

# **Y**OUTH CRIME WATCH OF LIBERIA SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES PROGRAM FOCUS DETAILS



“Helping to create a crime free society”

# YOUTH CRIME WATCH OF LIBERIA SCHOOLS PROGRAM COMPONENTS DETAILS

## CRIME REPORTING

Want your school or neighborhood to be safer? Young people can help encourage peers to report crime in the making as well as information on crimes under investigation.

The main functions of an anonymous and safe crime reporting system are to:

1. Eliminate youth fear of retaliation.
2. Encourage youth to report crime.
3. Prevent drug abuse, crime and violence in schools and neighborhoods.

Why set up a crime reporting system in your school or neighborhood? It makes reporting easier and safer; prevents crime by sharing information about potential problems; helps authorities to solve crimes; and establishes an ethic that endorses reporting as the right and responsible thing to do. That atmosphere makes it harder for criminals to succeed and contributes to a feeling of safety and security among all members of the community.

Young people understand the importance of reporting crime. They want safer schools and neighborhoods, and if they know how to report effectively, they'll do it.

### **What is crime reporting?**

Most simply, it's giving the proper authorities information you have about

- A crime that *might* be committed
- A crime that *has been* committed, or
- Someone who was involved in committing a crime

In other words, it's preventive, not just reactive.

The system is grounded in the belief that reporting is the right thing to do, that it's a responsibility to peers and others, and that it makes the community safer for everyone. The Youth Crime Watch approach to reporting relies on community and personal commitment to prevention, not on cash rewards.

### **Reporting prevents crime in at least four ways:**

1. Heads off incidents before they can take place
2. Helps to identify problems causing crimes
3. Makes it easier to find criminals and prevent them from offending again
4. Creates a climate that does not tolerate crime

Nobody likes a snitch or a tattletale, but many young people recognize the difference between those juvenile behaviors and reporting crime. They're willing to report because they don't want friends hurt, they don't want a thief on the loose who might target them, or they don't like the idea of someone getting away with doing something wrong.

An effective crime reporting system encourages candor and reduces fear by providing anonymous as well as direct ways to report. It educates the school or neighborhood about what to report, how to report, and why to report. It shares

successes so the community knows the system works. It is sensitive to its audience and supportive of their safety and security.

What gets reported? Certainly, anything that would be considered a felony or a serious misdemeanor - thefts, assaults with or without weapons, drug use or dealing, vandalism, graffiti, arson, sexual assaults, or threats of these crimes. Reporting of such actions as smoking, littering, or truancy, will be encourage in schools on the theory that these contribute to a sense of disorder.

### **Our Strategy**

1. Devise a reporting system that is dependable and safe. Most plans involve one or more of the following:
  1. Tip Box
  2. Phone Line
  3. Student Patrol
  4. Direct youth to adult reporting
2. Advertise the importance of reporting with posters, flyers, PA announcements, contests, and commendations
3. Train youth on:
  1. How to handle anonymous tips
  2. How to report crime anonymously
  3. Non-confrontation
  4. How to observe incidents without being involved

To start or strengthen a crime reporting system, we will need five things:

1. Committed youth
2. Adults who will work with youth and take action on reports
3. A system for both anonymous and face-to-face reporting
4. Education for youth and adults running the system on how to explain the system, handle reports and respond helpfully to victims
5. Education for the school or neighborhood in what to report, how to report, and why to report

**Committed youth** such as members of a Youth Crime Watch or similar student organization means young people who believe in crime reporting, can explain how to use the system, and will be the ambassadors to their peers to promote the system.

**Adults who work well with youth** and will ensure that action is taken on reports can include school resource officers, assistant principals, teachers, counselors, school security staff, local law enforcement officials, youth group advisors, and social and other service providers. They need to see partnerships with youth as effective and to take on the responsibility of gathering and acting on crime reports. Training in crime reporting with local law enforcement

agencies, in victim assistance, and in working with younger victims in particular helps. The adults need to know how to reach such community resources as counseling, mediation, family and social services, rape crisis/sexual assault centers, drug treatment, juvenile authorities, and diversion programs, to name just a few.

