

# YOUTH VIOLENCE SYMPOSIUM

THURSDAY OCTOBER 19, 2017

1:00PM - 3:00PM

HANOVER TOWNSHIP SENIOR CENTER

240 SOUTH ILLINOIS ROUTE 59, BARTLETT, IL. 60103



## Report & Findings

April 2018



**Youth Violence Symposium  
Report & Findings**

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## Executive Summary

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, youth violence is a leading cause of death and nonfatal injuries in the United States. Homicide is the third leading cause of death among persons aged 10 to 24 years in the United States. While this is a sobering statistic for our country, Hanover Township Supervisor, Brian P. McGuire convened the Hanover Township Youth Violence Symposium on October 19, 2017, to better understand what youth violence looks like in Hanover Township.

The Symposium gathered local experts from law enforcement, juvenile justice, mental health, education, human services and public health fields to capture what youth violence looks like and what can be done to address it within Hanover Township. Youth, in middle and high schools, as well as parents from various Hanover Township Youth and Family Services programs were also interviewed to capture their input for this report.

Five discussion questions that covered what youth violence looks like, what factors contribute to it, possible solutions to it, barriers addressing it, and hopes for the next five years in addressing youth violence within Hanover Township were used to capture input. While the input varied, there quickly emerged four primary areas of concern and priorities from all of the participants. They include:

1. **Cyber-Bullying**-the need for parent education on internet, social media and electronic physical and emotional safety.
2. **Fighting**-the need for early identification in schools to prevent youth from becoming chronic fighters; a school wide embedded trauma informed care system of supports.
3. **Unsupervised Youth**-the need to secure after school busing for Streamwood High School; create free after school intermural athletic programming for youth to be active, engaged and have fun without pressures.
4. **Positive School Culture**-the need to enhance school resources and approach in engaging youth to be a part of creating school culture through innovation, program design, and implementation of a freshman orientation/engagement program over a high schoolers four year experience; further develop the middle school to high school transition programming to foster positive connections to new school and decrease students anxiety and fighting behaviors.

This report captures the findings from the Symposium and gives the reader a general overview of some theories behind youth violence as well as the four areas of concern. Furthermore, this report provides a framework to consider in providing education, prevention and interventions to youth and in addressing the four identified priorities. This framework included: Adverse Childhood Experiences, brain development, risk and protective factors in youth violence, the role of shame and impact of chronic stress on youth development.



*This report is dedicated to the youth of Hanover Township – may you be nurtured with positive relationships, have plenty of opportunities for growth and meet the developmental and social challenges that naturally occur with a spirit of “can do” and flourish in positive ways.*

**Hanover Township Officials**

**Brian P. McGuire, Supervisor**

**Katy Dolan Baumer, Clerk**

**Thomas S. Smogolski, Assessor**

**Mary Alice Benoit, Trustee**

**Craig Essick, Trustee**

**Eugene N. Martinez, Trustee**

**Khaja Moinuddin, Trustee**

Special Thank you to the following Hanover Township Staff for assisting with the Symposium:

Kristen Vana, Manager, Hanover Township Mental Health Board

Amanda Teachout, Prevention & Volunteer Coordinator, Hanover Township Youth & Family Services

Sumara Baig, Prevention Specialist, Hanover Township Youth and Family Services

Kristen Smith, Director, Hanover Township Office of Community Health

Tracey Colagrossi, Director, Hanover Township Senior Services

Claudia Mazzanti, Family Therapist, Hanover Township Youth and Family Services

Nora Gonzalez, Family Therapist, Hanover Township Youth and Family Services

Karen Low, Family Therapist, Hanover Township Youth and Family Services

The Hanover Township Youth Violence Symposium was convened at the request of Brian P. McGuire, Supervisor of Hanover Township, on October 19, 2017. The Symposium was a gathering of various local experts involved with law enforcement, juvenile justice, mental health, education, human services and public health fields to discuss what youth violence looks like and what can be done to address it within Hanover Township. This report captures the findings from the Symposium as well as offers a framework to better understand youth violence, research on prevention strategies and goals for the Youth and Family Services Department to achieve in preventing youth violence within Hanover Township.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, youth violence is a leading cause of death and nonfatal injuries in the United States. Homicide is the third leading cause of death among persons aged 10 to 24 years. From bullying to fighting to gun violence...youth violence has many forms and consequences. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines youth violence as occurring when young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others. Youth violence typically involves young people hurting other peers who are unrelated to them and who they may or may not know well. A young person can be involved with youth violence as a victim, offender, or a witness. Different forms of youth violence can also vary in the harm that results from it. This can include physical harm, such as injuries or death, as well as psychological harm, increased medical and justice costs, decreased property values and disruption of community services.



Youth Violence Symposium leadership participants

The leaders who participated at the Symposium brought their expertise, experience and skills to the

table. Seating at the Symposium was assigned to give each table a variety of disciplines and expertise. The intent was to have the leaders learn from each other as well as network to enhance their work. Leaders did not sit with someone that they work with as this could influence what was shared. Specific questions were asked to capture what the leaders thought youth violence looks like in Hanover Township. Leaders were given time to write down their answers and then share out and discuss their ideas. The intent was to capture the unbiased thoughts and expertise from the leaders in writing as well as through dialog with each other.

