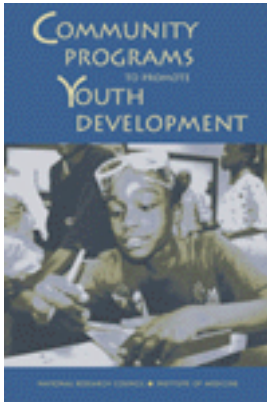


Free Executive Summary



Community Programs to Promote Youth Development

Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, Editors, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine

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After-school programs, scout groups, community service activities, religious youth groups, and other community-based activities have long been thought to play a key role in the lives of adolescents. But what do we know about the role of such programs for today's adolescents? How can we ensure that programs are designed to successfully meet young people's developmental needs and help them become healthy, happy, and productive adults? Community Programs to Promote Youth Development explores these questions, focusing on essential elements of adolescent well-being and healthy development. It offers recommendations for policy, practice, and research to ensure that programs are well designed to meet young people's developmental needs. The book also discusses the features of programs that can contribute to a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. It examines what we know about the current landscape of youth development programs for America's youth, as well as how these programs are meeting their diverse needs. Recognizing the importance of adolescence as a period of transition to adulthood, Community Programs to Promote Youth Development offers authoritative guidance to policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and other key stakeholders on the role of youth development programs to promote the healthy development and well-being of the nation's youth.

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Executive Summary

Adolescence is the pivotal period between childhood and adulthood. It is the time when youth need to acquire the attitudes, competencies, values, and social skills that will carry them forward to successful adulthood. It is also the time when they need to avoid choices and behaviors that will limit their future potential. Parents and families play a crucial role in helping young people navigate this phase. In the past, schools, neighborhoods, and communities extended and enhanced positive development and supported young people. Indeed, an enduring image of American life is the participation of neighbors and community members watching out for children, taking responsibility for their safety and well-being, and helping to steer them in the right direction.

In recent decades, a number of social forces have changed both the landscape of family and community life and the expectations for young people. A combination of factors have weakened the informal community support once available to young people: high rates of family mobility; greater anonymity in neighborhoods, where more parents are at work and out of the home and neighborhood for long periods, and in schools, which have become larger and much more heterogeneous; extensive media exposure

to themes of violence and heavy use and abuse of drugs and alcohol; and, in some cases, the deterioration and disorganization of neighborhoods and schools as a result of crime, drugs, and poverty. At the same time, today's world has become increasingly complex, technical, and multicultural, placing new and challenging demands on young people in terms of education, training, and the social and emotional skills needed in a highly competitive environment. Finally, the length of adolescence has extended to the mid- to late twenties, and the pathways to adulthood have become less clear and more numerous.

Concerns about youth are at the center of many policy debates. The future well-being of the country depends on raising a generation of skilled, competent, and responsible adults. Yet at least 25 percent of adolescents in the United States are at serious risk of not achieving "productive adulthood" and face such risks as substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, school failure, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Depending on their circumstances and choices, they may carry those risks into their adult lives. Public investments in programs to counter such trends have grown significantly over the past decade or so. For the most part, these efforts have targeted specific problems and threats to young people. Substantial public health investments have also been made to prevent such problems as teen smoking, sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancy, and alcohol and other drug use. Major funding has been allocated to the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency and youth crime.

These efforts have led to some successes. On one hand, adolescent well-being and behavior have shown substantial improvement in some areas since the late 1980s. Serious violent juvenile crime has declined, teen pregnancy has decreased, and more young people are graduating from high school and participating in volunteer and community service. On the other hand, cigarette smoking, HIV infection, school violence, and obesity have increased during this period, particularly among youth in high-risk urban neighborhoods and very poor rural communities. In addition, many youth are entering the labor market with inadequate knowledge skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and prepare for and succeed in a job interview.

Continued efforts to prevent and control these and other problems are clearly needed. An exclusive focus on problems, however, narrows the vision that society should have for all of its young people. Many who study adolescent development and work with young people have increasingly come to believe that being problem-free is not fully pre-

pared. Beyond eliminating problems, one needs skills, knowledge, and a variety of other personal and social assets to function well during adolescence and adulthood. Thus a broader, more holistic view of helping youth to realize their full potential is gaining wider credence in the world of policy and practice.

This approach is not viewed as replacing the focus on preventing problems, but rather creating a larger framework that promotes positive outcomes for all young people. Public and private organizations are now engaged in a wide array of activities that fall within this framework. Such programs include mentoring, school-based community service programs and other volunteer activities, school-to-work transition programs, parenting skills, arts and recreation activities, among others. All are part of a new direction in public policy that places children and adolescents once again at the center of neighborhood and community life, where they can engage with caring adults inside and outside their families, develop a sense of security and personal identity, and learn rules of behavior, expectations, values, morals, and skills needed to move into healthy and productive adulthood.