**A system that provides for both anonymous and face-to-face reporting** can include tip boxes, telephones, e-mails, and web sites, among other methods. It needs to provide for anonymity even if the system knows the reporter's name. A means of face-to-face reporting is vital for time-sensitive situations, personal victimization, and emergencies.

**Education for those who run the system** includes teaching those who might receive crime reports how to take a useful report, how to treat reports confidentially, how to help victims, and how to teach others to use the system. Operational details of the system, such as how often reports are collected, what information is vital for a report to be useful, and what happens to a report once it's received are important for this group. The school security staff, a senior administrative officer, the Youth Crime Watch advisor, the school resource officer, and a local victim assistance provider can help with this training.

**Education for those who use the system** on what should be reported - specific kinds of crimes or crimes-in-the-making, tips about who committed particular crimes, and so on; information that the report should contain; how to report when time is critical, what will happen to reports, and how reporting helps prevent crime and build a sense of security. Education can happen in many ways - fliers and brochures advertising the system, presentations at assemblies or in classes or club meetings, announcements over the public address or closed-circuit TV system, videos that can be shown at meetings or in classes, posters throughout the area, articles in the school paper, to name just a few.

### **safe and responsible reporting**

Youth Crime Watch promotes "safe and responsible" crime reporting of suspicious incidents and/or persons who have given you 'probable cause' or an overwhelming reason to believe that they are or will be engaged in a criminal act and/or conspiracy to violate the law.

What does this mean? Under no circumstances are our volunteers to confront or in any way make direct contact with the suspect(s). You should **immediately contact a responsible adult**. Know the phone numbers for your local police or YCWL office or the local office of the(NBI).

**\*\*\*ONLY in a life or death situation should you dial 911\*\*\***

Strategies for reporting crime will consider the following:

- Number of suspects
- Description of each person
- Description of vehicles if applicable
- Nature of the acts or statements that have raised your suspicions
- Anything else that you think would help in assisting the authorities to make safe contact with the suspect(s).

The responsible adult will evaluate the situation and take appropriate action.

## Our reporting methods

Youth Crime Watch will adopt these methods of anonymous reporting which includes:

- The tip box or suggestion box
- The telephone coupled with an answering machine or voice mail
- E-mail to a central address
- A web site that directs reports to a central address
- Oral reports to a Youth Crime Watch member

**The tip box** usually consists of several locked boxes at key points around the school. Each box has a slot for inserting written reports. Boxes need to be located in places that are reasonably populated - not deserted and not in the middle of heavy traffic. The box (and education about using it) should remind students of what's needed for a good report - a dated, legible note describing as much as possible who, what, when, where, why, and how. Advantages of the tip box include low cost, low reliance on technology, and written records. Disadvantages include unreadable reports and the need for students to be on campus to file reports. Tip boxes also require that someone physically visit and collect reports from each of the boxes, generally at least once a day.

**Telephone reporting systems** offer a number of variations, which includes toll-free line. Calls to the toll-free line are immediately directed to a cell phone in possession of the school resource officer or Youth Crime Watch of Liberia. The reporting system partnered with a local gangs. The telephone approach allows students to call from school, from home, from a friend's, or from a pay phone. And there's no question that teens are comfortable talking on the phone, so this approach makes it easier for them to communicate. On the other hand, the telephone approach leaves no lasting record of the report, unless messages taped or transcribed and checked for accuracy. It also requires resources - funds or in-kind donations for the equipment, the telephone service, and a secure area in which to house the equipment.

**E-mail and web sites** have proved successful in reaching out to many of today's teens who are electronically literate. Both email box and a website for crime reports will be developed. Many e-mail addresses offer ready anonymity. Both e-mail and web approaches can provide printed reports to send to appropriate authorities. There are some drawbacks - setting up the web page or e-mail. Youth Crime Watcher in schools will be trained in the use of the internet.