The leaders included:

Chief Marlon Parks, Cook County Sheriff's Office  
Christine Carlyon, Cook County States Attorney's Office  
Dr. Eimad Zakariya, Chief Medical Examiner, Cook County Medical Examiner's Office  
Chief Jeffrey Swoboda, Chief of Police, City of Elgin  
Chief James E. Lampkin, Chief of Police, Village of Schaumburg  
Chief William Burke, Chief of Emergency Services, Hanover Township  
Deputy Chief Andrew Johnson, Village of Hanover Park Police Department  
Deputy Chief Geoffrey Pretkelis, Village of Bartlett Police Department  
Commander Josh Norum, Village of Streamwood Police Department  
Commander Kurt Metzger, Investigations Division, Village of Schaumburg Police Department  
Lieutenant Mike DeGiulio, Investigations Division, Village of Schaumburg Police Department  
Joanne Stingley, Police Social Worker, City of Elgin  
Tricia Rossi, Police Social Worker, Village of Hanover Park  
Kristin Jordan, Supervisor of Human Services, Village of Schaumburg Police Department  
Jill Sbarboro, Social Work Intern, City of Elgin Police Department  
Edward Walsh, Juvenile Probation Officer, Circuit Court of Cook County  
Joanne McGuffin, Probation Officer, Circuit Court of Cook County  
Gretchen Vapner, Executive Director, Community Crisis Center  
Colleen Koncilja, Director of Clinical Services, Renz Addiction Counseling Center  
Mark Parr, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Center  
Andrea Janos, Coordinator of Outreach Services, Centro de Informacion  
Dr. Ariel Correa, Principal, Innovations Academy of Streamwood Behavioral Health Systems & Member of the Hanover Township Committee on Youth  
Luis Fernando De Leon, Principal, Tefft Middle School  
Dr. Maria Valdovinos, Principal, Sunnydale Elementary School  
Shannon Henderson, MTSS Lead, Streamwood High School & Member of the Hanover Township Committee on Youth  
Tessa Aiozza, Dean, Streamwood High School  
John Parquette, Director, Hanover Township Youth and Family Services  
Tina Houdek, Clinical Manager, Hanover Township Youth and Family Services  
Michael Cohen, Outreach and Prevention Services Manager, Hanover Township Youth and Family Services  
Nicole De Falco, Partner, Upsurge Advisors & Chair, Hanover Township Committee on Youth

The department experienced several barriers in attempts to capture youth and parents input and participation at the Symposium, including: securing parental consent for minors to participate, time of the day when leaders and youth could meet at the same time, location and transportation for youth/parents. Several plans were discussed with the Hanover Township Committee on Youth as well as with the staff of Hanover Township Youth and Family Services to capture youth and parent voice.

Given the time constraints and the need to secure parental consent, it was decided to capture input from youth and parents who utilize the programs and services offered by Hanover Township Youth and Family Services. The department values youth and parental input and did not want to misinterpret their experience, knowledge, needs and priorities related to youth violence. The department included youth and parental voice also so that they had the opportunity and ability to be engaged and have influence on the Symposium's outcomes, the department's programs and the goals to be achieved.



Dr. Maria Valdovinos, Principal at Sunnysdale Elementary School, shares her insights into youth violence within her focus group

A set of five questions were developed and answered by the leaders, youth and parents. The questions asked included:

1. Reflecting within the last year, what does youth violence look like in your role within Hanover Township?
2. What are the factors that contribute to youth violence within Hanover Township?
3. From your perspective, what are the solutions to youth violence within Hanover Township?

4. What barriers do you see to addressing youth violence within Hanover Township?
5. If we were to reconvene in 5 years, what would you hope has happened in Hanover Township regarding youth violence?

Responses to question one, **Reflecting within the last year, what does youth violence look like in your role within Hanover Township?**, brought forward a mixture of responses, however, the majority of the leaders identified the following as the most concerning: 1. **Cyberbullying**- youth are using social media platforms to bully others as well as to orchestrate fights at school and in the community. Youth are also capturing video footage of bullying and fighting to reflect their personality/image, promote violence and create drama/vengeance. 2. **Fighting**-youth are fighting at earlier ages. Female fights tend to be more physical than verbal. Youth who fight tend to use their smart phones and social media to plan, orchestrate, capture and promote fights. 3. **Drug use**-youth are experimenting with drugs at an earlier age and do not have the cognitive skills/development to make informed decisions. Drugs are also more readily available locally. 4. **Disrespect/anger**-youth tend to have a lack of respect for adults and become angry quickly; lack of trust in authority.

Of the youth who participated in answering this question, **Middle Schoolers** identified having gangs in school or neighborhoods, fighting and the inability to solve problems and conflicts with words. **High Schoolers** also identified fighting – they further defined out fighting to include fighting for attention and fighting over cheating partners. The High Schoolers also identified shootings in their neighborhoods as a form of violence. Interestingly, the **Parents** who participated did not provide input to this question.

Data was shared about youth violence within and around Hanover Township to help get a sense of what youth violence looks like. The leaders from Hanover Park and Schaumburg Police Departments, Cook County Probation, Cook County Medical Examiner's Office and the Children's Advocacy Center shared data (ages 0-26) from one full year, 2016. This data offers another view of what youth violence looks like within and around Hanover Township. Data from the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office included:

4 suicides - Hanover Park(2), Elgin(1) and Streamwood(1)

6 heroin overdoses- Bartlett(1), Hoffman Estates(1), Streamwood(1), and Schaumburg(3)

Data from the Children's Advocacy Center for Hanover Township included:

73 victims, ages 0-18, of violence, of these 73 victims:

64% involved sexual abuse

21% involved physical abuse

3% involved child abduction

12% were a witness to Domestic Violence/abuse

Juvenile Probation data from the 3rd District, which covers the Cook County portions of Elgin, Hoffman Estates, Streamwood, Bartlett, Hanover Park, Schaumburg, Roselle, Elk Grove Village, Mount Prospect, Rolling Meadows, Arlington Heights, Prospect Heights, Wheeling, Palatine, Buffalo Grove, Deer Park, Inverness, Barrington, Barrington Hills, South Barrington and East Dundee includes:

434 juvenile arrests (including possession of cannabis, battery, assault, domestic battery, sexting)