Recent increases in funding from federal agencies, foundations, state and local governments, and the private sector have given impetus to these efforts and, at the same time, focused attention on the need to assess program effects and provide objective, reliable information to guide future investment. There is great diversity among the organizations that offer these programs, as well as the programs' emphases, curricula, and populations served. Organizations offering youth programs range from large national youth-serving agencies, such as 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girls, Inc., Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, to more local youth sports organizations, community centers, schools, libraries, faith-based institutions, museums, arts centers, service clubs, and numerous other grassroots organizations. Programs may target youth broadly or focus on a subset of them, defined by characteristics such as neighborhood, ethnic group, or special need. The focus of these programs may be general or specific (e.g., centered on sports, religion, or academic success).

This report focuses broadly on community-based programs for youth and examines what is known about their design, implementation, and evaluation. These are programs located in the communities in which the youth live. In the context of this report, communities may include neighborhoods, block groups, towns, and cities, as well as nongeographically defined communities based on family connections and shared interests or values.

THE COMMITTEE CHARGE

The Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth was established by the Board on Children, Youth, and Families and the Committee on Adolescent Health and Development (formerly the Forum on Adolescence). The specific charge to the committee was:

- Review and synthesize available data on community interventions and programs to promote positive outcomes for adolescent development;
- Assess the strengths and limitations of data sources and indicators commonly used to characterize youth health, development, and well-being;
- Assess the strengths and limitations of methodologies and approaches used to evaluate these activities; and
- Identify gaps and central questions for the design of a unified conceptual framework and research agenda to promote the healthy development of youth.

To the extent feasible, the committee was asked to identify those programs with sufficiently strong evidence to suggest that they could serve as models for communities that are enhancing their youth programs.

Support for the committee's work came from private foundations and federal agencies. All those supporting this study share a common desire to understand more about how community programs for youth can be designed to promote the positive development of youth. Foundations seek guidance about wise investments in adolescent programming; policy makers seek guidance regarding effective prevention and youth development approaches; and program practitioners and managers seek assistance as they work to design and evaluate their programs.

The committee examined programs that target young people ages 10 to 18. While we made the decision to focus our review and analysis on programs promoting a "youth development" perspective, we rejected the often polarized view of youth programming as either "prevention/problem-centered" or "youth development" centered. Our view is that both approaches are valuable and necessary and that, in practice, the distinction between the two is often blurred.

The committee turned to multiple types and sources of information for this report—theory, practical experience, and qualitative and quanti-

tative research and data—in order to gain as broad a perspective as possible on positive youth development. Based on its analysis of this information, the committee generated a set of conclusions and recommendations organized around two primary themes: (a) policy and practice; and (b) research, evaluation, and data collection.

In beginning its work, the committee agreed on a set of four core concepts that serve as a foundation for this report:

- Some youth are doing very well;
- Some youth are taking dangerous risks and doing poorly;
- All young people need a variety of experiences to develop to their full potential;
- Some young people have unmet needs and are particularly at risk of participating in problem behaviors (e.g., dropping out of school, participating in violent behavior). These include young people who often, but by no means always, live in high-risk neighborhoods, are poor, experience repeated racial and ethnic discrimination, and have a substantial amount of unsupervised time during nonschool hours. Other youth who are in special need of more programs include youth with disabilities of all kinds, youth from troubled family situations, and youth with special needs for places to find emotional support.

Although the committee stresses the importance of providing support for all youth regardless of economic status, we were also particularly interested in understanding community programs for young people who have the greatest need coupled with the fewest resources. We found very little research to talk specifically about the kinds of programs that would be particularly appropriate for these disadvantaged and underserved youth, including youth who are gay and lesbian, youth who are bullied at school, and youth who have experienced sexual and other forms of harassment.

POLICY AND PRACTICE

Promoting Adolescent Development at the Program Level

Understanding adolescent development and the factors contributing to the healthy development of all young people is critical to the design and implementation of community programs for youth. Consequently

BOX ES-1
Personal and Social Assets That Facilitate Positive Youth Development

Physical development

- Good health habits
- Good health risk management skills

Intellectual development

- Knowledge of essential life skills
- Knowledge of essential vocational skills
- School success
- Rational habits of mind—critical thinking and reasoning skills
- In-depth knowledge of more than one culture
- Good decision-making skills
- Knowledge of skills needed to navigate through multiple cultural contexts

Psychological and emotional development

- Good mental health including positive self-regard
- Good emotional self-regulation skills
- Good coping skills

the committee began its work by identifying a set of personal and social assets that increase the healthy development and well-being of adolescents and facilitate a successful transition from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood. We grouped these assets into four broad developmental domains: physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional, and social development. Box ES-1 summarizes the four domains and specifies the assets within each.

