

# Protecting Our Children

## Conflict Resolution: Stopping Youth Violence Before It Starts

(NAPSA)—Thanks to sustained research, the causes and effects of youth violence are increasingly becoming understood. This improved understanding has led to the development of tools and techniques that can help defuse conflicts before they escalate into violence.

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (NYVPRC) has assembled current resources on the Web site [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org) to help teens, parents and other adults concerned about violence committed by or against youth. This Web site contains reliable information on all aspects of youth violence prevention, as well as referrals or links to additional related information.

With roots in international diplomacy, conflict resolution techniques have been recognized as effective in preventing violence in schools and workplaces as well as averting warfare between hostile nations. The goal is to find solutions that all parties to a conflict can accept. Children can begin learning—and using—conflict resolution skills at an early age, at home, at school and in their neighborhood or community.

### What You Can Do At Home

Whether it's a routine argument at home, being teased at school or being threatened by a gang at the mall, the knowledge a child has on how to respond to situations can make the difference between a minor incident and a potentially larger problem.

Here are some ideas to think about and explore with your child:

• **Anger is OK; violence is not.** Everybody gets angry at



### Conflict resolution skills can benefit most children.

times; what counts is how the anger is managed. Channeling anger into problem-solving gives these emotions a constructive outlet, and helps defuse the situation.

• **There are many ways to win.** Keeping calm, responding with humor, walking away, or asking for help are some winning alternatives to heckling and fighting.

• **Strong people don't need to fight.** This is more than just a saying; research shows that children who feel powerless are more likely to fight than those who feel they have some control over their environment.

• **Teach by example.** Think about how you handle conflict; do you insist on winning every argument on principle, or do you look for acceptable solutions? In conflict situations, do you control your temper or “lose” it? Can you admit being wrong? Just as whatever parents say influences their kids, what they do also has an impact on their children.

### School-Based Programs

Many schools throughout the U.S. have begun to integrate conflict resolution education into

their curricula—beginning as early as the first grade. The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has developed a fact sheet outlining four basic approaches to school-based conflict resolution education. By choosing various elements from each, educators can tailor programs to a school's specific needs.

• **Freestanding courses** in which dispute resolution principles and skills are presented as a distinct class or study unit. This is also called the “process curriculum” approach.

• **Peer mediation** involves training young people to act as problem-solvers, helping to settle disputes among their peers.

• **Peaceable Classroom** incorporates conflict resolution education into a curriculum's core subjects; further, teachers use these techniques to manage their classrooms.

• **Peaceable School** programs integrate conflict resolution into every aspect of the school's operation, involving every level of staff.

As many as 10,000 programs using these techniques have been implemented across the country—and have yielded significant results.

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center was established as a central source of information on violence committed by and against young people. For more information, log on to [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org), call toll-free 1-866-SAFEYOUTH (723-3968), 1-800-243-7012 (TTY), 301-562-1001 (FAX), or e-mail [NYVPRC@safeyouth.org](mailto:NYVPRC@safeyouth.org).