



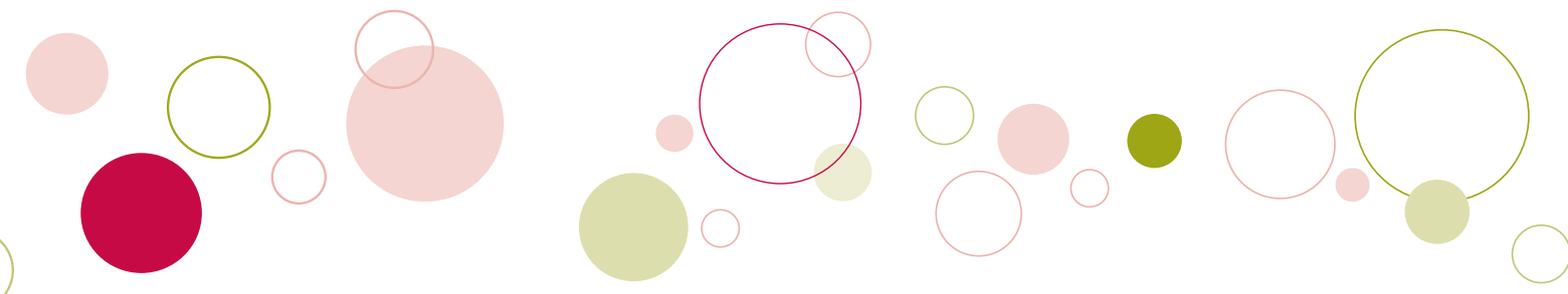
Why Invest in Youth Development?

A Report by the Youth Development Network



Table of Contents

What is youth development?	2
What are the key supports and opportunities necessary for positive youth development?	2
Whose responsibility is it to help youth develop?	2
Access and equity	3
Why invest in youth development?	3
What is the impact on our workforce if we do not invest in youth development?	3
What specifically does the research show us?	3
What are some of the best-practice programs nationwide?	4
What is the status of youth in the Sacramento Region?	5
How well is Sacramento County doing in giving youth the key supports and opportunities they need to successfully transition to adulthood?	8
What are some of the best practice programs locally?	9
Community Level Change	9



What is youth development?

Youth development is an ongoing growth process in which the community engages to help youth meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, be spiritually grounded, and to build skills and competencies which allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives. (Karen Pittman, Forum for Youth Investment)

“Problem free is not fully prepared”

Karen Pittman, Forum for Youth Investment

What are the key supports and opportunities necessary for positive youth development?

In the absence of positive influences, youth will find other ways, often negative ones like gangs, to meet their needs. Forty years of youth development research shows that at-risk youth can become successful in spite of the odds they face. There are five basic supports and opportunities that youth need in order to overcome obstacles in their homes, schools and communities (Gambone, Connell):

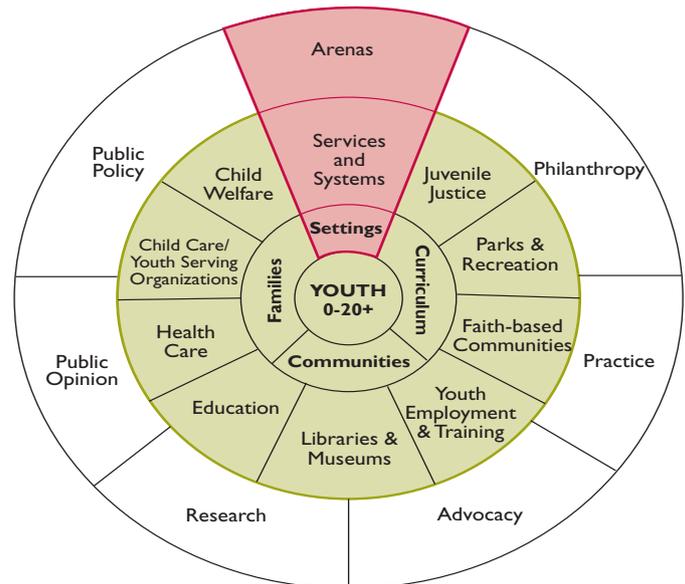
1. Emotional and Physical Safety—meeting youth’s basic needs as well as building trust and respect.
2. Caring Relationships—from at least one adult in each youth’s life, and the existence of positive relationships with peers.
3. Youth Participation—includes opportunities for youth to have a voice, multiple choices, leadership, a say in decision-making and a sense of belonging.
4. Community Involvement—opportunities for the youth to connect and impact their community in positive ways.

