

Center
for the
Study
of
Social
Policy

Creating Strategies, Empowering Communities, Delivering Results

YOUTH RIVE

PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING



The Center's Goal

To examine how foster youth can be supported in ways that advance healthy development and well-being and reduce the impact of negative life experiences.

Adolescents in Foster Care

- ❑ Approximately 44 % of the children in care are over the age of 11
- ❑ 1 in 3 of the children who *enter* foster care are over 11 years old
- ❑ Last year, almost 30,000 youth exited foster care without a safe and permanent family
- ❑ Outcomes:
 - 24.4% of adolescents who aged out did not have high school diploma or GED compared to 7.3% of general population
 - 52% were unemployed compared to 24.4% of the general population
 - Only 57% had health insurance compared to 78% of the general population
 - 30% of the young people in the Midwest study reported homelessness for at least one day by age 24

Federal Mandate on Safety, Permanency and Well-Being

Safety:

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect
- Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate

Permanency:

- Children have permanency and stability in their living arrangements
- Continuity of family relationships and connections are preserved for children

Well-Being:

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

Premises

- Adolescence can be a difficult stage, particularly for youth who have experienced adversity.
- Much can be learned about helping at-risk youth by understanding what healthy development entails for all youth.
- When a state removes a child from the home, it has an obligation to meet the developmental needs of the youth.
- As adolescence is a unique developmental period, youth need developmentally appropriate service delivery approaches.

Premises (continued)

- Child welfare *alone* cannot address the social, emotional, cognitive and physical well being of youth.
- Advancing healthy development and well-being for youth must focus on increasing both protective and promotive factors and reducing risk factors.
- Such an approach must be adopted by multiple youth serving systems.
- Research in positive youth development, resiliency, neuroscience and the impact of trauma on brain development can inform policy and practice.

“Adolescence is a time of enormous opportunity and of enormous risk. And how the teens spend their time seems to be particularly crucial. If the ‘use it or lose it’ principle holds true, then the activities of the teen may help guide the hard-wiring, actual physical connections in their brain.”

Dr. Jay Giedd

The Task

Scan the lifespan development research:

- What does healthy development and well-being look like?
- How is healthy development and well-being achieved?

Two Results

Document

“Scan and Compilation of Research
Addressing Developmental Issues across
the Lifespan (0 - 25), with Special
Attention to Adolescent Development”

Evolving Protective Factors Framework

Document Outline

I. Background on “Development”

- A. Defining “Development” – 3 Perspectives
- B. Lifespan Development
- C. Critical Life Events
- D. Domains of Development
- E. Major Current Theories and Perspectives in Lifespan Development

II. Background on “Adolescence”

- A. Conceiving “Adolescence”
- B. Parent-Child/Adolescent Relationships
- C. Adolescent Risk-Taking & Risky Behavior
- D. Identity Development and Risk-Taking

III. Developmental Neuroscience

- A. Basic Principles and Constructs
- B. Adversity, Stress, and the Brain
- C. Changes in Brain Structure & Function
- D. Implications of the Nature of the Adolescent Brain

IV. Developmental Tasks (O-25)

V. What Does Healthy Development Look Like?

- A. Developmental Tasks
- B. Constructs of Positive Youth Development
- C. Factors that Affect Healthy Development
- D. The Positive Psychology Perspective
- E. Positive Youth Development Approach
- F. Developmental Assets
- G. Successful Adult Development

VI. How is Healthy Development Achieved?

VII. Risk and Protective Factors

VIII. Resiliency

- A. Key Studies and Events
- B. Personal Resiliency Strengths
- C. Resilience Correlates
- D. Resiliency and Adolescence

Increased Knowledge

- Protective and promotive factors
- Positive youth development
- Resiliency
- Adolescent brain development
- Impact of trauma
- Trauma informed practice

Risk, Protective, Promotive Factors

Risk factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that increase the probability of poor outcomes.

Protective factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk.

- *Healthy development and well-being cannot be explained simply as mitigating, coping with, or eliminating risk.*

Promotive factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that actively enhance well-being.

Protective + Promotive Factors

Increase the probability of positive, adaptive, and resilient outcomes, even in the face of risk.

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PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

INCREASE PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS

- Positive self-concept and high self-esteem
- Healthy, supportive, caring relationships with family, other adults, and peers
- Constructive engagement in family, school, and community
- Safe, stable, nurturing, and equitable environments

REDUCE RISK FACTORS

- Psychological stressors
- Inadequate or negative relationships with adults or peers
- Insufficient or inadequate opportunities for positive growth and development
- Unsafe, unstable, inequitable environments

DYNAMIC OUTCOMES HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT & WELL-BEING FOR YOUTH

INDIVIDUAL

- Hopeful, compassionate, curious, resilient identity
- Supportive family and social networks
- Ability to form and sustain caring, committed relationships
- Success in school & workplace

POPULATION

- Physically, emotionally and mentally healthy
- Supportive family and social networks
- Appropriate education to achieve goals
- Participation in school and community
- Safe and nurtured in communities
- Successful in school

Recommendations

- Take a positive youth development approach to all opportunities for young people in foster care.
- Provide “interdependent” living services that connect young people with family and caring adults.
- Engage young people in planning and making decisions.
- Be trauma-informed to promote healing and emotional security.
- Promote community partnerships that create a web of opportunities for youth and their families that enhance healthy development and well-being.

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. (2011). *The Adolescent Brain: New Research and Its Implications for Young People Transitioning from Foster Care*. St. Louis, Missouri.

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Questions and Comments

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