

IT'S YOUR COMMUNITY

OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, students will be able to:

- List problems in the community
- Identify and analyze a specific problem
- Define and identify stakeholder groups
- Discuss how communities can work together to solve problems
- Plan a project in the community (optional)

MATERIALS NEEDED

Chalkboard/flip chart

Chalk/markers

Pens

Package of colored dots (enough for three for each student and visitor) and/or many colored markers

Masking tape

Nametags

Overhead projector (optional, activity rules can be written on a blackboard/flip chart)

HANDOUTS

1. A Problem in Lincoln Heights
2. Steps for Problem Solving
3. Lincoln Heights Community Plan
4. Guidelines for Advocates (optional)

COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE

Invite several leaders from community groups who are concerned about crime, violence, police relations, citizen apathy, youth empowerment, etc. and one police officer working as part of a community policing effort. Ask the visitors to bring information about opportunities for youth involvement in the community and/or community policing.

The ideal number of visitors depends on the number of students in the class. One officer or community leader for every four or five students is preferable. Send a copy of the session and the "Suggestions for the Community Resource Person" found in the introduction of the manual when confirming the date and location.



Have the resource person help you where you see this icon.

PREPARING TO TEACH

- Copy **Handouts**.
- Write up and post the session outcomes.
- Prepare materials.
- Write up the activity rules on a flip chart, the blackboard or on a transparency.

REVIEW TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Brainstorm
- Jigsaw

LOCAL LAWS AND PROCEDURES

There are no local law adaptations necessary for this lesson.

A PROBLEM IN LINCOLN HEIGHTS

1

If visiting community leaders or officers are present, introduce them and explain that they will be helping with the lesson.

2

Distribute **Handout 1, A Problem in Lincoln Heights**, to students and resource people.

Handout 1: A PROBLEM IN LINCOLN HEIGHTS

Lincoln Heights is a neighborhood with a high crime rate, a lot of violence, and strained relations between residents and the police. Residents feel that police aren't doing enough to help the neighborhood, while police officers feel that the residents, especially the youth, are the cause of the community's problems.

Residents are tired of drug dealers, gunfights and the police attitudes towards youth. Most of the people in the neighborhood are afraid to go out at night and sometimes even during the day. Residents resent being seen as the problem; youth are especially offended at this characterization. The police do not answer residents' calls, and even the fire trucks don't respond quickly.

The police are also getting frustrated. They want to close down the drug markets, but cannot get nearby residents to help them. After a violent crime has occurred, police in squad cars arrive on the scene, but can't find any witnesses, even though everyone has seen what happened. Youth, in particular, are hostile toward police authority.

3

Read the Lincoln Heights situation aloud to the class.

4



Have students identify and list the many problems in Lincoln Park. As the students run out of ideas, ask the community resource people to add anything they think is missing.



NOTE: When the students are identifying the problems, do not evaluate their comments by saying things like "good idea" or "do you really think that's the problem?" This often limits student input. Be sure to include the community resource people's perceptions of the problems also.

5

Write the list on the blackboard or flip chart. It will likely include:

- poor relationship between residents and police
- drug and gun violence
- lack of crime witnesses
- dangerous situation for police and residents
- perception of slow response time when residents call for police and fire trucks

6

Make sure everyone understands the problems listed. Discuss problems only to clarify, not evaluate. Combine similar problems.

7

If you recorded the “problems” on a sheet of flip chart paper, give each student and guests three colored dot stickers (or one marker, which they will use to make three marks). If you recorded the “problems” on the chalkboard, give each student and guest a piece of chalk.

8

Ask them to examine the list and decide which three problems they think are the most important for the community to solve (prioritizing the list). Then ask everyone to come up to the list at the same time and mark his/her three choices.



NOTE: Make sure that everyone participates in this activity at the same time. If students take turns, then some may be influenced by the selections of others. The goal is to get each person’s independent evaluation of the three most important problems.

9

Tally the votes and circle the top three problems on the list. Use the number one problem for the rest of the lesson or ask the class which one of the three problems they would like to work on. *Be sure that the problem is one that is appropriate for community problem solving.* The rest of this lesson should be adapted to fit the problem chosen.

10

Work for just a few minutes to create a one or two sentence statement of the problem. Write it clearly on the board or paper so that it continues to be visible to everyone. For example: “police are too slow” might become, “Police do not respond quickly enough to calls from residents.”

11

Explain that identifying and clearly stating the problem, as you have just done, is an essential first step in community problem-solving.

12



Tell the students that the next step is identifying *stakeholders*. Ask if anyone knows what this word means. Ask the resource people to help. Define the word “stakeholder” with the class:

Stakeholders are all the people involved in a problem and impacted by it.

13

Ask the students who the major stakeholders are in the problem. These might include:

- the residents
- youth
- the police
- businesses in the area
- the drug dealers

14

Explain that an effective solution to any problem requires that everyone involved, all the stakeholders, be a part of planning and creating a solution.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM

1

Distribute **Handout 2, Problem Solving Steps** and review it with students.

