

Youth Surveys and Youth Development Strategies: Lessons from the Field

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Youth Surveys and Strategies

Advances in our understanding of the complex role the environment plays in shaping youth opportunities, behaviors, values, and attitudes have generated widespread interest in "youth development." Youth development is used in at least three ways that are related but distinguishable:

- 1. Natural process:** the growing capacity of a young person to understand and act upon the environment.
- 2. Philosophy or approach:** a set of principles emphasizing active support for the growing capacity of young people by individuals, organizations, and institutions, especially at the community level.
- 3. Programs and organizations:** a planned set of activities (consistent with the approach in #2) that foster young people's growing capacity (as described in #1).

Youth development strategies (#3) seek to address the common and interconnected causes of risk behavior by capitalizing on opportunities at the family, school, community, and peer levels to prevent their occurrence.

Although the new emphasis on youth development and primary prevention has spawned a number of provocative approaches and instruments, most of these have evolved independently of one another, leaving those in the youth development field to suffer from lack of a unified and comprehensive vocabulary. Surveys for measuring adolescent well-being have proliferated in recent years. Many of these instruments extend far beyond simple measures of risk behavior and are accompanied by "ecological" youth development strategies aimed at reforming adolescent home, peer, school, and community environments. Users must select among a variety of survey tools based on related but differently labeled theories and conceptual

domains. The liberal, broad-ranging use of terms such as "assets," "risk factors," "protective factors," "positive developmental outcomes," and "thriving indicators" confuses even the most knowledgeable youth development specialists and impedes comparisons of the tools and integration of the approaches they represent.

This document describes four youth development assessment tools: the Social Development Strategy, developed by Communities That Care (CTC); the Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors, developed by the Search Institute; the Expanded Youth Risk Behavior Survey (EYRBS), developed by the New York State Departments of Health and Education; and the Youth Enhancement Survey (YES), developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The sections detailing the conceptual domains included in the descriptions of each survey tool adopt the terms and categories used by each survey developer to describe primary assessment areas (with one exception; the EYRBS questions were grouped into conceptual categories not originally designated by the authors to permit easier comparison with the other tools). A glossary of terms is provided to assist the reader in comparing assessment categories across tools.

The second half of the document summarizes reports from communities that have used the surveys and associated youth development strategies. It supplements the description of the survey tools with information about the experiences of upstate New York communities that have begun to use the tools and strategies to foster the development of young people. We hope readers will be able to make well-informed decisions among tools and strategies or to combine them appropriately.

Youth Survey Communities That Care, Seattle, Washington

Background

Communities That Care (CTC, also known by the names of its principals, Catalano and Hawkins) is a private organization that provides an assessment survey and corollary support services to communities seeking a comprehensive youth development strategy. The hallmark of the CTC strategy is a solid research base. The CTC Social Development Strategy is the research framework that CTC employs to assist communities in identifying specific goals and objectives. This framework rests on ecological research demonstrating that young people who have strong bonds to their families, schools, and communities are most likely to prosper. CTC uses a community-wide approach, in which key stakeholders are encouraged to address youth issues with multiple strategies in multiple domains. To guide each community's approach, CTC provides tools for measuring levels of risk factors and for selecting which risk factors are most significant, and it provides methods for monitoring community progress. Because CTC has amassed a broad range of "promising approaches"—programs and strategies proven through research to be effective in reducing risk—they are able to assist communities in designing a comprehensive program for addressing youth needs once the risk profile for that community has been compiled. The survey and support services are aimed primarily at identifying and addressing youth at risk.

