



What is Communities That Care?

Communities That Care (CTC) is a risk-focused approach to reducing adolescent problem behaviors through community mobilization and planning. Local citizens and community leaders work together as the CTC for Youth Board to identify the risk factors that increase the likelihood of problem behaviors developing, and enhance the protective factors that can shield youngsters from problems. The risk and protective factors are used to implement a comprehensive plan to step ahead of problems with far-reaching and long-lasting solutions.

What are Risk Factors?

Risk factors such as availability of drugs, family conflict, academic failure, and favorable attitudes toward problem behavior are those conditions that increase the likelihood that a child will develop one or more behavior problems in adolescence. CTC attempts to identify and reduce the risks present in the community, home and school.

What are Protective Factors?

Protective factors, like individual characteristics, bonding, healthy beliefs and clear standards, are aspects of adolescents' lives that counter risk factors or provide a buffer against them. A key strategy of CTC is to enhance protective factors that promote positive behavior, well being, and personal success.

What Risk Factors has CTC Identified for Youth in the Norristown Area?

The Norristown CTC for Youth Board has identified four priority risk factors that can lead youth in the greater Norristown area to adopt problem behaviors:

1. Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior

Because of the importance of peer approval to adolescents, friends' attitudes and actions can be a powerful factor in teens' behavior. This risk factor is one of the most consistent predictors of the presence of problem behaviors.

2. Lack of School Commitment

This refers to the young person who no longer sees their role of student as a viable one and no longer appreciates the value of an education. The truancy data reported by school districts underscores this perception.

3. Perceived Availability of Handguns

Statistics show that the more available firearms are in a community, the higher the violent crime rates tend to be, and, conversely, fewer firearms in a community is correlated with lower violent crime rates.

4. Family Management

Families experiencing stress such as marital problems, unemployment, and poor communication skills have a more challenging time working through the pre-adolescent and adolescent stages without tremendous turmoil or negative outcomes. Poor family management practices include lack of clear expectations of behavior, failure of parents to monitor their children, and excessively severe or inconsistent punishment.

How is CTC Responding to These Risk Factors?

Norristown CTC provides prevention education through forums, presentations, community outreach, summer communication programs, and informational mailings. In addition, the CTC for Youth Board is undertaking a series of programmatic strategies to assist schools and families in helping youth to avoid problematic behavior:

- **Aggression Replacement Training (ART)** - Research-based approach for helping youth understand and control their anger.
- **Guiding Good Choices and Staying Connected With Your Teen** - Five-week, national model programs designed to assist parents in preparing their children/teens to make positive decisions and reduce the risk factors for drug use in adolescence.
- **Norristown Violence Prevention Initiative (NVPI)**
A local replication of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model providing intervention and pro-social opportunities for high-risk or aggressive youth.
- **Say It Straight®/ Hablando Claro**
An evidence-based communication training program designed to help students develop empowering communication skills and behaviors and increase self-awareness, self-efficacy, and personal and social responsibility.
- **Social Marketing**
Campaigns such as *Find Your 25th Hour*, *Education=Options*, and *Don't Smoke your Future* are intended to increase public awareness to pressing community issues.
- **Social Media**
Our e-mail-based Google group, *Norristown Positive Youth Network*, shares local news and events from greater Norristown area organizations. Norristown CTC is also active on several social networks:
Facebook: www.facebook.com/NorristownCTC
Twitter: @CTC_NVPI
Instagram: @nvpinorristown
- **Strengthening Families Program 10-14/Familias Fuertes 10-14**
National model, seven-week family strengthening program for parents and youth ages 10-14 that helps families reduce the risk for serious problems by guiding youth through the teen years.

The CTC Community Vision

Norristown Area Communities That Care for Youth (CTC) brings together community residents and leaders to prevent substance use and violence in order to secure a more safe, caring and educated environment in which youth can live and grow to be productive members of our community.

What Can You Do?

Some of the things that you can do to make a difference in the lives of Norristown's youth include:

- Share in the decision-making by joining the CTC for Youth Board
- Lend your expertise (program development, graphic design, community knowledge, marketing/PR)
- Spread the word about CTC to friends, family and your neighbors
- Donate your services to support youth-focused organizations, agencies or programs.

For More Information Contact:

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