

Parents Are the Foundation

Teens and Safety

October 2007

Do youth in Iowa County feel safe in their schools, homes and communities?

Research from the Iowa County Search Survey of 1274 7th – 12th graders shows that 78% of the teens are never afraid of walking around their neighborhood, 78% are never afraid of getting hurt by someone at school and 87% are never afraid of getting hurt by someone at home. While this is great news for Iowa County teens, about 20% of our teens do report they are afraid sometimes or often in their neighborhoods and schools and 13% report being afraid sometimes or often at home.

Teens who feel threatened or unsafe are less likely to venture forth and take some risks. Teens that are safe are more likely to feel secure enough to try new things and are more likely to make positive contributions to their school and community. Safety is an important asset for young people.

How often do you feel afraid of--	Never	Once in a while/ Sometimes	Often/Always
Walking around your neighborhood	78	18	3
Getting hurt by someone at school	78	19	4
Getting hurt by someone at home	87	10	3

Chart 1: Percentage of Iowa County Teen Responses to “How often do you feel afraid.....in your neighborhood, school or home?”

Safety is a concern for the teens that feel threatened or are being bullied and for the teen who is the bully. Youth who are bullied might avoid school, become withdrawn and depressed or may exhibit the bullying behavior on other teens.

Bullying behavior can lead to more violent actions against others. The Iowa County Search survey asked teens to indicate “what would you do if someone hit or pushed you for no reason?” Chart 2 shows that although 47% of the teens reported they would react non-violently, 53% reported they would hit them back or hurt them worse.

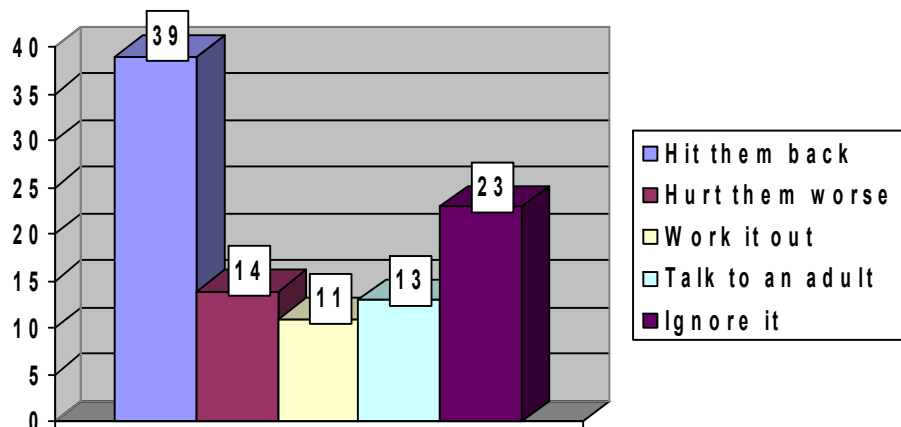


Chart 2: Percentage of Iowa County teen responses to “What would you do if someone hit or pushed you?”

The good news is that according to Steve Small, UW-Extension Child Development specialist, teens whose parents take an active role in their lives are at lower risk for becoming victims of violence.

Parents can start by asking children as young as 5 about bullying behavior. Children that young, who are engaging in bullying, should be taught to apologize, ask forgiveness and shake hands.

If your teen feels unsafe or threatened, Search Institute suggests three ways to help your teen feel safer:

√ Acknowledge your teen's feelings of fear and discuss them openly.

√ Give practical suggestions on how your teen can be safe in specific circumstances.

√ Reassure your teen that one of your goals is to keep her or him safe.

Remember that teens who feel safe often act in these ways:

- ▶ They're relaxed.
- ▶ They're warm, open and friendly.
- ▶ They enjoy being creative.
- ▶ They dream big and take risks.
- ▶ They're confident and secure.



One of the five promises in America's Promise states "Every child and youth needs and deserves to be physically and emotionally safe everywhere they are—from the actual places of families, schools, neighborhoods and communities to the virtual places of media."

Teens need places in the community where they can participate in constructive activities in a safe environment. These activities might include summer sports, dance lessons, neighborhood picnics or ball games, 4-H club activities, or summer jobs as well as numerous other activities.

Look for activities for your teen that spark their interests, challenge them academically and gives them opportunities to contribute to their communities.

We want Iowa County teens to feel safe and secure at home, at school and in the community.

Source: Search Institute, Ideas for Parents, #13, 1997

REMEMBER: PARENTS ARE THE FOUNDATION!

"Parents are the Foundation" is a monthly, school-year newsletter containing information from the 2005 Survey of Student Resources and Assets in Iowa County Schools by America's Promise and the Search Institute and the University of Wisconsin-Extension Iowa County. This series is adapted from the UW-Extension Teen Assessment Project "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" newsletter series. This issue was written by Deb Ivey and edited by Ruth Schriefer and Sarah Weier. Thanks are extended to the 1,264 7th to 12th graders in Highland, Mineral Point, Pecatonica and River Valley who participated in the survey. For more information, contact us at UW-Extension Iowa County, 608-935-0391 or on the web at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/iowa/>