Ideally, a crime reporting system will try to put more than one system in place to open anonymous reporting opportunities to the widest numbers of students. There is no magic combination that is right for any setting. Far more important is the commitment to collecting reports regularly and acting on them in good faith. Many young people trust the human link more than the suggestion box or the elections of phones or emails. The YCWL will encourage this human link.

## keeping it going

Education about crime reporting is an ongoing process. New students and staff come in every year; current students and staff forget what they learned the year before; the system acquires new features or new successes; reporting methods change.

Education should target adults in the community as well as young people. It should emphasize the preventive power of reporting, not just the need to report crimes that happened or information on criminal suspects.



Youth-run patrols on school grounds and communities help prevent crime and reduce fear. The main functions of a youth patrol are to:

1. Be a visible deterrent to criminal activity.
2. Produce non-confrontational trained reporters.
3. Involve a wide spectrum of youth in supporting school and community activities.
4. Help to identify real threats to the schools and communities environment.

General rules and regulations of a youth patrol:

1. Youth will be supervised by an adult advisor
2. Youth will not intervene in any crime, they will simply report it
3. Youth will be trained to report serious violations to an adult leader privately
4. Youth will receive quality training in how to respond to situations

Enlisting young people as active partners in building a safer school and community increases their commitment to prevention, provides additional help in spotting trouble or possible trouble, and reduces fear and crime.

The concept is simple: Young people work together in a formal structure, with help from adults, to patrol the campus of the school in pairs or small groups, acting nonconfrontationally to help maintain order, enforce rules, and report crime or crime-threatening situations. They are not tasked to apprehend criminals. They may serve as mediators with proper training. The patrol members may help with prevention education for students, staff, and community dwellers.

Youth patrols in schools assist with security at school events.

There are at least six ways that youth patrols strengthen the school's security:

1. Youth - both in and out of the patrol - take greater ownership of the school and community because they see adults as willing to share the responsibility with them.
2. Peers can be more effective than adults in working with other youth, especially with proper training.

3. Patrol members help set standards and expectations for peers' behavior.
4. Having additional trained observers - the patrol members - noting and reporting not just specific crimes or rules violations but problems that could lead to crime increases the safety of all in the school.
5. An active, successful patrol encourages other students to report crimes or crimes-in-the-making.
6. A well-structured patrol, one that involves a wide cross-section of the student body, builds a sense of unity and community among students.

Are patrols effective? Youth Crime Watch will start youth patrols at all levels - elementary, junior, and secondary. Patrols will report & alert schools and community about violence that were nipped in the bud. Their presence reduces fighting, horseplay, vandalism, and parental worries.

### **First steps**

The process of starting a patrol involves eight activities. Some of these can be undertaken simultaneously; others must follow in sequence.

**ONE:** Recruiting the core patrol group requires developing an application and screening process. For success, the patrol membership, needs to reflect the make-up of the school and community. It cannot consist solely of top students or members of a few cliques. An application and interview process helps identify youths' understanding of and commitment to the concept of crime prevention and the patrol. Each applicant should be required to secure a signed parental permission for membership in the patrol. Obviously, students who pose a threat to the security of the school and community or to other patrol members should be discouraged from applying. The screening process may include such features as review of grades and behavioral records, review of an application essay, and interviews with the patrol sponsor, Youth Crime Watch Liberia. In addition to recruitment processes, YCWL will have retention standards, including requirements for conduct and grades

**TWO:** Establishing the kinds of activities patrol members are expected to report only possible major offenses - such as theft, assault, drug use or sales, weapons possession, sexual assault, and the like. School authorities will be encourage identify what is to be reported, what should be reported (and to whom) as an urgent or emergency situation.

**THREE:** Setting up training for patrol members means they will understand, chain of command for patrol reporting, patrol strategies and techniques, report-taking, basic victim assistance pointers, handling of sensitive information, and the standards of conduct expected of patrol members. This training can be conducted by a variety of people. It should include written materials as well as such interactive training as role plays, small group discussions, and practice runs. Patrol members should also learn how to present the patrol concept and benefits effectively to fellow students, school staff, and community members.