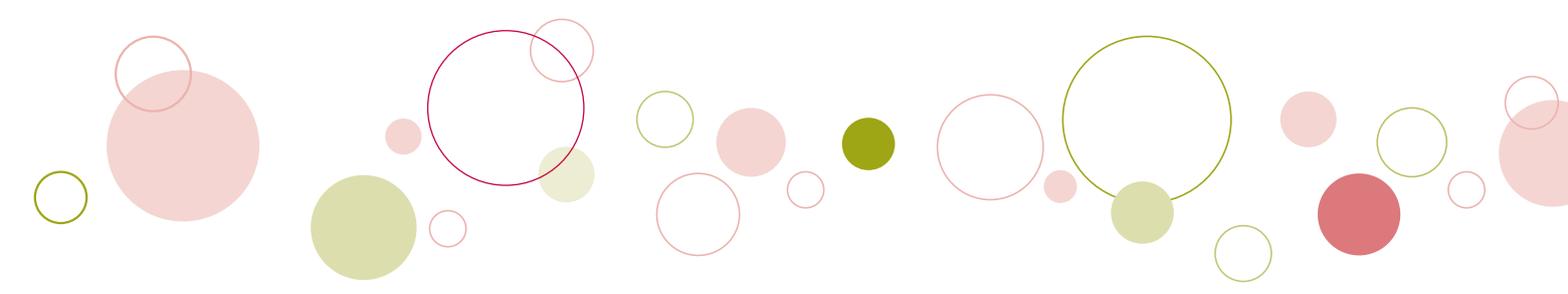
5. Skill building—that is challenging, relevant and engaging across a core set of competencies (cognitive, social, vocational, civic, physical and creative/cultural).

Whose responsibility is it to help youth develop?

Since youth are always in the process of developing, every setting matters. Each sector has a job to help youth develop positively:

- Schools: help youth develop cognitively, physically, socially and civically
- Faith community: help youth develop morally
- Businesses: help youth develop job skills
- Civic organizations: help youth become engaged in community service projects.





Access and equity

Integrated, accessible, community-based supports and opportunities are more likely to support youth development. Youth who have less access to supports and opportunities do poorly. These supports are often not present in the home, schools or community. Not only is it important to ensure equal access, it is also important to address cultural difficulties and barriers that impact how youth experience opportunities.

Why invest in youth development?

For the last four decades, our nation has been trying to resolve youth problems – academic failure, drug use, teen pregnancy, juvenile crime, lack of workforce readiness and more. These efforts have returned mixed to poor results. Youth “problems” are often caused by underlying issues that are widespread and chronic: persistent poverty, parents’ lack of family management skills, racism, lack of supports and opportunities, and lack of clear standards in the community. As a result, many youth experience difficulties in school, have poor navigation and decision making skills, lack of a sense of purpose and lack of skills or access to affect change. Even when “problems” are addressed, youth are not automatically then prepared for college, work and life. Repeated studies across the nation show that today’s workforce lacks the soft skills needed to ensure worker success. Low voter turnout and low volunteer rates are signs that youth do not understand their civic obligations. Family violence, work place conflicts and divorce rates are signs that we have not taught youth to appropriately

resolve relationships issues. Youth must be prepared appropriately so they can respond to the challenges and opportunities of navigating adolescence and preparing for adulthood.

What is the impact on our workforce if we do not invest in youth development?

According to research conducted by FSG Social Impact Advisors:

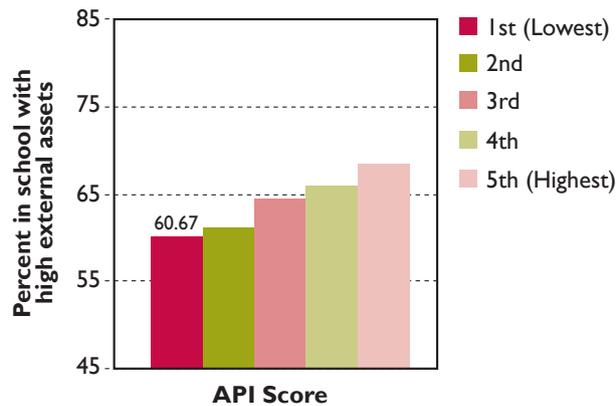
- Of 100 9th-grade students entering public high school in any major U.S. city, 70 will stay in school to graduate, 40 will enter college/university or technical school, and only 18 will earn a college degree in four years.
- Ten million U.S. jobs could go unfilled by 2010 because the available workforce will lack the needed skills to fill the positions.
- Deficits in basic skills cost businesses, colleges and under-prepared graduates as much as \$16 billion annually in lost productivity and remedial expenses.
- America’s high-school graduation rate ranks 16th of 20 developed countries, with Germany, Japan and France, among many others, all reporting higher rates.

