



CSPV SCHOOL VIOLENCE FACT SHEET

FS-SV10

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Exposure to Urban Violence

- The social and economic costs of school violence have reached alarming proportions over the last two decades.
- Students in some urban schools regularly confront violence. Teachers find themselves spending increasing amounts of time dealing with students' violent and disruptive behavior.
- Exposure to violence most affects students and teachers in urban schools that are marked by high levels of poverty and low academic achievement.
- Every day approximately 100,000 children are assaulted at school. Additionally, 5,000 teachers are threatened with physical assault and 200 are actually attacked.
- Approximately one of every eight students has reported carrying some form of weapon to school.
- Twenty percent of students have reported that threats involving a weapon and/or threats of assault in school represent a major problem for them. However, the most frequently reported forms of violence in school are pushing and shoving.
- Most of the violence to which students are exposed occurs in their home neighborhood and in the neighborhood surrounding the school rather than in the school itself.
- A school setting is "contaminated" by the attitudes, expectations, and behaviors that students and teachers carry from other settings into the school, as well as their immediate experiences within the schools.
- Exposure to violence generates a sense of fear and leads to acts intended to reduce or control fear.
- Exposure to violence is psychologically toxic. This exposure may produce:
 - generalized emotional distress;
 - disruptions in interpersonal relationships;
 - problems with aggression, conduct disorder, and truancy;
 - cognitive, psychological, and physical issues related to learning and teaching; and
 - physical symptoms, such as chronic fatigue.
- The effects of exposure to violence in schools may spread to others within the school setting. This spread, or "contagion," changes the school setting in ways that negatively alter school interactions and interfere with the schools' capacity to achieve its educational and social goals.
- Widespread concern about violence within a school may reduce the quality of teaching, disrupt classroom discipline, limit teachers' availability to students before or after the school day, and reduce students' motivation to attend school and/or willingness to participate in extracurricular activities.

The information for this fact sheet was excerpted from the following book chapter. *Violence in American Schools* was developed by CSPV through a grant from the W.T. Grant Foundation:

Lorion, R.P. (1998). Exposure to Urban Violence: Contamination of the School Environment. In D.S. Elliott, B. Hamburg, & K.R. Williams (Editors), *Violence in American Schools: A New Perspective*, (pp. 293-311). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press

For more information on how to obtain a copy of this book, please contact Cambridge University Press, 110 Midland Avenue, Port Chester, NY 10573. Telephone: (800) 872-7423, E-mail: orders@cup.org, or URL: www.cup.org.