

1 **COMMITTEE: HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

2 **POLICY: DECLARATION OF YOUTH VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC**
3 **EPIDEMIC IN THE UNITED STATES (RESOLUTION)**
4 **(JOINT WITH LAW AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**
5 **COMMITTEE)**

6 **TYPE:**

7 The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) declares youth violence as a
8 public health epidemic and supports the establishment of nationwide trauma-informed
9 education by Congress and the Administration.

10

11 NCSL believes youth across our nation are committing acts of violence against one
12 another and throughout their communities causing victimization among their peers,
13 social and psychological dysfunction, leading to in some cases, symptoms of Post-
14 traumatic Stress Disorder.

15

16 A national survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that
17 United States adults reported approximately 1.56 million incidents of victimization by
18 perpetrators estimated to be between 12 and 20 years of age. The CDC states,
19 "Violence is a serious public health problem in the United States. From infants to the
20 elderly, it affects people in all stages of life. In 2007, more than 18,000 people were
21 victims of homicide and more than 34,000 took their own life." The CDC reports that
22 many people survive violence and are left with permanent physical and emotional scars
23 and that violence erodes communities by reducing productivity, decreasing property
24 values and disrupting social services.

25

26 In 1985, former United States Surgeon General C. Everett Koop declared violence as a
27 public health issue and called for the application of the science of public health to the

28 treatment and prevention of violence. In 2000, former United States Surgeon General
29 David Satcher declared youth violence as a public health epidemic, and released a
30 report that deemed youth violence as a threat to public health and called for Federal,
31 state, local and private entities to invest in research on youth violence. Additionally, the
32 report also states that the public health approach to youth violence involves identifying
33 risk and protective factors, determining how they work, making the public aware of
34 these findings, designing programs to prevent or stop the violence and calls for national
35 resolve to confront the problem of youth violence systematically; to facilitate entry of
36 youth into effective intervention programs rather than incarceration; to improve public
37 awareness of effective interventions; to convene youth, families, researchers and public
38 and private organizations for a periodic youth violence summit; to develop new
39 collaborative multidisciplinary partnerships; and to hold periodic, highly visible national
40 summits;.

41
42 The Pennsylvania State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of
43 Colored People (NAACP) Branches, through its Education Committee members, have
44 given testimony before the Education Committee of the House of Representatives
45 calling for attention to the impact of trauma brought about by violence and other adverse
46 conditions on children's academic performance as well as their relationship with school
47 and the broader society.

48
49 Due to the violence epidemic, youth suffer from either primary or secondary trauma.
50 Primary trauma is trauma associated with the violent death of a loved one. Secondary
51 trauma results from exposure to violence present within their community. Exposure to
52 violence in families and communities, as well as exposure to homicidal death, can lead
53 to youth-specific post-traumatic stress disorder with complex effects as well as
54 homicidal grief. NCSL recognizes that trauma is not easily visible within youth because
55 it requires proper assessment and, due to the amount of violence youth are currently
56 exposed to, measures should be taken without delay, to properly assess the issue.

57
58 NCSL supports the CDC statement that schools provide "a critical opportunity for

59 changing societal behavior because almost the entire population is engaged in this
60 institution for many years, starting at an early and formative period" and "Universal
61 school-based violence prevention programs represent an important means of reducing
62 violent and aggressive behavior in the United States."

63

64 NCSL strongly supports a state/federal partnership to increase education in violence
65 prevention and PTSD awareness through education.

66

67 Expires August 2015