WHAT WORKS IN YOUTH VIOLENCE

A re-appraisal of the evidence

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY | Care Economy Research Institute

VICTORIA State Government

CONTENTS

AUTHORS

Kate Syme-Lamont Care Economy Research Institute, La Trobe University

Irene Blackberry Care Economy Research Institute, John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research, La Trobe University

Cecily Fletcher Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

About this report

This report was commissioned by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Ovens Murray Area – East Division, on behalf of the Ovens Murray Local Site Executive Committee.

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of evidence-based strategies for addressing youth violence and contributes to broader efforts to deliver more integrated and responsive services across the region. The report draws on an umbrella review of systematic and literature reviews, supplemented by secondary analysis of de-identified data on justice-involved youth in Ovens Murray.

Youth violence is a complex and multi-causal issue, closely linked to the broader socio-economic conditions in which it takes place. To strengthen rigour and clarity, this report adopts a definition focused on actual physical violence perpetrated by young people. However, the evidence and insights presented have relevance to risk and protective factors for vulnerable youth more broadly.

The evidence base for youth violence prevention and reduction is well-established. Effective strategies typically operate across multiple levels of influence—including individuals, families, schools, and communities—and combine universal prevention with more intensive, targeted interventions for high-risk youth.

Youth violence overall in Ovens Murray has declined steadily over the past decade. However, a subgroup of high-risk young people with justice system involvement reflects patterns of vulnerability consistent with known drivers of youth violence identified in the evidence base. They are disengaged from school, are high users of other services such as homelessness and emergency services and have been victims of crime, especially family violence, themselves.

These findings are consistent with broader patterns of youth vulnerability and prevention science, but they also offer specific insights into how services in the region might better target resources to those most in need. This report does not provide formal recommendations. However, it highlights the potential value of an ongoing program of monitoring and evaluation to inform collaborative, multi-targeted strategic interventions that respond to place-based needs.

Approaches to youth violence in research and policy

Ecological systems theory

Contemporary approaches to youth violence often have roots in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) which explains how a child's development is influenced by their surrounding environment. The theory conceptualises human development as occurring within a set of nested systems, each exerting influence on the individual and interacting with one another over time. The theory has been widely adopted across disciplines, including public health, education, and social policy.

An ecological model for understanding youth violence

A range of international and domestic bodies use models influenced by ecological systems theory to understand youth violence. These models underscore the importance of context — in both risk and protective factors — in the emergence of youth violence and the design of effective interventions.

The WHO model of violence prevention is commonly cited. Originally applied to understanding child abuse, the model was subsequently applied to understanding the complexities of youth violence.[1]

Table 1 | An ecological model of risk and protective factors for youth violence

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF RISK / PROTECTIVE FACTORS	EXAMPLE INTERVENTIONS
Individual	Personal characteristics and biological factors that influence behaviour	• History of abuse • Low self-control • Substance use • Mental health challenges • Impulse control and coping skills	• Life skills or emotional regulation training • School-based social development programs
Relationship	Close relationships that may increase or mitigate risk	• Family conflict • Harsh or neglectful parenting • Peer pressure • Supportive adult relationships	• Parenting training • Mentoring programs • Family therapy
Community	Settings such as schools and neighborhoods where social relationships occur	• Unsafe schools • High-crime neighbourhoods • Social cohesion • Presence of gangs	• Improve school climate and safety • After-school and youth engagement programs • Community policing
Societal	Broader structural, cultural, and policy context affecting all other levels	• Income inequality • Cultural norms supporting violence • Poor access to education or employment • Discrimination	• Social policy reforms • Anti-poverty and equity programs • Public education campaigns • Justice system reform

Risk factors

In the Australian context, social ecological models are also used to identify risk factors for youth violence, using a public health approach. There are known risk factors for youth who become involved in violence. Understanding these factors can help policy makers identify those at risk, understand the complexities of the influences that exacerbate that risk, and help to direct resources in an impactful and evidence-based manner.

Table 2 | An Australian public health perspective on ecological factors for youth violence

ECOLOGICAL DOMAIN	RISK FACTOR
Individual and peer	• Being male • Alcohol use • Previous violent, delinquent or antisocial behaviour • Association with antisocial or delinquent peers • Impulsivity
School	• Low academic achievement • Low school engagement, absenteeism • Suspensions
Family	• Family conflict • Family history of violence • Poor family management
Community	• Availability of drugs and alcohol • Community norms conducive to violence • Situational risk factors • Trauma

Prevention science

Evidence-based approaches to address youth violence integrate insights from ecological systems and specifically target risk and protective factors within populations and at different stages of development to reduce the likelihood of youth becoming involved with violence.

These approaches fall under prevention science – an interdisciplinary field that seeks to mitigate poor social, physical, and mental health outcomes by identifying the root causes of these issues. A core premise is that adverse outcomes – whether substance misuse, delinquency, or violence – are not inevitable; instead, they can be prevented or mitigated by reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors in people's lives.[2]

Prevention approaches are classified by two distinct, yet often overlapping, definitions.

The **Universal** / **Selected** / **Indicated** classification describes the population the intervention is applied to. **Universal** programs are applied universally to a defined population regardless of risk; **Selective** programs target populations assessed as being at-risk of violence; and **Indicated** programs directly target youth who are already exhibiting violent behaviour.

The **Primary** / **Secondary** / **Tertiary** classification refers to the point in the violence trajectory at which a prevention program is applied and describes the objective. **Primary** programs address risk and protective factors to prevent violence before it occurs, **Secondary** programs intervene immediately after a violent act occurs to minimize short term consequences, and T**ertiary** programs take place after violent events to address and ameliorate long term consequences of violence.[3]

The two systems often overlap in real-world application. For example, while universal interventions are often primary, primary interventions are also frequently applied to populations assessed at being at high-risk of violence. In addition, as prevention approaches incorporate core insights from ecological theories and models of violence prevention, tertiary interventions such as rehabilitation or justice interventions might also seek to ameliorate long term impacts of violence within a community, as well as directly targeting the young offender individually.

While these systems help to clarify the vast and heterogeneous range of youth violence prevention interventions available to communities, the complexity of real-world application presents

challenges in evaluation. It is often difficult to clearly categorise interventions within a single model or system. As such, assessing the effectiveness of individual programs—and identifying the mechanisms that contribute to their success or failure—remains an ongoing task for researchers and practitioners in youth violence prevention. While existing frameworks have advanced evaluation practices in the field[2,3], important challenges persist and are referred to in this report.

Despite these complexities, evidence for prevention strategies is notable; many hypotheses of prevention science are now supported by decades of long-term, longitudinal data and research that demonstrates how risk and vulnerability accumulate over the life-cycle. These advances bolster the evidence base for rigorous interventions that are developmentally targeted.[2,4]

Examples include the US-based Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s Youth Violence Prevention Centers (YVPC), which partner with local communities to develop youth violence prevention strategies and identify and test youth violence interventions. According to a 2015 systematic evaluation of 53 of these programs, the interventions resulted in a median reduction in youth violence of 15%.[5]

From Australia, a nine-year evaluation of Communities That Care in Victoria found significant decreases in municipal youth crime rates in towns using the prevention system compared to control towns.[6] In 2024, a long-term evaluation of a community initiative, Pathways to Prevention, found a reduction in youth violence of 50% at an individual level and 20% at a community level in communities that received the intervention.[7] Both of these examples are explored further in ***Examples of effective, evidence-based interventions***.

These findings contribute to a growing body of evidence for the approaches of prevention interventions in an Australian context and are of great use for communities looking for rigorous, evidence-based tools and strategies to prevent and reduce youth violence and respond to populations who are most at risk.

What works? An umbrella review and re-appraisal of the literature

Goal

A vast amount of literature has been written about youth violence, in an effort to answer questions about "what works?" in youth violence prevention.

