



# ***Effective Communication Training***

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# VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE

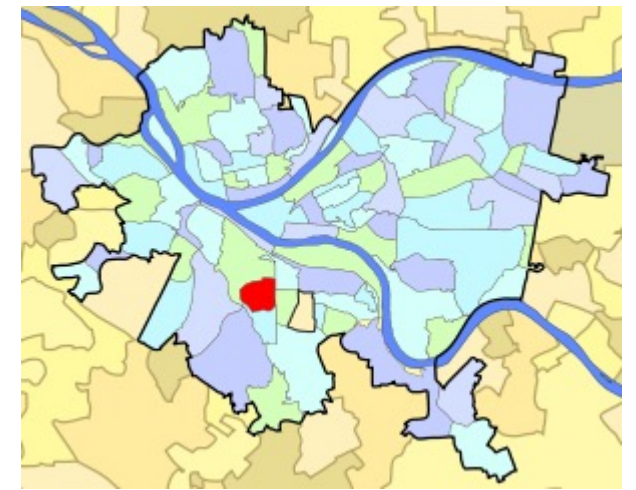
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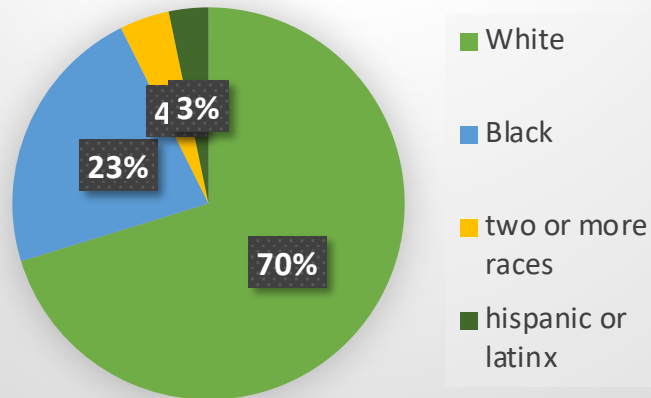
- Voices Against Violence (VAV) grew out of a street outreach initiative by Richard Carrington, Sr. working with Pittsburgh gang members in 1992.
- Formally established in 1995 in response to a growing need for holistic community-based programs that serve youth involved with gangs, drugs, and guns in South Pittsburgh.
- VAV became one of the first and foremost anti-violence organizations in Pittsburgh, pioneering programs in Street Mediation, Conflict and Restorative Justice Practices.



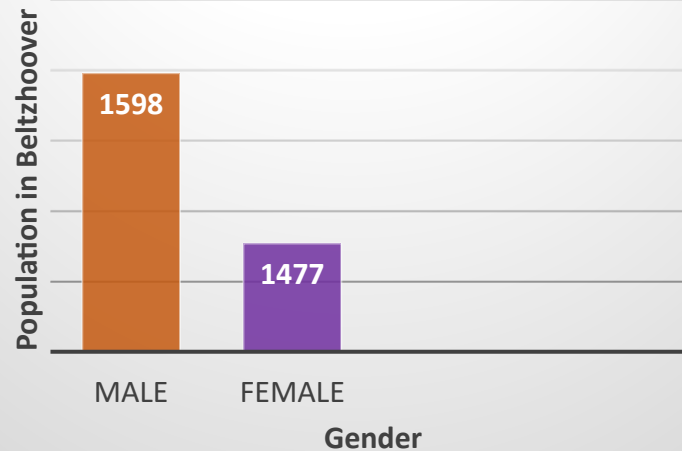
# Beltzhoover Demographics



### Race in Beltzhoover



### Beltzhoover Gender



City-data.com crime index for city in 2018 (higher means more crime):

City:  340.2

U.S. average:  219.3

**Average household size:**

Beltzhoover:  4.5 people

Pittsburgh:  1.9 people

- Beltzhoover is located in South Pittsburgh. It is named after Malchoir Beltzhoover, a tradesman from the early 1800's
- Mckinley Park is a community gathering spot
- The community has been impacted by increasing amount of gun violence

# VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE

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VAV serves male and female youth ages 4 to 24 residing in South Pittsburgh communities.