**FOUR:** Faculty, administrative personnel, custodial staff, and other adults should be briefed on the patrol, preferably with patrol members taking the lead. The adults need to understand what they should and should not expect patrols to do and how they can best help and support patrol activities.

**FIVE:** Introducing the patrol to the student body should be an exciting event - or even several events. Emphasis for students should be on the ways in which the patrol will make their school environment safer and more enjoyable.

Students should view the patrol as an extension of the student body rather than limited to a few cliques. They should be able to explain to parents and others how the patrol benefits the school. The patrol's T-shirts, ID cards, and other identifying features should be well publicized. We should not forget that competent and required training, clear expectations, qualified adult supervision, and periodic reviews of problems and concerns of the young patrollers are important in protecting both the school and the patrol members from complaints and misunderstandings.

### **What we need**

People, equipment, and training are essential to a successful patrol.

There are four kinds of **people** who need to be involved:

1. **Top administrators in the school**, who should be involved with the advisor and the core Youth Crime Watch or similar group in defining the patrol's major duties and key working components. The principal and key assistant principals, the head of school security, and teaching staff should all understand and support the patrol. They should be familiar with its duties and concur in its responsibilities.
2. **The sponsor**, who in general should be a police officer equipped by training and experience to teach and answer questions about patrol techniques and management. If the sponsor is not a police officer, the patrol should receive training from, and have an ongoing relationship with a police officer. The sponsor needs to have good skills in coaching rather than directing youth, because the patrols are designed to be youth-led. Of course, the coaching role becomes more substantive the younger the patrol group. The sponsor should also know or become educated about crime prevention strategies.
3. Enough qualified **student members** to do the jobs of the patrol. Patrol workloads need to consider students' other obligations, including classroom work, and to ensure that there is sufficient backup to meet commitments when people are ill or otherwise unable to take part. Either membership should be increased or responsibilities should be reduced so there is a match.
4. A **student body** that understands the patrol's role and how it helps them, and sees the patrol as reflective of the school's population.

A patrol needs some specific **materials** to do its job properly. Many of these items can be donated or loaned.

- Matching T-shirts for all members of the patrol. You can use Youth Crime Watch shirts or have special shirts made.
- Matching dayglo orange safety vests for all members of the patrol who might be working in twilight or after dark.
- Sufficient sturdy flashlights for all active patrol teams, as well as spare fresh batteries.
- A cooler and cups for water and sodas when groups are on extended patrols, such as for school events outside regular hours.
- Dayglo or bright yellow raingear for active patrol members whose routes require being out of doors. These should, if possible, be marked "Patrol" on front and back.

- Clipboards with attached pens for taking notes. Portfolios that offer protection for pages are especially helpful.
- Identification cards, if at all possible, to recognize and document the students' status as patrol members.

### **What we do**

Recruitment needs to be scheduled as a regular event, at least once or twice during the school year.

- Keeping records of who patrols and what patrols accomplish helps to promote the concept and acknowledge young leaders.
- Setting up recognition - certificates or other public celebration - provides important motivation and support.
- Patrol routes, routines, and duties should be reviewed and updated periodically, probably at least once a year.
- Celebrations of the patrol as a group - picnics, pizza parties, or similar outings - emphasizes the teamwork that is vital to effective patrols.
- Education for new and current patrollers and for faculty, staff, and other students is an ongoing process.

A patrol can be among the most rewarding elements of a Youth Crime Watch program. It engages a range of students, provides opportunities for active youth leadership, and reinforces the idea that students can and should take a major role in preventing crime and making their schools safer. It takes thoughtful, focused energy and effort, but it's well worth the investment!



Knowing about the problems of drug-abuse, pornography, violence, and crime is vital to convincing people to get involved in YCW's prevention efforts. So whether or not *prevention education* is a formal component of your Youth Crime Watch, we find that it is an integral part of our work every day: in Core Group meetings, at assemblies and meetings; and through action projects.

