



**Be Peace. Choose Peace. Create Peace.**

## CHOOSE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

### What is Civic Engagement?

According to Thomas Ehrlich, editor of *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, civic engagement means “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference,” as well as “promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political” means.<sup>1</sup>

### How do people learn Civic Engagement?

People can become involved in their communities in many ways, including community service, political activism, environmentalism, as well as other volunteer activities that serve the community and improve quality of life.<sup>2</sup>

Anyone can become involved in civic engagement at any time, but it is best to impart the importance of civic engagement on children and young people. Educators should connect the subjects they teach – especially the humanities – to society and politics, and to the ways students can contribute outside of school once they graduate. Once people become involved in their own communities and start to work for the communal wellbeing, their engagement leads to increased civic knowledge and greater awareness of others, and young people grow to become active citizens.<sup>3</sup>

### How do people implement Civic Engagement?

The Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford University in California has collaborated with faculty and administrators from seventy-six institutions to create the Pathways of Public Service and Civil Engagement framework. The Haas Center began work on the framework in 2013 and over the years has condensed the framework into six pathways of civic engagement:

1. Community-Engaged Learning and Research: Connecting coursework and academia to social issues within the community to enrich knowledge and inform students’ decisions and actions on social issues.
2. Direct Service: Working to address the immediate needs of the community or individuals within the community.
3. Policy and Governance: Participating in the government and political processes and policymaking.
4. Community Organizing and Activism: Educating and mobilizing the public to collective action.
5. Philanthropy: Using private funds and donations to contribute to the public good.

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<sup>1</sup> Ehrlich, T. (Ed.). (2000). Preface. In *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* (p. vi). Onyx Press.

<sup>2</sup> Hair, E., Michelson, E., and Zaff, J. (2002). *Civic Engagement Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis*. Child Trends. Retrieved from <http://search.issueab.org/resource/civic-engagement-programs-and-youth-development-a-synthesis.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Dedman, B. (2021). *Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement: A Nationwide Effort to Make Service a Way of Life*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/articles/pathways-public-service-and-civic-engagement-nationwide-effort-make-service-way-life>.

Choose [Peaceful Practice]

6. Social Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility: Using ethical business practices and private sector approaches to respond to social or environmental issues.<sup>4</sup>

### For what types of circumstances is Civic Engagement suited?

Civic engagement is well-suited for developing positive social and emotional behaviors among people who use it and could potentially interrupt aggression and violence between people and groups depending on the form the engagement takes.

### Does Civic Engagement work for preventing or controlling aggression or violence?

Communities with high rates of civic engagement and collective efficacy are less likely to have instances of community and family violence. When children grow up with a sense of collective good and have closer ties with neighbors and other community members, it benefits their social, emotional, and behavioral development and makes it less likely for youths to engage in violence. These communities are also more likely to have the infrastructure that can aid underprivileged youth and prevent violence.<sup>5</sup>

### Where else might I go to learn more about Civic Engagement?

- This short [video](#) titled “What is Civic Engagement?” may be a helpful resource for students
- The Haas Center for Public Service has more information on their six pathways of civic engagement as well as examples at their [website](#)
- This [webpage](#) at Youth.gov has several resources for youth on becoming civically engaged

### About Peace Through Action USA

Peace Through Action USA activates and equips Americans to implement practical peaceful solutions to aggression and violence in their communities and our country. We are a national-scope, charitable, civic and social capital-building organization. Learn more at [www.PeaceThroughAction.org](http://www.PeaceThroughAction.org).

*Have a suggested addition to this information sheet? Send it to [inbox@peacethroughaction.org](mailto:inbox@peacethroughaction.org). If you found this information beneficial, [please give](#) a gift of money to support our creation and maintenance of similar resources.*

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<sup>4</sup> Stanford Haas Center for Public Service. (n.d.). *Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement*. Retrieved from <http://haas.stanford.edu/about/our-approach/pathways-public-service-and-civic-engagement>.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, A., Duarte, C., Jain, S., Kawashima-Ginsberg, K., Pope, A. (2019). Civic Engagement Among Youth Exposed to Community Violence: Directions for Research and Practice. *Journal of Youth Development* 14(1), 24-47. 10.5195/jyd.2019.596.