197 juveniles on probation:

137 were felony cases (i.e., aggravated battery, aggravated unlawful use of a weapon, residential burglary, robbery)

60 were misdemeanor cases (i.e., battery and theft)

101 juveniles were on court supervision:

79 were misdemeanor cases (i.e., battery, domestic battery, and retail theft)

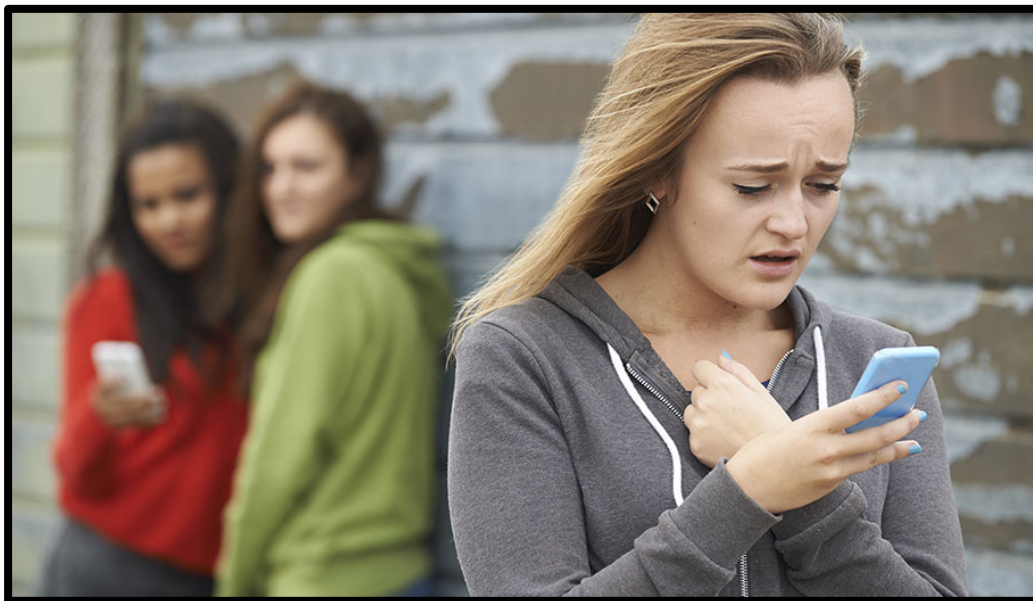
22 were felony cases (i.e., aggravated battery and possession of a criminal substance)



Responses to question two, **What are the factors that contribute to youth violence within Hanover Township?**, brought forth the following contributing factors: 1. **Advances in Technology**-parents and adults have difficulty staying current in technology (smart phones, internet) and how youth are using it; youth use their smart phones to text as a primary means of communication. Conflict resolutions skills are limited as youth feel no need to resolve conflicts via texts and posts; the conflict is electronic in nature versus face to face. 2. **Social Media**-youth use social media as a means to communicate about themselves and others; can be used in harmful ways, i.e., cyberbullying, sexting, drug dealing, fighting, inflated ego/celebrity. Youth tend to not feel accountable for what they post and tend not to understand the potential long term consequences. Adults have difficulty staying current with social media platforms, uses and how to teach youth to be safe. 3. **Unsupervised Youth**-increase in single parent households and/or both parents working, increase in sporadic work schedules, and lack of transportation or unreliable transportation to get youth to activities. Parents have difficulty accessing programs for their children due to costs/locations/time offered leading to youth being unsupervised and having a more sedentary lifestyle. Also, youth have less time and access to their parents as adult role models. 4. **Early Exposure to Familial Trauma**-younger children are becoming more violent and are exposed to trauma earlier in life. Leaders reported children under the age of 13 are being arrested for fighting, carrying weapons and stealing. Trauma can include: experiencing a divorce, experiencing or witnessing physical, sexual or emotional abuse, experiencing emotional or physical neglect within the home, having an incarcerated parent, having a mentally ill parent, or having someone in the family with a substance abuse problem. 5. **Ease and Access to Drugs**-youth are being exposed to drug use at an

earlier age due to the internet, social media, and television. Drug use is glamorized and used as a status in some circles. Drugs are also more readily available and accessible within the local vicinity versus traveling to Chicago. 6. **Lack of Transportation or Reliable Transportation**-youth have limited access to reliable transportation. Public transportation within the Township is limited. After school activity busing has been cut at Streamwood High School. Youth are more apt to report being bored which can lead to getting into trouble. 7. **Single Parent Homes or Both Parents Working**-many of today's youth are living in single parent households or two parent households with both parents working. Again, this leaves youth unsupervised when not in school.

**Middle Schoolers** identified the following factors as contributors to youth violence: Crowded school halls resulting in bumping into others and shoving in the halls. Gangs have a presence in schools and in their neighborhoods resulting in intimidation, fear and possible recruitment. Immaturity, interpersonal conflicts and bullying was also reported as contributors. They reported that a lot of fighting in their circles is due to owing money to other youth. Lastly, social media use and misuse was identified as a contributing factor.



**High Schoolers** identified the following factors as contributors to youth violence: Social media use and misuse between youth – often used for organizing fights creating spectators and instigators. Interpersonal conflict and cheating often escalates emotions and violence. Racial tensions amongst youth in school and in neighborhoods were identified as a contributor to youth violence.

**Parents** who participated identified the lack of affordable, accessible structured afterschool activities available for their children as a contributing factor to youth violence. Money worries and lack of money was also identified.

