

TAKING BACK YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

If crime has a strong grip on a neighborhood, it's hard to take the first steps toward reclaiming your streets.

People are afraid that if they act, criminals will take revenge. You can counter this fear, and protect each other, by working closely with police and organizing group activities – there's safety in numbers. You may want to meet outside the neighborhood at first.

Neighborhoods across the country have used these tactics to take a stand against drugs and violence.

- Ask police for help in forming a citizen patrol that walks the neighborhood, intimidating drug dealers by writing down license plate numbers and descriptions of suspected dealers. Videotape or photograph illegal activities. Pass information on to law enforcement. Wear a “uniform” – a brightly colored cap or special T-shirt.
- Use a bullhorn or loudspeaker to broadcast “Drug dealers on the block. Police are being notified.”
- Demonstrate against landlords who rent property to drug dealers.
- Make public your dissatisfaction with businesses, including restaurants and bars that ignore drug dealing. Do the same to stores that sell drug paraphernalia – such as marijuana pipes or rolling papers.
- Organize neighborhood clean-up campaigns to sweep litter and drug paraphernalia off the streets, clean off or paint over graffiti, plant flowers and trees, and repair broken equipment in playgrounds.
- Make young people part of your neighborhood improvement team. Find other creative, constructive activities for youth, especially teens.
- Put up large, colorful banners or signs that warn drug dealers that residents are watching for crime and reporting it to the police.
- March or organize a vigil to demonstrate the community's will to drive out drug dealers and other criminals.
- Make sure the newspapers and television cover this good news – show the world that neighbors and police care and are taking action!

Use good judgment when faced with problems of illegal drug use or sales or other criminal activity in your neighborhood. Think about how you can report a drug problem without subjecting yourself to retaliation. It's important to report, but it's equally important to report safely.