Support Services and Costs

CTC offers an extensive range of support services. In addition to the survey tool and data analysis, they offer a variety of trainings, consultations, and technical assistance. They also publish a wide range of workbooks, videos, planning kits, transparencies, risk reduction curricula, and textbooks. One of the program's strengths is being able to walk a community step-by-step through the entire process of identifying, addressing, and evaluating youth development needs. Assuming the ability to pay, communities working with CTC have access to multiple resources that facili-

tate efficient and effective planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Costs for bringing in CTC trainers range from \$3,400 to \$8,000 per training, depending on the nature and length of the training. Strategic consultation and technical assistance cost \$1,000 to \$1,500 per day. The CTC youth surveys cost \$1.60 or \$1.80 per student, depending on the quantity purchased. The final narrative report costs from \$500 to \$700. CTC offers a wide variety of school curricula that range in cost from \$175 to \$525. Other support materials range from \$16.95 to \$550.00. Communities may choose from a variety of packages to tailor services to meet their own needs.

Survey Design and Research Base

The CTC youth survey assesses both risk and protective factors. The risk component is based on nineteen risk factors that have consistently proved to be reliable predictors of adolescent substance abuse, pregnancy, delinquency, school dropout, and violence. The protective component is based on research documenting the role that families, schools, and communities play in buffering youth from serious risk. All scales used in the survey have been tested and shown to be reliable. Because the survey draws on research about the prediction and prevention of drug and alcohol abuse, its risk component focuses largely on alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and antisocial behaviors.

Who Owns the Data?

The data technically belong to the community that contracted with CTC to generate it. CTC reserves the right to use the data in comparative analyses as long as the identity of the community is protected. Raw data can be secured by the communities that contract for CTC services, although it is unclear whether there is an associated fee for preparing the data for export.

Contact Information

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Social Development Strategy Conceptual Domains*

Conceptual Domain	Number of Questions	Conceptual Domain	Number of Questions
Demographics	12	Risk Factors: Peer-Individual Domain	36
Gender	1	Rebelliousness	3
Age	1	Early initiation of antisocial behavior	8
Ethnicity	1	Attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior	4
Family composition	3	Attitudes favorable to substance use	4
Rural /urban residence	1	Peer antisocial behavior	6
Language at home	1	Peer substance use	4
SES (parent education)	2	Peer rewards for antisocial behavior	4
School performance	1	Sensation seeking	3
Grade	1	Protective Factors: Community Domain	3
Risk Behaviors: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use (primarily frequency)	31	Rewards for community involvement	3
Risk Factors: Community Domain	27	Protective Factors: School Domain	5
Low neighborhood attachment	3	Opportunities for school involvement	2
Community disorganization	5	Rewards for school involvement	3
Transitions and mobility	4	Protective Factors: Family Domain	11
Laws and norms favorable to drug use	10	Family attachment	6
Perceived availability of drugs and firearms	5	Opportunities for family involvement	3
Risk Factors: School Domain	6	Rewards for family involvement	2
Poor academic achievement	2	Protective Factors: Peer-Individual Domain	9
Low degree of commitment	4	Religiosity	1
Risk Factors: Family Domain	24	Belief in the moral order	4
Poor family supervision	6	Social skills	4
Poor family discipline	3		
Family conflict	3		
Family history of antisocial behavior	6		
Parental attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior	3		
Parental attitudes favorable to substance use	3		

* Based on 1999 draft of CTC paper submitted for publication that describes psychometric analyses of and resulting revisions to existing CTC survey

Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors— The Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Background

The Search Institute is a private organization that provides an assessment survey and support services to communities seeking a comprehensive youth development strategy. The institute is best known for its assets-based framework. This framework synthesizes contextual and individual factors that serve to inhibit health-compromising behaviors and enhance the likelihood of positive developmental outcomes. Peter Benson and others at the Search Institute have identified a total of forty internal and external assets that are correlated with low involvement in risk behavior. The assets-based framework has two main purposes: to provide a language of core elements of positive human development that is capable of uniting citizens and socializing agencies around a shared vision; and to empower and mobilize all community sectors to take unified action on behalf of positive youth development. The Search Institute's recently published book, *Developmental Assets*¹, documents the research base underlying its theoretical tenets and assessment tools.