HANDOUT 2: STEPS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Describe the problem (make sure you know what the problem is).
2. Identify the stakeholders and their need to be involved. (Do the involved people really want to solve the problem?)
3. Think of all the alternative solutions. (Think of different things to do to solve the problem.)
4. Consider the consequences to each alternative. (What will happen, good or bad, if you try that alternative?)
5. Choose the alternative that seems to be the best solution and try it.
6. If the solution does not work, try another alternative.

2

Tell the students that they will represent stakeholders and try to solve the posted problem using these steps. When they have decided on the solution or solutions they wish to use, they will participate in a community meeting.

3

Break the students into groups of no more than four or five and assign each group to represent a stakeholder group (see **Jigsaw** in the “Teaching Strategies” section of this manual). Hand out nametags and have students write their stakeholder group on them.

If you have a large class, you may have more than one group for each stakeholder group or think of other stakeholders. Tell the students to work in their stakeholder groups to come up with possible solutions to the problem and decide on the best one (keeping their stakeholder role in mind). Each group member should write down what was decided as the best solution and a couple of alternatives (they can take notes on the handout). Give the groups 10 -15 minutes to come up with their best solution (s) from the perspective of their role.

4

If possible, assign a resource person to each group and ask them to help facilitate the discussion, but let the students come up with their own ideas. As much as possible, align the resource people with their knowledge, i.e. police officer with the police group.

5

When the students have completed their tasks, reorganize the groups so that each new group has at least one representative of each stakeholder group and (if possible) a resource person. Tell everyone that the resource people will now be neutral and that the students are on their own representing their interest groups. Ask the resource people to help guide the process, but allow students to work toward compromise with as little help as possible.

6

Give one copy of **Handout 3, Lincoln Heights Community Plan** to each new group and ask them to pick a recorder (who will fill out the plan) and a reporter (who will share the plan with the rest of the class later).



NOTE: Adjust the handout to reflect the number of “stakeholder” groups.

7

Tell them they must work together as representatives of their stakeholder groups to come up with a plan for the whole community. Read the handout aloud. Remind them that they may have conflicting ideas from their last group about what they and the others should do to solve the problem. Remind them that their job now is to reach a compromise everyone can agree on.

HANDOUT 3: LINCOLN HEIGHTS COMMUNITY PLAN

1. List each person's alternative solutions.
2. Think of the consequences of each solution and begin to choose solutions that work best for each person.
3. As a group - agree on what each stakeholder group will do to help solve the problem.
Stakeholder group _____ will:

Stakeholder group _____ will:

Stakeholder group _____ will:
Stakeholder group _____ will:
Stakeholder group _____ will:

8

Circulate around the room to make sure all of the groups understand and are progressing.

9

Bring the groups back together and have them each report back to the class on what they came up with. Let the other students ask questions about each group's plan. The entire group can answer the questions.

10

After each group has reported, ask the following questions:

- What was the same in most of the group's plans?
- What was different?
- What was the hardest part of coming up with the plan as a community?
- How do you think this process would work with people in a real community?
- How would you ensure that each stakeholder did his/her part?
- Do they think this plan will work to solve the problems?



11

Ask the community resource people to talk **briefly** about how this process compares to what goes on in their communities and if any efforts like this one are in progress. Ask if youth are involved. Can they be? How?

12



If a community police officer is present, ask her or him to talk **briefly** about the concept of community policing and how it works in the community.

SUMMARY/DEBRIEF

1

Ask students if any of the problems they listed are similar to problems in their communities. List their ideas on the board.

Is there anything they can do? Who would the stakeholders be? Can they locate them?
What could they do to get people interested in solving a local problem?

2

Ask the resource person if any action is being taken on these problems. How can youth be involved in the solution?

3

Do they think this process could be used in their community? What would you change or do differently? Take this opportunity to talk about a group project with the class, if possible. *See optional activity.*

PROJECT PLANNING ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL)

1

If it is a possibility in your setting, you could involve the youth in planning a project to solve a problem as an extension to the program.

2

Ask the class if there are any problems in their community or facility that they are interested in working to solve.

3

Arrange for additional meetings with the youth and invite the community resource people to assist. At these meetings, youth and police should use, **Handout 2, Steps for Problem Solving** and **Handout 4, Guidelines for Advocates**, which provides helpful tips for students who are interested in tackling a problem in their community.

WEB RESOURCES

ACORN (Association of Community Organization for Reform Now) is one of the largest community organizing groups in the country. You can visit their Web site at:
www.acorn.org

For information about community policing you can visit:
www.communitypolicing.org

To learn more about youth activism and for resources on developing a campaign, visit:

Speakout.com- **<http://speakout.com/activism/issues/>**
Youth In Action Network- **www.teaching.com/act/**