The goal of this study was to conduct an umbrella review of systematic evaluations, reviews and meta-analyses to synthesize and identify widespread themes and context dependent outliers.

The review was guided by principles of the realist framework which seeks to address questions about how, why, for whom, and in what context certain interventions or programs function. A realist perspective is based on the premise that for any observed outcome, there are one or more causal processes ("mechanisms") that only become active in certain contexts.[8] In line with this pragmatic and applied approach, reviews were mapped according to the realist Context (C) + Mechanism (M) = Outcome (O) framework.

Data from the reviews was extracted according to typology of the interventions; the populations the interventions were applied to (Universal/ Selected/ Indicated), and at which point of the youth violence prevention trajectory they were applied at (Prevention/ Secondary/ Tertiary). In line with ecological models of youth violence prevention, the review also collected data about the ecological level the interventions were applied within: either individuals, peers and relationships, families, schools, and/or communities.

Finally, in a continuous effort to interpret this evidence within the context it was commissioned, the scope prioritised insights from evidence most relevant for the audience intended for this report. For example, judicial interventions such as restorative justice programs or raising the age of criminal responsibility are widely accepted as evidence-based initiatives to address recidivism in young people[9], and might be considered efficacious youth violence interventions. However, local community service bodies have no power over the law's application, and thus such interventions were considered irrelevant for this review. Rather, evaluations of programs targeting youth at risk of becoming justice-involved or diverted from the justice system were considered relevant and thus included. More information about the inclusion and exclusion criteria follows in the methodology section.

Methodology

The search began by consulting experts in the field and within the community for examples of program evaluations and grey literature that speak to the issue of youth violence and determined as especially relevant. These were not necessarily included if they fell outside out the inclusion and exclusion criteria but provided a valuable direction from which to begin. Then, several 'gold-standard' articles and documents were collected to provide the list of key words and terms that formed the basis of the search strategy.

PsycINFO and Google Scholar and Dimensions databases were searched for the following terms:

(aggress* OR violen* OR assault OR abus*) AND (intervention OR program* OR training OR reduc* OR prevent*) AND (review* OR meta* OR analysis OR meta-analysis OR evaluat*) AND (youth OR young OR adolesc* OR teen*)

The Australian policy database Analysis and Policy Observatory (APO) was searched under subject headings 'Juvenile Offenders', 'Youth Justice', 'Youth', Youth and Violence' and 'Violence Prevention' for relevant literature. The Australian Institute of criminology's database was also searched using the key word: 'youth violence', under the subject: Crime Prevention.

Covidence was used for data management. A model outlining the screening process in available in Appendix A.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The review sought to synthesize the evidence base of interventions to address youth violence. This is a huge topic with a vast array of literature. While the umbrella review method was used to limit and 'pre-synthesize' some evidence, some limitations on scope regarding the definition of youth violence was applied.

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses were included when they evaluated the effectiveness of interventions to reduce or prevent the actual perpetration of physical violence by young people.

Young people were defined as 0-25 years old in recognition that rigorous evaluations often consider long term effects on a population.

Included reviews measured actual perpetration of violence using a variety of methods; including but not limited to crime statistics, court records, and behavioural surveys (self, teacher, peer, or parent reported). Reviews were excluded if they solely focused on other types of adverse behaviours in youth such as general aggressive behaviour (bullying, anger, or emotional dysregulation) or general delinquent behaviours (such as drug abuse or non-violent crime). However, reviews that included general adverse behaviours as part of an overall strategy to reduce actual perpetration of violence were included.

In addition, reviews of interventions focused solely on intimate partner violence (IPV) or adolescent dating violence (ADV) were excluded. While ADV may involve physical violence and shares many of the same risk and protective factors with other forms of youth violence, it also presents distinct contextual and aetiological features. Interventions often address victims as well as perpetrators, and outcomes, mechanisms of change, and measurement approaches can introduce features which heighten comparison difficulties. Thus, to preserve conceptual coherence and analytic validity, such reviews are excluded unless they explicitly situate ADV within a broader youth violence prevention framework.

Reviews of interventions for individuals, families and communities that were administered by or took place (in whole or in part) in schools, homes, community services or in the general community were included.

Interventions conducted in highly specialised settings were excluded from this review if they were deemed to fall outside the scope of policy and program design for governments, executive bodies and community services. For example, evaluations of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for youth violence applied in clinical settings were excluded. However, many programs utilise an element of CBT or other therapeutic methods within a wider strategy to reduce violence, and reviews including programs of this type were included.

Youth violence interventions: insights from the evidence base

Youth violence interventions work. Effective interventions are appropriately designed for the context in which they occur, are targeted to the right populations, and are invested in and implemented rigorously according to evidence. Integrated interventions that combine primary and universal strategies with highly targeted strategies for high-risk youth address the multifactorial causes of youth violence, especially when delivered as part of a coordinated strategy involving multiple levels of influence.

Mechanisms to foster engagement are crucial, as even the most 'effective' interventions can fail without genuine involvement by youth, families, schools and the broader community. Finally, effective interventions must coincide with a rigorous regime of data collection, evaluation and monitoring. Targeting appropriate interventions requires thorough planning and analysis of needs. Monitoring and evaluation allows successful programs to be embedded and sustainable.

Comparing interventions for heterogeneous populations

While short-term interventions show stronger results than prevention measures, the most effective programs include a combination of both approaches.

Evaluations of highly targeted secondary and tertiary programs show stronger effectiveness results compared to universal preventative measures when measured within the same group. This result was consistent across the group reviews that included interventions with a heterogeneous range of intervention approaches.

However, several considerations must be made when considering this evidence.

First, program evaluations typically measure outcomes immediately after or at a relatively short-term period after the intervention has taken place. This makes it difficult to measure impact of genuinely universal or prevention interventions that target broad risk and protective factors. While these can be measured in other ways (for example, improvement in child health outcomes or school

attendance) and rigorous examples of long term outcomes do exist[7], such studies are still fewer in number and slower to produce evidence of results compared with short term programs for high risk youth.[2] In addition, the prevalence of youth violence is often highly dependent on community dynamics which is difficult to control for over time, especially in quantitative assessments with narrow outcome measures. While improvements in the field of evaluations have been made to address these difficulties[3], this should be kept in mind when comparing such a broad range of approaches. Finally, the goal of universal and primary interventions is to prevent violence before it occurs. While there are many examples of effective strategies to address youth crime among at-risk or justice-involved youth, development of such conditions is an indication of systemic failure – an issue that universal and preventative approaches are designed to address.

However, while stronger effects were usually produced by secondary and tertiary programs for selective and indicated populations, programs assessed as most effective were often combined with primary prevention measures that targeted broader populations. For example, in a systematic review of 20 place-based approaches, research designs with the greatest impact overall combined strategies targeting high-risk youth (e.g. outreach, mentoring, case management, conflict resolution) with programs designed to foster better outcomes at a whole school level or in communities.[10]

Effective interventions target multiple levels

Targeting multiple levels of influence leads to stronger, broader outcomes, across program types.

One of the most consistent findings across 33 meta and systematic reviews was that effective interventions target multiple levels of society. This finding was consistent across all program classifications.

Programs that target multiple domains might include intensive therapeutic support for the youth (individual), a program of school re-engagement to support learning objectives (school), family therapy or support and greater involvement of parents in schooling (family), and a mentorship program to engage youth in pro-social activities and the broader community (community).

This evidence supports insights from ecological models that view involvement from more than one level of influence as essential to changing youth behaviour. For example, several reviews found that training programs set in schools and aimed at developing social, academic, or conflict resolution skills, were most effective when they included some aspect of parental, carer or family involvement. Examples of this were diverse but included regular and consistent communication between teachers and parents or carers such as regular updates or meetings. From a realist perspective, this approach aims to improve engagement with school by fostering parental ownership of a youth's educational success within the school environment.[7,10-12]

Low engagement undermines effectiveness

Successful implementation and evaluation of multi-domain approaches relies on engagement.

