

## FEATURES OF A POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM<sup>1</sup>

- Physical and psychological safety and security
- Structure that is developmentally appropriate, with clear expectations, increasing opportunities to make decisions and to take on leadership roles
- Emotional and moral support
- Opportunities to experience supportive adult relationships
- Opportunities to form close relationships with peers that support and reinforce healthy behaviors
- Opportunities to feel a sense of belonging and being valued
- Opportunities to develop positive social value and norms
- Opportunities for skill building and mastery
- Opportunities to develop confidence in their abilities to master their environment
- Opportunities to make a contribution to their community
- Strong links between families, schools, and broader community resources

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ON POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



### Oklahoma State Department of Health

*Maternal and Child Health Service  
Child & Adolescent Health Division*  
(405) 271-4471  
<http://cah.health.ok.gov>

**National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth**  
Website: [www.ncfy.com](http://www.ncfy.com)

**Community Guide to Helping America's Youth**  
[www.helpingamericasyouth.gov](http://www.helpingamericasyouth.gov)

**Family and Youth Services Bureau**  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb)

**Search Institute**  
[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

**Center for Youth Development and Policy Research**  
[cyd.aed.org/ydmobilization.html](http://cyd.aed.org/ydmobilization.html)



## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

HELPING  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
ACHIEVE  
FULL POTENTIAL



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<sup>1</sup>National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth for the Family and Youth Services Bureau. (2007). Putting positive youth development into practice. *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, iii-47.

<sup>2</sup>Pittman, K.J., Martin, S., and Yohalem, N. (2006). Youth development as a "big picture" public health strategy. *Journal of Public Health Management Practice*, s23-s25.

<sup>3</sup>Birkhead, G.S., Riser, M.H., Mesler, K., Tallon, T.C., and Klein, S.J. (2006). Youth development is a public health approach. *Journal of Public Health Management Practice*, s1-s3

<sup>4</sup>Family and Youth Services Bureau. (2007). *Fact sheet: Positive youth development*. Retrieved from: <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/> 28 March, 2008.

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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# POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF ADOLESCENTS HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON THE OVERALL HEALTH OF SOCIETY: TODAY’S ADOLESCENTS ARE TOMORROW’S WORKFORCE, PARENTS, AND LEADERS. IN THE PAST, APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH YOUTH TO IMPROVE HEALTH OFTEN FOCUSED SOLELY ON PROBLEM BEHAVIORS AND EFFORTS TO CHANGE THEM. THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH EMPHASIZES THE MANY POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND FOCUSES ON WORKING TO DEVELOP INHERENT STRENGTHS AND ASSETS IN YOUTH TO PROMOTE HEALTHY BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT<sup>3</sup>

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (PYD) IS BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT, GIVEN GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FROM CARING ADULTS, ALL YOUTH CAN GROW UP HEALTHY AND HAPPY, MAKING POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES<sup>1</sup>.

THE POWER OF THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH IS THAT IT CALLS FOR BOLSTERING THE EXPECTATIONS AND RANGE OF SUPPORT OFFERED TO YOUNG PEOPLE WHO FACE BARRIERS TO THEIR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE THE RANGE OF ASSETS ALL YOUTH POSSESS<sup>2</sup>.



## 40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS<sup>1</sup>

Research has provided a number of various findings in regards to youth needs for life challenges. One of the most comprehensive and cited works comes from The Search Institute, which in 1990, put forward a list of 40 developmental “assets” it believes are critical to the positive development of young people. Twenty of the assets come from the outside world of community and family, while the other twenty come from values inside the youth.

## EXTERNAL ASSETS<sup>1</sup>

### Support

This includes family support and parental involvement, positive family communication, other adult caring relationships, caring neighborhood and school climate

### Empowerment

Community values youth, youths viewed as a useful resource, community service, safety

### Boundaries & Expectations

Family, school and neighborhood boundaries, adult role models, positive peer influence, high expectations and encouragement

### Constructive Use of Time

Youth is involved in creative activities, youth programs, religious activities and uses time at home wisely

## INTERNAL ASSETS<sup>1</sup>

### Commitment to Learning

Achievement motivation, school engagement, at least one hour of homework per day, bonds with school, reading for pleasure

### Positive Values

Caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, restraint

### Special Competencies

Planning and decision making skills, interpersonal competence, resistance skills, peaceful conflict resolution

### Positive Identity

Personal power, self-esteem, sense of purpose, positive view of personal future

## HOW CAN THESE ASSETS HELP YOUNG PEOPLE<sup>1</sup>

Research by The Search Institute has shown that having a greater number of these developmental assets reduce a young person’s tendency towards:

- Alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use
- Antisocial behavior and violence
- School failure
- Sexual activity
- Attempted suicide



## BENEFITS OF USING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH<sup>1</sup>

- Youth believe they can be successful instead of internalizing the negative statistics about them that often appear in the media
- Youth engage in productive activities that build job and life skills and reinforce community-mindedness
- Youth grow comfortable questioning and exploring roles as citizens in a participatory democracy

This benefits occur when community members and policymakers harness the positive energy and initiative of youth, rather than focusing on their problems.

## A ROLE FOR EVERYONE<sup>4</sup>

- Neighborhood and community leaders can involve young people to discuss improvements in their communities
- Policymakers can engage youth in discussions about policies that affect them
- Youth service organizations can encourage youth participation in every aspect of their work
- Teachers and school administration can ensure that school policies, procedures, and teaching methods engage young people fully
- Parents can strive to engage their children in positive activities that nurture their talents, skills, and interests