The institute offers two surveys. It is perhaps best known for Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors, a survey designed to assess youth asset and risk domains. More recently, the Search Institute teamed up with America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth, an organization headed by Colin Powell, which advocates unified community emphasis on what it considers to be the five most critical resources youth need. Together, the Search Institute and America's Promise developed the Survey of Student Resources and Assets, a tool that allows individual

communities to gather data on the extent to which their youth have access to the five key resources and the forty assets. They also provide a range of support services to communities for developing, implementing, and tracking youth development initiatives.

Support Services and Costs

The Search Institute offers a wide range of support services. Trainings, workbooks, curricula, survey instruments, and expert consultation can be purchased to fit each phase of the youth development initiative. Costs can range well over \$50,000. Bringing the Search Institute staff to individual communities for training can cost from \$2,000 to \$7,500, depending on the nature and length of the training. There are usually small additional charges for each participant. Sending one or more community representatives to a national or regional Search Institute training can cost from \$229 to \$1,195 (not including travel costs), depending on the length of training. The two surveys range in cost from \$1.65 to \$2.00 per student. Final reports cost from \$450 to \$700. Curricula, workbooks, and other support materials start at \$10. Communities may choose from a variety of packages to meet their specific needs.

Survey Design and Research Base

The principal survey tool, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*, measures assets, developmental deficits, thriving indicators, and risk-taking behaviors. Developmental deficits are defined as countervailing structural influences that limit healthy development by limiting access to external assets, blocking development of internal assets, or easing the way into risky behavioral choices. Thriving indicators are those that demonstrate that an individual youth is constructively engaged in his or her life. Risk-taking behaviors are indicators most commonly associated with threats to a youth's health or well-being. The forty assets are broken down into internal and external assets (see section listing specific conceptual domains). The survey contains 156 items and is generally administered in one classroom period.

¹Scales, P. C., and Leffert, N. 1999. *Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development*. Minneapolis: The Search Institute

The assets framework is largely grounded in the empirical studies of child and adolescent development found in the literature on prevention, resiliency, and protective factors.

The Survey of Student Resources and Assets contains the forty assets referred to above but also includes items that measure the five core resources: ongoing relationships with caring adults; safe places and structured activities during nonschool hours; a healthy start for a healthy future; marketable skills through effective education; and opportunities to serve. The Search Institute reports that all measures used in both surveys have demonstrated psychometric reliability.

Who Owns the Data?

The Search Institute is a private organization whose product is its survey and support ser-

vices. The data generated through the institute's contracts with individual communities technically belong to the contracting community, although the institute reserves the right to use the data in comparative analyses as long as the identity of the community is protected. Additionally, although contracting communities may purchase raw data on high-risk behaviors, thriving indicators, and developmental deficits, the Search Institute will not release individual-level data on developmental assets.

Contact Information

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www.search-institute.org

Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Conceptual Domains

Conceptual Domain	Number of Questions	Conceptual Domain	Number of Questions
Demographics	9	External Asset: Empowerment	11
Gender	1	Community values youth	4
Age	1	Youth as resources	3
Ethnicity	1	Service to others	1
Family composition	1	Safety	3
Family residence	2	External Asset: Boundaries and Expectations	16
SES (parent education)	2	Family boundaries	3
Grade	1	School boundaries	3
High Risk Behaviors: Substance Use	9	Neighborhood boundaries	1
Alcohol	2	Adult role models	3
Tobacco	2	External Asset: Constructive Use of Time	6
Inhalants	1	Creative activities	1
Marijuana	1	Youth programs	3
Drinking and driving	2	Religious community	1
Other drug use	1	Time at home	1
High Risk Behaviors: Other than Substance Use	15	Internal Asset: Commitment to Learning	10
Sexual intercourse	1	Achievement motivation	3
Antisocial behavior	3	School motivation	4
Violence	6	Homework	1
School truancy	1	Bonding to school	1
Gambling	1	Reading for pleasure	1
Eating disorder	1	Positive peer influence	4
Depression	1	High expectations	2
Attempted suicide	1	Internal Asset: Positive Values	13
Thriving Indicators	8	Caring	3
School success	1	Equality and social justice	3
Helps others	1	Integrity	2
Values diversity	1	Honesty	1
Maintains good health	1	Responsibility	2
Exhibits leadership	1	Restraint	2
Delays gratification	1	Internal Asset: Social Competence	11
Overcomes adversity	1	Planning and decision making	2
Resists danger	1	Interpersonal competence	3
Developmental Deficits	5	Cultural competence	3
Alone at home	1	Resistance skills	2
Victim of violence	1	Peaceful conflict resolution	1
Physical abuse	1	Internal Asset: Positive Identity	8
Drinking parties	1	Personal power	2
TV overexposure	1	Self-esteem	4
External Asset: Support	17	Sense of purpose	1
Family support	3	Positive view of personal future	1
Positive family communication	3		
Other adult relationships	3		
Caring neighborhood	1		
Caring school climate	3		
Parent involvement in schooling	4		