Engagement by youths, families, schools, and communities is crucial. Low engagement can undermine program mechanisms and the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of programs.

For example, a review of seven school-based programs in the United States targeting students identified as at risk of violent behaviour (i.e. secondary interventions delivered to a selected population) found that effective training models typically combined elements of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) with broader social skills and conflict resolution education.[12] These interventions were primarily child-focused and centred on individual-level training in anger management, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication. While the review identified several programs as effective, it acknowledged substantial limitations in the evidence base. In particular, follow-up evaluations were heterogeneous, with only two programs assessing impact beyond one year.

Notably, the two interventions that reported mixed outcomes incorporated parental involvement and teacher training as core components, appearing to conflict with calls for a multi-domain approach. However, actual engagement from parents was minimal. In one instance, parental participation was limited to signing consent forms, with no substantive involvement in the intervention itself. These same two programs were also the only ones to conduct long-term evaluations (at two and five years).

The review concluded that interventions incorporating CBT alongside social skills development appeared most promising for at-risk youth. However, it also highlighted that without genuine engagement from key adults—particularly parents and educators—claims of long-term impact and transferability across holistic domains of influence remain tenuous.[12]

This finding was replicated across several reviews. In another review of 26 randomised control trials (RCTs) of youth violence intervention programs (for selective populations), a lack of cooperation by school organisation and staff and a lack of parental attendance resulted in low overall implementation of the intervention and poor effectiveness results.[13]

The findings underscore a critical tension in the literature: while multi-domain engagement is well-established as necessary for lasting change, reviewed programs who fail to secure engagement in practice can impact the effectiveness results of otherwise well-designed interventions.

Appropriate targeting enhances success

Context-sensitive design ensures programs are responsive to the community, enhance engagement, maximise resources by targeting the right populations, and make use of existing infrastructure.

Effective programs are designed for and reflect the specific characteristics and needs of the target population. From a realist perspective, this is a foundational consideration: the mechanisms by which interventions produce change must be understood in relation to the contexts in which they are applied.

Universal, selective, and indicated interventions are all useful in different contexts. However, to maximise limited resources, enhance engagement; and to support evaluation, monitoring and sustainability, strategies should be guided by an in-depth understanding of the violence profile of the community.[14]

A major theme across effective youth violence prevention interventions was the importance of collaborating with communities in design and implementation.[10,15] The benefits of this approach are manifold: collaborative design integrates real-world knowledge into the interventions, strengthens community bonds, and increases engagement. Reviews of successful interventions also highlighted the value of collaborative design in increasing cultural sensitivity and trust within ethnic minority populations.

One study of the implementation strategies of positive youth development (PYD) programs in the Northern Territory (reviewed in a study of 12 PYD programs), highlighted how early perceptions of the intervention as externally imposed, a "non-Indigenous solution" reduced community engagement.[15] The program improved engagement by holding regular meetings with members of the community which was assessed as an effective mechanism to improve overall success in implementation.

Collaborative approaches can also help to build trust and enhancing involvement of families, overcoming low engagement of some parents who were resistant to exposing family issues or who felt threatened by mentor relationships, as highlighted by another program in the same study.[15]

Designing programs for context also calls for considering the existing infrastructure and capacity of community services and broader networks of supports and influences. Building on capacity where it already exists, and enhancing capacity where it is lacking is crucial, informed by an understanding of the local context.

While schools are often sites of youth violence programs, and the involvement of a supportive school is seen as critical to success, several reviews noted the complexity of relying on busy teachers to rigorously administer elements of an intervention, and keep lines of communication open with parents and social workers.[13,15] Suggestions to overcome this barrier were context dependent but included appointing a school-based liaison to bridge gaps between multiple off-site programs and having certain programs in schools delivered by external practitioners.[15]

A number of tools and frameworks exist to assist communities design, implement and evaluate programs in light of their unique context and needs. In a review of 20 place-based youth violence intervention models, five Communities that Care (CTC) based models demonstrated statistically significant reductions in a range of youth violence indicators.[10] CTC emphasises involving multiple agencies and stakeholders in the community to rigorously assess community need, and to design and evaluate interventions based on a unique profile. More information about Communities that Care is covered in *Examples of effective, evidence-based interventions.*

Common features of universal interventions

Universal strategies that focus on prevention by identifying risk factors and enhancing protective factors can be supported with community planning and a public health approach.

Continuous, long-term strategies that focus on embedding better models of behaviour and improving systems of support are the most effective universal and prevention strategies. These interventions have a broader range of social health indicators in the short term and can be evidenced in the youth crime rate after extended and continuous application.

Community wide planning, collaboration, and local implementation of evidence-based programs have shown effectiveness internationally to prevent violence before it occurs. With a detailed risk assessment, the clusters of known risk factors for violence can be detected and addressed, improving protective factors in that area and lowering the likelihood that youth will become involved in violence over time.

Common examples of effective universal youth violence prevention strategies include limiting the availability of alcohol, improving maternal child health and early childhood education, fostering supportive school environments, increasing parental involvement with school, and having a broad range of community services to respond to crisis situations, such homelessness, drug and alcohol, family violence, and mental health services.[2]

While universal applications of prevention interventions are understood to involve all domains of society (as in the ecological model), preventative approaches might be indicated in a school context, within a community considered at risk of violence due to broader social conditions. School disengagement is one of the key risk factors for youth violence, and school success is a strong predictor for many positive outcomes for youth. In whole school programs that offer students training in social and emotional regulation, interventions show increased success when combined with teacher training, and parental involvement.[14,16] The Australian Pathways to Prevention initiative (covered further in *Examples of effective, evidence-based interventions*) showed long term positive impacts on youth crime rates by improving school success and fostering parental support.[7]

Common features of selective and indicated interventions

Effective interventions for selective and indicated populations were highly targeted, included an element of expert-delivered therapeutic support, and involved multiple levels of influence.

There is strong evidence for a range of effective interventions for youth at risk of violence or who are justice-involved. Most reviews found effective interventions included some element of intensive, individual therapy such as CBT to teach and reinforce social and emotional regulation and improve overall mental health and coping skills.[14]

Multiple studies demonstrate the effectiveness of Multisystemic Therapy (MST), an intensive, individualised intervention that engages families and communities to address the complex, multi-level drivers of serious antisocial behaviour. MST is designed for chronic, violent, or substance-involved youth offenders and their families, targeting the social systems that influence behaviour.[14,17]

A review of mentoring relationships for selective and indicated populations found broad effects for mentoring effectiveness as part of a broad system, although the reviewers did concede it was difficult to separate the mentoring element from other characteristics of well-designed and appropriate strategies (targeting multiple domains of influence).[18]

All reviews that included strategies for at-risk youth highlighted that when professional or clinical interventions were indicated, expert delivery by trained professionals (social workers, therapists, MST practitioners) was crucial.[17,19] Even in the case of mentors, results suggested mentors were more effective when engaged as professionals (for example when the mentoring program had mutual benefits such as advancing their careers).

Interventions found to be most effective were those that included families, schools, services, and in general, targeted multiple domains of influence with intensive re-engagement. For example, an analysis of 7 place-based approaches in selective communities (very high crime rates and gang association), found effective interventions for violent youth combined focused deterrence[I], mentoring, school re-engagement, and highly targeted therapeutic interventions. The review highlighted that the therapeutic elements were delivered by trained professionals with expertise in youth crime; and, that these interventions were delivered by multiple agencies, and with parental or carer/ mentor involvement. In addition, interventions found to be most effective combined targeted strategies for high-risk youth with a broad range of universal prevention strategies for the community.[10]

[I]Focussed deterrence is a crime prevention strategy for high-risk individuals involving justice and law enforcement and social services.