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VAV Summer Camp serves children ages 4-14. The camp is divided into 3 age groups 4-7, 8-11 and 12-14 male and female groups. The junior staff are participants from Learn and Earn starting from age 14. Our senior staff go up to 40+ in age.

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Program participants are economically and socially under-served, with the majority meeting the eligibility criteria to qualify for the free or reduced lunch program.

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Youth come to Voices Against Violence in a variety of ways. Some are mandated to the program by local magistrates or probation officers, there are school or agency referrals, and others learn about the organization from family, friends, or community members.

## What Were our Roles as BTG interns?



Consultants and Administration



Function as Providers and lead mindfulness sessions with all age groups



Observe dynamics at camp and offer insight



Develop 6-month, 1-year, and 5-year plan for VAV



Conducted trainings on effective communication, trauma-informed approaches to working with youth, and facilitating discussions with campers surrounding life topics

**Our Project:  
What Needs is  
it Meeting?**



# Project Objectives

Our objective is to provide a training manual for the Senior Counselor staff at VAV to effectively train the Junior Counselors and teach communication skills.

- The manual will include a curriculum set for Senior Counselor staff offering guidance for training the Junior Counselor staff.
- This includes a physical manual and training videos on communication styles and how to communicate effectively.



# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TRAINING

## **Why We Chose this Project?**

- Senior counselors train the junior counselors from Learn and Earn. While watching the training, we noticed a lack of engagement. It was unclear how effectively junior counselors were retaining the information.
- We observed some situations and altercations that could have been avoided if the concerns were communicated effectively and appropriately.
- Effective communication by the counselors will help campers feel more comfortable with relying on them for support, which can in turn reduce violence overtime
- Effective communication->effective mentorship-> improvement in emotional, educational, and social outcomes for youth



## Effective Communication

It is important that when dealing with conflict we use assertive communication as opposed to passive or aggressive communication. This way we can find a solution and model to our campers how to express our feelings and frustrations.

### Passive

**Passive Communication** is when a person puts the needs of others above their own. This person may not stand up/advocate for themselves, and they don't express their needs. Since they don't express their needs, they can be taken advantage of

- What does it look like?
  - Soft spoken/quiet
  - Poor eye contact/looks down
  - Lack of confidence
  - Allows others to take advantage
  - Don't express one's own needs
  - Prioritize needs of others

### Aggressive

**Aggressive Communication** is when a person expresses that only what they want, feel, or need is what matters. They can ignore the other person's needs in the process or even sometimes bully them.

What does Aggressive Communication look like?

### Assertive Communication

**Assertive Communication** makes sure to acknowledge the importance of BOTH parties needs. Assertive Communication is the happy medium between passive and aggressive communication. Assertive communication involves both standing up or advocating for their needs while still listening and respecting the other party. Assertive communication is a mix of being confident while also being willing to compromise and find common ground.

What does Assertive Communication look like?

- Confident tone/body language
- Good eye contact
- Listens without interruption
- Willing to compromise
- Clearly states needs and wants
- Stands up for own rights

### Example:

As a counselor, your group was scheduled to be in the top room for an activity. When you get there, another counselor has their group in there, despite not being scheduled. They say that they are going to use the room for their group. How might you respond?

Passive response: "Um yeah, that's fine; I guess we will find a different space".

Aggressive response: "This is stupid! You shouldn't be in here, so you better get out!"

Assertive response: "I can see that you want to use this room for your group, but my group is on the schedule for being in this room. Is there a way we can work this out and find a different location for your group?"

# Our Product: Counselor Training Materials

# Our Product: Training Materials

## Allergic Reactions

Every Year, we have campers with various allergies. Some that are known and unknowns. With that in mind, it is important that our counselors know how to identify the signs of an allergic reaction.