(For a complete copy of the full white paper “Best in Class: How Top Corporations Can Help Transform Public Education” see www.fsg-impact.org)

What specifically does the research show us?

Research from a wide variety of disciplines definitively shows that youth who have sufficient support from their families, schools and

¹The Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets include both external and internal assets in the following categories: External Assets (Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, Constructive Use of Time) and Internal Assets (Commitment to Learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies, Positive Identity).



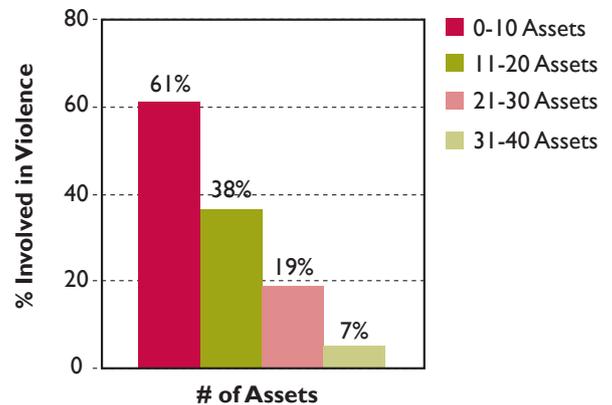
communities develop the assets¹ necessary to do well in life (see www.search-institute.org, www.ydsi.org, www.wested.org, www.nap.edu). Research by the California Department of Education Healthy Kids survey shows strong correlations between the number of supports or assets that youth experience and their academic achievement.

“Deficits in basic skills cost businesses, colleges, and under prepared graduates as much as \$16 billion annually...”

Ernst & Young

Conversely, there are equally strong correlations between the lack of “assets” or supports and opportunities for youth and increases in problem alcohol use, illicit drug use, teenage sexuality and acts of violence.

Youth Violence

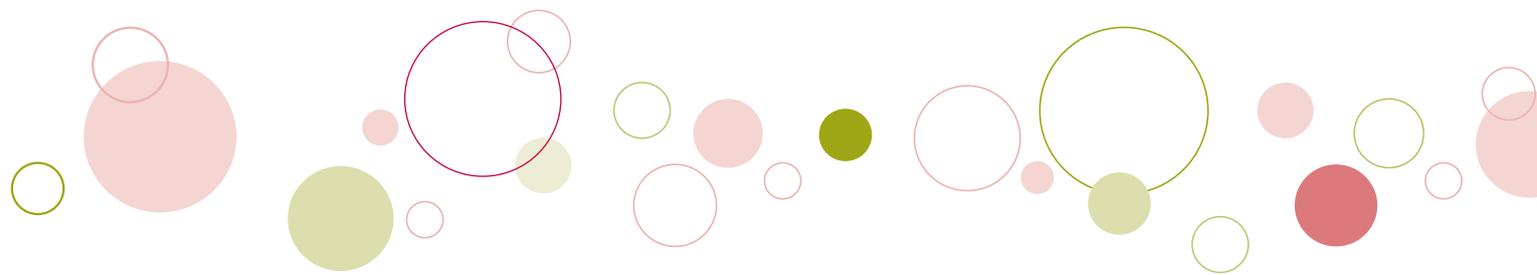


The National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, published a report that offers several useful findings regarding the correlation between supports and opportunities to develop individual assets, including:

- The more supports and assets youth have, the better they do.
- Continuous exposure to positive settings, experiences and people, as well as opportunities to gain life skills supports youth’ positive development.
- Communities that invest in more opportunities for youth to develop assets in quality settings are more likely to see youth do better.

What are some of the best-practice programs nationwide?

The National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, in its study entitled “Community Programs that Promote Youth Development,” documents more than 100 best-practice programs that provide effective developmental supports for



youth, in the areas of mental health prevention and intervention, youth violence prevention, teen pregnancy prevention and youth development. The following youth development programs were reviewed and deemed best practices:

- Big Brothers and Big Sisters—a mentoring program that provides non-family caring adult mentors to support youth.
- Teen Outreach Program (TOP)—a life skills education program offering youth training in parent/adolescent communication, future life planning, life skills training and involvement in community service opportunities.
- Quantum Opportunities—an academic program that offers academic support, life skills/job preparation and community service.