Most Youth Crime Watch programs will not be based on a formal curriculum. But that does not diminish the critical importance of a prevention education effort. That is how our Youth Crime Watch program will change attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors in schools or communities.

### **Why we educate?**

Remember that education is broader than the teaching component of Youth Crime Watch. Education may involve things such as public service announcements, music, posters, forums, and many other approaches that we might never have thought of as teaching.

Our educational plan will be based, in part, upon what we want to accomplish. Our goals might include:

- Having everyone take a single action such as never letting their book bags out of their immediate sight.
- Getting youth or others involved in an activity such as Youth Crime Watch.
- Telling others about something -- for example, just telling other students about the hard work our Youth Crime Watch is doing can build support for the program.
- Helping people to understand a problem (such as a sort of crime) and so that they can take action to prevent or stop it.
- Building the skills and knowledge of our audience.

### **How we educate**

There are many different approaches that we will adopt to teaching or educating others:

- Television or radio public service announcements
- Flyers, or brochures (hand them out, or leave them around schools and communities)
- Music, rap, poetry, dramatic readings, and dance
- Forums, debates, discussions, and critical thinking groups
- Surveys, which educate both those doing the survey and those being surveyed
- Posters
- Hotlines
- Games that have a purpose of teaching a prevention message
- Newspapers
- Tests or quizzes
- Resource persons who bring experience and learning to the group to be educated.
- Classroom curriculum, either as a curriculum insert or as a free-standing course
- Service-learning, which engages youth in reflection with the service they provide
- Face-to-face presentations by Youth Crime Watchers for peers, younger youth, or members of the community.

### **Our Audience**

**Small children** in pre-school and the early elementary grade levels are still developing their vocabulary, are learning from direct experience rather than

generalities or concepts, and are still learning to accept rules and understand that it is good if everyone follows those rules. Therefore, the educational objectives for this group must be able to be attained with very concrete visual presentation, must be in language understood by the young child, and must provide as much opportunity for hands-on work as possible.

**Older children and early adolescents** (ages 7 to 12 generally) can understand examples, classes of things, lists, and order of things to be done. Incorporating this sense as well as an appeal to their interests in peers, their school, and their community is important.

**Young teens** ages 13 to 15 are at a stage where it should be possible to deal in concepts and abstract thinking. Their need for peer affiliation and approval, for expanding their boundaries, and to be in control suggests their own active involvement in their learning through making suggestions, practice, and shaping the educational message themselves.

**Older teens** are beginning to take on the responsibilities normally associated with adult responsibility. Their appreciation for crime, violence, and drug prevention education should appeal to their role in society, the future, and their relationships with younger youth. This suggests that they play a major role in refining and reformulating the educational content and make application of it to society.

**Adult** learning is, in many traditional ways, based on five basic principles

1. leadership
2. experience
3. appeal
4. respect
5. novelty

Therefore, adults need to be actively involved in their own learning content and conditions. Their experiences should be respected because that often defines their position on issues surrounding their education. It should be clear why the educational information is important. Those doing the educating should establish an environment of respect and trust and fun. Finally, every adult wants to be appreciated on the basis of his or her own unique style and person (and so do youth)

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In providing crime, violence, or drug prevention education within the component of the Youth Crime Watch effort, the **basic concepts of Youth Crime Watch** should be remembered:

- Youth are part of the school and community solution to preventing and stopping crime.
- We are proud of ourselves and our school and community.
- We believe in taking care of ourselves and also in caring for others.
- Working together we can reduce and eliminate undesirable forces in the world.

## VEHICLE SAFETY

The bus safety component of Youth Crime Watch follows our "watching out, helping out" philosophy. This component stresses the importance of school bus safety and the helps youth report serious crime if it occurs on the bus.

Those of us who must ride the bus everyday to work or school have the right to feel safe on the bus. But this also means we have a responsibility. It means we must all act safely on the bus.