Youth violence profile: Identifying moments for intervention for high-risk youth

Please note

This section (pages 13–18) contains analysis of sensitive data and has been removed from this public version of the report to protect confidentiality and privacy. The complete analysis is available upon approval for legitimate research, policy, or professional purposes.

To request access to this section, please contact:

Senior Program Manager
North Area - Department of Justice and Community Safety
ovensmurraybcc@justice.vic.gov.au

Examples of effective, evidence-based interventions

Place-based approaches

Place-based approaches are a group of strategic frameworks for youth crime prevention that tailor interventions to the specific social, economic, and environmental conditions of a local area. Rather than applying one-size-fits-all solutions, they emphasise context-sensitive design, drawing on local data, community input, and multi-agency collaboration. These approaches can be applied to different stages of the youth crime life cycle (Prevention/Secondary/Tertiary), in communities at different risk levels (Universal/Selective/Indicated). They aim to address concentrated disadvantage, build community capacity, and promote long-term safety and wellbeing.

Throughout the literature, interventions that follow a place-based approach (whether explicitly or implicitly) are evaluated as being effective for youth violence prevention. While the approaches applied within this framework are vast and heterogeneous (reflecting the heterogeneity of the population and issues they are applied to), PBAs can be understood as involving certain key characteristics:

Place based approaches:

- are geographically bound in a defined location.
- address local needs, solutions and the unique conditions of that location.
- are opportunity-driven and reflect local resources and constraints
- are collaborative and engage multiple community stakeholders and domains in design and implementation, including:
  - involving multiple agencies (e.g. schools, police, community services, health services)
  - meaningfully engaging with communities at all levels.[10]

Below, two examples of place-based approaches, Communities that Care and Pathways to Prevention are discussed with regards to their approach, mechanisms, and outcomes.

Communities that care

Communities That Care (CTC) is a coalition-based, evidence-informed prevention framework developed by Dr. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard Catalano at the University of Washington's Social Development Research Group. CTC applies a public health approach to reduce youth risk behaviours such as substance use, violence, and school dropout. It engages community stakeholders in identifying local needs, setting priorities, and implementing evidence-based strategies to strengthen protective factors and promote positive youth development. Grounded in research across public health, education, and social sciences, the model supports schools and communities through five structured phases, and has demonstrated success internationally and in Australia in improving youth wellbeing, academic outcomes, and reducing harmful behaviours.[2,24]

Mechanism and prevention approach

CTC supports multi-agency coordination and community collaboration. While it is usually applied to a whole population (Universal) in order to strength protective factors and reduce risk factors, insight from the method can be used to assess risk and target interventions as well.[10]

CTC seeks to:

- Strengthen community ownership and leadership of prevention initiatives
- Enhance the efficient use of local resources by minimising duplication and fragmentation
- Reduce inter-agency competition in the delivery of human development services
- Improve the long-term sustainability of prevention efforts
- Support coordinated, cross-sector responses to complex social challenges

One of CTC's defining features is the establishment of community coalitions that bring together members of the public, local authorities, and key stakeholders to collaborate across all stages of planning, implementation, and ongoing review.[10]

It uses five "phases" that guide communities to evaluate their needs, set priorities and implement a program, and evaluate the progress.

Table 6 | The following model is adapted from the Communities That Care Australia.[XIV, 24]

PHASE	ACTION
1 - Get Started	Communities initiate the process by identifying and engaging key stakeholders to participate in the Communities That Care framework.
2 - Get Organised	A formal Communities That Care Partnership is established to oversee planning, coordination, and decision-making within the school community.
3 - Develop a Profile	A Community Profile Report is compiled using data from the Communities That Care Youth Survey, public sources, and a review of existing services and strengths. The Partnership sets priority areas for intervention.
4 - Create a Plan	The Partnership develops a detailed Community Action Plan for mental health promotion, outlining selected evidence-based programs, expected outcomes, and implementation roles and responsibilities
3 - Implement and Evaluate	The Action Plan is put into practice, with the Partnership ensuring programs are delivered with fidelity and that implementation is systematically monitored and evaluated.

Evidence of impact

The evidence base for CTC is strong and growing. It has been tested internationally and in Australia. In a review of 20 place based approaches included in the meta-review for this report, CTC interventions were found to have statistically significant positive impact on youth delinquent behaviour and other risk factors for youth violence, compared to the control group (similar communities that did not implement CTC). It also found lower arrests in 12 months after the program and at a long term follow up, another found a 5% annual reduction of crimes of property and deception for adolescent aged between 10-17 years old.[10] In Victoria, a study of youth crime statistics between 2010–2019 compared the impact on youth crime statistics in LGAs that had implemented the CTC framework compared with similar communities who had not. The Australian model of CTC adapted to focus on reducing adolescent alcohol supply, it also examined the effects on alcohol supply on youth crime trends. While the study called for further evaluation, it finds evidence for positive effects of youth crime: An annual reduction of for crimes against persons was observed for all age groups and a 5% reduction for crimes of property and deception where the alleged perpetrator was aged 10-17 years old. In addition, risk rates for child injury in hospital reduced by 12%.[6]

Pathways to prevention

Pathways to Prevention is an early intervention program to prevent youth violence commissioned by the Federal Government and developed under the leadership of Professor Ross Homel AO. The initial round was trialled in several disadvantaged suburbs of Brisbane from 2001-2011.

The intervention combined two preschool enrichment programs for four-year-old children in 2002 and 2003 with comprehensive family support, which extended from 2002 until 2011. More than 1,000 families and nearly 1,500 children aged four to 11 were involved.

Mechanism and prevention approach

The program was developmentally focused and collected extensive data throughout the implementation.

This initiative delivered integrated services, including a preschool enrichment program to support children's social and communication skills for school readiness; parent training and support to enhance families' capacity to foster child development; and initiatives to strengthen partnerships between families, schools, and community organisations.[25]

It combined two key forms of intervention:

- The Preschool Intervention Program (PIP) targeted four-year-old children and comprised two main components: a communication skills program delivered throughout the preschool year in two settings by specialist teachers in collaboration with regular staff and parents; and a 14-week social skills program delivered in two other preschools by postgraduate psychology students under the supervision of the Griffith University research team.
- Family Independence Program, delivered by Mission Australia, provided flexible support to families with children attending free preschools on

[XIV] There CTC Australia mentions indication to improve mental health outcomes, however the CTC method is a broad prevention method that has also been rolled out and tested for youth violence internationally and in Australia.

primary school grounds or those who had recently transitioned to Year 1.

A follow-up report identified additional mechanisms as key to the program's success:

- Early intervention in the pre-school years (i.e. in developmental pathways linked to later crime)
- Delivery by skilled professionals supported by trusted community workers
- Integration into existing systems such as schools and community services
- A multisystemic and ecological approach
- Guided by universal, prevention-focused framework with optional early intervention components
- A commitment to capacity building among frontline staff
- Sustained delivery over time to achieve measurable impact, and
- Sustained and rigorous data collection throughout the intervention to measure impact.[7]

Evidence of impact

A report on the program's long-term impact, analysed by linking data collected over the program with youth justice records, was released in 2024. Evaluation of the Pathways to Prevention Analysis of youth outcomes found that children who received the preschool skills program plus family support had significantly lower rates of offending later in life with a 50% reduction in the number of young people with court-recorded offenses by age 17. None of the children who got both the preschool program and intensive family support ended up engaging in youth crime by age 17. Crime rate reductions at a population level were also observed. The Brisbane neighbourhoods involved in Pathways to Prevention experienced a reduction in youth offending of about 20% in the years following the intervention, (2008–2016) compared to Brisbane neighbourhoods with similar risk profiles who didn't receive the intervention.