Expanded Youth Risk Behavior Survey—New York State Departments of Health and Education

Background

The Expanded Youth Risk Behavior Survey (EYRBS) is a collaborative interagency initiative to enhance the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) for New York State. The YRBS was developed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and is typically administered every two years, nationally and statewide. The New York State sampling frame tries to represent the entire state. In collaboration with the state Department of Health, the state Department of Education strongly encourages school districts to participate, but they do so voluntarily. The current New York State plan is to use a survey that combines the YRBS and the EYRBS in spring 2001.

Support Services and Costs

There is no cost to communities whose class or school is part of the EYRBS sample for that year. If a community wants to use the EYRBS on its own or administer the survey to youth not included in the sample, costs depend on how true to the EYRBS form it keeps, sample size, and negotiations with the State Education Department (SED) for technical assistance. Support services are provided by the SED and include the basics of administering and presenting data. SED provides primary data analysis, but communities are at liberty to conduct their own analyses as well.

Survey Design and Research Base

The YRBS was field-tested by CDC. It is intended to assess a variety of health risk behaviors. The expanded version contains additional risk assessment questions on the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and on school attendance. It also includes questions related to six different asset domains; individual assets within each domain are typically measured using single items. The EYRBS contains 101 questions that can be completed by students in a normal class period.

Who Owns the Data?

Because the YRBS and expansions on it were designed and implemented using public funds, the data are technically available to anyone desiring access. The New York State Education Department is the repository for state-level data. (We know of one person who tried unsuccessfully to gain access to state YRBS data, which indicates that this is not automatic.) The CDC is the repository for federal data—all of which is accessible via the World Wide Web. Communities contracting with SED to use the EYRBS may acquire copies of the raw data for local analysis.

Contact Information

State Education Department
Education Building
Albany, New York 12234
(518) 474-3852

Expanded Youth Risk Behavior Survey Conceptual Domains*

Conceptual Domain	Number of Questions	Conceptual Domain	Number of Questions
Demographics	7	Protective Factors	9
Gender	1	Use of professional mental health services	1
Age	1	Use of medication to control mental illness	2
Ethnicity	1	Contraception/STI prevention practices	2
Height and weight	2	Sleep practices	2
School performance	1	Doctor and dentist visits	2
Grade	1	Risk Behavior: Sexual Behavior	6
Risk Behavior: Personal Safety	4	Incidence of intercourse	1
Bicycle safety	1	Sexual orientation	1
Car safety	3	Age at first intercourse	1
Risk Behavior: School Attendance	2	Number of partners	1
Frequency of cutting class	1	Use of alcohol and drugs	1
Frequency of skipping school day	1	Incidence of pregnancy	1
Risk Behavior: Violence	4	Doctor and dentist visits	2
Frequency of carrying weapon	2	Assets	13
Frequency of involvement in physical fights	2	Commitment to learning	1
Risk Behavior: Mental Health	5	Positive values	3
Suicide ideation and attempt	4	Social competency	1
Incidence of panic attacks	1	Social support	3
Risk Behavior: Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Use	25	Constructive use of time	2
Frequency of use	16	Boundaries and expectations	3
Practices	9		
Risk Behavior: Body Image	3		
How describe weight	1		
Weight maintenance and loss practices	2		
Risk Factors	27		
Victim of physical or sexual abuse	3		
Perceived school safety	1		
TV and computer use	2		
Nutrition practices	3		
Frequency of involvement in physical activity	2		
Attitudes about legitimacy of drug and alcohol use	4		
Attitudes about risks	4		
Perceptions of friends' attitudes	4		
Perceptions of parents' attitudes	4		