The national Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has compiled a list of 27 best practice programs to prevent juvenile delinquency. The following programs that use youth development practices were evaluated as best practice programs*:

- Teens, Crime and the Community—a program designed to reduce the incidence of teenage victimization by engaging youth as crime prevention resources in their schools and communities.
- Youth Courts—a youth involvement program in which youth are judged by their peers for minor delinquency, status offenses and problem behaviors.

*Unfortunately, there is no common method to measure the effectiveness of best-practice programs. Some best-practice programs, such as the Teen Outreach Program, are based upon the effectiveness of a specific curriculum, while other programs, such as Teen, Crime and Community and Youth Courts are based on a specific program implementation and methodology. Similarly, some programs measure success by reducing teen pregnancy rates (TOP), while others (Youth Courts) measure success by reducing the recidivism rates of juvenile-offenders.

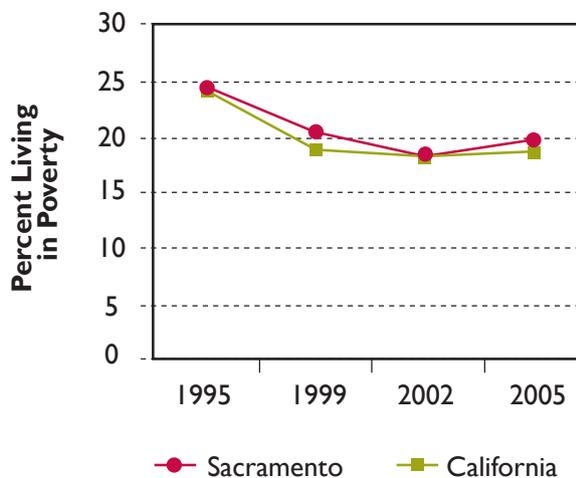
What is the status of youth in the Sacramento region?

For the purposes of this brief, we have defined the Sacramento region as El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo counties. The Great Valley Center is the source of regional data on the valley and the Sacramento County Children’s Coalition, which publishes the Sacramento Children’s Report Card, is the source of data on Sacramento County.

Population

According to the 2000 Census, there are 486,630 children under the age of 18 in the Sacramento region (El Dorado- 40,533; Placer- 65,826; Sacramento- 337,769; and Yolo- 42,502).

There are an additional 162,267 transitional-aged youth 18 to 24 years of age in the region (El Dorado- 10,628; Placer- 4,542; Sacramento- 116,232 and Yolo- 30,865) many of whom still need numerous supports and opportunities to successfully transition to the workforce and life.



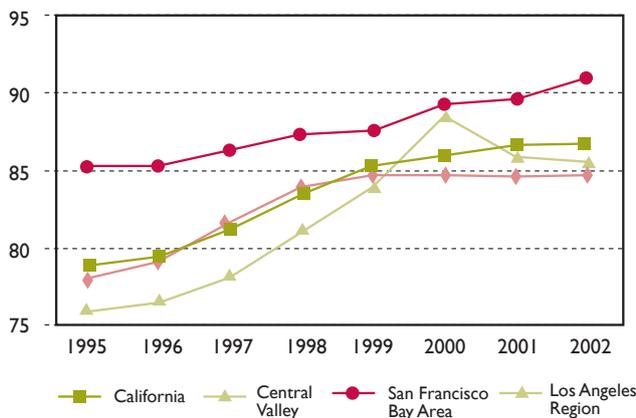
Sacramento County accounts for 65% of the region's children which includes more of the region's children than the other counties combined.

Poverty

The Sacramento region has a substantially higher child poverty rate at 23% than the statewide rate of 18%. Only three counties in the valley have a smaller percentage of children in poverty than the state as a whole: Placer, El Dorado and Yolo counties.

While Sacramento County consistently has had more children living in poverty than the state, California children are more likely to live in poverty than kids nationwide. Why is this important? Children raised in poverty are more likely to lack the basics of food, clothing, adequate housing and health care. Furthermore, they are more likely to start school with limited language skills, have less parental support with homework and have to deal with more social and emotional problems that interfere with learning.

