

Positive Youth Development

A NEW BEGINNINGS MENTORING TRAINING

Positive Youth Development

- ▶ Positive youth development refers to an ongoing growth process in which all youths endeavor to meet their basic needs for safety, caring relationships, and connections to the larger community while striving to build academic, vocational, personal, and social skills.

Emphasis on POSITIVE Outcomes

- ▶ Examples of youth development outcomes are:
 - ❑ competence (academic, social, vocational skills),
 - ❑ self-confidence, connectedness (healthy relationship to community, friends, family),
 - ❑ character (integrity, moral commitment), caring and compassion.

Long-Term Involvement

- ▶ Supportive relationships have to endure for a long period of time to be effective.
- ▶ Supportive relationships have to accompany young people throughout their growing up years.
- ▶ While short-term positive results may be seen and should be built on, positive and community-based youth outcomes may not be measurable for 15-20 years.
- ▶ Youth development strategies have to embrace and ready themselves for long-term engagement.

Community Involvement

- ▶ Youth development stresses the importance to engage the larger social environment that influences how young people grow up and develop.
- ▶ This includes family and friends and the community they live in.
- ▶ Community involves social services, youth organizations, schools, law enforcement agencies, businesses, faith and civic groups and private citizens.
- ▶ Positive Youth development needs strategies and tools that involve large sectors of the community in the task of making the community a better place for young people to grow up in.

Coordination with other Youth Services

- ▶ The staff of youth development programs increasingly recognize the need to work in meaningful partnerships with other community institutions, especially schools. Rather than viewing schools as having responsibility for academic achievement while they are working on "everything else," community organizations are seeing youth development as a shared responsibility.
- ▶ For example, many communities are designing community schools or extended-service schools—partnerships between public schools and community organizations that increase young people's access to safe places, enriched education, and positive relationships at all hours of the day and evening.

Coordination with other Youth Services Continued

- ▶ A key issue in the implementation of community schools is the extent to which the after-school program connects with and enriches the school curriculum.
- ▶ While most observers would agree that children's needs are best addressed when coordination and enrichment occur, in reality these aims are difficult to achieve. Often the after-school program is offered in isolation from the day-time program, resulting in a missed opportunity to reinforce children's learning and to provide an integrated experience.
- ▶ Equally often, extended-day programs miss the opportunity to engage children in enriched learning through experiences that are different from what happens during the school day. For many extended-day programs, the programmatic "default drive" is remediation (especially tutoring) and help with homework. While there is a place for such services, the focus of the extended day should be enrichment and the provision of learning opportunities that complement and supplement what happens during the regular school day.

Coordination with Youth Services Continued

- ▶ After-school programs can extend children's "time on task" without duplicating exactly what happens during the school day. Creative program designers know that you can teach reading, math, and science through cooking or woodworking class, performing and visual arts, individual and team sports, and planning and implementing community service programs. Chess clubs and technology classes provide perfect opportunities to practice logic, persistence, concentration, and critical thinking skills.

Effectiveness of Programs Targeting Specific Programs

- ▶ Several studies have shown that participation in targeted prevention programs can reduce high-risk behaviors among teenagers. For example, in four consecutive annual evaluations, participants in the Teen Outreach Program sponsored by the Association of Junior Leagues International were shown to be less likely than their nonparticipant peers to have experienced either pregnancy or school failure.
- ▶ Often, studies show that participation in individual components—such as assertiveness training or parent-daughter communication about sexuality—leads to more specific pregnancy-reduction effects.
- ▶ Studies have shown that participation is associated with improved school attendance, lower dropout rates, and improved scores in work readiness, math, reading, and self-esteem.

Questions