

All Families and Individuals Deserve To Live a Life Free From Violence

It is a moment that feels devastatingly similar to December 14, 2012, when twenty-six people, including twenty students and six adults, were shot and killed at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. The violence that occurred yesterday in Uvalde, Texas, brings back those same feelings of sadness, anger, and urgency to find solutions. The Center for Empowerment and Education feels deep heartache for the children, families, and teachers impacted by the senseless violence of yesterday's mass school shooting.



Over the last decade, we have seen how this type of violence has directly impacted our community and witnessed the ongoing resiliency of our friends and neighbors. We recognize that healing from any of type of trauma is nonlinear and requires systemic action and support. Our programs and services are designed to respond to and help clients process trauma, most importantly, prevent it from occurring in the first place.

While the details of this tragedy are still being gathered and released, what we do know is that it was connected to domestic violence. "Information on his background has yet to be released, but what seems clear is the common thread he shares with other mass shooters: a history of assaulting women they're either related to or have been romantically involved with." (Rae, 2022) We know that these types of aggressive are learned behaviors. We stand firm in our steadfast belief that violence is preventable and response to this violence should be proactive rather than reactive.

At The Center for Empowerment and Education, we believe that children and school employees deserve the right to learn and teach in a safe environment. We know that prevention education is one of the keys to eliminating violence in our schools. “Youth violence is highly prevalent. 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. The majority of these homicides are from firearm violence.” (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016) We are reminded once again of the importance of our primary prevention programming we provide in our 13 town service area. Our programs ensure that children and teachers are equipped with resources, tools, and support to turn to when a student is experiencing violence in their home, community, or school.

It is our mission to help eradicate violence in as many ways as possible. More than 28,000 adults and children benefit from our education and training programs annually. Our education programs address the topics with age-appropriate delivery to teach and empower students surrounding topics such as bullying, respect, boundaries and body safety, healthy relationships, and for the younger children we do this through puppetry, art, music, and story-telling to teach children how to be safe. Evidence supports that preventative programming such as ours can and does reduce violence. By being proactive and providing education in the school surrounding these topics, we are taking action before the violence has the opportunity to manifest.

We believe that prevention education is vital to our community, yet prevention programming is not widely recognized through funding opportunities and not all schools participate in preventative education. Our Education, Training, and Outreach programs in the school and community are primarily funded through our own fundraising efforts. Line items in the state and local budgets do not support as many preventative programs and services because we are a reactionary nation and community by design. “Preventing school violence requires addressing the factors that put people at risk for or protect them from violence. Research shows that prevention efforts by teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and even students can reduce violence and improve the school environment.” (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)

Our hearts will continue to hurt as families and communities wrap their heads around the events that occurred yesterday and all other preventable tragedies. If you or someone you know is triggered by any ongoing violence, know that support services are available. We will continue to do our part at The Center for Empowerment and Education to eliminate acts of violence through preventative education in our schools and community. All families and individuals deserve to live a life free from violence.

References

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Fast Fact: Preventing School Violence. Retrieved from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/fastfact.html>