Conclusions

□ Individuals do not necessarily need the entire range of assets to thrive; in fact, various combinations of assets across domains reflect equally positive adolescent development.

- Good conflict resolution skills
- Mastery motivation and positive achievement motivation
- Confidence in one's personal efficacy
- "Planfulness"—planning for the future and future life events
- Sense of personal autonomy/responsibility for self
- Optimism coupled with realism
- Coherent and positive personal and social identity
- Prosocial and culturally sensitive values
- Spirituality or a sense of a "larger" purpose in life
- Strong moral character
- A commitment to good use of time

Social development

- Connectedness—perceived good relationships and trust with parents, peers, and some other adults
- Sense of social place/integration—being connected and valued by larger social networks
- Attachment to prosocial/conventional institutions, such as school, church, nonschool youth programs
- Ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts
- Commitment to civic engagement

□ Having more assets is better than having few. Although strong assets in one category can offset weak assets in another category, life is easier to manage if one has assets in all four domains.

□ Continued exposure to positive experiences, settings, and people, as well as opportunities to gain and refine life skills, supports young people in the acquisition and growth of these assets.

Moving now from the individual to the environment, young people develop these positive personal and social assets in settings that have the following features.

- Physical and psychological safety and security;
- Structure that is developmentally appropriate, with clear expectations for behavior as well as increasing opportunities to make

decisions, to participate in governance and rule-making, and to take on leadership roles as one matures and gains more expertise;

- Emotional and moral support;
- Opportunities for adolescents to experience supportive adult relationships;
- Opportunities to learn how to form close, durable human relationships with peers that support and reinforce healthy behaviors;
- Opportunities to feel a sense of belonging and being valued;
- Opportunities to develop positive social values and norms;
- Opportunities for skill building and mastery;
- Opportunities to develop confidence in one's abilities to master one's environment (a sense of personal efficacy);
- Opportunities to make a contribution to one's community and to develop a sense of mattering; and
- Strong links between families, schools, and broader community resources.

Table ES-1 provides details on the features of positive developmental settings.

Conclusions

□ Since these features typically work together in synergistic ways, programs with more features are likely to provide better supports for young people's positive development.

□ Community programs can expand the opportunities for youth to acquire personal and social assets and to experience the broad range of features of positive developmental settings.

Among other things, community programs can incorporate opportunities for physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development; opportunities to address issues of ethnic identity, sexual identity, and intergroup relationships; opportunities for community involvement and service; and opportunities to interact with caring adults and a diversity of peers who hold positive social norms and have high life goals and expectations.

Recommendation 1—Community programs for youth should be based on a developmental framework that supports the acquisition of personal and social assets in an environment, and through activities, that

TABLE ES-1 Features of Positive Developmental Settings

	Descriptors	Opposite Poles
Physical and Psychological Safety	Safe and health-promoting facilities; practice that increases safe peer group interaction and decreases unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.	Physical and health dangers; fear; feeling of insecurity, sexual and physical harassment; and verbal abuse.
Appropriate Structure	Limit setting; clear and consistent rules and expectations; firm-enough control; continuity and predictability; clear boundaries; and age-appropriate monitoring.	Chaotic; disorganized; laissez-faire; rigid; overcontrolled; and autocratic.
Supportive Relationships	Warmth; closeness; connectedness; good communication; caring; support; guidance; secure attachment; and responsiveness.	Cold; distant; overcontrolling; ambiguous support; untrustworthy; focused on winning; inattentive; unresponsive; and rejecting.
Opportunities to Belong	Opportunities for meaningful inclusion, regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disabilities; social inclusion, social engagement and integration; opportunities for socio-cultural identity formation; and support for cultural and bicultural competence.	Exclusion; marginalization; and intergroup conflict.
Positive Social Norms	Rules of behavior; expectations; injunctions; ways of doing things; values and morals; and obligations for service.	Normlessness; anomie; laissez-faire practices; antisocial and amoral norms; norms that encourage violence; reckless behavior; consumerism; poor health practices; and conformity.
Support for Efficacy and Mattering	Youth-based; empowerment practices that support autonomy; making a real difference in one's community; and being taken seriously. Practices that include enabling; responsibility granting; and meaningful challenge. Practices that focus on improvement rather than on relative current performance levels.	Unchallenging; overcontrolling; disempowering; and disabling. Practices that undermine motivation and desire to learn, such as excessive focus on current relative performance level rather than improvement.