* Note that the terms "risk behavior," "risk factor," and "protective factor" are not concept category terms found in the EYRBS. These terms were added to permit easier comparison with other tools. In some cases, it was not clear whether a specific question was intended to assess a risk behavior, risk factor, or protective factor by the original author(s). In those cases, a conceptual category was assigned.

Youth Enhancement Survey— University of Wisconsin, Madison

Background

The Youth Enhancement Survey (YES), known as the Teen Assessment Program (TAP) in its previous form, is marketed as a multifaceted, community-based research and education program designed to help youth by helping parents, schools, youth-serving agencies, and community leaders better support youth development. It combines collaborative and ecological research models designed to empower local citizens. A local steering committee comprising key community stakeholders is encouraged to work with Cooperative Extension educators and university research specialists to adapt the survey template to meet specific community needs. The survey template has been demonstrated to be psychometrically sound, and the steering committee is encouraged to work closely with university specialists to preserve the validity and reliability of the customized instrument. The analysis below refers to the most recent version developed by TAP originator Professor Stephen Small at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. However, the most distinctive feature of his approach is its collaborative nature.

Support Services and Costs

Communities are encouraged to work through their local extension educator to review, revise, implement, interpret, and disseminate the survey and survey results. The county extension educator may call university faculty for additional support services. These services are generally free. The survey template is also free. In New York State, county extension educators can obtain the survey and support services from Cornell. The processing of completed surveys at Cornell and a report on the results costs \$1/survey plus additional charges if special analyses are requested. New York State users have reported that costs are minimal and can

often be met from discretionary budgets and in-kind donations from survey partners.

Survey Design and Research Base

Many of the items in the YES survey are drawn from instruments that have previously demonstrated reliability. The survey has several major sections. Problem assessment focuses on key youth risk areas, including sexuality, drug and alcohol use, mental health, dieting and eating, and sexual and physical abuse. In addition to assessing risk prevalence and practices, the survey also taps potential environmental facilitators and inhibitors of risk behavior. A large section on enhancement factors by context is included, which measures developmental assets in the contexts of family, school, community, and peers. The survey is designed so that sections can be either adopted or deleted. The survey originators urge that questions forming major sections be maintained as constructed to protect validity and reliability but encourage community users to add questions and sections tailored to specific community information needs.

Who Owns the Data?

Professor Thomas Hirschl of Cornell's Department of Rural Sociology has performed data processing for several New York State communities and hopes to continue providing this service. He maintains a file of data collected using the survey (primarily generated from the older TAP version) but returns the processed data (i.e., summaries of responses to the items) to community users with some basic analyses. Users are encouraged to continue analyzing the data and to report the findings locally.

Contact Information

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Youth Enhancement Survey Conceptual Domains

Conceptual Domain	Number of Questions	Conceptual Domain	Number of Questions
Demographics	11	Protective Factors	12
Gender	1	Individual	3
Age	1	Social services	4
Ethnicity	1	Parental communication	5
Family structure	1	Enhancement Factors by Context: Family	22
SES (parent education and work status)	2	Maternal support	4
School performance	1	Paternal support	4
Grade	1	Academic focus	3
Mental Health Outcomes	14	Monitoring	4
Worries and concerns	14	Values	5
Depression (Beck)	1	Cohesion	1
Suicide	3	Stability	1
Positive Developmental Outcomes	11	Enhancement Factors by Context: School	11
Academic orientation	5	Equity	4
Respect for diversity	3	Safety	2
Health and fitness	3	Quality	5
Work orientation	3	Enhancement Factors by Context: Community	11
Social responsibility	3	Community support	3
Prosocial values	6	Community monitoring	2
Good social skills	3	Positive policing	2
Positive sense of self (self-esteem and identity)	10	Activities	2
Adult-structured activities	1	Safety	2
Future aspirations	1	Enhancement Factors by Context: Peers	10
Leadership ability	2	Support	3
Negative Developmental Outcomes	23	Monitoring	1
Drug and alcohol use	12	Values	4
Antisocial behavior/delinquency	8	Share information	2
Sexual experience	3		
Risk Factors	10		
Access	3		
Sexual abuse	3		
Physical/verbal abuse	2		
Negative role models	2		

