

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT YOUTH VIOLENCE IN WINDHAM COUNTY

A major goal of Youth ImPact Windham County is reducing the incidence of violence among youth.

What do we know about youth violence in general and locally?

- In 2007, 38% of Windham County 8th grade males and 21% of females had been in a physical fight.
- Windham County has higher than state avg.'s for violent injuries, "unmanageable" children, & dispositions for delinquency.
- Individual factors linked to violence: school success or failure, emotional problems, and substance abuse.
- Family factors linked to violence: discipline practices, comm. style, & lack of involvement
- Children who witness violence or who face physical, sexual, mental, or emotional abuse at home are more likely to become violent.
- Community factors linked to violence: low neighborhood cohesiveness, and community disorganization;
- Environmental factors linked to violence: poverty and media exposure.
- Violence in television, movies, and video games is a contributors.
- Drugs and alcohol and easy access to weapons are contributors
- No single factor or single defining situation causes an individual to engage in violent behavior
- Effective strategies to reduce youth violence include mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Children with adult mentors are much less likely to engage in drug or alcohol use or to commit violent acts
- Bullying is a major CAUSE of youth violence
- The most violent harassment is based on disability, race, sexual orientation, nationality, and religion
- The Best Time to Prevent Violent Behavior is from Pre-k to 3rd grade

(Sources: Windham County 2007 YRBS, VAHS 2007 Community Profile, National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, "Youth Violence Research," 2001)

- From 1/1/05 to now Brattleboro has had 44 cases of "unmanageable" findings. This means that the judge found a child was beyond the control of their parents. *(Brattleboro District Court)*
- From 1/1/05 until now Brattleboro has had 69 cases of "abuse and neglect" findings. This means the judge has found a child has been abused or neglected by their parent(s).
- Overall, delinquency cases have dropped significantly since 2000, pretty much all over the State. We are not sure of the reason – some of it may have to do with less law enforcement resources, resulting in fewer charges. It may be for a good reason, better intervention by social services and schools. *(District Court Manager)*
- "Unmanageable" cases have gone up though. We have more and more cases of juveniles who reach early adolescence and adolescence who are simply "out of control." I think that has a lot to do with the breakdown of families – lack of parenting skills, lack of intact families, substance abuse issues of the parent(s), and poverty. It is uncommon for us to get a case here where both parents are together and living in the same house.