisis situation occurring in their school and providing the leadership needed to develop crisis plans before a crisis occurs. In this way, school counsellors work at the primary prevention level to help stop a crisis from happening.

As much as teachers would like to safeguard children against violence and tragedy, it is impossible to guarantee it. Unfortunately, many children experience tragedy before they may be emotionally able to deal with it. Sometimes the tragedy may be so terrible that even adults may have a hard time coming to terms with it. Schools have come a long way in helping students deal with crisis. One need only compare school responses to recent tragedies such as the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colorado, the suicide of a teenage girl in Bonavista, Newfoundland, and the accidental drowning deaths of three teenagers in Pouch Cove, Newfoundland to the disappearance and murder of 13 year old Dana Bradley in St. John's, Newfoundland twenty years ago.

In December 1981, Dana left her friend's house to go home, but didn't arrive. She was seen hitchhiking along a busy road and, after an extensive search, her body was discovered a week later. During the week she was missing, her friends were questioned by the police, but no one thought to help them emotionally. When her body was found, there was no counselling for the students of the school or her close friends and no one took the time to explain what had happened. At her funeral, many friends did not even believe she was in the coffin. Afterwards, school resumed as normal. No one took the time to discuss the events with the students. Unfortunately, many years ago, educators did not foresee the need for having a plan in place for dealing with such tragedies.

Today, many school districts have crisis intervention plans developed that help them respond to students and teachers in the event of the death of a student or students. This was evidenced this past year when an entire community mourned the death of three teenaged boys in Pouch Cove. School districts now realize the importance of allowing students to mourn and allowing them to talk about and deal with their own emotions regarding tragedy. Counsellors were brought in to conduct both individual and group counselling with the students, memorial services, arranged and conducted by the students occur, and mementoes of their lives with the deceased are placed in special areas where they can remember their friends. A suicide of a student last year in Bonavista evoked the same response. Students received individual counselling from the guidance counsellor and group counselling from the school psychologist, teachers were encouraged to allow students to determine how their class would progress the day after the suicide, and the students arranged and conducted a memorial service. As a result of the suicide and the comments of both students and teachers, the guidance counsellor developed a suicide prevention program that he and the school psychologist administered to the junior high students for one term. It was so successful, he was approached by senior high school students who also wanted to participate in the program. The interest in the program indicated that it may be an effective program for the prevention of teen suicide.

A tragedy elicits powerful reactions that individuals must address if they are to resume normal lives. Regardless of the nature of the tragedy, or whether or not the individuals were prepared for it, one thing is indisputable - the pain felt by those affected is real. Learning to accept and to deal with the pain of loss is an important step in emotional development. People have to learn to work through their reactions rather than avoid them. Avoidance only serves to

complicate grief and encourage future relapses. Crisis intervention plans help students and teachers confront the realities of tragedy and handle the sorrow they experience. Crisis intervention plans also help schools avoid a “state of confusion” after a tragedy occurs. People may not be thinking clearly after a traumatic event, therefore, a clear set of steps to follow insures that proper intervention measures take place.

According to Stephens (1997), a good crisis plan focuses on crisis prevention, management, and resolution. It also identifies community resources and agencies that serve students. Unfortunately, most crisis planning is done in the aftermath of a traumatic event (Poland, 1997). The prevailing view of many health professionals is that children who experience violence are resilient, however, many experience depression, fear and anxiety many years after the event. Poland (1997) believes that children, when given the opportunity to verbalize their feelings about an incident, recovered more quickly than those who were not given that opportunity. According to Poland (1994), schools must do more than rely on the resiliency of children following a crisis. School mental health workers must be encouraged to seek out children in need of help. Children must be given opportunities to express their emotions and be allowed to exhibit all emotions without apprehension. Finally, parents need information about childhood reactions to crisis and suggestions regarding how they can assist their child in dealing with the experience.

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention

In nonviolent crisis intervention, staff are placed in a situation whereby they must intervene with an individual and address behavior that may deteriorate to a more violent or

disruptive level (National Crisis Institute, 1983). In addition, his/her response should be such that any escalation of the behavior is prevented while maintaining the safety of the staff member. A course offered by the National Crisis Institute called *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*, helps educate school staff on how to provide the best care, welfare, safety and security to individuals in their charge, even in the most violent moments. School counsellors should be trained in this prevention technique so that they can, in turn, educate their colleagues through staff in-servicing. In this program, counsellors and teachers are trained in the identification of staff verbal and nonverbal behaviors that may lead to the escalation of violence, the use of appropriate reactions to violence, how to control their own fear and anxiety when faced with a crisis situation, and how to protect their own personal safety if violence escalates to the point where they are physically threatened.

