

# Office of the Governor

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Governor Highlights State Efforts to Prevent Youth Violence Visits Statewide Youth Program Promoting Anti-Violence Message**

Governor Christie Whitman today visited students at the Essex County Technical Careers Center's "Students Against Violence and the Victimization of Youth" (SAVVY) program and told them it is in their power to help keep violence out of their lives. While speaking with students the Governor told them the state would do all it could to help keep New Jersey's schools and neighborhoods free of violence.

Gov. Whitman highlighted a new program that will help students prevent violence and keep it out of their schools and their communities. The V-Free initiative, announced by the Governor last Tuesday, creates a tip line, 1-877-624-8082, for students to call when they are concerned about a potentially dangerous situation. A website, [www.v-free.nj.gov](#), is also available to provide resource information for students, teachers and parents. In addition, \$75,000 will be made available to help students get involved in the effort to prevent violence.

"It's about what you can do, working with each other and adults, to mediate conflict, change the culture, and say there's a better way than violence," said the Governor. "I want to congratulate all of you for the work you have done to eliminate violence from your school. It is impressive and important to note that students are taking the lead."

"I also want to give credit to the teachers and everyone involved in the School-Based Program here at Newark Tech," the Governor continued. "Caring adults, and I certainly include parents, have to make sure they listen to what young people are saying. Communication is crucial."

SAVVY is an anti-violence project that demonstrates to students how they can avoid violence, mediate conflict and change their school's culture through youth counseling and printed materials. In addition to working with students, SAVVY helps teachers and staff to learn how they can handle conflict and prevent its escalation into a violent situation.

"The SAVVY program is a prime example of how the School-Based Youth Services Program can change children's lives," said Department of Human Services Commissioner Michele K. Guhl.

SAVVY is part of the Department of Human Service's School- Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP). School-Based Programs are currently in existence in 29 districts and combine various services such as school, social services, health

services and law enforcement resources to create a multi-faceted approach to prevent violence, drug use and teen pregnancy.

SAVVY has been part of the technical school in Newark since 1993. In an attempt to get students to pledge to be "SAVVY", the program employs a six-week campaign to introduce the program to students. The campaign features banners, flyers, bulletin boards, daily announcements and safe school surveys.