Responses from question three, **From your perspective, what are the solutions to youth violence**

**within Hanover Township?**, included the following possible solutions: 1. Early identification and intervention programs to prevent youth violence. 2. Increase funding for services to address youth concerns. 3. A youth center. 4. Obtain more child and adolescent psychiatrists (Bilingual-English/Spanish) for the Township catchment area. 5. Conflict resolution classes for youth to decrease fighting. 6. Youth who commit violence and crime need to get in front of a judge; increase Cook County Juvenile Court services. 7. Improve school culture so youth want to be in school. 8. Rewarding good behavior. 9. Anti-bullying programming. 10. Increase parental supports in effective parenting.

**Middle Schoolers** identified the following solutions to youth violence: The need for more acceptance of differences, “minding your own business” and for youth to stop saying bad things to each other. They also stated that “bad kids” need to be removed from school to create a safer school environment. Middle schoolers had mixed opinions about police involvement with addressing youth violence.

**High Schoolers** identified the need for a safe space and a teen center as a solution. They identified the need for more personal accountability for their actions as well as more privacy in their lives. Social media was also seen as a possible solution to youth violence – whistleblower apps and the development of further on-line safety technology/apps.



Tina Houdek, Clinical Manager, Hanover Township Youth and Family Services, leads one of our focus groups

**Parents** identified more youth engagement and positive activities for youth as solutions to youth violence. They also stated that Police Officers in schools interacting positively with youth helps decrease youth violence.

Responses to question four, **What barriers do you see to addressing youth violence within Hanover**

**Township?**, the leaders had the most consensus on what they identify as barriers to addressing youth violence, they included: 1. Accessibility to programs and services. 2. Affordability of programs and services. 3. Culturally reflective staffing and services. 4. Ability to speak and read multiple languages and communication with a diverse community. 5. Transportation – increase access to public transportation. 6. “Doing more with less” – providers of youth services are stretched in staffing and resources. 7. Lack of consequences and lack of accountability for youth who misbehave, commit crime and are violent. 8. Gap between misbehaving and excelling youth – the youth who avoid trouble and the youth who are doing well at school often are “off the radar” and have less programming opportunities. 9. Lack of funding for residential placement and treatment resulting in more youth with high needs not getting the appropriate treatment or services.

**Middle Schoolers** did not identify any barriers to addressing youth violence. **High Schoolers** identified the misuse of social media as a barrier. Also, they identified that many adults have difficulty handling youth and that they are “tired of hearing the same things from the same people.”

**Parents** identified a lack of community involvement for their children and teens as well as adults prejudging youth negatively as barriers to addressing youth violence.



Hanover Township Youth and Family Services Youth Leaders from Bartlett and Streamwood High School are trained to provide youth led events to promote healthy relationships, prevent substance use and promote positive connections at school

Responses to question five, **If we were to reconvene in 5 years, what would you hope has happened in Hanover Township regarding youth violence?**, the leaders had much to say including these commonalities: 1. A decrease in youth violence, crimes and battery charges. 2. An increase in early

identification and intervention programs for youth and their families. 3. Youth led efforts to prevent school violence. 4. More youth leadership opportunities at school and in the community. 5. More media/digital exposure controls - “what is seen cannot be unseen.” 6. More interpersonal youth relationship development without the use of technology. 7. Mentoring programs for parents and youth. 8. More education for parents and youth about the misuse of social media platforms. 9. More collaboration between services, programs and providers. 10. A youth center where youth have voice and choice and are valued, have purpose and can be successful. 11. Less grade school children having an awareness of adult problems (i.e., active shooters, heroin epidemic, etc.)

**Middle Schoolers** identified several hopes to achieve within five years to address youth violence, including having a free teen center, feeling more safe at school and more peace at school, home and in their neighborhoods.

**High Schoolers** identified their hopes as well. They included having more school pride, more positive connections at school and more free activities at school and in the community. They also hoped that the gang activity would stop.

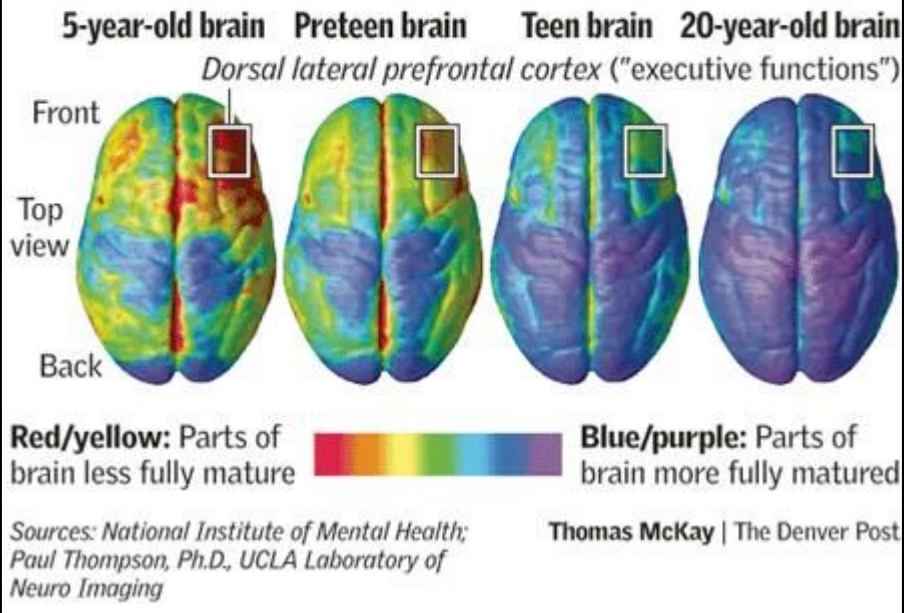
**Parents** had ideas in addressing youth violence for the next five years which included continuing the Hanover Township Open Gym Program as well as expanding it to larger venues. They also thought that a teen center would be helpful for their teens.