The results strongly support prevention hypotheses and provide persuasive evidence that a well-designed early prevention approach can measurably reduce youth violence and delinquency amongst at-risk youth in Australia.

Epilogue

DFFH commissioned this research report to inform Ovens Murray government and community services' strategic investment of resources and effort to improve outcomes for our vulnerable youth.

As we face ever-increasing demand and complexity in the lives of those we support -and limited resources to match this- the imperative to focus investment on early intervention and prevention approaches only becomes sharper.

This report does not provide formal recommendations. However, Ovens Murray Local Site Executive Committee (LSEC) members and Community Service agencies were invited to respond to the Draft Report. Initial feedback has been integrated into the table in Appendix B. to inform further discussion as to how we, in Ovens Murray, build upon our existing capacity to undertake a more systematic approach to early intervention for at-risk populations.

Connected, place-based planning and priority setting may be facilitated through our existing governance structures and partnerships, which are strong. Our success will be driven by a shared commitment to working and learning together, using available evidence, data and resources to make a difference in young people's lives. This is how we move forward in difficult times.

My thanks to Kate Syme-Lamont, Care Economy Research Institute, La Trobe University and all our local partners in government and the community sector for your support and contribution of knowledge and expertise to this project.

Cecily Fletcher

Youth & Vulnerability Project lead, DFFH, Ovens Murray

Citations

1. Krug, E.G., et al., World report on violence and health. 2002, World Health Organization: Geneva.
2. Catalano, R.F., et al., Worldwide application of prevention science in adolescent health. The Lancet, 2012. 379(9826): p. 1653-1664.
3. Matjasko, J.L., et al., A systematic meta-review of evaluations of youth violence prevention programs: Common and divergent findings from 25years of meta-analyses and systematic reviews. Aggression and Violent Behaviour, 2012. 17(6): p. 540-552.
4. World Health Organisation. Youth Violence: Key Facts. 2024; Available from: https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youth-violence#:~:text=in%20this%20age%20group,most%20perpetrators%20are%20males%20too.
5. David-Ferdon, C., et al., CDC grand rounds: preventing youth violence. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep, 2015. 64(7): p. 171-4.
6. Rowland, B., et al., Evaluation of Communities That Care—Effects on Municipal Youth Crime Rates in Victoria, Australia: 2010–2019. Prevention Science, 2022. 23(1): p. 24-35.
7. Allen, J., et al., The impact of a preschool communication program and comprehensive family support on serious youth offending: New findings from the Pathways to Prevention Project. 2024.
8. Wong, G., Realist Review in Health Policy and Systems Research. 2018, World Health Organization: Geneva.
9. Singh, M., New bail laws will undermine community safety at the cost of vulnerable children and young people, children's commissioners say. 2025: Commission For Children and Young People.
10. Baidawi, S., et al., Place-based approaches to tackling local youth violence: A review of evidence on models, implementation and impacts. 2023.
11. Melendez-Torres, G.J., et al., Whole-school interventions promoting student commitment to school to prevent substance use and violence: a systematic review. Public Health, 2023. 221: p. 190-197.
12. Molina, I.A., C.N. Dulmus, and K.M. Sowers, Secondary Prevention for Youth Violence: A Review of Selected School-Based Programs. Brief Treatment & Crisis Intervention, 2005. 5(1).
13. Park-Higgerson, H.K., et al., The evaluation of school-based violence prevention programs: A meta-analysis. Journal of School Health, 2008. 78(9): p. 465-479.
14. Fagan, A.A. and R.F. Catalano, What Works in Youth Violence Prevention:A Review of the Literature. Research on Social Work Practice, 2013. 23(2): p. 141-156.
15. Dickson, K., et al., How Do Contextual Factors Influence Implementation and Receipt of Positive Youth Development Programs Addressing Substance Use and Violence? A Qualitative Meta-Synthesis of Process Evaluations. Am J Health Promot, 2018. 32(4): p. 1110-1121.
16 Gavine, A.J., P.D. Donnelly, and D.J. Williams, Effectiveness of Universal School-Based Programs for Prevention of Violence in Adolescents. Psychology of Violence, 2016. 6(3): p. 390-399.
17. Van Der Merwe, A. and A. Dawes, Youth violence: A review of risk factors, causal pathways and effective intervention. Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health, 2007. 19(2): p. 95-113.
18. Tolan, P.H., et al., Mentoring programs to affect delinquency and associated outcomes of youth at risk: A comprehensive meta-analytic review. Journal of experimental criminology, 2014. 10: p. 179-206.
19. Abdul-Adil, J. and L.M. Suárez, The Urban Youth Trauma Center: A Trauma-Informed Continuum for Addressing Community Violence Among Youth. Community Mental Health Journal, 2021. 58(2): p. 334-342.
20. Yoorrook Justice Commission, Yoorrook for Justice: Report into Victoria's Child Protection and Criminal Justice Systems 2023.
21. Hemphill, S.A., et al., Does school suspension affect subsequent youth non-violent antisocial behaviour? A longitudinal study of students in Victoria, Australia and Washington State, United States. Australian Journal of Psychology, 2013. 65(4): p. 236-249.
22. Hemphill, S.A., et al., Modifiable Determinants of Youth Violence in Australia and the United States: A Longitudinal Study. Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 2009. 42(3): p. 289-309.
23. Sentencing Advisory Council, 'Crossover Kids': Vulnerable Children in the Youth Justice System. 2019: Sentencing Advisory Council, Level 3, 333, Queen Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000.
24. Communities That Care. 2023; Available from: https://www.communitiesthatcare.org.au/.
25. Freiberg, K., et al., Creating pathways to participation: a community-based developmental prevention project in Australia. Children & Society, 2005. 19(2): p. 144-157.

Bibliography

Abdul-Adil, J., & Suárez, L. M. (2021). The Urban Youth Trauma Center: A Trauma-Informed Continuum for Addressing Community Violence Among Youth. Community Mental Health Journal, 58(2), 334-342. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-021-00827-4

Abimanyi-Ochom, J., Dona, S. W. A., Mudiyanselage, S. B., Mehta, K., Kuklinski, M., Rowland, B., Toumbourou, J. W., & Carter, R. (2024). Australian Communities That Care (CTC) intervention: Benefit-cost analysis of a community-based youth alcohol prevention initiative. PLOS ONE, 19(11), e0314153. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0314153

Allen, J., Homel, R., Vasco, D., & Freiberg, K. (2024). The impact of a preschool communication program and comprehensive family support on serious youth offending: New findings from the Pathways to Prevention Project. https://doi.org/10.52922/crg77574

Axford, N., Tredinnick-Rowe, J., Rybcyznska-Bunt, S., Burns, L., Green, F., & Thompson, T. (2023). Engaging youth at risk of violence in services: Messages from research. Children and Youth Services Review, 144, 106713. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2022.106713

Baidawi, S., & Sheehan, R. (2019). Maltreatment and Delinquency: Examining the Contexts of Offending Amongst Child Protection-Involved Children. The British Journal of Social Work, 50(7), 2191-2211. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcz113

Baidawi, S., Valdebenito, S., Smith, S., Irving, M., Wills, E., Mitchell, J., Hall, A., Tan, B., Lewis, J., & Shlonsky, A. (2023). Place-based approaches to tackling local youth violence: A review of evidence on models, implementation and impacts.

Beelmann, A., & Raabe, T. (2009). The effects of preventing antisocial behaviour and crime in childhood and adolescence: Results and implications of research reviews and meta-analyses. European Journal of Developmental Science, 3(3), 260-281.