Our role as Youth Crime Watchers is to help keep the bus safe. While the driver is responsible for keeping everything under control, there may be some things that escape the driver's attention. This is when Youth Crime Watch can help, without undermining the driver's authority. When someone on the bus is showing off a weapon or passing out drugs, doing graffiti, or even when people are throwing objects at the bus, you can help ease the problem by reporting. Many problems can be reported later anonymously; however, when someone is in danger you should report right away. This also emphasizes passenger safety as well.

## MENTORING

Mentoring is a valuable component of your Youth Crime Watch program. Mentoring can do much to help youths build a safer community. It can:

1. Provide a structured, one-to-one relationship or partnership that focuses on the needs of the mentored participant.
2. Foster caring and supportive relationships.
3. Encourage individuals to develop their fullest potential.
4. Help an individual to develop his or her own vision for the future.
5. Develop active community partnerships.

### **Youth Crime Watch of Liberia key steps in mentoring**

Key steps in a mentoring project for our Youth Crime Watch program:

1. Create a statement of purpose and long-range plans
2. Devise a recruitment plan for both mentors and participants
3. Determine orientation of mentors and participants to be involved
4. Hold an intense eligibility screening for mentors and participants
5. Devise a training curriculum and train mentors and participants
6. Create a matching strategy
7. Monitor progress
8. Provide on-going training, materials and general support
9. Evaluate

 **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Conflict Resolution is a formal name for settling problems in a way that lets you hold on to your dignity, while letting others save theirs as well. Even when conflict resolution techniques don't yield the ideal outcomes, they tend to improve the situation; at the very least, they help us keep from making a bad situation worse.

What can Conflict Resolution do for youth and their school community? Lots! it can help youths feel better about just going to school. When you learn how to handle yourself better under pressure, you're not quite as worried about the misunderstandings, personal slights, and power struggles. When you set the tone-whether as an administrator, aide, student, teacher, or parent volunteer-your choice to act more responsibly shows leadership. When we do slip up, we just need to make any appropriate apology and/or restitution, and resolve to do better next time. That's the never-ending learning process, and over time it translates into less stress.

### **Our Strategy**

1. Decide what emotion you are feeling
2. Analyze the conflict
  1. What are your issues
  2. What is your relationship with the other person
  3. How does the conflict make you feel
3. Communication
  1. Allow each person to have a chance to voice their perspective
  2. Listen to the other person while speaking and do not interrupt
4. Identify the problem
  1. Clearly state what you think the problem is and allow the other person the same opportunity
  2. State what needs to change
5. Search for solutions: brainstorm ideas together that would alleviate the problem
6. Choose the solution
  1. Evaluate which ideas would work the best to alleviate the problem
  2. Make sure it is clear what both of you need to do
7. Closing: discuss what can be done differently to avoid similar situations in the future

## **1. Community Building**

No matter how much you know academically, people need to want to live and work together in order to talk things out. They need a sense of belonging, of community. That requires taking time to get to know people better. If we want someone else to listen to us, to respect our feelings, and to treat us fairly, we have to start that process. We can't fairly expect someone else to give us anything we're not willing to give. This is true for everyone -- students, administrators, parents, teachers, family members, employees. Building community, strengthening relationships, and modeling better behavior always starts in first person: "I am where it starts."

## **2. Knowing the Rules**

The Peace Education Foundation offers the *Rules for Fighting Fair* as basic guidelines for everyone from grade five through senior high, college, families, and employees. These rules are:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Focus on the problem.
3. Attack the problem, not the person.
4. Listen with an open mind.
5. Treat a person's feelings with respect.
6. Take responsibility for what you say and do.

## **3. Understanding Conflict**

Healthier attitudes toward arguments and disagreements start with understanding that conflict is natural and common. We'll never prevent all conflicts, but that's alright. Conflict can actually *help* us by provoking us to learn, to think, to understand. Exercise helps our physical muscles grow stronger, and conflict is like an emotional workout -- it can be tiring, even frustrating, but when you've handled it honestly and diligently, it can leave you stronger. It just makes more sense to face most conflicts openly. (That can be very uncomfortable at first for many of us, but anyone can learn to deal with it.)