continued

TABLE ES-1 *Continued*

	Descriptors	Opposite Poles
Opportunities for Skill Building	Opportunities to learn physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills; exposure to intentional learning experiences; opportunities to learn cultural literacies, media literacy, communication skills, and good habits of mind; preparation for adult employment; and opportunities to develop social and cultural capital.	Practice that promotes bad physical habits and habits of mind; and practice that undermines school and learning.
Integration of Family, School, and Community Efforts	Concordance; coordination; and synergy among family, school, and community.	Discordance; lack of communication; and conflict.

promote both current adolescent well-being and future successful transitions to adulthood.

Serving Diverse Youth at the Community Level

Many different individual organizations provide community programs for youth; each has its own unique approach and activities. How communities organize youth policies, as well as support individual programs, also varies from community to community. For example, the organizing body might be the mayor's office, a local government agency, or a community foundation. A private intermediary organization or an individual charismatic leader, such as a minister or a rabbi, might also organize such efforts. However, it is often the case that there is no single person or group that is responsible for either monitoring the range and quality of community programs for youth or making sure that information about community programs is easily accessible to members of the community.

Conclusion

□ Adolescents who spend time in communities that are rich in developmental opportunities for them experience less risk and show evidence of higher rates of positive development. A diversity of program

opportunities in each community is more likely to support broad adolescent development and attract the interest of and meet the needs of a greater number of youth.

Community programs for youth differ in their objectives, design, approach, and focus, and some may choose to emphasize certain program features over others. Even with the best staff and best funding, no single program can necessarily serve all young people or incorporate all of the features of positive developmental settings. The complexities of adolescent development and the increasing diversity of the country make the heterogeneity of young people in communities both a norm and a challenge. Therefore, effective programs must be flexible enough to adapt to this diversity among the young people they serve and the communities in which they operate.

Recommendation 2—Communities should provide an ample array of program opportunities that appeal to and meet the needs of diverse youth, and should do so through local entities that can coordinate such work across the entire community. Particular attention should be placed on programs for disadvantaged and underserved youth.

Recommendation 3—To increase the likelihood that an ample array of program opportunities will be available, communities should put in place some locally appropriate mechanism for monitoring the availability, accessibility, and quality of programs for youth in their community.

Recommendation 4—Private and public funders should provide the resources needed at the community level to develop and support community-wide programming that is orderly, coordinated, and evaluated in reasonable ways. In addition to support at the community level, this is likely to involve support for intermediary organizations and collaborative teams that include researchers, practitioners, funders, and policy makers.

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND DATA COLLECTION

The multiple groups concerned about community programs for youth—policy makers, families, program developers and practitioners, program staff, and young people themselves—have in common the desire to know whether programs make a difference in the lives of young people, their families, and their communities. Some are interested in

learning about the effectiveness of specific details in a program; some about the effects of a given program; some about the overall effect of a set of programs together; and others about the effects of related kinds of programs. Research, program evaluation, and social indicator data can help improve the design and delivery of programs, and in doing so can play a significant role in answering such questions and improving the well-being and future success of young people.

Research

The committee first reviewed research on both adolescent development and the features of positive developmental settings that support it. In both cases, the research base is just becoming comprehensive enough to allow for tentative conclusions about the individual assets that characterize positive development and features of settings that support it. The committee used a variety of criteria to suggest the tentative lists of both important individual-level assets and features of settings that support positive development outlined in Box ES-1 and Table ES-1. These suggestions are based on scientific evidence from short- and long-term experimental and observational studies, one-time large-scale survey studies, and longitudinal survey studies reviewed by the committee. However, much more comprehensive work is needed.

Conclusions

❑ More comprehensive longitudinal research, that either builds on current efforts or involves new efforts, is needed on a wider range of populations that follows children and adolescents well into adulthood in order to understand which assets are most important to adolescent development and which patterns of assets are linked to particular types of successful adult transitions in various cultural contexts.

❑ Despite its limitations, research in all settings in the lives of adolescents—families, schools, and communities—is yielding consistent evidence that there are specific features of settings that support positive youth development and that these features can be incorporated into community programs

❑ In the committee's judgment, current evidence supports the replication of a few specific integrated programs for positive youth development: the Teen Outreach Program, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Quantum Opportunities are three prime examples.

