



## YouthAlert! Uses Teamwork and Education to Prevent Youth Violence



**“Kids are dying from diseases that the world already has cures for—violence is the same way. We already have the cure, we just have to apply it correctly.”**

Douglas Wain,  
CEO and Founder of  
YouthAlert!

### More Information

**YouthAlert!**  
[www.youthalert.us](http://www.youthalert.us)

**CDC, Violence Prevention,  
Youth Violence**  
[www.cdc.gov/  
ViolencePrevention/  
youthviolence](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence)

**The Community Guide: Task  
Force Findings on Violence**  
[www.thecommunityguide.  
org/topic/violence](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/topic/violence)

Youth violence is a serious public health problem in the United States. Over the past 25 years, juveniles aged 10 to 17 years have been involved as offenders in approximately 25% of serious violent crimes.<sup>1</sup> YouthAlert!, a non-profit community outreach program in Kentucky, seeks to reduce youth violence through universal school-based interventions recommended by The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide). By instituting school-based interventions in the program’s home state before expanding nationwide, YouthAlert! aims to reduce youth violence through education and teamwork.

The program follows a [Community Guide recommendation](#) for universal school-based interventions, including approaches to reduce disruptive or antisocial behavior in younger students and approaches to reduce dating violence, bullying, and general violence in older students. This evidence-based approach is both age appropriate and easy for students to understand.

### Tailoring Prevention Tactics

Douglas Wain, CEO and founder of YouthAlert! wanted to create a program using evidence-based prevention techniques that could be used nationwide. In order to best reach communities in need, Wain and his team developed unique instructor manuals for educators in each of the 50 states and started with programs in local Kentucky schools.

“There are different tactics for each community,” Wain said. “We do have an instructor manual when we go into the schools that’s a little more tailored to the community. [We incorporate] their curriculum, their local standards, to see the exact way to do it.”

By tailoring prevention tactics to the standards of local jurisdictions, YouthAlert! can better reach its target audience while working closely with local education departments and school leaders. This partnership allows for better dissemination of anti-violence education and a stronger support system for victims of youth violence.

This tailored approach requires an understanding of the causes of youth violence, including mental health issues, income disparity, ethnic and gender disparity, and family history of violence. Poor parental discipline and delinquent peers can also contribute to youth violence.<sup>2</sup> Youths prone to violence also commonly exhibit other behavioral problems, including drug abuse and difficulties with schoolwork.

### A Comprehensive Approach

There is no single solution for youth violence, so YouthAlert! created a comprehensive approach, citing The Community Guide as a primary resource.



“YouthAlert! believes there’s already enough evidence-based violence and bully prevention [strategies] out there to cure violence. We already know how to do it. We’re just applying it, all the information that’s there,” Wain said. “We’re not reinventing the wheel; we’re taking the thousands of wheel designs that we know work and applying them to our model.”

YouthAlert! incorporates several skills included in the [universal school-based programs review](#). In addition to manuals and handouts educating youth about violence, the program also promotes mental well-being and self-awareness.



YouthAlert! focuses on adolescents aged 10-24, empowering them to prevent violence in school, at home, and in their communities.

“We’re not just a comprehensive violence prevention program,” Wain said. “We consider ourselves a comprehensive youth health program and a comprehensive youth program.”

### Tracking Results

In order to track progress made by the YouthAlert! program, participants are expected to fill out evaluations after the program presentation, along with a pre- and post-test to go over lessons learned.

The pre-test/post-test assessment has shown significant learning progress. YouthAlert! boasts a 74% gain score among the middle and high school students that completed the five-question assessment.<sup>3</sup>

The program’s evaluation assessments show positive improvement as well. Of more than 10,000 Kentucky youth served and surveyed by the program, 96.2% of students said the presentation will help prevent them from committing an act of violence. One hundred percent of teachers said the presentation could make a difference in a positive way, and that they would recommend the program to other organizations.

### Lessons Learned

- **Modify programs to suit local needs.** There are many different factors that contribute to youth violence, and not every program is one-size-fits-all. Tailor educational programs for the target audience, adapting for participants’ age, regional requirements, and sources of violence endemic to that community.
- **Use all available resources.** Instead of trying to start new studies or programs from scratch, use information that’s readily accessible to have a good foundation. Having nationally-recognized, research-based evidence as a starting point provides both recognition and credibility.
- **Treat the whole problem.** Many efforts to reduce violence don’t take socioeconomic, ethnic, gender, and mental wellness influences into account when creating new programs. In order to succeed, programs must treat the individual as well as the community.

## What is The Community Guide?

The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide) is an essential resource for people who want to know what works in public health. It provides evidence-based recommendations about public health interventions and policies to improve health and promote safety.

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force)—an independent, nonfederal, unpaid panel of public health and prevention experts—bases its recommendations on systematic reviews of the scientific literature. With oversight from the Task Force, scientists and subject-matter experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conduct these reviews in collaboration with a wide range of government, academic, policy, and practice-based partners.

[www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org)

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 Community Preventive Services Task Force

March 2017

<sup>1</sup>Task Force on Community Preventive Services. A recommendation to reduce rates of violence among school-aged children and youth by means of universal school-based violence prevention programs. *Am J Prev Med* 2007;33(2S):S112-13.

<sup>2</sup>Wasserman G, Keenan K, Tremblay R, et al. Risk and protective factors of child delinquency. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2003.

<sup>3</sup>YouthAlert! (YA!) Home Page. (2015) [retrieved January 03, 2017] Available from <http://youthalert.us/>