

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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WORDS NOT WEAPONS

BALTIMORE CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT: YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

With the goal of bringing awareness to youth violence prevention, the Baltimore City Health Department will be launching a communication campaign centered in Baltimore's emergency rooms (ERs) and spanning across neighborhoods, schools, and community hubs across the city. The campaign, called "Words Not Weapons," is a way to spread a message of non-violent conflict resolution, and it focuses on *communication* as being the key to violence prevention.

The Words Not Weapons campaign asks the following pledges from three groups of constituents, to build a healthier, safer, and stronger Baltimore:

1. **For youth in Baltimore**, we ask you to be the first and most important part of the solution. When faced with conflict, commit to using words, not weapons. Take the time to: **W**alk away, **O**rganize your thoughts, **R**each out for help, and **D**ecide not to fight. Above all, if you have concerns or frustrations, talk them out. Communication is a better choice than conflict.
2. **For adults in Baltimore**, in all our neighborhoods and schools and stores and beyond, we ask you to be the support system that our youth need. Instead of closing the curtains, walking by, or looking away, be present and communicate that you care. Be the person that a youth can reach out to, and help them decide not to fight.
3. **For medical professionals (particularly doctors, nurses and other providers in ERs) in Baltimore**, we ask you to set aside the "treat and street" mentality, and instead commit to treating violent injuries as more than just medical issues. Discuss Baltimore's current epidemic of violence with patients and pass out Words Not Weapons flyers/resource cards to your patients (especially to youth). While it may take a few moments of time, it is this type of intentional communication with patients that can and will save lives.

The time for stronger action against violence is now. Everyone in Baltimore, whether young or old, threatened by violence or distant from it, has the responsibility to recognize violence is a public health issue with consequences not just for today, but for generations to come. Because of that, we must today decide to stem the rising tide of violence in our city, and build a healthier community out of words, not weapons.

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