Very few integrated programs have received the kind of comprehensive experimental evaluation necessary to make a firm recommendation about replicating the program in its entirety across the country. However, there is sufficient evidence from a variety of sources to make recommendations about fundamental principles of supportive developmental settings and some specific aspects of programs that can be used to design community programs for youth. These are captured by the features of supportive settings outlined in Table ES-1.

Recommendation 5—Federal agencies that fund research on adolescent health, development, and well-being, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Education, should build into their portfolios new or more comprehensive longitudinal and experimental research on the personal and social assets needed to promote the healthy development and well-being of adolescents and to promote the successful transition from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood.

Recommendation 6—Public and private funders should support research on whether the features of positive developmental settings identified in this report are the most important features of community programs for youth. This research should encourage program design and implementation that meets the diverse needs of an increasingly heterogeneous population of youth.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation and ongoing program study can provide important insights to inform program design, selection, and modification. Program evaluation can also help funders and policy makers make informed choices about which programs to fund for which groups of youth. The desire to conduct high-quality evaluation can help program staff clarify their objectives and decide which types of evidence will be most useful in determining if these objectives have been met. Ongoing program study and evaluation can also be used by program staff, program participants, and funders to track program objectives; this is typically done by establishing a system for ongoing data collection that measures the extent to which various aspects of the programs are being delivered, how are they delivered, who is providing these services, and who is receiving these services. Such information can provide useful information to program

staff to help them make changes to improve program effectiveness. Finally, program evaluation can test both new and very well developed program designs by assessing the immediate, observable results of the program outcomes and benefits associated with participation in the program.

Such summative evaluation can be done in conjunction with strong theory-based evaluation or as a more preliminary assessment of the potential usefulness of novel programs and quite complex social experiments in which there is no well-specified theory of change. In other words, program evaluation and study can help foster accountability, determine whether programs make a difference, and provide staff with the information they need to improve service delivery.

Clearly there are many purposes for evaluation. Not surprisingly then, there are different opinions among service practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and funders about the most appropriate and useful methods for evaluating community programs for youth. In part, these disagreements reflect different goals and different questions about youth programs. They also reflect philosophical differences about the purposes of evaluation and nature of program development. Program practitioners, policy makers, program evaluators, and others studying programs should decide exactly which questions they want answered before deciding on the most appropriate methods. The most comprehensive experimental evaluation, which involves assessment of the quality of implementation as well as outcomes, is quite expensive and involves a variety of methods. It also provides the most comprehensive information regarding both the effectiveness of specific programs and the reasons for their effectiveness.

Conclusions

- ❑ Very few high-quality comprehensive experimental evaluations of community programs for youth have adequately assessed the impact of the programs on adolescents.
- ❑ Some high-quality experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations show positive effects on a variety of outcomes, including both increases in the psychological and social assets of youth and decreases in the incidence of such problem behaviors as early pregnancy, drug use, and delinquency.
- ❑ Experimental designs are still the best method for estimating the impact of a program on its participants and should be used when this is the goal of the evaluation.

Comprehensive program evaluation is an even better way to gather complete information about programs. It requires asking a number of questions through various methods. The committee identified six fundamental questions that should be considered in comprehensive evaluations:

- Is the theory of the program that is being evaluated explicit and plausible?
- How well has the program theory been implemented in the sites studied?
- In general, is the program effective and, in particular, is it effective with specific subpopulations of young people?
- Whether it is or is not effective, why is this the case?
- What is the value of the program?
- What recommendations about action should be made?

All six questions may not be answered well in one study; several evaluative studies may be needed to address these questions. Thus comprehensive experimental evaluation can be quite expensive and time-consuming—but provides the most information about program design, as well as fundamental questions about human development. Thus, it is particularly useful to both the policy and research communities, as well as the practice community.

In order to generate the kind of information about community programs for youth needed to justify large-scale expenditures on programs and to further fundamental understanding of the role of community programs in youth development, comprehensive experimental program evaluations should be used when:

- the object of study is a program component that repeatedly occurs across many of the organizations currently providing community services to youth;
- an established national organization provides the program being evaluated through many local affiliates; and
- theoretically sound ideas for a new demonstration program or project emerge, and pilot work indicates that these ideas can be implemented in other contexts.

Comprehensive experimental evaluations are not appropriate for newer, less established programs or programs that lack a well-articulated

theory of change underlying the program design. A variety of non-experimental methods, such as interviewing, case studies, and observational techniques, and more focused experimental and quasi-experimental studies are ways to understand and assess these types of community programs for youth. Although the nonexperimental methods tell us less about the effectiveness of particular community programs than experimental program evaluations, they can, when carefully implemented, provide information about the strengths and weakness in program implementation and can be used to identify patterns of effective practice. They are also quite helpful in generating hypotheses about why programs fail.