High School Graduation Rate (per 100 Students) 1995-2002



Source: California Department of Education

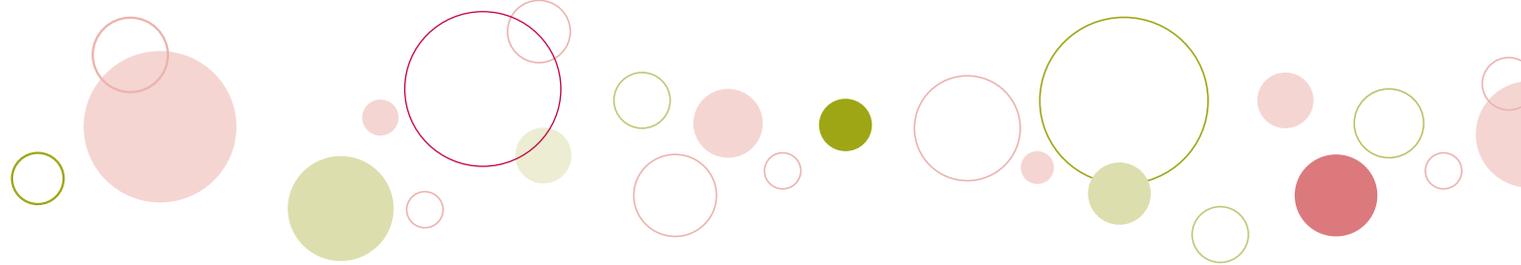
According to a 2004 National Health Interview Survey, 12% of children with a learning disability in the U.S. lived in families whose income was less than \$20,000 compared to only 8% who lived in families whose income exceeded \$75,000.

Education

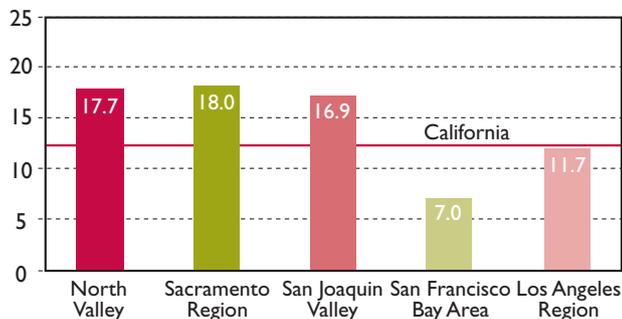
One of the best predictors of future socioeconomic status is the possession of a high school diploma, since it indicates that the recipient has achieved the basic reading, writing and mathematics skills needed for many jobs and for a post-secondary education. However, the calculation of high school "completion" and high school "graduation" rates varies greatly. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of the U.S. Department of Education, the 2003 national high school "completion" rate, defined as the percentage of adults 25 and older who had completed high school, was 85% (Stoops 2004).

Using this NCES data, the percentage of students who have completed high school in the central valley has consistently been lower than the nationwide and statewide average at 84.8%.

Huge disparities in achievement exist among California's student subgroups. About 12 out of every 20 white students in grades two through 11 were proficient in English on the 2006 statewide test compared with fewer than six of every 20 African-American students, Hispanic/Latino or other economically disadvantaged students. Although nearly two-thirds of Asian students and more than half of white students were proficient in mathematics in 2006, only about five of every 20 African-American students, six of every 20 Hispanic/Latino students. The 2006 Academic Performance



Rate of Substantiated Child Maltreatment Referrals (per 1,000 Children) 2001



Source: UC Berkeley Center for Social Services Research
 Population Data Source: Claritas Inc. and 2000 US Census

Index (API) of African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, and Pacific Islander students is significantly lower than the API for white and Asian students at every level: elementary, middle and high school. (California Department of Education, 2006).

Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment is measured by the number of children aged 0-17 with substantiated reports of child abuse or neglect in each county. That is, a social worker has investigated an allegation of child maltreatment and determined that child abuse or neglect has in fact taken place. Children with substantiated reports of child abuse or neglect in multiple counties are counted once in each reporting county.

Abused children suffer from an array of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral problems which may include suicide, substance abuse, depression, and academic problems. Children who are abused or neglected are more likely to repeat the cycle of

violence into the next generation, through entering into violent relationships or abusing their own children. Child abuse and neglect is under-reported, and is found in families of all socioeconomic levels and ethnic groups.

Other risk factors include family stresses such as poverty and social isolation. Unfortunately child abuse rates are much higher throughout the Sacramento region than the rest of the state. With a child maltreatment rate of 17.3 per 1,000 children, the Sacramento region has a higher child maltreatment rate than the state overall (12.2 per 1,000 children).

In 2005, there were 4,443 children in foster care in Sacramento. The length of stay in foster care is an indication of how quickly child welfare is able to resolve the problem that led to the child's removal. When children are removed from their parents, child welfare tries to find a safe environment with relatives. When that is not possible they are placed in foster homes or group homes. The goal is reunification with the parents or another permanent plan for the child that can be found quickly. All regions of the Sacramento Valley do as well or better than the state overall in finding permanent homes.