**Cardiovascular System**  
Swelling, dizziness, fainting, weakness, pale skin, bluish coloration

**Skin**  
Hives, itching, redness, swelling, welts

**Digestive System**  
Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain

**Respiratory System**  
Wheezing, tightness or pain in chest, difficulty breathing, coughing, runny nose, watery, itchy eyes

## DOS AND DONT'S FOR WORKING WITH KIDS

DO	DONT
✓ Be enthusiastic!	✗ Don't scream or yell at the campers
✓ Be creative with activities	✗ Don't hit the campers
✓ Be attentive to their needs	✗ Don't single out campers
✓ Be role models	✗ Don't leave campers unattended
✓ Ask for help when needed	✗ Don't sit around on your phone

## HOW TO GIVE AN EPIPEN

**Step One**

**Step Two**

**Step Three**

**Step Four**

### TRAUMA-INFORMED TEACHING TIPS

- 1 Use calm and predictable transitions<sup>a</sup>
  - 2 Recognize when a child is going into "survival mode" and respond empathetically<sup>b</sup>
  - 3 Teach social and emotional skills and self-regulation skills<sup>b</sup>
  - 4 Create quiet areas where kids can practice mindfulness<sup>b</sup>
  - 5 Provide sensory material<sup>b</sup>
  - 6 Praise publicly and criticize privately<sup>a</sup>
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<sup>a</sup> Dorado, J., & Zakrzewski, V. (2013). How to Help a Traumatized Child in the Classroom.  
<sup>b</sup> Terrasi, S., & de Galarce, P. C. (2017). Trauma and learning in America's classrooms. Phi Delta Kappan, 98(6), 35-41.





# Healthy People 2030

## Reduce physical fighting among adolescents — IVP-11

### Summary

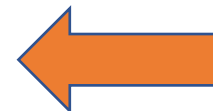
Adolescents who get into fights are at risk for injury and are more likely to take part in other dangerous behaviors, like substance use and weapon carrying. Many high school students have been in at least 1 fight in the past year. Teaching adolescents life skills, connecting them to caring adults, and creating safe environments where youth live, learn, and play are examples of strategies that can reduce the risk for fighting and related outcomes.

## Increase the proportion of adolescents who have an adult they can talk to about serious problems — AH-03

### Summary

Adolescents who have an adult to confide in are less likely to take part in risky behaviors. Taking steps to prevent these behaviors is important because they're linked to many chronic health problems later in life. Evidence shows that mentoring programs are an effective way to improve behavioral, social, emotional, and academic outcomes in adolescents.

## Increase the proportion of trauma-informed early childcare settings and elementary and secondary schools — AH-D01



This goal is still in development

# Evaluating Quality of our Product



Pre-test and Post Test



Survey



Staff Evaluations



# Recommendations

1. Utilize graduate interns from Pitt School of Social Work and Public Health as administrative staff year-round

2. Balance family dynamics while in the workplace

3. Ideally have camp activities and staff set months in advance

4. Have documented protocol and code of conduct



# What We Learned

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- **Adaptability-** Working within a community setting means things will not always go as planned. We learned to go more with the flow and adapt to the changing environment
- **Humility-** We were entering the site as outsiders to the community; we had to practice acknowledging limits to our experiences and knowledge. This also pertains to recommendations we provide to staff.
- **Everyone Has a Story-** We learned how important it is to consider what experiences people may be going through and to not be so quick to assume.

# Personal Reflections

"I feel like I learned so much in a few short weeks working at Voices Against Violence and Bridging the Gaps that they can't teach you in a classroom. We found ourselves utilizing many of the concepts we learned in our social work and public health courses, such as considering the person-in-environment and best practices in community engagement. Thank you to our community mentors for treating us as family and making us feel like our input was valued. I'm so thankful to have been paired with Emmanuela and to tackle so many new adventures together."- Nidhi 😊





# Personal Reflections

"Being that Voices Against Violence this summer allowed me to step out of my comfort zone. I had the chance to develop and hone I skills I didn't know I had. As an aspiring social worker, I found reassurance of why I chose this field. I found myself using skills such as trauma informed approach to address campers and situations we faced on site. I also got first-hand experience in running an organization and working on the community level to engage the community we are serving. This summer I gained more than just work experience. I got a family. Our mentors showered us with so much love and care that being away from our families and friends didn't seem so bad anymore. They made us feel what we thought and felt mattered. The kids also reminded us constantly how much our presence made a difference to them and camp overall. Most importantly, I had the best partner! I honestly do not know how I would have gotten through the summer without her. This is definitely a summer I'll never forget"- Emmanuela ❤️





**THANK  
YOU!**

**We would like to extend  
our gratitude to our  
community mentors for  
their love and support  
this summer and our  
faculty mentor for her  
patience and expertise.  
You made this a summer  
we will never forget!**