Programs that meet the following criteria should be studied through nonexperimental or more focused experimental and quasi-experimental methods, depending on the goals of the evaluation:

- An organization, program, project, or program element that has not matured sufficiently in terms of its philosophy and implementation;
- The evaluation has to be conducted by the staff of the program under evaluation;
- The major questions of interest pertain to the quality of the program theory, the implementation of that theory, or to the nature of its participants, staff, or surrounding context;
- The program is quite broad, involving multiple agencies in the same community; and
- The program or organization is interested in reflective practice and continuing improvement.

Whether experimental or nonexperimental methods are used, high-quality, comprehensive evaluation is important to the future development and success of community programs for youth and should be used by all programs and youth-serving organizations.

Recommendation 7—All community programs for youth should undergo evaluation—possibly multiple evaluations—to improve design and implementation, to create accountability, and to assess outcomes and impacts. For any given evaluation, the scope and the rigor should be appropriately calibrated to the attributes of the program, the available resources, and the goals of the evaluation.

Recommendation 8—Funders should provide the necessary funds for evaluation. In many cases, this will involve support for collaborative teams of researchers, evaluators, theoreticians, policy makers, and practitioners to ensure that programs are well designed initially and then evaluated in the most appropriate way.

Data Collection and Social Indicators

Over the past decade, social indicator data and technical assistance resources have become increasingly important tools that community programs can employ to support every aspect of their work—from initial planning and design, to tracking goals, program accountability, targeting services, reflection, and improvement. There are now significant data and related technical assistance resources to aid in understanding the young people involved in these programs. Community programs for youth benefit from ready access to high-quality data that allow them to assess and monitor the well-being of youth in their community, the well-being of youth they directly serve, and the elements of their programs that are intended to support those youth. They also benefit from information and training to help them use these data tools wisely and effectively.

Conclusion

❑ Even when exploited to their full potential, administrative, vital statistics, and related data sources can cover only limited geographic areas and only some components of a youth development framework. Adding local survey data in diverse communities, as has been done in a number of states and individual communities, can help create a more complete picture.

Community programs for youth are interested in building their capacity to assess the quality of their programs. To produce useful process evaluations, performance monitoring, and self-assessment, however, program practitioners need valid, reliable indicators and measures of the developmental quality of the experiences they provide. Such information would also facilitate the ability of communities to monitor change over time as new program initiatives are introduced into the community. If communities know how their youth are doing on a variety of indicators for an extended period of time both before and after a new program

is introduced, they can use this information as preliminary evidence that their program is effective. Such inferences are strengthened if information on the same indicators is available in comparable communities that did not introduce that program at the same time. Research is needed to determine whether appropriate indicators vary depending on the characteristics of the specific youth population served by a program and as understanding of the determinants of positive youth development improves, these indicators should be periodically revisited and, if necessary, revised.

Many community programs also lack staff knowledge and the funds to take full advantage of social indicators as tools to aid in planning, monitoring, assessing, and improving program activities. Individual programs and communities would benefit from opportunities to improve their capacity to collect and use social indicator data.

Recommendation 9—Public and private funders should support the fielding of youth development surveys in more states and communities around the country; the development, testing, and fielding of new youth development measures that work well across diverse population subgroups; and greater coordination between measures used in community surveys and national longitudinal surveys.

Recommendation 10—Public and private funders should support collaboration between researchers and the practice community to develop social indicator data that build understanding of how programs are implemented and improve the ability to monitor programs. Collaborative efforts would further the understanding of the relationship between program features and positive developmental outcomes among young people.

Recommendation 11—Public and private funders should provide opportunities for individual programs and communities to increase their capacity to collect and use social indicator data. This requires better training for program staff and more support for national and regional intermediaries that provide technical assistance in a variety of ways, including Internet-based systems.

COMMUNITY
PROGRAMS
TO PROMOTE
YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT

Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth

Jacquelynn Eccles and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, *Editors*

Board on Children, Youth, and Families
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The photographs on the cover and used in this report are the work of young people from throughout the United States involved in a youth photography program. They are the work of Brittany Green, Lim Mom, Terrell Stewart, Shytise Taylor, and Lenna Vorn. The sponsor of the youth photography program was the EZ/EC Foundation Consortium, a partnership of 10 foundations formed to support implementation of the EZ/EC Initiative's 10-year effort to revitalize urban and rural areas of deep poverty, and to help document its lessons.