In building with the hopes for the next five years, moving forward, the work will focus on the prevention of youth violence. In order to prevent youth violence, gaining a shared understanding of it is essential. Youth violence often results from various individual, family and environmental (school, neighborhood, peer group) traumatic experiences during childhood. Youth violence is a public health concern that has biological, familial, psychological, economic, social, political and spiritual roots. According to John Hopkins, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence, the direct and indirect costs of youth violence in the US exceeds \$158 billion dollars every year.

With the advancements of technology and science, research has demonstrated that exposure to youth violence and early trauma impacts prenatal, child and adolescent brain development. The human brain is vital to the overall functioning, behavior, learning and health of youth. The National Institute of Mental Health has done extensive studies on brain development with the use of various brain scans. This research has led to the understanding that brain development continues through the twenty sixth year of life and that the frontal cortex is the last part of the brain to fully develop. The frontal cortex is the part of the brain that regulates mental processes including thinking, decision making and planning – it is the rational part of the brain that helps regulate the amygdala. The amygdala is the “emotional” part of the brain where the primitive survival responses of fight, flight or freeze is generated.

## Judgment last to develop

The area of the brain that controls "executive functions" — including weighing long-term consequences and controlling impulses — is among the last to fully mature. Brain development from childhood to adulthood:



Exposure to trauma and violence during the brain's developmental years can impact the brain's ability to function and develop, often resulting in negatively impacting one's impulsivity, attention, learning, decision making, emotional control, and response to stress. In clinical and educational settings, there has been a movement to integrate knowledge and skills to address childhood trauma. Included in this report are the definitions used by the Adverse Childhood Experiences' (ACE's) research study conducted by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is one of the longest and most reliable studies on childhood trauma.

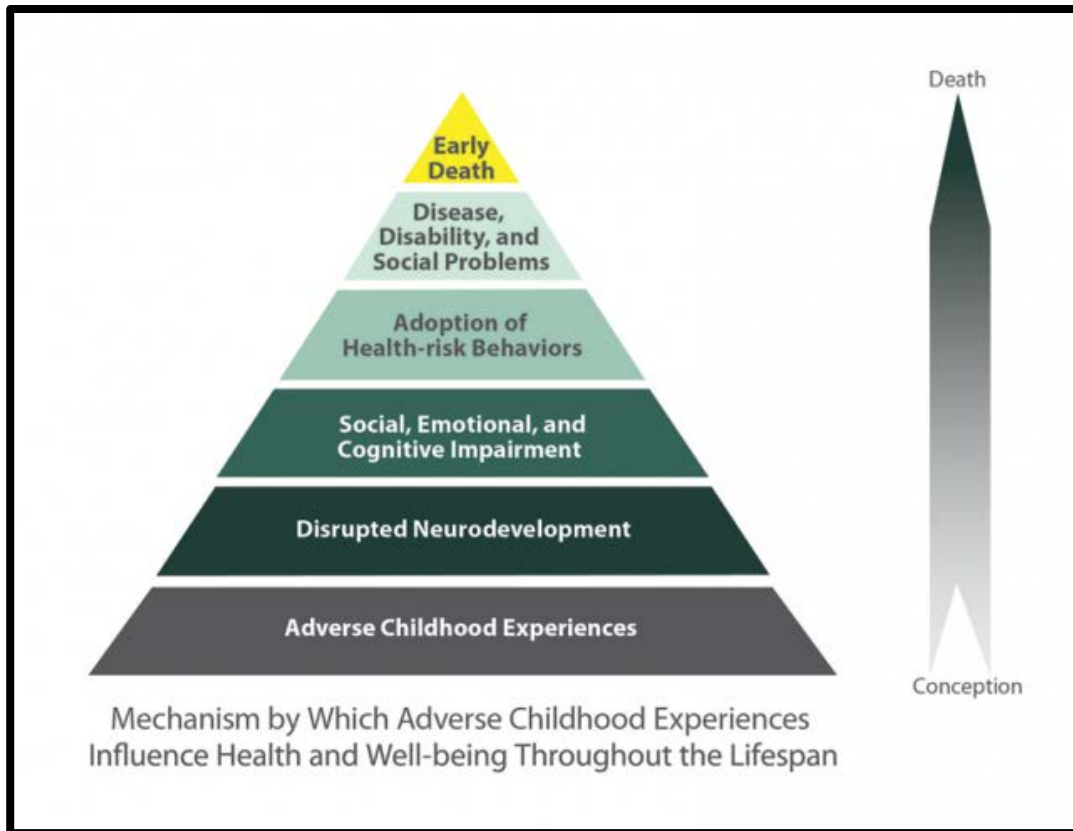
ACE's define childhood traumatic experiences to include:

### Abuse:

**Emotional abuse:** A parent, stepparent, or adult living in your home swore at you, insulted you, put you down, or acted in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt.

**Physical abuse:** A parent, stepparent, or adult living in your home pushed, grabbed, slapped, threw something at you, or hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured.

**Sexual abuse:** An adult, relative, family friend, or stranger who was at least 5 years older than you ever touched or fondled your body in a sexual way, made you touch his/her body in a sexual way, attempted to have any type of sexual intercourse with you.



Source: Center for Disease Control & Prevention

#### Household Challenges:

**Mother treated violently:** Your mother or stepmother was pushed, grabbed, slapped, had something thrown at her, kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, hit with something hard, repeatedly hit for over at least a few minutes, or ever threatened or hurt by a knife or gun by your father (or stepfather) or mother's boyfriend.

**Household substance abuse:** A household member who is a problem drinker or alcoholic or a household member who uses street drugs.

**Mental illness in household:** A household member who is depressed or mentally ill or a household member who attempted suicide.

**Parental separation or divorce:** Your parents were separated for any given time or divorced.

**Criminal household member:** A household member went to prison.

#### Neglect:

**Emotional neglect:** Your parents, stepparent or guardian did not make you feel important or special. You did not feel loved and the people in your family did not look out for each other nor did they feel close to each other.

