As with any other project, careful and extensive planning is the key to success for youth survey projects. We highly recommend you involve youth from the very beginning of the planning process.

We recommend you schedule an initial planning meeting with all relevant parties. Typically this includes:

- Adult coordinators. It is a good idea to have 2-3 working on this project, depending on size and scope.
- Youth. We recommend 10-20 youth, depending on how many surveys you plan on collecting.

The objectives of this initial planning meeting are:

1. Agree on the objective for the youth survey. Specifically,

   - **What do you want to know at the end of the survey? Some examples:**
     - Are you looking to plan new programs that you want youth opinions on?
     - Are you trying to highlight the need in the community for more program funding?
     - Are you trying to bring awareness to the community of the existence of violence against youth in the community?

   - **Who are you trying to influence with your findings?**

   - **How many surveys do you want to collect?**
     - If you are hoping to attract media attention for your findings, you will want to collect 300 – 500 surveys.
two

STEP
Designing the Survey Instrument

You will want to include questions that get to the heart of the issues of concern for your committee. If youth possessing guns is a major concern, you will want to be sure to include several questions to get to what motivates them to carry a gun, how they are able to get access, and what the community could do to influence their decision.

It is imperative to bring youth into this process, both to find out what issues are important to them and how the questions should be phrased. You will want to be sure questions are written in language that youth understand and use regularly.

three

STEP
Conducting the Surveys

Now that you have done the planning and prep work, it's time for what is probably the part of the survey process that is the most fun, conducting the surveys.

In our experience, it works best to send youth out in teams of two or three. These teams will go to the selected locations with printed surveys in hand and ask youth to complete the surveys. It is best to have the survey participants complete the surveys on the spot. If you give them the opportunity to take it home, the chances are slim that you will get it back again.
While this is often the least enjoyable part of the survey, it is also one of the most critical. We have found that creating an Excel chart to enter the responses to be most efficient.

Give yourself time. We found that to enter 400 surveys it takes about 15-20 hours. Again, this is an area that "Choices for Youth" can be of assistance if you do not have the people-power and/or computer capacities.

Once you have your results, it is important to share them with your community. While the results may have internal benefits for your organization, we highly recommend that you do what you can to publicize the results to the wider community.

While holding a press conference can be an expensive endeavor, there are numerous inexpensive ways to release your youth survey results.

Letter to the Editor
After the front page, the editorial page is the second most frequently read section of the newspaper. It is also the best place to reach your policy makers. You may want to consider having the Executive Director or head of your organization write a letter to the editor sharing the results of your youth survey and what the results mean for your community.

Websites or Newsletters
If your organization has a website or a newsletter, we recommend highlighting your results in these materials.

City Council and/or County Supervisor Meetings
Your city and county government most likely meets on a weekly basis to discuss issues affecting your community. At each of these meetings there is a section of the meeting where members of the public can share information or make announcements. This public forum is an excellent way to let your elected officials know what is going on in their communities.

Youth Papers
Another option is to have the youth who participated in the survey process write a story about it for their school's newspaper.

Community Meetings
Partner with other organizations and neighborhood groups. Provide them with valuable information in a setting where you will have a large audience.
We hope this information is useful and applicable. If you need further direction or any assistance in these steps, please contact "Choices for Youth" at info@preventviolence.org.