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Acknowledgments

The Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth is a project of the National Research Council (NRC) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM). This report is the product of a 2-year project during which a 15-member committee evaluated and integrated the current science of adolescent health and development with research and findings related to program design, implementation, and evaluation of community programs for youth. The funding for this project was provided by a diverse group of public and private sponsors: the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the U.S. Department of Justice; the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Monitoring in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; the William T. Grant Foundation; and the Ford Foundation. We are also grateful for the support provided to Jacquelynne Eccles, committee chair, by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Center for Ad-

vanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, during the time that she chaired this committee.

Beyond the expertise and hard work of the committee, we were fortunate to have many leaders in the field enthusiastically participate in this project. These individuals shared their knowledge and years of experience as researchers, evaluators, practitioners, policy makers, and funders of youth programs and interventions. We are thankful for their time and their intellectual insights.

During the planning and early working stages of this project, a small group of well-respected authorities in the area of youth development advised the staff and the committee. We wish to thank these individuals for sharing their wisdom and for their enduring commitment to issues affecting the health, development, and well-being of young people and the institutions that serve them: Peter L. Benson, Search Institute; Michele Cahill, Carnegie Corporation of New York; Jean Grossman, Public/Private Ventures; Richard Murphy, Academy for Educational Development; Karen Pittman, International Youth Foundation/Forum for Youth Investment; and Constancia Warren, Academy for Educational Development.

In October 1999 the committee convened a one-day Workshop on Opportunities to Promote Child and Adolescent Development During After-School Hours. Participants included leading researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and funders from the fields of education, research and evaluation, adolescent development, and program design and delivery: Michele Cahill, Carnegie Corporation of New York; Jennifer Davis, Office of the Mayor of Boston, Massachusetts; Joy Dryfoos, Hastings-on-Hudson, New York; Robert Halpern, Erikson Institute; Karen Hein, William T. Grant Foundation; Robin L. Jarrett, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; Joan Lombardi, Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy; Richard Negron, Children's Aid Society; Terry Peterson, U.S. Department of Education; Karen Pittman, International Youth Foundation/Forum for Youth Investment; Jane Quinn, DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund; Elizabeth Reisner, Policy Studies Associates; Carla Sanger, LA's Best; Carter Savage, Boys and Girls Clubs of America; Constancia Warren, Academy for Educational Development; and Heather Weiss, Harvard Family Research Project.

In January 2000 the committee convened a second one-day Workshop on the Science of Youth Development Programs. Another set of leaders from diverse fields presented their work along with important insights about future directions and current needs: Dale Blyth, Center for

4-H Youth Development; Diane Chamberlain, Valley Community Clinic; Michelle Alberti Gambone, Gambone and Associates; Douglas Kirby, ETR Associates; David Milner, Community Impact! USA; Constanca Warren, Academy for Educational Development; Heather Weiss, Harvard Family Research Project; Kendra Wells, 4-H Youth Development; Gary Yates The California Wellness Foundation; and Hanh Cao Yu, Social Policy Research Associates.

In addition to formal workshops, a number of individuals were invited to make presentations and participate in discussions at the regularly scheduled meetings of the committee. In October 1999, we were fortunate to participate in a panel discussion about community programs and suggested future research directions with Ann Segal, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Pam Stevens, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation; and Xavier De Souza Briggs, Division of Research, Evaluation, and Monitoring of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. At the same meeting, Jodie Roth-Herbst, Center for Children and Families, Teachers College, Columbia University, and Jean Grossman, Public/Private Ventures, summarized research on preventing risk behaviors and promoting youth development. Lloyd Kolbe, Division of Adolescent and School Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, also discussed the threats to adolescent health and well-being.

In March 2000, several people described public and private supports that exist at the national, state, and local levels and ways in which intermediary organizations are organizing youth programming at the community level. Karen Pittman, International Youth Foundation/Forum for Youth Investment, provided an overview of major youth initiatives and organizations and suggested ways in which they fit together. Dale Blyth, Center for 4-H Youth Development, University of Minnesota, and Jeffrey Arnett, University of Maryland, provided their perspectives on positive youth development and suggested developmental milestones that mark or facilitate the end of adolescence and the transition to adulthood. Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatteé of the University of Pennsylvania summarized their research on the Penn Prevention Project. Michele Cahill, Carnegie Corporation of New York, described the array of activities that currently make up youth development programming. Jean Grossman, Public/Private Ventures, discussed measurement tools, indicators, and processes for youth programs. Finally, Richard Murphy and Constanca Warren of the Academy for Educational Development, dis-

cussed policy and system-level supports and barriers for youth development programs.

