



TAG in Action: Youth ALIVE! Caught in the Crossfire

As part of its national call to action, **Adolescent Health: Think, Act, Grow**® (TAG), the Office of Adolescent Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has identified a number of successful strategies for improving adolescent health throughout the country.

The Goal

The Caught in the Crossfire program meets young victims of violence at their hospital bedsides in order to prevent retaliatory violence, offer practical help, and provide a path toward safety and healing.

The Game Plan

Caught in the Crossfire (CiC) is a hospital-based violence intervention program based in Oakland, California. The nonprofit organization, Youth ALIVE!, delivers CiC as part of an array of violence prevention, intervention, and healing programs. Youth ALIVE! was founded on the belief that youth from the city's most violent neighborhoods have the power to change things for the better. The CiC program was created in the early 1990's by a young man, Sherman Spears, who was himself violently injured. Sherman realized that while the hospital was equipped to care for his physical wounds, it was not equipped to address the emotional wounds that he and his family experienced. Sherman also understood that becoming a victim of violence created a "teachable moment," a time that youth are particularly open to learning and making positive changes.

Building on these teachable moments, CiC's trained intervention specialists and case managers to work with young victims to address both their immediate need for violence intervention and ongoing service needs as they recover. The first of its kind, CiC has been replicated across the country. In 2009, Youth ALIVE! and its partners established the National Network of Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs in order to share knowledge, promote best practices, and collaborate on research. Over the years, the evidence supporting hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) has grown. Evaluations of CiC and other HVIPs have demonstrated an array of cost-saving outcomes including reduced likelihood of reinjury or readmittance to a hospital, and reduced future involvement with the criminal justice system.

The Winning Plays

Anne Marks, Executive Director of Youth ALIVE! shared that, "Caught in the Crossfire, and all of our Youth ALIVE! programs, are based on the lived experiences of youth. We start there and then we hold ourselves accountable for outcomes. It's important that our staff come from the community we serve. It means our CiC interventionists can offer victims understanding while also providing them with practical approaches to addressing their physical and emotional safety. Trauma is a contagion. Without intervention, 44 percent of people who get shot will be shot again in five years. We recognize that we need to provide young victims with the space, time, and support to heal."

Learn More

Youth ALIVE!
<http://www.youthalive.org>
National Network of Hospital-based
Violence Prevention Programs
<http://nnhvip.org>

