

We are family: Adult support reduces youths' risk of violence exposure

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Adults can have a bigger influence on youths growing up in poor, violent neighborhoods than they may realize, according to a study to be presented Sunday, April 26 at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in San Diego.

Researchers found that males living in Philadelphia who identified supportive relationships with parents and other adult [family members](#) were significantly less likely to report that they were involved in [violence](#) or had witnessed violence.

"This is good news. In neighborhoods with high levels of [community violence](#) and few safe spaces to spend time, having supportive adult connections is protective against [violence exposure](#)," said lead researcher Alison Culyba, MD MPH, clinical fellow in the Craig-Dalsimer Division of Adolescent Medicine at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Dr. Culyba and her colleagues interviewed 283 males ages 10-24 years, 98 percent of whom were African-American. They asked youths about their adult and peer connections, involvement in violence and witnessing violence, school performance, and substance use. Youths also were asked to characterize the nature of relationships with family members whom they viewed as having an important role in their lives. Relationships were divided into three categories: supportive, unsupportive and mixed supportive/unsupportive.

Supportive relationships with adult family members were common

among youths, with nearly 70 percent saying they had at least one supportive adult in their lives, including mothers (60 percent), fathers (27 percent) and maternal grandmothers (15 percent).

One-third of youths reported a high violence involvement, 30 percent reported high violence witnessing and 17 percent reported both.

Participants who reported having at least one supportive adult in their life were significantly less likely to be involved in or to witness violence.

"These findings are consistent with other research that shows supportive adult connections are protective in so many ways, including increasing [school performance](#), decreasing substance use, delaying first sexual encounter and contributing to mental health. This is an exciting study because it clearly places violence on this list," said Dr. Culyba, a PhD student in epidemiology at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. "Next steps include thinking about how society can best prepare adults for this critical role so we can work together to safeguard [youth](#)."

More information: Dr. Culyba will present "Examining the Role of Supportive Adults in Violence Exposure Among Urban Male Youth" from 4:45-5 p.m. PT Sunday, April 26. To view the study abstract, go to [www.abstracts2view.com/pas/vie ... hp?nu=PAS15L1_2755.6](http://www.abstracts2view.com/pas/vie...hp?nu=PAS15L1_2755.6)

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