Two committee members spent a day with Richard Catalano at the University of Washington discussing the work he and his colleagues at the Social Development Research Group had done reviewing existing community-based programs for youth. Three other committee members and one staff person spent time with Bruce Saito and his staff at the Los Angeles Conservation Corps learning about their programs and talking with youth participants.

We also wish to acknowledge several consultants who either wrote or helped to write documents that were incorporated into this report: Jonathan Zaff, Child Trends, summarized the data on participation levels in youth programs and the measurement of positive youth outcomes; Naweko Dial, a graduate student at Stanford University, reviewed youth program opportunities on Indian reservations; Candice Jones, a law student at Georgetown University, collected information on youth development funding; Joanna Burton, a doctoral student at the University of Illinois-Champaign and an intern with the National Academies, helped review the research on community, school, and family influences on adolescent development; and Janice Templeton, a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, made an extraordinary commitment to reviewing and synthesizing the vast collection of evaluation research on community programs for youth and helped draft Chapters 6 and 7 of this report.

Dozens of scientists provided articles, papers, chapters, and books. We are most appreciative of the responses to our requests for information from Robert Blum, Center for Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota; James Connell, Institute for Research and Reform in Education; Delbert Elliot, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado, Boulder; Thaddeus Ferber, International Youth Foundation/Forum for Youth Investment; Michele Gambone, Gambone and Associates; Jean Grossman, Public/Private Ventures; Merita Irby, International Youth Foundation/Forum for Youth Investment; Douglas Kirby, ETR Associates; Bonnie Politz, Academy for Educational Development; and Gary Walker, Public/Private Ventures.

The photographs on the cover and used in this report are the work of young people from throughout the United States involved in a youth photography program. Professional photographer Steven Shames taught them to use cameras to capture positive community activities and community change. The photos represent young people engaged in commu-

nity service, arts, music, recreation, and mentoring. They are the work of Brittany Green, Lim Mom, Terrell Stewart, Shytise Taylor, and Lenna Vorn. The sponsor of the youth photography program was the EZ/EC Foundation Consortium, a partnership of 10 foundations formed to support implementation of the EZ/EC Initiative's 10-year effort to revitalize urban and rural areas of deep poverty, and to help document its lessons.

This report has been reviewed in draft form by individuals chosen for their diverse perspectives and technical expertise, in accordance with procedures approved by the Report Review Committee of the NRC. The purpose of this independent review is to provide candid and critical comments that will assist the institution in making the published report as sound as possible and to ensure that the report meets institutional standards for objectivity, evidence, and responsiveness to the study charge. The review comments and draft manuscript remain confidential to protect the integrity of the deliberative process.

We thank the following individuals for their participation in the review of this report: Anthony Biglan, Oregon Research Institute, Eugene, OR; Angela Diaz, Community Medicine, Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York; Kenneth A. Dodge, Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University; Greg J. Duncan, Institute for Policy Research/School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University; Paula Duncan, Agency for Human Services, State of Vermont; Lorraine V. Klerman, Maternal and Child Health Program, School of Public Health, University of Alabama; Jane Quinn, The Children's Aid Society, New York; Robert J. Sampson, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago; Shepherd Smith, Institute for Youth Development, Sterling, VA; Wendy Wheeler, National 4-H Council, Chevy Chase, MD; and Brian Wilcox, Center on Children, Families, and the Law, Lincoln, NE.

Although the reviewers listed above have provided many constructive comments and suggestions, they were not asked to endorse the conclusions or recommendations nor did they see the final draft of the report before its release. The review of this report was overseen by Beatrix Hamburg, Department of Psychiatry, Cornell University Medical College. Appointed by the National Research Council, she was responsible for making certain that an independent examination of this report was carried out in accordance with institutional procedures and that all review comments were carefully considered. Responsibility for the final content of this report rests entirely with the authoring panel and the institution.

The committee wishes to recognize the important contributions and

support provided by several individuals connected to the NRC and the IOM. We thank the members of the Board on Children, Youth, and Families (BOCYF), under the leadership of Evan Charney, and the Forum on Adolescence, under the leadership of David Hamburg. We also thank Kenneth Shine, IOM president; Susanne Stoiber, IOM executive officer; Barbara Torrey, executive director of the NRC's Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences (DBASSE); Faith Mitchell, DBASSE deputy director; and Jane Ross, director of the Center for Economic and Social Sciences for their steadfast support of the project and their critical review of multiple drafts of the report.

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Jennifer A. Gootman, *Study Director*
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