

# VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUNDAMENTALS

Start here to explore the world of violence prevention essentials. Go on a journey through the four steps in the public health approach to violence prevention. You'll also learn about timing your prevention efforts, strategies to stop violence before it starts, and how factors that put people at risk for violence and protect them from it occur at every level of society. Then take a deeper dive with recommended trainings.

## Welcome to the world of violence prevention.

As you explore this world, you will begin a journey to help make lives, relationships, and communities healthier and safer — for everyone.

Scroll to discover and learn how to use knowledge and evidence to create impact in your own community.

### THIS RESOURCE EXPLORES:

- Public Health Approach
  - Violence Prevention in Four Steps
  - Timing of Prevention Efforts
  - Primary Prevention
- The Social-Ecological Model

## Public Health Approach

The public health approach is a comprehensive way to help people, organizations, and systems understand how to prevent violence.

Launching a violence prevention program using the public health approach takes many steps. Many stakeholders are involved along the way.

Each step sets up the next for success.

# Public Health's Approach to Violence Prevention in Four Steps

Violence prevention involves these steps to take flight.



## 1. DEFINE THE PROBLEM

This step involves collecting data to find out the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “how” of violence happening in a given jurisdiction. Data come from a variety of sources — death certificates, medical or coroner reports, hospital records, child welfare records, law enforcement, population-based surveys, and more resources.



## 2. IDENTIFY RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

In this step, you explore why some people or communities experience more violence than others. Scientific research reveals what puts people at risk and what protects them. Risk factors are the characteristics of populations or settings that increase the risk for violence. Protective factors buffer against the risk factors and decrease the likelihood of violence. The goal of violence prevention is decrease risk factors and increase protective factors – thereby reducing violence.



## 3. DEVELOP AND TEST PREVENTION STRATEGIES

In this step, prevention strategies are developed using the information gathered in steps 1 and 2. Once prevention strategies are developed, they are rigorously evaluated to see if they prevent violence.



## 4. ASSURE WIDESPREAD ADOPTION

In this step effective strategies are disseminated and implemented widely for greater impact. Though this is considered the final step of the public health model, assessments and evaluations continue. Continued evaluation helps ensure all components of a strategy fit within a community and have the desired effect of preventing violence.

Learn more about this approach with **Violence Prevention in Practice:**  
<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/violence-prevention-practice>

# Timing of Prevention Efforts

Comprehensive efforts involve working upstream and downstream.



## PRIMARY PREVENTION

### Stopping Violence Before it Starts

Strategies that create healthy relationships and environments reduce risks and increase buffers.



## SECONDARY PREVENTION

### Immediate Responses to Violence

Services like emergency and medical care address short-term consequences.



## TERTIARY PREVENTION

### Long-Term Responses to Violence

These approaches address trauma or disability from experiences of violence and help victims recover physically and emotionally.



## Primary Prevention



**Violence is a serious public health problem, and it is also preventable.**

CDC focuses on primary prevention — using strategies that work to stop violence before it starts.

Each year, we have more insights into how professionals and communities can prevent violence from happening in the first place. These insights come from prevention strategies that have shown impact on the occurrence of violence as well as on risk and protective factors for violence.

There's still more work to be done. This is where you can help. Violence prevention begins by understanding the basics.

Learn more about violence prevention basics in the **Principles of Prevention Training:** <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/principles-of-prevention/>

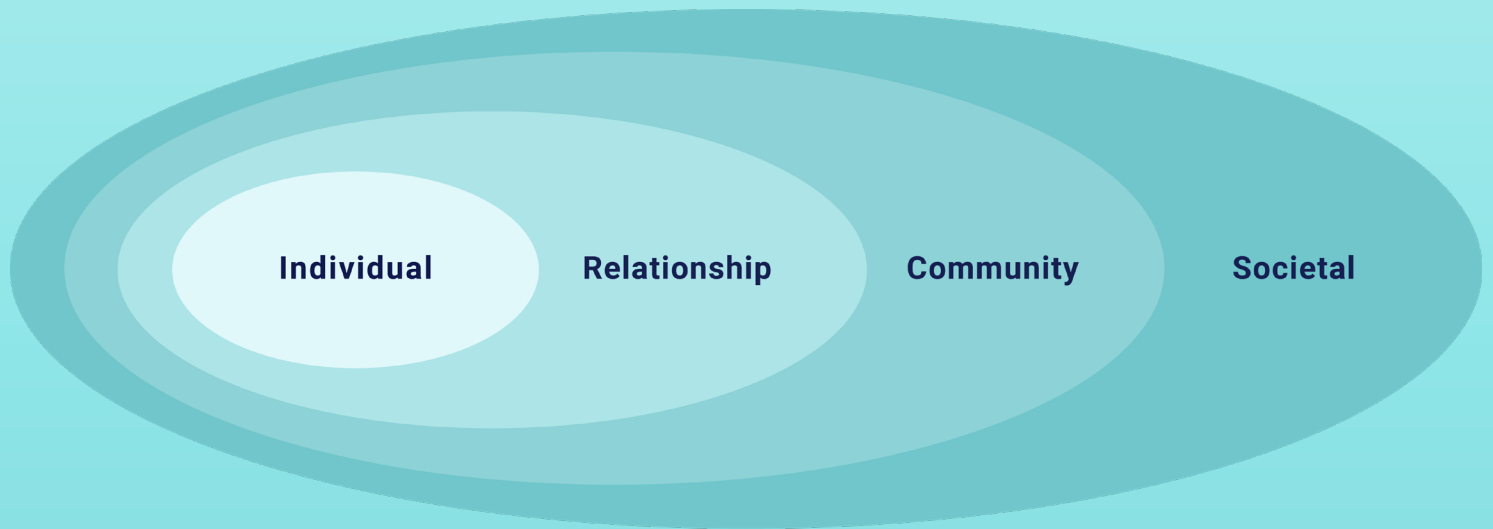


# The Social-Ecological Model

Violence prevention depends on understanding the factors that influence the problem.

The Social-Ecological Model shows the interplay of factors between four levels of society. This range of factors can put people at risk or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating violence.

We must act across all levels to prevent violence.



## INDIVIDUAL

The first level identifies biological and personal history factors that increase the likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. Factors may include age, education, income, substance use, and history of abuse.

Prevention strategies at this level promote attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that prevent violence. Examples include conflict resolution and life skills training.

## RELATIONSHIP

The second level examines close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing violence as a victim or perpetrator. A person's closest social circle — peers, partners, and family members — influence their behavior and shape their experience.

Prevention strategies here focus on communication, parenting practices, and other bonds and connections. Examples include parenting and family-focused prevention programs, mentoring, and peer programs.

## COMMUNITY

The third level explores local settings and aims to identify characteristics associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. Settings include neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.

Prevention strategies at this level impact the social, economic, and environmental characteristics of settings. Examples include reducing social isolation; enhancing economic and housing opportunities; and improving the processes, policies, and settings in schools and workplaces.

## SOCIETAL

The fourth level looks at broad societal factors that help create a level of acceptance or intolerance for violence. It also includes the health, economic, educational and social policies that help to maintain economic or social inequalities between groups in society.

Prevention strategies at this level impact these factors. Examples include strategies to change social norms that support violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts, state and federal policies that offer economic and other supports to families, and policies that support early childhood education to help pave the way for children to achieve lifelong opportunity and well-being.

**Now you know the basics  
and are ready to dive deeper.**

Visit VetoViolence to learn more.

<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/main/>



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