Youth Development Strategies

The four surveys described here have been used in upstate New York as sources of data to inform communities' youth development initiatives. In response to questions about the relative merits of these surveys, we conducted an exploratory study to compare the experiences of different communities in selecting and implementing one of the four youth development surveys. Two surveys are associated with broader community youth development strategies: namely, the Search Institute's (SI) "Developmental Assets Model" and Communities that Care's (CTC) "Social Development Model." The two stand-alone surveys are the Teen Assessment Project (TAP, now known as the Youth Enhancement Survey) and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS, now revised for use in New York State as the Expanded Youth Risk Behavior Survey).

We asked people in 17 upstate communities² to talk about their experiences with these surveys. Five of the communities had used SI as an exclusive strategy, and another seven had used it as part of a hybrid strategy (i.e., a blend of strategies, usually SI with CTC). Four communities were in the process of using CTC as their exclusive strategy, and another seven had adopted it more recently as part of a hybrid strategy. Two communities had used the TAP survey alone, and an additional community had employed it as part of a hybrid strategy. (One informant provided background information for TAP based on experience using it in multiple communities in Arizona and Virginia.) Although YRBS is widely used, promoted jointly by the state Departments of Health and of Education, we were not able to interview anyone with experience using it. Therefore, the remainder of this report refers only to the first three surveys.

Although SI and CTC both offer a survey tool associated with a youth development strategy, not all communities adopting a particular strategy also administered the associated survey. In addition, some communities have adopted parts of several strategies or

models. In general, however, regardless of their chosen strategy, the communities we surveyed tended to fall into one of three stages. (See Attachment A for a table specifying model, phase, and community.)

Stage 1: A committee is currently exploring options or has recently initiated approach(es). Some support services may have been secured (training, curriculum, written guides), but the community has not yet administered a survey or begun community-wide initiatives.

Stage 2: A decision has been made about which strategy(ies) to use. The survey, if used, was recently completed or is in the process of completion; data are not yet widely available or used. Community-wide initiatives or programs are just getting off the ground.

Stage 3: The selected approach(es) has gained a secure foothold and data generated from the survey(s), if used, have been integrated into community-wide initiatives or programs.

Methodology

In each community, an in-depth telephone interview was conducted with a person who was closely affiliated with local youth development efforts. Communities and individuals were chosen based on referrals from associates at Cornell and around the state. We attempted to identify additional communities by sending out inquiries via e-mail to all New York State Youth Bureau directors whose e-mail addresses were listed in the state directory. Thirty additional counties were successfully contacted this way, and three additional interviews were conducted as a result of this solicitation.

We did not succeed in contacting an informant in every identified community; after two non-responses, we stopped attempting to make contact. We know there are communities whose efforts we did not learn about. This method of identifying communi-

² Communities represented include: Amherst, Kingston, Washington County, Wyoming County, Jefferson County, Monroe County, Oneida County, Herkimer County, Broome County, Oswego County, Sullivan County, Orange County, Livingston County, Tompkins County, Cattaraugus County, Lewis County, and Dutchess County.

ties gave us a “convenience sample,” which does not necessarily reflect the number and proportion of communities using the surveys. However, we attempted to make contact with an individual in 45 of the state’s 56 counties. New York City is not represented.