Another program called *Working Effectively With Violent and Aggressive States* (Butchard and Spencier, 2000), also helps to train counsellors in nonviolent crisis intervention. The program is based upon the concept that sometimes students drop out of an optimal state and become anxious, agitated, aggressive, or even assaultive. It helps counsellors identify and improve upon the skills they possess that will help such students return to their “competent state”, thus reducing the incidence of violence in the school. These skills include appropriate communication with a student in any of the problem states, helping students reduce their level of anxiety, helping students understand the ramifications of their behavior, helping students make positive choices with regards to their behavior, and the use of nonverbal behaviors that may calm an aggressive student.

Although it is an important aspect of any guidance counsellor’s job, there are a few

obstacles to successful crisis planning (Poland, 1994). These include:

1. many people believe that taking action in a violent situation may actually make the crisis worse,
2. many people respond that it “is not their job”,
3. schools lack the needed resources, personnel, and planning time, and
4. no curriculum units exist that are devoted to safety topics, conflict resolution and problem-solving (p. 176).

It is important for these obstacles to be overcome if educators are to create adequate plans of action with regards to crisis intervention. In the opinion of Poland (1994), it is a “task that needs to be listed as a priority on the job descriptions of administrators and school psychologists” (p. 176).

Monitoring and Evaluating the Results of the Plan

Once a program is in place, it is important to measure how successful the actions are in terms of the degree to which goals were attained, the percentage of the student population that was affected by the program, and the extent to which student behaviors were modified by the program (Roy and Boivin, 1989). According to Keller and Tapasak (1997),

treatment integrity is a critical concern to the determination of an intervention’s efficacy. It must be documented that the intervention was conducted in the manner in which it was designed. If the intervention was not implemented properly, then failure to bring about change in the aggressive behavior cannot be attributed to the inefficacy of the intervention (p. 121).

Evaluation of any violence intervention program must also include the determination of how well the students generalize what they have learned to other situations. According to Keller and Tapasak (1997), “there must be concern not only with whether significant change in target measures has taken place, but with whether the attained changes are meaningful and important to the individual student and to the student’s significant others” (p. 122).

Ultimately, information gathered from the evaluation of implemented programs can help the guidance counsellor identify strengths and weaknesses in the program so that it can be improved upon (Roy and Boivin, 1989). In an ideal situation, any program implemented by the guidance counsellor would have the desired effect - reducing the incidence of school violence. However, this is not the case. Each student is an individual, different from all other students. S/he may come from different backgrounds, have different home situations, and have different physical and emotional needs. These differences prevent the selection of one “cure-all” program. Consequently, a program may be implemented and modified throughout the school year to help meet the specific needs of each child. Additionally, evaluation helps identify programs that are inefficient in creating change in the behavior of the students involved. Thus, the guidance counsellor may suspend use of the program or drop it from the action plan all together.

Conclusion

A school is a microcosm of the world in general. Each person in the school has a role to play which impacts upon the school climate. Teachers educate the students in the different subjects offered and perform various supervisory roles for administration and extracurricular activities. The administration provides a leadership role for the staff and serves as a liaison

between staff, the district, and the community. The students' role is primarily as learner, however, any teacher realizes that the variety of students in any class can have an impact upon the classroom climate. Finally, there is the guidance counsellor; a person whose job some people tend to regard as the "feel good" person, until they need his/her expertise. The responsibilities of the guidance include helping administrators with scheduling and program development, helping students with graduation and university requirements, personal concerns, and learning difficulties, and acting as an advocate for the students. Considering that one guidance counsellor may be responsible for several hundred students at one time, the role of the counsellor can be described as pivotal to the school environment.

As society becomes more aware of the problem of violence in the schools, the guidance counsellor's role continues to expand. Violence prevention initiatives must be incorporated into the support plan every counsellor has for his/her school. A careful assessment of the school's needs helps the counsellor identify appropriate programming and supports that would benefit the student body. Social skills training, conflict resolution, communication and mediation skills, assertiveness training, anger management, and crisis intervention teams are all examples of psychological services consistent with violence-free schools (Cole, 1995). The best school-based violence prevention programs seek to do more than reach the individual child. Instead they try to create a safe community that lives by a credo of nonviolence (Bodine and Crawford, 1998).

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