**Physical neglect:** Your parents, stepparent or guardian did not take care of you or protect you. You were not taken to the doctor if you needed it. You may have not had enough to eat and/or your parents were too drunk or too high to take care of you. You may have had to wear dirty clothes at times.

Risk factors and protective factors are other variables to consider when understanding youth behavior and preventing youth violence. The U.S Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention defines risk factors to include anything that increases the probability that a youth will suffer from harm. A protective factor is something that decreases the potential harmful effect from a risk factor. Both factors are found in four domains, including the individual, family, peer and school/community – see below table:

Risk Factors	Domain	Protective Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early antisocial behavior and emotional factors such as low behavioral inhibitions</li> <li>• Poor cognitive development</li> <li>• Hyperactivity</li> </ul>	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High IQ</li> <li>• Positive social skills</li> <li>• Willingness to please adults</li> <li>• Religious and club affiliations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate or inappropriate child rearing practices,</li> <li>• Home discord</li> <li>• Maltreatment and abuse</li> <li>• Large family size</li> <li>• Parental antisocial history</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Exposure to repeated family violence</li> <li>• Divorce</li> <li>• Parental psychopathology</li> <li>• Teenage parenthood</li> <li>• A high level of parent-child conflict</li> <li>• A low level of positive parental involvement</li> </ul>	Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in shared activities between youth and family (including siblings and parents)</li> <li>• Providing the forum to discuss problems and issues with parents</li> <li>• Availability of economic and other resources to expose youth to multiple experiences</li> <li>• The presence of a positive adult (ally) in the family to mentor and be supportive</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending time with peers who engage in delinquent or risky behavior</li> <li>• Gang involvement</li> <li>• Less exposure to positive social opportunities because of bullying and rejection</li> </ul>	Peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive and healthy friends to associate with</li> <li>• Engagement in healthy and safe activities with peers during leisure time (e.g., clubs, sports, other recreation)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor academic performance</li> <li>• Enrollment in schools that are unsafe and fail to address the academic and social and emotional needs of children and youth</li> <li>• Low commitment to school</li> <li>• Low educational aspirations</li> <li>• Poor motivation</li> <li>• Living in an impoverished neighborhood</li> <li>• Social disorganization in the community in which the youth lives</li> <li>• High crime neighborhoods</li> </ul>	School/Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrollment in schools that address not only the academic needs of youth but also their social and emotional needs and learning</li> <li>• Schools that provide a safe environment</li> <li>• A community and neighborhood that promote and foster healthy activities for youth</li> </ul>

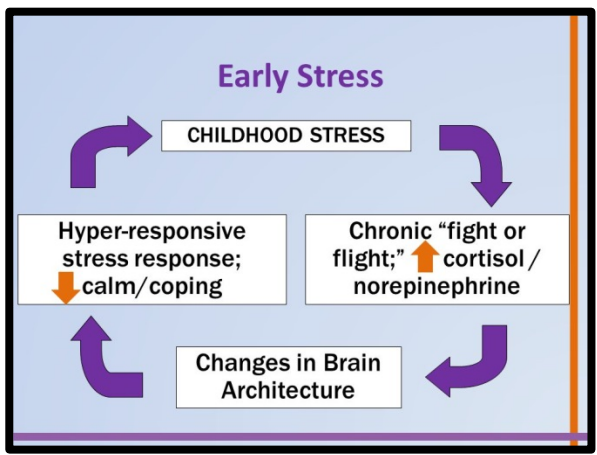
Source: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

The U.S Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention also stresses that it is important to understand that risk and protective factors include variables which create different degrees of impact. It is important to note that no single risk factor leads a youth to become delinquent. Also, risk factors often do not operate in isolation and typically are cumulative in nature – the more a youth experiences, the more likely they will become delinquent. Furthermore, the more risk factors that a youth experiences across multiple domains the more likely their delinquency increases. Because of the various domains and the natural process of development, it is important for schools and service providers to provide ongoing assessments of youth for early identification and intervention.

It is important to also understand the role a parent, or teacher, or a person in the role of being in charge/care taker plays in responding to a child’s behavioral response to trauma. Children often internalize or externalize their feelings. Silvan Tomkins work on shame helps us better understand why youth act in certain ways, including using violence towards others as well as towards oneself. Tomkins believes that shame is a critical regulator of social behavior.

Tomkins defines shame as occurring anytime one’s experience of positive affects is interrupted. When shame is experienced, behavior tends to act in one of the four quadrants of what D.L. Nathanson calls “The Compass of Shame.” – withdrawal (isolating behaviors, running away, hiding), attacking self (putting oneself down, i.e., “I am so dumb!” or masochism or cutting behavior), avoidance (use of denial, using drugs and alcohol to change their reality, or distraction through thrill seeking behaviors, i.e., speeding, extreme sports) and attack others (blaming others for their behaviors, blaming the victim, lashing out verbally or physically fighting). These behaviors are often experienced by children and adolescents.

Chronic stress also is associated with youth violence and negatively impacts brain development. Many youth and families live with chronic stress often resulting from experiencing: frequent moves, food insecurity, and exposure to familial and domestic violence, racism, living with untreated mental health and substance abuse issues, poverty, bullying and/or limited access and utilization of health and mental health services.



Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

The research on preventing, intervening, responding to youth violence and methods to promote healthy development in prosocial ways is vast and the approaches are diverse. Some of the variables in the approaches are due to the various settings, staffing, access, and financial resources available for implementation. For the sake of this report, the focus will be on the one key effective strategy, regardless of what environment or resources are available: healthy relationships.