## **4. Perception and Diversity**

People tend to see what they want to see, unless they take a deliberate interest in another person's viewpoint. If you want to make your home, classroom, or community more peaceful, you can start by adopting the attitude of "This person I'm upset with must have some good reason for seeing things that way. Maybe I need to listen more carefully to figure out what's going on." This carries some real advantages and benefits: first, if I do come to understand why that other person feels differently than I do, I'm likely to honestly care a little more. I'll actually want to help settle the dispute. Besides that, when I take the first step and give someone else a good listening-to, sometimes that leaves the other person more willing to hear my side, too.

## **5. Managing Anger and Other Difficult Feelings**

There's nothing intrinsically bad or dangerous about anger. It's what we often do with anger that creates the problems. Anger lets us know we should address the issues, and it stirs up the physical energy we need in order to do so. The trick is in learning how to keep control of our anger, rather than letting it control

us. This one can be a real challenge, but anyone can learn to handle it, given time and practice.

## **6. Effective Communication**

Communication skills such as reflective listening, I-Statements and respectful self-expression help us find common ground and dig deeper for solutions. Using them doesn't mean we'll always agree, but we can work together to forge workable solutions. Outcomes won't be perfect. You can't always get what you want. But even a partial answer is better than constant bickering, putting others down, and holding bitterness inside. And partial solutions are surely better than any kind of physical violence.



As typically practiced in schools, Peer Mediation is a process by which a couple of trained student mediators:

- Listen to other students (whom we'll call "disputants") who would otherwise have received a disciplinary/punitive referral
- And help the disputants create their own solutions to the conflict

### **What do Youth Crime Watch of Liberia mediators *not* do?**

Mediators don't provide the disputants with answers. They don't tell anyone what to do, or force anyone to apologize. They certainly don't punish. They don't report back to the teacher or the principal. They just carry out the process and complete some simple, confidential report forms for the mediation coordinator.

YCWL mediation is a voluntary alternative to traditionally punitive consequences. We use it only when the offense is serious enough that, if ignored, it would seem about to create a referral, but it hasn't yet crossed that line. The intent of mediation rather than punishment is that disputants not only lose less class time, but also that they learn that they can handle most of the typical interpersonal problems on their own -- without having to involve adults, and without getting themselves in bigger trouble. In a well-planned and implemented program, most disputants will come up with workable settlements. That doesn't mean perfect. It means that the disputants felt that the process was fair and reasonable, and that the solutions work for them.

### **Conflicts between adults and students**

Some schools allow the option of mediation between adults and students when both parties are willing, and when the issue at hand is not a serious breach of school policy. Though these can be effective, we emphasize the role of students working with students; student/adult mediations should be considered only when the peer mediation program is well established and widely accepted as successful.

### **What kind of issues should go to YCWL mediation Team?**

- Those that entail physical violence, or clear potential of it in the absence of adults
- Those that require suspensions. Some schools offer mediation for students who've been in fights as a possible trade-off. For example, a fight may require a three-day suspension, or a two-day suspension

followed by mediation. Such a policy may also require a parent meeting. (These are only examples of how some schools adapt the process; there's no absolute right or wrong in what can or can't be set up.)

- Anything illegal, e.g., weapons, drugs, vandalism, sexual harassment or abuse, etc.

### **What can Peer Mediation do for youth and your school community?**

Many schools who take the time to prepare for and diligently implement their peer mediation program find a significant decrease in disciplinary referrals -- as much as 70-80%. More concretely, students can avoid punishment for relatively small problems. More positively, it helps them realize that they really can do something significant about problems they have with other people. Teachers and administrators can spend more time teaching their lessons or dealing with other more pressing issues. Making a suitable referral for mediation takes up less time than what they'd normally do to address it in the classroom. The mediation itself generally brings students away from the session less likely to repeat the offense.