Butler, N., Quigg, Z., Wilson, C., McCoy, E., & Bates, R. (2024). The Mentors in Violence Prevention programme: impact on students' knowledge and attitudes related to violence, prejudice, and abuse, and willingness to intervene as a bystander in secondary schools in England. BMC Public Health, 24(1), 729. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-18210-9

Carrascosa, L., Cava Caballero, M. J., Buelga Vásquez, S., & Jesus, S. N. d. (2019). Reduction of sexist attitudes, romantic myths, and aggressive behaviours in adolescents: Efficacy of the DARSI program.

Catalano, R. F., Fagan, A. A., Gavin, L. E., Greenberg, M. T., Irwin, C. E., Ross, D. A., & Shek, D. T. L. (2012). Worldwide application of prevention science in adolescent health. The Lancet, 379(9826), 1653-1664. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(12)60238-4

Clayton, C. J., Ballif-Spanvill, B., & Hunsaker, M. D. (2001). Preventing violence and teaching peace: A review of promising and effective antiviolence, conflict-resolution, and peace programs for elementary school children. Applied & Preventive Psychology, 10(1), 1-35. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-1849%2805%2980030-7

Communities That Care. (2023). https://www.communitiesthatcare.org.au/

Cox, E., Leung, R., Baksheev, G., Day, A., Toumbourou, J. W., Miller, P., Kremer, P., & Walker, A. (2016). Violence Prevention and Intervention Programmes for Adolescents in Australia: A Systematic Review. Australian Psychologist, 51(3), 206-222. https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12168

Craig, S. G., Frankiewicz, K., Stearns, N. R., Girard-Lapointe, J., Cortese, A., Vogel, N., & Pepler, D. J. (2025). What do we know about the stop now and plan program? A systematic review and meta-analysis of an early invention for children and youth with conduct problems. Prevention Science(American Psychiatric Association. (2022). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5-TR). American Psychiatric Association Publishing https://dx.doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787Augimeri, L. K. (2024). Personal communication, Febr), No-Specified. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11121-025-01788-w

David-Ferdon, C., Simon, T. R., Spivak, H., Gorman-Smith, D., Savannah, S. B., Listenbee, R. L., & Iskander, J. (2015). CDC grand rounds: preventing youth violence. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep, 64(7), 171-174.

David-Ferdon, C., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Dahlberg, L. L., Marshall, K. J., Rainford, N., & Hall, J. E. (2016). A comprehensive technical package for the prevention of youth violence and associated risk behaviours.

Dickson, K., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Fletcher, A., Hinds, K., Thomas, J., Stansfield, C., Murphy, S., Campbell, R., & Bonell, C. (2018). How do contextual factors influence implementation and receipt of positive youth development programs addressing substance use and violence? A qualitative meta-synthesis of process evaluations. American Journal of Health Promotion, 32(4), 1110-1121. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0890117116670302

Fagan, A. A., & Catalano, R. F. (2013). What Works in Youth Violence Prevention:A Review of the Literature. Research on Social Work Practice, 23(2), 141-156. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731512465899

Farrington, D. P., Gaffney, H., Losel, F., & Ttofi, M. M. (2017). Systematic reviews of the effectiveness of developmental prevention programs in reducing delinquency, aggression, and bullying. Aggression and Violent Behaviour,

33(Abrams, L.S., Mizel, M.L., & Nguyen, V. (2014). Juvenile reentry and aftercare interventions: Is mentoring a promising direction? Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work, 11, 404-422 https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2014.897115 https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.ni), 91-106. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.11.003

Freiberg, K., Homel, R., Batchelor, S., Carr, A., Hay, I., Elias, G., Teague, R., & Lamb, C. (2005). Creating pathways to participation: a community-based developmental prevention project in Australia. Children & Society, 19(2), 144-157.

Gavine, A. J., Donnelly, P. D., & Williams, D. J. (2016). Effectiveness of Universal School-Based Programs for Prevention of Violence in Adolescents. Psychology of Violence, 6(3), 390-399. https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000052

Hahn, R., Fuqua-Whitley, D., Wethington, H., Lowy, J., Crosby, A., Fullilove, M., Johnson, R., Liberman, A., Moscicki, E., Price, L., Snyder, S., Tuma, F., Cory, S., Stone, G., Mukhopadhaya, K., Chattopadhyay, S., & Dahlberg, L. (2007). Effectiveness of universal school-based programs to prevent violent and aggressive behaviour: A systematic review. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 33(2,Suppl), S114-S129. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2007.04.012

Hahn, R. A., Bilukha, O., Lowy, J., Crosby, A., Fullilove, M. T., Liberman, A., Moscicki, E., Snyder, S., Tuma, F., Corso, P., & Schofield, A. (2005). The Effectiveness of Therapeutic Foster Care for the Prevention of Violence: A Systematic Review. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 28(2,Suppl1), 72-90. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2004.10.007

Hemphill, S. A., Aneta, K., I., H. T., Rachel, S., W., T. J., & and Catalano, R. F. (2013). Does school suspension affect subsequent youth non-violent antisocial behaviour? A longitudinal study of students in Victoria, Australia and Washington State, United States. Australian Journal of Psychology, 65(4), 236-249. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12026

Hemphill, S. A., Smith, R., Toumbourou, J. W., Herrenkohl, T. I., Catalano, R. F., McMorris, B. J., & Romanuik, H. (2009). Modifiable Determinants of Youth Violence in Australia and the United States: A Longitudinal Study. Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 42(3), 289-309. https://doi.org/10.1375/acri.42.3.289

Herrenkohl, T. I., Hemphill, S. A., Mason, W. A., Toumbourou, J. W., & Catalano, R. F. (2012). Predictors and Responses to the Growth in Physical Violence During Adolescence: A Comparison of Students in Washington State and Victoria, Australia. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 82(1), 41-49. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2011.01139.x

Hobson, J., Twyman-Ghoshal, A., Banwell-Moore, R., & Ash, D. P. (2022). Restorative Justice, Youth Violence, and Policing: A Review of the Evidence. Laws, 11(4), 62. https://doi.org/10.3390/laws11040062

Howard, D., Jarman, H. K., Clancy, E. M., Renner, H. M., Smith, R., Rowland, B., Toumbourou, J. W., Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M., & Klettke, B. (2023). Sexting Among Australian Adolescents: Risk and Protective Factors. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 52(10), 2113-2130. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01827-1

Howard, K. A., Flora, J., & Griffin, M. (1999). Violence-prevention programs in schools: State of the science and implications for future research. Applied & Preventive Psychology, 8(3), 197-215. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-1849%2805%2980077-0

Jiang, S., Chen, Y., & Wang, L. (2024). Effectiveness of Community-Based Programs on Aggressive Behaviour Among Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 25(4), 2845-2861. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380241227986

Kettrey, H. H., & Marx, R. A. (2019). The effects of bystander programs on the prevention of sexual assault across the college years: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 48, 212-227.

Kingston, B., Bacallao, M., Smokowski, P., Sullivan, T., & Sutherland, K. (2016). Constructing “Packages” of Evidence-Based Programs to Prevent Youth Violence: Processes and Illustrative Examples From the CDC’s Youth Violence Prevention Centers. Journal of Prevention, 37(2), 141-163. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-016-0423-x

Klenowski, P. M., Bell, K. J., & Dodson, K. D. (2010). An empirical evaluation of juvenile awareness programs in the United States: Can juveniles be “scared straight”? Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 49(4), 254-272. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10509671003716068

Kovalenko, A. G., Abraham, C., Graham-Rowe, E., Levine, M., & O’Dwyer, S. (2022). What Works in Violence Prevention Among Young People?: A Systematic Review of Reviews. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 23(5), 1388-1404. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838020939130

Krug, E. G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A. B., Lozano, R., & World Health, O. (2002). World report on violence and health. In. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Limbos, M. A., Chan, L. S., Warf, C., Schneir, A., Iverson, E., Shekelle, P., & Kipke, M. D. (2007). Effectiveness of Interventions to Prevent Youth Violence A Systematic Review. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 33(1), 65-74. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2007.02.045

Lundgren, R., & Amin, A. (2015). Addressing Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Among Adolescents: Emerging Evidence of Effectiveness. Journal of Adolescent Health, 56(1), s42-s50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.08.012

Manuel, C., & Jørgensen, A. M. K. (2013). Systematic review of youth crime prevention interventions. SFI.

