

# Research finds parents can play a role in preventing teen fighting

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Nearly one-fourth of all teens reported being involved in a physical fight

in the past year, with higher rates of violent altercations among African American and Latino adolescents. In the first study of its kind, researchers conducted focus groups with African American and Latino parents regarding teen violence.

Findings from their study suggested that addressing the [parents'](#) attitudes about fighting, involving them in [violence prevention programs](#) and tailoring programs to different racial/ethnic groups may improve the effectiveness of prevention programs.

In the study, published online in the *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, researchers found Latino parents condoned fighting only as a last resort while some African American parents stated that fighting is sometimes necessary. Previous studies had suggested such views among parents are likely to lead to higher rates of fighting among youth.

Latino parents in the study said they taught their children the consequences of fighting, how to regulate emotions and nonviolent means for resolving disputes. African American parents in the study endorsed nonviolent methods but expressed some doubts about the effectiveness of such strategies. African American parents also suggested corporal punishment as a method to prevent fighting. But they acknowledged that this is only a short-term strategy.

"Fighting can lead to serious injuries and even death, so we felt it was important to identify effective ways to prevent physical altercations among adolescents," said Rashmi Shetgiri, MD, a Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute (LA BioMed) lead researcher and corresponding author of the study. "Most violence prevention programs focus on school-based interventions with little involvement of families. This study suggests that it is crucial to involve families, especially parents, in violence [prevention programs](#)."

The researchers, who noted that little is known about parental views about fighting, conducted two focus groups of African American parents and two [focus groups](#) of Latino parents of urban adolescents aged 13-17. Of the 17 participants, 76% were female. The Latino parents stated that parents are the most protective influence against fighting and that fighting prevention should start at home. African American parents also said 'teaching starts at home.'

"In addition to addressing parental views about fighting, our study suggests that teaching parents and adolescents how to effectively use nonviolent methods to resolve conflicts and increasing their use of these methods may help reduce violent altercations among African American and Latino teens," said Dr. Shetgiri. "We also determined that involving all the influential members of a teens' community—from teachers to peers—would be beneficial."

She said [violence prevention](#) programs could be more effective by tailoring them to different racial/ethnic groups, such as addressing African American parents' communications with their children about the acceptability of [fighting](#) and recognizing the prominent role of the family among Latinos.

Provided by Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor

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