

Assets for Youth Work Group Planning Meeting

Issue: Positive activities for young people in our community

- What assets are there for youth in our community?
- What kind of support do these programs and activities need from the community in order to continue and/or to expand?
- What facilitates/hinders youth participation in the activities that exist?
- What youth activities are underrepresented?
- Which youth are underserved?

Two recent reports written for the Charlottesville/Albemarle Commission on Children and Families (CCF) have highlighted the need for engaging local youth, especially those at-risk, in productive activities. It has been shown that access to quality out-of-school programs in the neighborhood and community is a protective factor for youth. Furthermore, gaps in extracurricular opportunities for youth are associated with an increased likelihood to engage in risky behaviors.

Target populations:

- Middle and High School Students
- Groups of youth identified as less involved in productive activities:
 1. Lower Income (“Working Poor”)
 2. At-risk
 3. Juvenile Offenders
 4. Rural Youth

What do we know?

- Local and national research indicates that involvement in activities is a strong protective factor for youth.

National research:

- The U.S. Departments of Education and Justice report that high quality after-school programs increase children’s safety, decrease risk-taking behavior, and increase academic ability.
- Teens who do not participate in after-school activities are more likely to become teen parents than those who are involved.

Charlottesville/Albemarle research:

- Lower income youth (defined as those households with reported incomes of less than \$30,000) have lower levels of involvement in sports, fine arts and other productive activities and services. [CCF Needs Assessment, 2003]
 - Contributing factors may include transportation, cost and age of entry into programs.
- Initial findings from an informal survey of out-of-school programs indicate that there are over 20 organizations in the area that provide out-of-school services most of which provide supervised activities between 3:30 and 6:30 p.m. on weekdays.
 - There is a lack of before school and late evening programming for youth.

- A need for coordination of services may be needed to avoid over-serving certain groups of students.
- Youth involved in the juvenile justice system are less likely than their peers to be involved in productive activities. [CCF Juvenile Offender Study, 2002]
 - Specifically, 76% of the juvenile offenders in a local study group were described as not involved in a productive activity.

Questions to be answered...

- What would it take to get more at-risk youth involved in local activities/sports teams?
- Which outreach and recruitment strategies are most successful locally?
- Would access to transportation to and from extracurricular activities help? What type of transportation?
- What additional supports are needed to include at-risk youth in activities?
- How critical is it for parents of the target youth to be involved in the activities? To what degree are they willing to be involved?
- Is there a need for a comprehensive list of youth services that includes team/organization schedules and contact information? (with criteria for joining certain groups/organizations)
- What kinds of activities would older youth (ages 14-17) be interested in?
- Are there activities not currently available that would be beneficial?
- Is parental involvement important? To what degree are parents of the target youth willing to get involved?

Benefits of CCF Workgroup Structure:

CCF work groups are part of a broad strategy for a healthy community. Work groups provide a forum for community members to work together toward a shared goal. When work groups present recommendations to the CCF, the report is discussed, approved, or revised for policy or program recommendations to the local governments and to the community. As a result, workgroup recommendations can impact the provision of resources and program decisions and improve the lives of children and their families.