

SAN FRANCISCO/BAY AREA

Youth ALIVE!

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"TNT shows us a positive way of life and then we show younger kids."
--18 year old Teens On Target member

"What are we advocating for? Changes to improve our lives. What we can give is an informed picture about our lives that no one else can see. We need to become visible."
--16-year old Teens On Target member

Mission:

- To prevent youth violence and build youth leadership by engaging youth in developing and implementing violence prevention programs and policies which address the causes and solutions to youth violence.
- To prevent youth violence and generate youth leadership in California communities.

Overview: Youth ALIVE! operates two programs: *Teens on Target* (TNT) is a peer violence prevention program which over the past 11 years has trained 750 young inner-city youth in Oakland and Los Angeles as peer violence prevention educators and advocates, who have in turn have trained 37,500 young people. All of the youth in *Teens on Target* live in neighborhoods with high rates of violence. *TNT* members serve as peer violence prevention educators. The key qualifications are that they live in the same communities as the students they teach and that they complete rigorous training in how to convey violence prevention concepts and strategies to other youth. They are paid for their work.

Caught in the Crossfire (CiC): Youth ALIVE! members convinced the organization to start a program to enable young adults from their neighborhoods to work with violently injured friends, neighbors and family at Highland Hospital. That effort, called *Caught in the Crossfire* (CiC), helps hospitalized youth stop retaliation and make a healthy, nonviolent transition to adulthood. *Caught in the Crossfire* (CiC) is a hospital-based peer intervention program that has provided intensive services for more than 700 youth since 1994: 250 adolescent gunshot victims, family and friends; 200 young people on probation for violent offenses; and 280 students facing suspension or expulsion for violence.

TNT members and Youth ALIVE! staff also make presentations to public officials and community leaders for policies to prevent gun violence by reducing access to guns. In addition, YA! conducts primary research into gun supply and demand. (For more information about the Oakland Gun Tracing Project, download the report, "The Supply and Demand for Juvenile Guns in Oakland: Results of Oakland Gun Tracing Study.")

Results:

- Almost all *TNT* members graduate from high school, compared to 40% peer graduation rates.
- Ninety-four percent of *TNT* members say they can talk a friend out of carrying a gun, compared to only 56% before *TNT*.
- Seventy-five percent of *TNT* members say they are "very likely to look for alternatives to violent situations" after *TNT*, versus 31% before.
- Of the *CiC* hospitalized youth, 70% were less likely to be arrested during the six-month post-injury period versus hospitalized youth not in *CiC* (see *Journal of Adolescent Health*, March, 2004).
- Retaliation was reduced among 100% of hospitalized youth.

Key Elements of Success:

Youth trained and active as peer educators and advocates

Youth attending school and being injured in communities with high rates of violence are exposed to trained youth leaders who look like they do, talk like they do, come from the same neighborhoods, kind of families, and schools they do – but who are making different choices in their lives: choosing to attend and graduate from school, avoid violence, and treat others respectfully.

Tutoring and mentoring of youth

Evening and weekend activities provided

Intervention and counseling for range of problems (e.g., substance abuse, gang education)

Family and individual counseling

Parenting classes, family empowerment programs

Youth ALIVE! staff and TNT members combine public health data with real life experiences to develop workable solutions to youth violence.

Target Population: Youth ALIVE! works with teenagers who are involved in the juvenile justice system at some level, and those who are at risk of entering the system.

“We young people are the first line of defense for the prevention of violence. The hospitals and the police come in after the violence. We’re coming in before.”

--16 year-old TNT founding member