Matjasko, J. L., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Massetti, G. M., Holland, K. M., Holt, M. K., & Dela Cruz, J. (2012). A systematic meta-review of evaluations of youth violence prevention programs: Common and divergent findings from 25years of

meta-analyses and systematic reviews. Aggression and Violent Behaviour, 17(6), 540-552. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.06.006

McGuire, J. (2008). A review of effective interventions for reducing aggression and violence. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 363(1503), 2577-2597.

Melendez-Torres, G. J., Dickson, K., Fletcher, A., Thomas, J., Hinds, K., Campbell, R., Murphy, S., & Bonell, C. (2016). Systematic review and meta-analysis of effects of community-delivered positive youth development interventions on violence outcomes. Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 70(12), 171-177. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech-2015-206132

Melendez-Torres, G. J., Ponsford, R., Falconer, J., & Bonell, C. (2023). Whole-school interventions promoting student commitment to school to prevent substance use and violence: a systematic review. Public Health, 221, 190-197. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2023.06.021

Miao, T.-A., Umemoto, K., Gonda, D., & Hishinuma, E. S. (2011). Essential Elements for Community Engagement in Evidence-Based Youth Violence Prevention. American Journal of Community Psychology, 48(1-2), 120-132. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9418-6

Mikhail, J. N., & Nemeth, L. S. (2016). Trauma center based youth violence prevention programs: An integrative review. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 17(5), 500-519. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1524838015584373

Molina, I. A., Dulmus, C. N., & Sowers, K. M. (2005). Secondary Prevention for Youth Violence: A Review of Selected School-Based Programs. Brief Treatment & Crisis Intervention, 5(1).

Morrel-Samuels, S., Bacallao, M., Brown, S., Bower, M., & Zimmerman, M. (2016). Community Engagement in Youth Violence Prevention: Crafting Methods to Context. Journal of Prevention, 37(2), 189-207. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-016-0428-5

Mytton, J., DiGuiseppi, C., Gough, D., Taylor, R., & Logan, S. (2007). Cochrane review: School-based secondary prevention programmes for preventing violence. Evidence-Based Child Health: A Cochrane Review Journal, 2(2), 814-891.

Nation, M., Crusto, C., Wandersman, A., Kumpfer, K. L., Seybolt, D., Morrissey-Kane, E., & Davino, K. (2003). What works in prevention: Principles of effective prevention programs. American Psychologist, 58(6-7), 449-456. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.58.6-7.449

Park-Higgerson, H. K., Perumean-Chaney, S. E., Bartolucci, A. A., Grimley, D. M., & Singh, K. P. (2008). The evaluation of school-based violence prevention programs: A meta-analysis. Journal of School Health, 78(9), 465-479.

Piolanti, A., & Foran, H. M. (2022). Efficacy of Interventions to Prevent Physical and Sexual Dating Violence Among Adolescents. JAMA Pediatrics, 176(2), 142-149. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2021.4829

Pivnick, B. A., & Hassinger, J. A. (2021). The child in the school, the school in the community, and the community in the child: Linking psychic and social domains in school violence prevention. International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies, 18(3), 330-341. https://doi.org/10.1002/aps.1722

Reyes, H. L. M., Graham, L. M., Chen, M. S., Baron, D., Gibbs, A., Groves, A. K., Kajula, L., Bowler, S., & Maman, S. (2021). Adolescent dating violence prevention programmes: a global systematic review of evaluation studies. The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, 5(3), 223-232. https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642(20)30276-5

Rodney, L. W., Johnson, D. L., & Srivastava, R. P. (2005). The Impact of Culturally Relevant Violence Prevention Models on School-Age Youth. Journal of Primary Prevention, 26(5), 439-454. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-005-0003-y

Rowland, B., Kelly, A. B., Mohebbi, M., Kremer, P., Abrahams, C., Abimanyi-Ochom, J., Carter, R., Williams, J., Smith, R., Osborn, A., Hall, J., Hosseini, T., Renner, H., & Toumbourou, J. W. (2022). Evaluation of Communities That Care—Effects on Municipal Youth Crime Rates in Victoria, Australia: 2010–2019. Prevention Science, 23(1), 24-35. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-021-01297-6

Sentencing Advisory Council. (2019). 'Crossover Kids': Vulnerable Children in the Youth Justice System. V. S. Government;.

Simanovic, T., McFarlane, P., Brennan, I., Graham, W., & Sutherland, A. (2024). Focused deterrence: A protocol for a realist multisite randomised controlled trial for evaluating a violence prevention intervention in the UK. PLOS ONE, 19(3), e0301023. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0301023

Singh, M. (2025). New bail laws will undermine community safety at the cost of vulnerable children and young people, children's commissioners say https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/news/new-bail-laws-will-undermine-community-safety-at-the-cost-of-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-childrens-commissioners-say/

Smokowski, P. R., Bacallao, M., Evans, C. B. R., Rose, R. A., Stalker, K. C., Guo, S., Wu, Q., Barbee, J., & Bower, M. (2018). The North Carolina Youth Violence Prevention Center: Using a Multifaceted, Ecological Approach to Reduce Youth Violence in Impoverished, Rural Areas. Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research, 9(4), 575-597. https://doi.org/10.1086/700257

Tolan, P. H., Henry, D. B., Schoeny, M. S., Lovegrove, P., & Nichols, E. (2014). Mentoring programs to affect delinquency and associated outcomes of youth at risk: A comprehensive meta-analytic review. Journal of experimental criminology, 10, 179-206.

Toumbourou, J. W., Rowland, B., Williams, J., Smith, R., & Patton, G. C. (2019). Community Intervention to Prevent Adolescent Health Behaviour Problems: Evaluation of Communities That Care in Australia. Health Psychology, 38(6), 536-544. https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000735

Van Der Merwe, A., & Dawes, A. (2007). Youth violence: A review of risk factors, causal pathways and effective intervention. Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health, 19(2), 95-113.

Van der Stouwe, T., Asscher, J. J., Stams, G. J. J., Deković, M., & van der Laan, P. H. (2014). The effectiveness of multisystemic therapy (MST): A meta-analysis. Clinical psychology review, 34(6), 468-481.

Vega, A., Cabello, R., Megías-Robles, A., Gómez-Leal, R., & Fernández-Berrocal, P. (2022). Emotional intelligence and aggressive behaviours in adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 23(4), 1173-1183.

