

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

*Vision Statement*

All children in Indiana deserve an environment surrounded by competent and caring adults providing the highest level of care in order to offer youth a sense of belonging and empowerment, and promoting interactions that conform to the principles of positive youth development.

THE CHILDREN'S COALITION OF INDIANA WILL ADVOCATE AND SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING:

*Advocacy*

- ◆ Programs and initiatives that foster age-appropriate assets for the social, emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and physical development of youth.
- ◆ Restore all youth prevention funding, including Youth Service Bureaus, Project Safe Place, and after-school program funding, to its pre-2010 level, ensuring all youth in Indiana opportunities designed to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system.
- ◆ The use of research-based standards and competencies in all programs for children and youth.
- ◆ Support the creation of a permanent, statewide council to disseminate information on youth-focused research, funding partnerships, and public policy to stakeholders and the general public.

*Legislative Action*

- ◆ Support the establishment of a State employment position that identifies and disseminates Federal funding opportunities for local youth development initiatives, or assign such responsibilities to a State agency related to youth development.
- ◆ Ensure that youth development opportunities are not compromised as a result of regionalization, privatization, and other cost-cutting measures.
- ◆ Support the identification of all spending on youth programs in the State's budget.
- ◆ Oppose legislative initiatives that would enable further licensing of convenience stores, gas stations, and grocery stores to sell alcoholic beverages, as it has been clearly demonstrated that such expansion of alcohol sales increases opportunities for underage access.

*Administrative Action*

- ◆ Adopt State policies that support full youth partnership and participation in decision-making, programming, and development of services.
- ◆ Review and revise public transportation policies and procedures to increase youth accessibility to enrichment opportunities and remove barriers that prohibit participation.

*Implications of Non-Action*

- ◆ Failure to provide adequate prevention services leads to increased juvenile crime, higher teen pregnancy rates, and an increase in substance abuse, especially during after-school hours.
- ◆ Failure to provide remedial education and vocational opportunities will produce a generation of workers prepared for no more than minimum-wage employment, who are unable to compete in an increasingly technological workforce.
- ◆ Failure to provide prevention services for youth results in increased high school dropout rates, in turn impacting economic development, employment rates, poverty, and reliance upon public

assistance.

## **RATIONALE: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

While parents have the primary responsibility for the social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of their children, programs that support their efforts can strengthen the ability of the family to raise healthy children, productive workers, and responsible citizens.

### **Need for Youth Development Activities:**

73.8 percent of Hoosier parents who have school aged children work outside of the home (2009 American Community Survey). Because of this, afterschool care is a growing need in communities<sup>41</sup>. 24.9 percent of sixth graders and 67.1 percent of 12th graders are not supervised by an adult in the after school hours<sup>41</sup>. After school programs, such as sports, lessons, or clubs, provide children with opportunities to enrich their social, emotional and academic skills. Lack of afterschool programs impacts low-income communities at a larger rate due to family incomes and school budgets not allowing for expenses on enrichment activities.

This lack of structured activities and supervision results in an increase of negative activities between the critical hours of 3:00pm and 6:00pm. It has been found that youth ages 12 to 14 are most likely to experiment with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco during these hours<sup>41</sup>. Studies show that being unsupervised during after-school hours puts teens at a greater risk for truancy, poor grades, and depression<sup>41</sup>. Violence also peaks during the afterschool hours, and teens are twice as likely as adults to become victims of a violent crime and three times as likely to become victims of simple assault<sup>41</sup>. Additionally, teens are more likely to engage in gang violence between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.<sup>41</sup>.

### **Positive Youth Development:**

Government decisions regarding youth must not be driven by a remedial or punitive approach to the problems of young people; rather, government must adopt a comprehensive strategy to promote the positive development of all school-age youth, encouraging and empowering communities to develop and implement comprehensive plans to meet the growing needs of this often forgotten segment of our population. A proactive, asset-based approach to youth development will benefit young people, families, and communities. There is a demonstrated need for a major expansion of community-based services that promote positive youth development in Indiana.

Community strategic plans for positive youth development should embody the following principles:

- ◆ When youth development is identified as a broad public responsibility, young people will thrive.
- ◆ The role of the family is better supported when positive youth development opportunities are available.
- ◆ Youth are empowered when they are included as partners with adults in the decision-making process.
- ◆ Youth are better prepared to meet the challenges of adulthood when engaged in citizenship and community service activities.
- ◆ Youth development opportunities are greatly enhanced when community-based organizations are properly resourced.
- ◆ Increased investment in the youth development profession will result in higher quality youth services.

Permitting alcohol to be sold at convenience stores, gas stations and a greater number of grocery stores would increase the availability of alcohol to youth by doubling the number of current vendors. In a previous year there was a 230% increase in applications for permits to sell alcohol at gas stations/convenience stores, the majority of which were granted<sup>42</sup>. It is time that steps be taken to reduce the probability of adolescents becoming alcohol abusers. Even though death may not result, the possibility of our youth not being able to realize their full human potential due to alcohol addiction is of grave concern.

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<sup>41</sup> Indiana Youth Institute. (2007). Kids Count in Indiana: 2007 Data Book.

<sup>42</sup> Alcohol Tobacco Commission, December, 2007