Healthy relationships are vital to repairing the effects of early childhood trauma on the brain. According to Harvard Medical School, the brain has the ability “of individual neurons to form new synaptic connections in response to novel experiences or environmental challenges.” This ability in the brain is known as brain plasticity and it underlies learning and memory. Although the brain processing speed tends to slow down with age, the brain remains plastic throughout life.

The Office of the Surgeon General’s report, “Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General” found that “the most highly effective programs combine components that address both individual risks and

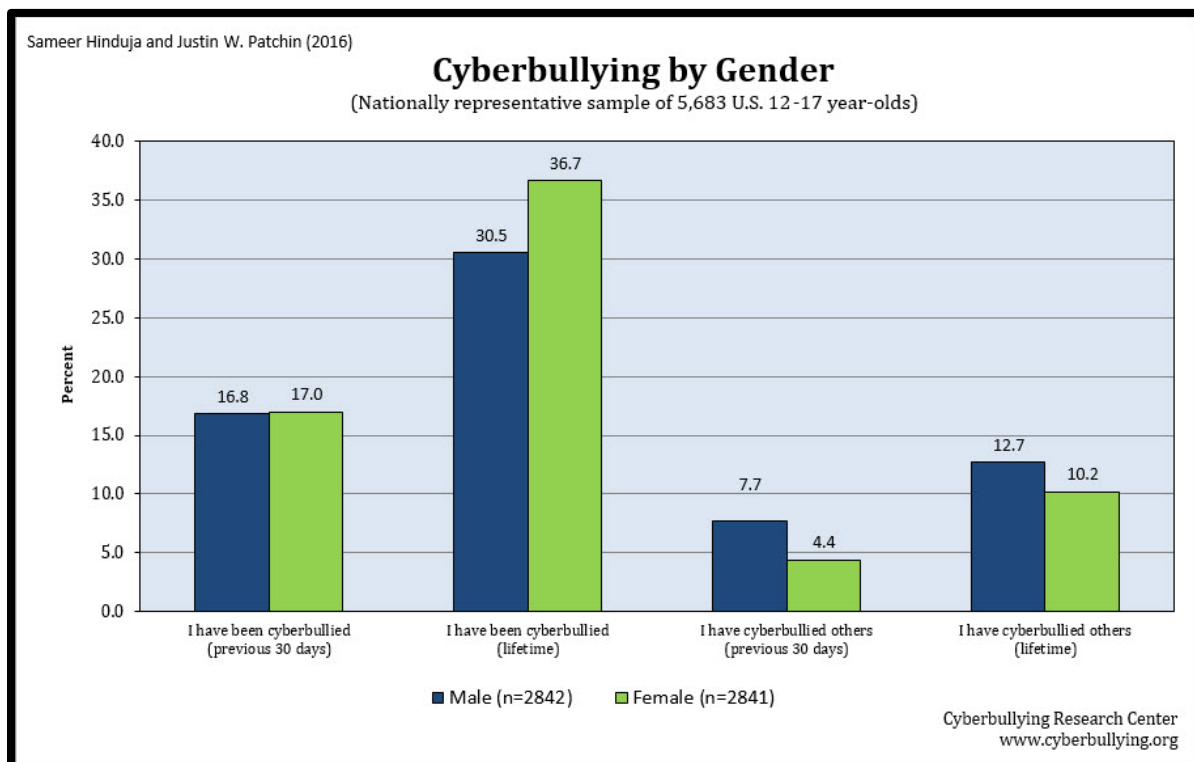
environmental conditions, particularly building individual skills and competencies, parent effectiveness training, improving the social climate of the school, and changes in type and level of involvement in peer groups" - all of which focus on unhealthy relationships.

From all of the responses from the leaders, youth and parents to the five focused questions, it became clear that the following four areas of concern were identified as the priorities and opportunities for response in addressing youth violence within Hanover Township. Listed under each identified priority are the department's next steps in addressing the concerns:

1. **Cyber Bullying:**

**Social Media Parent Education and Programming**-engage a professional presenter to provide technical and educational assistance for parents to ensure internet, social media and electronic physical and emotional safety. This forum will be provided at a large auditorium within the Township.

**Youth Leadership**-the Hanover Township Clinical Interventionist will integrate internet safety and cyber bullying education into her youth leadership programming and utilize her youth leaders to educate youth at the Hanover Township Open Gym Program, Alternative to Suspension Programming and at community events.



Source: Sameer Hinduja & Justin W. Patchin - Cyberbullying Research Center

## 2. Fighting:

**Early Identification Programming**-collaboration will occur with area principals and School District U-46 Director of School Safety and Culture to develop an early identification system to prevent youth from becoming chronic fighters. According to Snyder and Stoolmiller’s research on the reinforcement and coercive mechanisms in the development of antisocial behavior, they found from preschool to high school, students antisocial behavior changes in form and increases in intensity – making it important to assess and identify earlier than later.

**Conflict Resolution Through a Trauma Informed Approach**-collaboration will occur with School District U-46’s Alignment Collaborative for Education’s Trauma Informed Care A-Team to develop, implement and evaluate a trauma informed care/conflict resolution system for Streamwood High School and it’s feeder pattern schools. This system will include interdisciplinary professional learning communities for school staff to receive professional development, support and data management assistance to address adverse childhood experiences in the school setting and addressing interpersonal conflicts more effectively. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy noted that “sound delinquency-prevention programs can save taxpayers seven to ten dollars for every dollar invested.”

## 3. Unsupervised Youth:

**After School Transportation**-research after school busing options and funding sources to bring back after school busing at Streamwood High School to ensure that all students have access and are able to participate in pro-social afterschool programming, activities and events. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that “schools that have higher rates of participation in extracurricular activities during or after school tend to have higher levels of school connectedness.”