In Sacramento County, approximately 375 foster youth will 'age out' of the foster care system this year (Sacramento County, 2008). At age 18, foster youth are considered adults and as such are no longer eligible for support. Research about what happens to these youth is alarming. Teenagers, who comprise more than one-half of those in foster care, will leave the system alone, without family or other positive role models to help them as they transition to adulthood. Statewide, of those youth leaving foster care:

- 65% will leave without a place to stay
- 50% will be homeless within 18 months
- 50% or less will be employed 2.5 to 4 years after leaving foster care, and
- 38% will have maintained employment for at least one year

(Families and Children on the Move)

Juvenile Crime

Although the rate of juvenile arrests for felonies and violent offenses has been declining slowly since 2000, the central valley still has a much higher juvenile arrest rate for drug- and alcohol-related offenses (11.2 per 1,000) than the state (9.5 per 1,000).

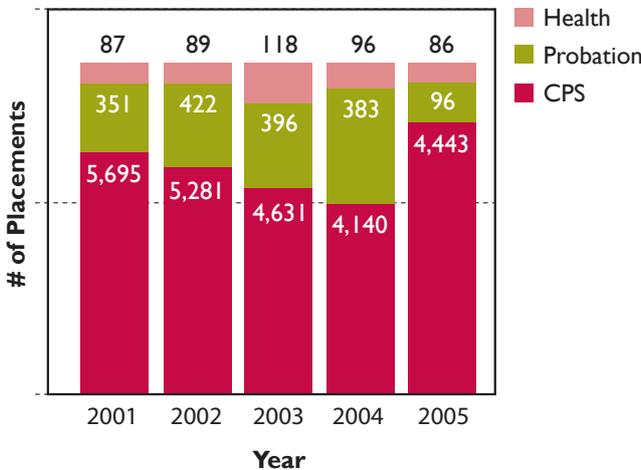
The felony arrest rate in the central valley is 2.8 per 1,000 compared to the state rate of 2.4, and the misdemeanor rate is 8.5 compared to the state's 7.1 rate. Felony arrests tend to be for drug offenses (55% of juvenile felony arrests), marijuana (24%), and

dangerous drugs (17%). Misdemeanor arrests are typically for marijuana (38%), drunk and disorderly conduct (21%), and violating liquor laws (17%).

Juvenile drug- and alcohol-related arrests are often the tip of the iceberg as the vast majority of teen drug and alcohol use does not conclude in arrest. Identifying the prevalence of teen drug- and alcohol-related arrests is important in assisting community leaders and policy-makers in the development of programs that focus on prevention, education and direct targeting of resources for treatment and intervention.

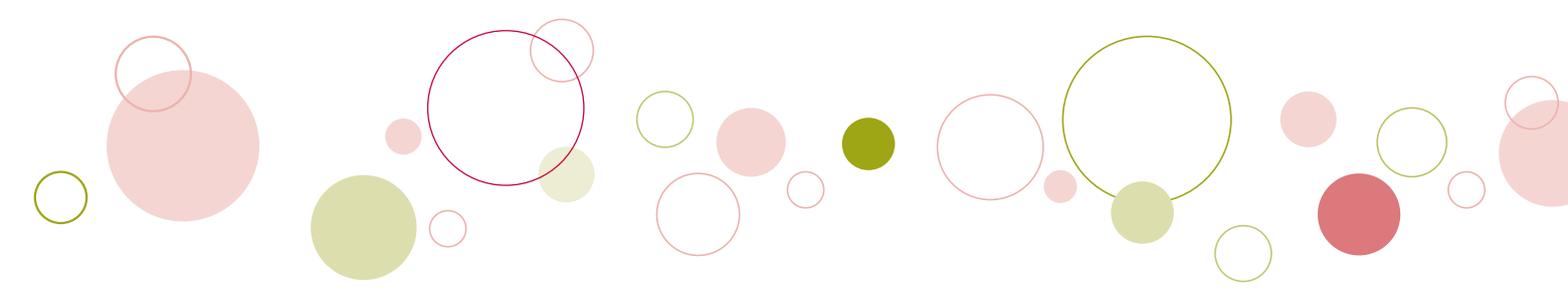
Sometimes, juveniles require out-of-home placement. Although the vast majority of out-of-home placements are due to child maltreatment rather than juvenile crimes, the total number of children in out-of-home placement in Sacramento County is reflected in the table below in the lower left.

