

Everyone's Doing It: Planning a Successful Community Crime Prevention Project

Are you tired of walking by playgrounds that are filled with trash and broken equipment? You know kids won't play there because it's such a mess. There is something you can do. You can make a difference by cleaning up that playground as a community crime prevention project.

There are hundreds of problems teens can solve to make their school, neighborhood, and community safer. Teens have talents and skills that can be put to use -- if you're an artist you can paint a mural to replace graffiti; if you like sports you can coach a team in your neighborhood; if you are a listener or a problem solver you can help settle arguments. You just need to fit your skill to a problem you want to solve.

Either find a group or get one together. Join an existing group like an after-school program at your school, Boys & girls clubs, 4-H, Scouts, YMCA or YWCA, or Camp Fire. If you need help finding what's around, talk to someone in your school, place of worship, police station, or recreation center. Whoever you work with, your project will need a plan if it's to be a success. This brochure will give you some ideas about setting up a helpful plan.



Steps for Success

1. Decide what your project is going to be.

List the problems that you and your group believe you can change in your neighborhood or school. For example, are there too many fights in your school? Are kids doing drugs? Has there been an increase in drunk driving incidents? Choose one problem. (At this point you may want to look around your community and see what people are already doing. Maybe you can work with another group.)

2. Plan what you're going to do and each step you're going to take to get there.

Decide who's going to do what, and set deadlines for completing each step. Split up the work evenly. This way no one will get burned out. Remember to plan for how you're going to be able to tell if your project was successful. Are there fewer fights at school? Has the school remained free of graffiti?

3. Get what you need.

Basically, you need people to do the work, materials (remember to include things like transportation, meeting space, food, photocopies), money, publicity, and the support of adults. Look to local businesses, foundations, parents, the school, community organizations, or places of worship to provide help. Get moving on your project.

4. Check your progress once your project is underway.

You want to be able to see if what you are doing is working. Ask people what they think -- do they feel safer with less arguing in school? Ask your friends how they think it's going. Or count things. If your project is supposed to reduce fights in your school, you can count how many fights there were in a typical week before your project began and how many there are now.

5. Get the message out.

And when you've got things moving -- share your success in your school or local newspaper. Then celebrate and thank everyone involved.

In Jefferson City, Missouri, teenagers audition to be in the cast of the Safety Kids program. They get to travel around to schools making presentations about drugs to other young people.

Take Action

Here are a few ideas of things you can do to improve your school and neighborhood.

- Set up a group for teens to share problems and solutions.
- Join a group that builds and renovates houses for low-income or homeless families.

- Do peer counseling.
- Start a teen court program in your school.
- Film anti-crime commercials and deliver them to your local television station.
- Clean-up and repair a playground or build a new one in an area that lacks one.
- Be a tutor or mentor to a younger person.
- Develop a "street smarts" section for your school's Web site.
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter, preschool, or senior center.
- Put on drug- and alcohol-free events to celebrate holidays or other special events.
- Teach younger kids anti-violence or anti-drug strategies.
- Put on art shows or performances with prevention themes.