**After School Intermural Athletics Programming**-collaborate with High Schools and Park Districts to establish a free after school intermural athletic program for students to participate in for fun and recreation without the pressures, costs, and expectations of more formal athletic, traveling programs.

## 4. Positive School Connection:

**School Connection Programming**-collaboration with School District U-46 and school principals to develop and enhance resources and approach in engaging youth to systematically enhance school culture by increasing youth’s positive connections, pride and ownership in their education, school and community. This will be accomplished by engaging youth in the process of innovation, program design and implementation of a freshman orientation/engagement program that will build positive connections over the four years of a high schoolers experience.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also defined “A positive school environment, often called school climate, is characterized by caring and supportive interpersonal relationships;

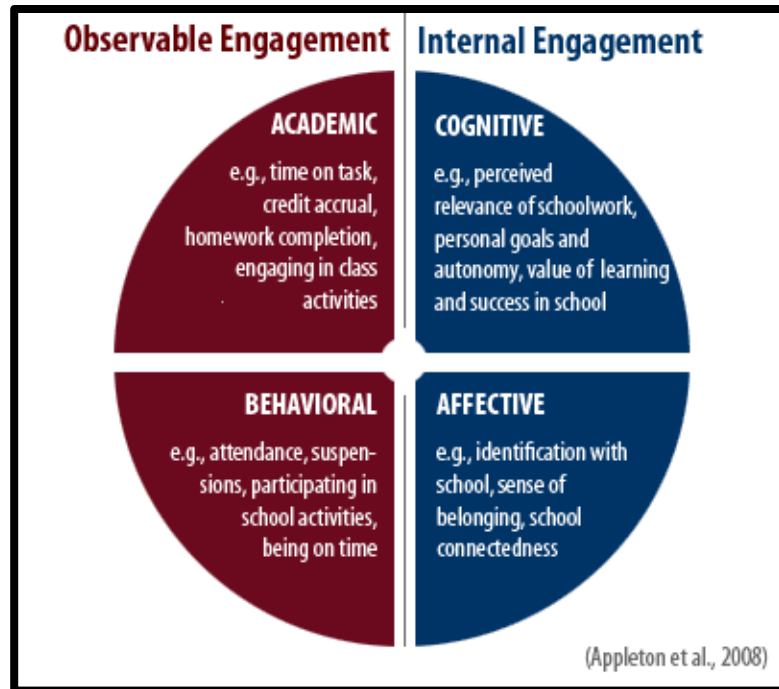
opportunities to participate in school activities and decision-making; and shared positive norms, goals, and values.”



James Mix, Hanover Township Program Coordinator and Leo Cushmer, Youth Leader, having fun with Tefft Middle School 7<sup>th</sup> graders at the “Be You” Snowball Event

The Surgeon General’s Report on Youth Violence found that “In schools, interventions that target change in the social context appear to be more effective, on average, than those that attempt to change individual attitudes, skills, and risk behaviors.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s report, “School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth” found that students are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and succeed academically when they feel connected to school.” Furthermore, they found that “School connectedness was the strongest protective factor for both boys and girls to decrease substance use, school absenteeism, early sexual initiation, violence, and risk of unintentional injury (e.g., drinking and driving, not wearing seat belts).”

In this same study, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that “school connectedness was second in importance, after family connectedness, as a protective factor against emotional distress, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation and attempts.” Parent engagement is also important in creating a positive school culture – even at the high school level. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines parent engagement in schools as “parents and school staff working together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of children and adolescents.” Schools can sustain parent engagement by addressing the common challenges to getting and keeping parents engaged. Research indicates that in schools with a harsh and punitive discipline climate, student connectedness is lower.



**Academic Transitions Programming**-collaboration with area middle and high schools on further developing a feeder pattern youth led school transition program to decrease incoming student’s anxiety, provide supports to facilitate an effective transition and promotes positive connections to new school to help prevent fighting in schools. According to Erikson, Peterson and Lembeck, “the dropout crisis is particularly severe during a student’s freshman year of high school and is often due to the social and developmental adjustments; the structural and organizational changes; and the increase in academic rigor and failure.”

**Going Forward**

Youth violence in its many forms has its roots in relationships in multiple environments – family, school, peers, work and community. While complex in nature, it is vital that the work is preventative in nature; that the identification of youth at risk earlier than later will produce better outcomes. Also key is the integration of new brain science and research to better inform the work and relationships with youth as well as adapt the systems that youth spend most time in to better meet their social/emotional/physical needs. Essential to positive youth development and brain health is positive, healthy relationships. Also essential to youth who have experienced adverse childhood experiences is having safe and healthy relationships with the adults in their lives and environments.

Hanover Township is thankful to our leaders who contributed at the Youth Violence Symposium and to the youth and parents who provided input as well. The Township is also thankful for the collaboration and efforts that will occur over the next five years in meeting the above priorities. The Department of Youth and Family Services will work in collaboration with various local partners, schools and leaders to problem solve further the four core areas of concern related to youth violence in Hanover Township. The department will also further develop its existing programs to integrate interventions, education and

resources to address these four areas.

The department welcomes you to continue to work with in collaboration in whatever capacity your employer allows – know that this work cannot be done alone nor does the department have all of the resources to do so. The youth of Hanover Township are the future and it is the vision and focus of the department to move the needle forward in progress to ensure that they have safe and positive relationships, have plenty of opportunities for growth and meet the developmental and social challenges that naturally occur with a spirit of “can do” and flourish in positive ways...making Hanover Township a great place to live for youth and their families.





The Hanover Township Committee on Youth, back row: Ray Alvarez, Dilpreet Kaur, Robert Wojtowicz, Dane Crouse, Ian Wright, and William Henderson. Front row: Rebecca Swangren, Dr. Ariel Correa, Shannon Henderson, Nicole DeFalco and Eugene N. Martinez, Hanover Township Trustee