Total Out-of-Home Placements in Sacramento County



How well is Sacramento County doing in giving youth the key supports and opportunities they need to successfully transition to adulthood?

One of the only measures that is available on how well youth experience the key supports and opportunities they need is the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS). Although this survey does not include statistically significant samples of students to apply this data to any specific school or district, this is one of the only widely used surveys in the state that asks students if they have caring adults, safe places, opportunities to participate and adults who have high expectations of them. The data measures both school and community connections which are high predictors of academic success. The data for each county can be obtained online at www.wested.org/chks/pdf/rpts_dl.



The CHKS data for Sacramento County shows that: only 32% of students in 7th-grade believe their school provides them with caring relationships, while only 31% of students in 11th-grade report caring relationships in school. The data is higher when students were asked the same question about caring relationships found in the community. 63% of the 7th-grade students report having caring relationships in the community while 60% of 11th-grade students report the same.

The survey shows a similar pattern when Sacramento County students are asked if adults in the school and community have high expectations of them: 49% of the 7th-grade students and 40% of the 11th-grade students reported that school staff members have high expectations of them. While 63% of the 7th-grade students and 60% of the 11th-grade students reported that members of their community have high expectations of them.

When surveyed about opportunities for meaningful participation in their school and community only 18% of the 7th-grade students and 15% of the 11th-grade students in Sacramento County reported that they had opportunities. However, nearly half (49%) of the 7th-grade students and 42% of the 11th-grade students reported that they had access to meaningful participation in their community.

Nationally, America's Promise reports that only 30% of youth report having four of the five promises of caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others.

What are some of the best practice programs locally?

In addition to local programs that have affiliation

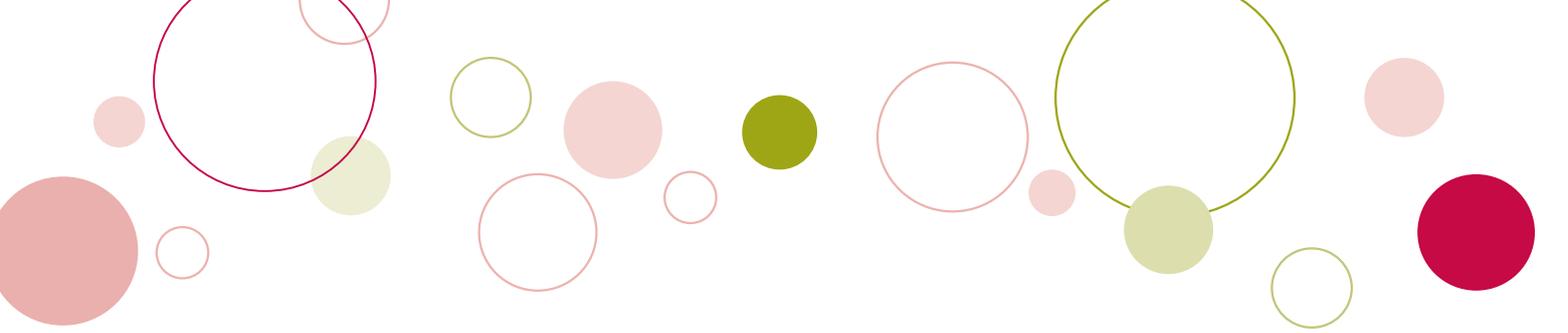
with nationally know model programs, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/ YWCA and Friday Night Live, there are several other local programs what have received regional or national recognition.

The California Permanency for Youth Project has chosen the following local program as a model program for youth permanency:

- EMQ/Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services Wraparound Model— Based on the Catholic Community Services of Western Washington model, the program focuses on youth as the primary informants in identifying known family and the wraparound services needed to stabilize the youth and family until they can use less intensive community and/ or professional supports.
- In the *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids* publication, the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services YouthWORKS program was selected as a model program in increasing academic achievement while reducing substance abuse and teen pregnancy. This after-school program provides academic assistance, life skills education and recreation while developing youths' leadership skills.

