

THE TIME IS RIGHT

Today's young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse society, new technologies, and expanding opportunities.

To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders, and citizens, government agencies, national youth-serving organizations, foundations and the business community are working together with a shared vision for the youth of our Nation:

Every young person's contributions will be valued today, and he or she will grow up with the hope, opportunity and support needed for successful adulthood.

No one sector, acting alone, can ensure that all young people acquire the competencies, character, and protection they need to seize the opportunities that lie ahead. The time is right to make youth development a national priority, and the organizations that helped develop this publication pledge to do their part. They are committed to working together to:

- Spread the message within their own work and throughout the country that young people are resources and assets in our communities;
- Make their existing youth development efforts more well-known and accessible;
- Explore ways to provide more positive youth development opportunities; and
- Invest in our Nation's most important resource: our young people.

HOW POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Reflections from Young People

"The program helped me with the toughest issue—knowing who I am and what I am."

"You brought out the best in me when I didn't know there was a best. So now when I imagine how big is my future, I know it's as large as your love."

"I realize now that the program did not just offer me services and funds; it offered me a life."

"I am proud to say that I will be returning to school in the fall to finish my high school education. I'm not saying I don't make mistakes, but it's good to know that I have support when I do."

"If it wasn't for you guys, I wouldn't be here right now."

Organizations endorsing these principles:

America's Promise—The Alliance for Youth
Casey Family Programs
William T. Grant Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Council of State Governments
National League of Cities
U.S. Conference of Mayors

IYF—US, International Youth Foundation
National Alliance of Business
National Campaign to Prevent Teen
Pregnancy
National Collaboration for Youth

including the:
Alliance for Children and Families
American Camping Association
American Red Cross
Association of Junior Leagues International
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
Boy Scouts of America
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Camp Fire Boys and Girls
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Child Welfare League of America
Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of America
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Communities in Schools
Families, 4-H and Nutrition
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Incorporated
Hostelling International—American Youth Hostels
Joint Action in Community Service
National Alliance for Hispanic Health
National Crime Prevention Council
National 4-H Council
National Mental Health Association
The National Mentoring Partnership
National Network for Youth
National Urban League
The Salvation Army
Save the Children
United Way of America
Volunteers of America
WAVE, Inc.
Women in Community Service
YMCA of the USA
Youth Law Center
YWCA of the USA
National Organizations for Youth Safety
National Training Institute for Community
Youth Work
Search Institute
YouthBuild USA
Youth Service America
Corporation for National Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development
U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Department of Transportation

TOWARD A BLUEPRINT FOR YOUTH: MAKING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT A NATIONAL PRIORITY

A collaboration to promote and support young people as resources and leaders for our communities and country

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WHAT IS POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

Positive youth development is an approach toward all youth that builds on their assets and their potential and helps counter the problems that may affect them. Growing up can be tough for everyone, but young people are far more likely to succeed if they are active participants in decision-making that affects their lives and their communities.

Key elements of positive youth development are:

- Providing youth with safe and supportive environments.
- Fostering relationships between young people and caring adults who can mentor and guide them.
- Providing youth with opportunities to pursue their interests and focus on their strengths.
- Supporting the development of youths' knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, including study, tutoring, sports, the arts, vocational education, and service-learning.
- Engaging youth as active partners and leaders who can help move communities forward.
- Providing opportunities for youth to show that they care—about others and about society.
- Promoting healthy lifestyles and teaching positive patterns of social interaction.
- Providing a safety net in times of need.

For more information about youth and positive youth development, go to the following web site:
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fysb/youthinfo>

WHY SHOULD I SUPPORT POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

- Positive youth development helps young people become independent and engaged citizens.
- Young people add tremendous value to dialogues on various issues in the community, offering different perspectives and new ideas.
- Research is beginning to show that the brain undergoes change during adolescence and may be affected, both positively and negatively, by experiences.
- Positive youth development encourages resilience, focusing on youths' strengths to overcome challenging situations.
- Positive youth development helps young people resist negative influences.
- Positive youth development programs can provide prevention services that reach youth identified as at risk in particular communities and that can serve to reduce the incidence of behaviors such as teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol use, dropping out of school, delinquency, and youth violence.
- Providing opportunities for young people to become independent is a good investment, avoiding potential problems that could be expensive to deal with later.
- Young people are future decision-makers and will become the leaders of our communities.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

- Encourage and assist all children and youth to focus on educational and developmental opportunities leading to lifelong learning. (Educational opportunities include guiding young people to master reading in the early grades; math in middle school; and rigorous courses in high school which prepare them for college, other post-secondary education, and employment. Developmental opportunities include a progressive series of activities and experiences that build cognitive skills and help young people become socially, morally, emotionally, and physically competent.)
- Work with community-based organizations and schools to build a seamless web of support, services, and opportunities that are culturally sensitive and address the full range of youth needs.
- Engage youth as full partners in community-building, including active roles on boards and in program design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Encourage public awareness about the positive contributions of youth within communities.
- Engage local businesses to establish mentoring programs, apprenticeships, job training and employment opportunities for youth.
- Spread the word about positive youth development.

PROMOTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, SOME EXAMPLES:

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative: This unprecedented joint effort among the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, Labor, and Health and Human Services helps communities design comprehensive educational, mental health, social, and juvenile justice services for youth. The services help young people develop the social skills and resilience necessary to avoid risky behaviors.

Girl Power! This national public education campaign is sponsored by HHS and helps encourage and empower 9- to 14-year-old girls to make the most of their lives, providing positive messages, accurate health information, and support for girls and those who care about them.

21st Century Community Learning Centers: The U.S. Department of Education and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation have entered into a partnership to keep inner city and rural public schools open after regular school hours for enhanced learning and developmental opportunities. Schools, members of the National Collaboration for Youth, and other community-based organizations work together on this initiative.

4H Clubs: Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through the Cooperative Extension System, since 1902 the 4H Clubs have offered activities and opportunities for growth, learning, and community involvement to youth in every county of the Nation.

Youth Opportunity Movement: Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, the vision is to ensure that all youth acquire the necessary skills and work experience to successfully transition into adulthood.

National Youth Network and National Organizations for Youth Safety: With support from the U.S. Departments of Justice and Transportation, these groups give youth an active role in the formulation of policies affecting them.

AmeriCorps: Of the more than 40,000 AmeriCorps members, most are young and in organizations focused on serving youth or engaging young people themselves to serve others. A special partnership between the Corporation for National Service and America's Promise supports 500 AmeriCorps Promise Fellows to give leadership to the Promise campaign in communities across the country.

Neighborhood Networks: This project of the Department of Housing and Urban Development provides nearly 1,000 multi-service computer technology community learning centers in public and low-income housing nationwide to teach computer literacy for 21st Century careers.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF): Nationwide, 35 percent of children receiving child care subsidies through the CCDF are school-aged. This program, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, also supports quality improvement activities such as professional development initiatives for staff in after-school programs.