Peer Mediation does call for all adults involved to trust the mediators' ability to help disputants settle these issues on their own. Teachers must be willing to release mediators from class as needed. Parents and teachers must be willing to let their children go to mediation for these issues. Plus, it's wise to enlist financial help from local businesses and agencies who could provide materials, off-site training facilities, incentives or rewards such as mediator shirts, buttons, etc.

## PEER AND CROSS-AGE TEACHING

Educating others about crime, violence, pornography, and drug abuse and their effects is an important part of a Youth Crime Watcher's job.

Peer teaching is when students teach each other, and since students listen to other students when it comes to issues like drug use and criminal activity, peer and cross-age teaching can be a fun and effective way to accomplish this important goal.

Cross-age teaching is when people reach out to teach others who are older or younger than they are: for example, when students help adults learn to read or when they spread the word about crime prevention among older adults or among children much younger than they are.

## ACTION PROJECTS

Youth Crime Watch was conceived for the youth to address the problems of the school or community. The Action Project component of YCW provides the opportunity for youth to design and execute any kind of project to address the concerns of the school or community. Often action projects are developed by the YCW Core Group, but such projects may also occur as part of the regular operations of the YCW or be carried out by another component of the effort such as the patrol group.

An action project is an activity planned by the youth to help alleviate a problematic situation and/or develop the resiliency of the school or community

against crime, drugs and violence. The planning process of this project builds leadership and team-building skills along with spirit and pride.

### **Below are some examples of YCWL Action Project**

**Victim/witness assistance:** Help students who have been crime victims by getting counseling for them, accompanying them to court or helping to get stolen items replaced or damages repaired.

**Forums and discussion:** Hold assemblies that help peers think about and make constructive contributions to problems and needs that affect their lives, such as drunk driving, pregnancy, higher education, and wider job opportunities for youth.

**Peer counseling:** Set up counseling services, including informal group sessions, one-on-one appointments, or hot lines, which can address personal problems, substance abuse, and many other issues.

**Fight Vandalism:** Emphasize school pride. Get together to paint over graffiti and fix damaged property. Use films, posters, brochures, and other things to educate your peers on the true costs of vandalism. Challenge everyone to make the school as good-looking as possible.

**Warm lines:** Operate a call-in service to help young students, especially those at home alone, during after-school hours. Volunteers can offer advice, a friendly voice, and positive direction.

**Drug abuse prevention campaigns:** Provide information to peers, younger children, and adults on dangers and effects of alcohol and other drugs. Get training to be peer counselors to help other young people with problems. Organize events to show how much fun a drug-free lifestyle can be.

**Plays, videos, raps, puppet shows, and other entertainment:** Write and perform skits and shows for other students, younger children, and the neighborhood, dealing with almost any issue, from drug abuse prevention to being at home alone.

**Student courts:** Help your school set up a student-run court with student judges, lawyers, jurors, and court officers where you can hear and try cases involving fellow students. Student courts are not mock courts—they make real judgments and impose real sentences.

**Escort service or check-in for senior citizens:** Walk older people to the bank or help them run other errands; phone seniors at an arranged time daily to make sure everything is all right.

**Student teaching corps:** Set up a student teaching service to help educate peers about the effects of crime and about preventing it. Teach younger children personal protection and other skills.

**Home security surveys:** With the police department's training and approval, provide information on making homes safer. Help residents who are disabled to make needed physical security improvements in their homes.

**Community clean-ups:** Work with others to clean up trashy, run-down, or overgrown public areas—or private property with the owner's permission. Spruce up schools, neighborhood parks, and yards of those unable to do the work. Wipe out or paint over graffiti.

**Fairs and displays:** Hold a safety fair in the school parking lot or design educational displays for malls, schools, hospitals, businesses, and community centers to get more people outside your school or program involved in crime prevention projects.

**Summer programs:** Plan and staff recreation programs for young children; build playgrounds; help provide outings for disadvantaged or institutionalized children.

**Writing, music, or art contests:** Organize these for the school or the whole community, to have fun, educate, and build interest.