Community Level Change

Although high-quality programs can make a difference in the lives of youth, young people grow up in communities, not programs. The Youth Development Network (YDN) is committed to supporting community level change. To create this change, we believe community norms need to shift to value youth as resources. (A 1998 survey of 1,200 Sacramento youth indicated that only



20% of youth feel valued) YDN is also committed to building public will that will invest in the development of youth to ensure:

- Youth's readiness for adulthood
- Policies that support high-quality and expanded opportunities for youth success
- Support to organizations for effective practices

YDN is committed to help create the following community-level changes that we believe will better foster the positive development of all of our youth:

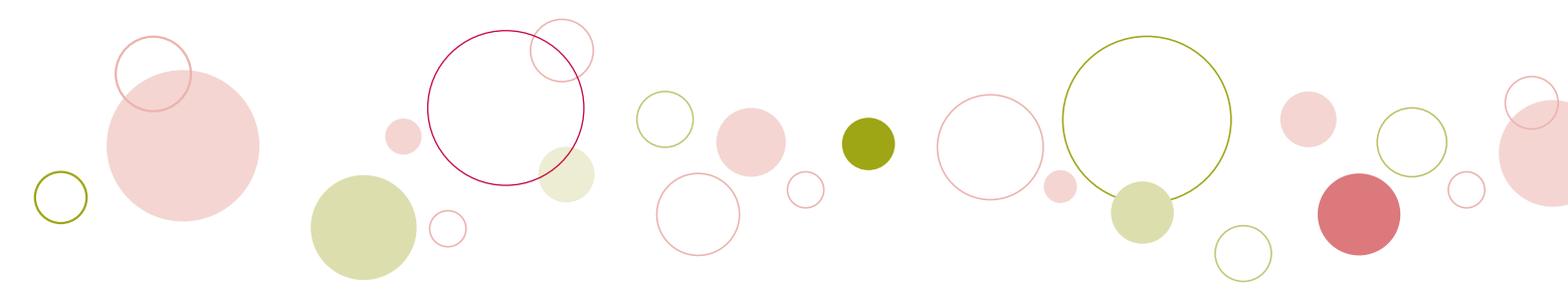
I. Strengthen the human services workforce. This can be accomplished by developing:

- Resources and training that have value across organizations, for educators, youth workers and business leaders in how to effectively engage and support youth in every setting. YDN is working in partnership with the Quality Counts effort to identify all trainings that supports youth workers to employ youth development practices and also create a trainers network to make it easier for those who want or need training to get it. Resources are needed to help agencies pay for training or provide release time to staff to attend trainings.
- Stronger career ladders and compensation guidelines that will help retain staff skilled in working with youth from an asset-based approach.
- Post secondary systems to create youth worker and youth development classes, certificates and degrees to help continue to professionalize the field and ensure professional coming out of teacher, social work, recreation, juvenile justice or other degrees have core skills to engage youth in asset based ways.

- Collaboration with schools to create a pipeline of students interested in human services fields and who have had exposure to youth development principles and practices. Promote more career academies and ROP programs that interest students in human services careers.

2. Support policies that increase key supports and opportunities for all youth by adopting the regional compact for children and youth. These policies include creating or increasing opportunities for:

- Out-of-school programs; such as, after school programs, evening and weekend programs, mentoring programs, etc.
- Youth involvement in community through volunteering, service learning opportunities, and in decision making and leadership roles in the community.
- Application of Experiential learning methods in schools and after school programs; such as, service learning, work based learning, outdoor education, and internships for youth.
- Funding for more prevention and intervention programs versus punishment and enforcement efforts.
- Increasing caring relationships through mentoring programs, training staff in creating relationships with youth, cultural competency training for organizations, conflict mediation training for students.



3. Expand communities' capacity for research, evaluation and connecting resources This includes more support for:

- Evaluation of programs that use youth development principles to document what works and the impact they have on youth outcomes.
- Creation of community data that better measure the quantity and quality of the supports and opportunities provided for youth and where gaps exist.
- Connecting resources by supporting YDN convenings and development of an on line network for providers; and other efforts to connect youth resources.

4. Work with local school districts, community-based organizations and cities to develop partnerships to promote community service learning. This will require:

- Training teachers and other youth workers on service learning.
- Creating more school and community partnerships to expand and facilitate more meaningful opportunities for students to participate in both their school and community; mechanisms to link students to community, training businesses and providers to engage youth in these opportunities.
- Developing ways to share programs that are working so the field is better informed on how to implement this approach.

5. Support policies that expand youth leadership opportunities for all youth in schools, cities, community-based organizations, and businesses. This may require:

- Training of adults on how to effectively engage youth as equal partners and why making leadership available to all youth is critical.
- Training all youth on how to effectively serve in leadership roles and what it means to be a leader.
- Creating more opportunities in all settings for all youth to experience leadership-such as leading community projects, having youth provide input, and serving on boards of directors of organizations or school boards.

Be a part of community-wide change. Find out how by contacting YDN today!

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