Walsh, C., Roche, E., & Gill, K. (2023). Street Doctors Northern Ireland: A mixed-method process and impact evaluation of a youth violence reduction intervention. Evaluation and Program Planning, 100, 102345. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2023.102345

Weisman, C. B., & Montgomery, P. (2019). Functional family therapy (FFT) for behaviour disordered youth aged 10-18: An overview of reviews. Research on Social Work Practice, 29(3), 333-346. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1049731518792309

Willoughby, M., Young, J. T., Borschmann, R., Spittal, M. J., Keen, C., Hail-Jares, K., Patton, G., Sawyer, S. M., & Kinner, S. A. (2023). Violence-Related Death in Young Australians After Contact With the Youth Justice System: A Data Linkage Study. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 38(17-18), 9923-9942. https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605231169490

Wilson, S. J., Lipsey, M. W., & Derzon, J. H. (2003). The effects of school-based intervention programs on aggressive behaviour: A meta-analysis. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71(1), 136-149. https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.71.1.136

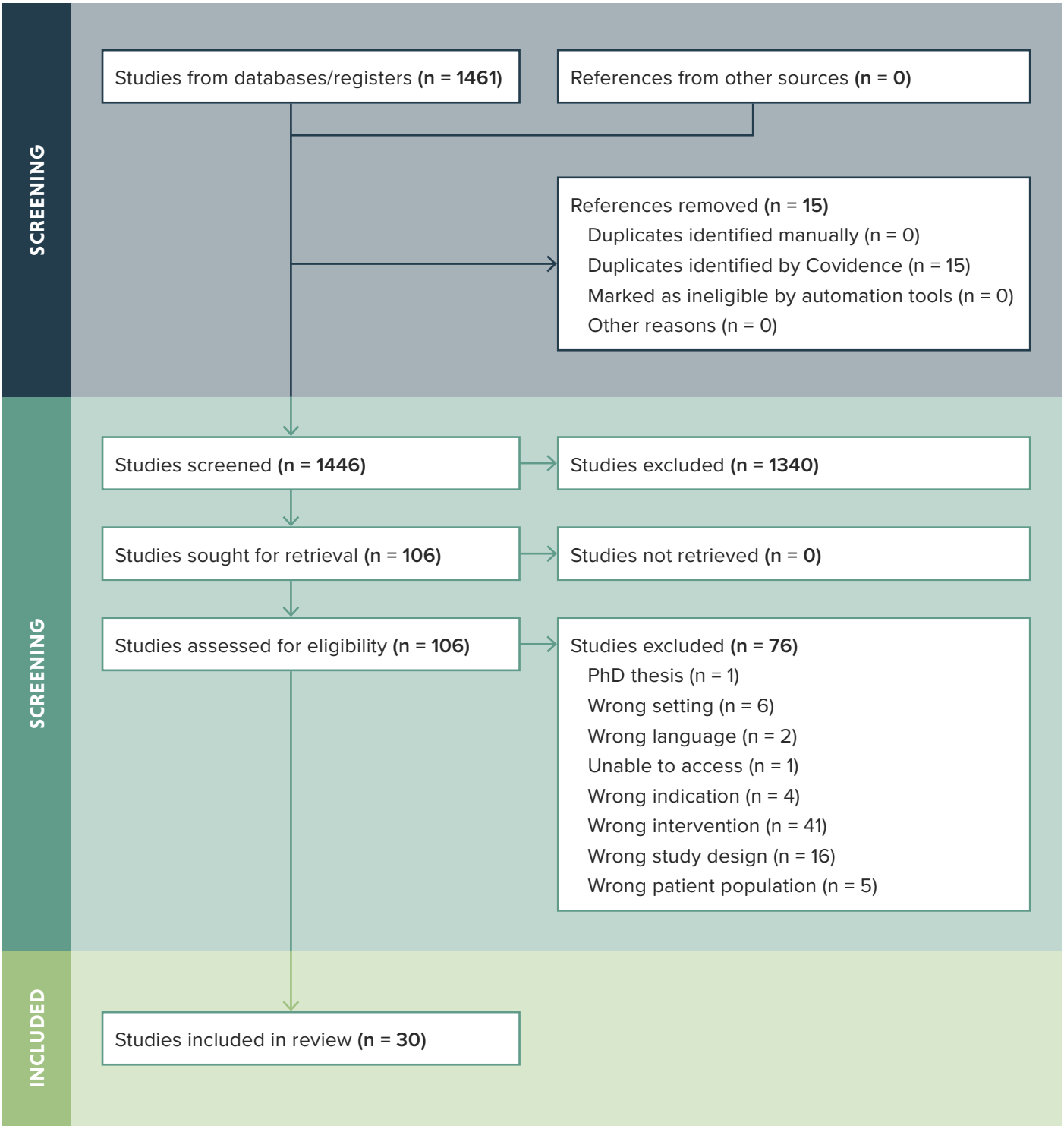
Wong, G. (2018). Realist Review in Health Policy and Systems Research (Vol. Evidence Synthesis for Health Policy and Systems: A Methods Guide). World Health Organization. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK569577/

World Health Organisation. (2024). Youth Violence: Key Facts. World Health Organisation. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/youthviolence#:~:text=in%20this%20age%20group,most%20perpetrators%20are%20males%20too

Yoorrook Justice Commission. (2023). Yoorrook for Justice: Report into Victoria's Child Protection

and Criminal Justice Systems https://yoorrookforjustice.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Yoorrook-for-justice-report.pdf

Appendix A



Appendix B

Youth and violence research report: Integrated feedback from Ovens Murray service sector

Data usage	• Combine data sets to identify and target those most at risk (e.g. educational attendance, FV, Police) • Establish a long-term strategy for data collection and sharing around local priority indicators • Use data to monitor engagement patterns and target approaches to those most vulnerable • Use data to target underlying drivers of youth violence (trauma, family violence, engagement, values) • Use TOD data to monitor engagement of families with children known to Child Protection with supports
Service coordination and integration	• Coordinate disparate service responses around individual therapeutic needs • Expand definitions of "family" to encompass multi-generational, shared care access to services • Consider eligibility for targeted supports to include younger cohorts, whilst avoiding stigma and shame • Map accessibility of services to demographics and locations of community need to inform planning
Strategic approaches	• Long-term focus for oversight of strategic priorities, investment, data gathering and evaluation • Include early and targeted interventions in strategic planning • Target causal factors earlier and address broader socio-economic conditions
Funding priorities	• Regional commitment to secure continuity funding for local youth engagement and early help programs • Funding 'backbone' support for multi-domain data coordination, design, implementation, and evaluation
Engagement	• Review who we are/aren't reaching with selected and targeted interventions by looking at the data • Enable agencies to creatively engage vulnerable families and young people in preventative work • Importance of parent/carer engagement at every point of connection with the service system – build trust! • Engage communities in targeting multiple domains of influence – how do we undertake this? • Mandate cross sector engagement in multi-domain, place-based prevention and early intervention
Education	• Greater data and understanding of school engagement, achievement patterns and intervention programs • Increase available support for Education staff to keep young people connected and engaged • Expansion of Early Years programs and Child Link data platform will assist identify early risk factors • Educate services and community on the Ecosystems model to understand the role everyone can play • Upskill practitioners and educators in early intervention roles about ecosystems and risk factors and increase training and proactive use of FVISS/CISS to support greater collaboration

Youth and violence research report: Integrated feedback from Ovens Murray service sector (cont.)

Strengths	• Confirmation of local knowledge and experience with relevant data and evidence; • A robust report providing a local reference point for advocacy and funding submissions. • Existing partnerships and structures provide a foundation to collectively reduce youth violence
Gaps	• Access to early clinical assessment and treatment for neurodevelopmental impairment • Staff training for engaging and supporting cross cultural and Indigenous youth, families and communities • Staff training in engagement and intervention skills specific to youth violence
Next steps	• Document and learn from other local examples of health promotion and prevention programs • Map current investment in integrated early intervention/prevention programs and effectiveness measures across ecological domains and prevention categories to align effort and address gaps. • Bring together targeted initiatives to respond to youth identified by Police, to maximise educational engagement, access to mental health and wellbeing services, community and family support. • Identify Cross-Border issues of service access, continuity and data sharing for vulnerable cohorts. • Facilitate further cross-sector discussion and planning addressing both this report and the Ovens Murray Community Needs Assessment 2024
Questions	• Why is there not more funding for place based, multi-domain and targeted initiatives? • How do we focus resources to address early risk and protective factors, and continue existing programs? • How do we bring these place-based frameworks to communities in the Ovens Murray Area?

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY | Care Economy Research Institute

VICTORIA State Government

DESIGN

Julia van Vuuren