A second limitation to the study is that, in most instances, only one informant per community was interviewed. This necessarily restricted the depth of information and the perspective gathered about each community’s experience. Another complication is that the lack of consistency in the way youth development strategies were organized and implemented muddied the definition of “community.” In some cases, strategies were coordinated at the county level and differentially implemented in each city, village, or town throughout the county. The primary contact, in this case, was frequently the county Youth Bureau director, who had excellent general knowledge about the strategies being conducted within his or her county but more limited knowledge about specific processes and outcomes in each of the municipalities. The term “community” as it is used here will refer to a single town or village or a cluster of towns and/or villages whose efforts are being coordinated by a larger county-level entity, usually the county Youth Bureau.

Findings

Community Profiles/Background

All the communities surveyed were located in upstate New York. Most were counties or small towns or villages situated in counties with both rural and urban populations. The socioeconomic status of the families living in the communities surveyed varied considerably, both within and among communities, based largely on urbanization and on proximity to major metropolitan areas. Although the populations served by the initiatives were largely white, reflecting the white majority in upstate New York, there were pockets of minority youth located predominately in counties with urban centers. Our data do not allow any generalizations about such characteristics as socioeconomic status, race, or urbanization.

Initiating a Youth Development Project

In most of the communities surveyed, county Youth Bureau directors or someone from another social service agency learned about one of the youth development strategies at a conference or through written material. Excited by the strategy’s potential, each leader conveyed information and enthusiasm to other key players, usually through networks of other youth-serving agencies represented on one or more local committees.

Eight of the counties represented here benefited from the additional incentive and funding provided by Integrated County Planning (ICP) grants. More recently, the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) awarded five of the counties (four of which were also ICP counties) State Incentive Cooperative Agreement (SICA) grants with the stipulation that they use a portion of the funds to implement the CTC model. The remaining communities cobbled together funds and in-kind services from a variety of sources or diverted funds budgeted for other purposes to initiate the process. Scarce funds were then stretched over several budget years to piece together training, materials, and surveys.

Youth Bureaus located in or near major metropolitan areas were best able to identify funding sources quickly. Rural communities have smaller operating budgets, fewer potential funding collaborators, and far less budget flexibility. Nevertheless, with the exception of one community that was facing severe budget limitations, all of the communities surveyed were able to identify funding sources within one to two years of initial committee discussion about implementing a youth development strategy.

Selecting a Strategy: Perceptions of What Each Has to Offer

There were generally two approaches to deciding what strategy to use. Some communities quickly adopted one strategy because one or more individuals in their human service community sold the approach to other key players without considering alternatives. Other communities went to great lengths to evaluate the

strengths and weaknesses of each strategy in light of their specific needs. Funding sources also played a key role in shaping the selection of strategies. In particular, the five communities receiving SICA grants from OASAS used CTC because it was an expectation of the grant. In some cases this meant that CTC emerged (or is in the process of emerging) as the exclusive or dominant strategy, but in other cases communities are using this funding to integrate CTC with previously adopted strategies. (See Attachment A for a complete breakdown of strategies and stages among responding communities.)

Several common criteria emerged that communities used to evaluate their options. In general, the requirements of funders, the degree to which the strategy was perceived as “sellable,” the perceived ability of the strategy to meet outstanding youth needs, the emphasis of the strategy on targeted vs. universal and primary vs. secondary prevention, and the sequence of exposure to the different strategies all appeared to influence decisions about which to use, alone or in combination. Determining the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy was clearly a very subjective practice, because features of a strategy deemed a liability in one community were frequently cited as an asset in another. The primary reasons communities gave for selecting a strategy are summarized below.

Why Search Institute?

“If the question is, ‘How can I make a difference?’ the answer is, ‘There are 40 ways [i.e., the 40 assets]—it can be with your own kid or with the child next door.’”

By far, the most appealing feature of the Search Institute strategy, with its focus on assets, is its optimism. The belief that the strategy would be easy to sell to the wider community because it focuses on strengths rather than deficits was a common theme. One respondent captured this sentiment well by stating, “It’s very hopeful. It gives people the optimism that they can individually do something. People feel overwhelmed by the intransigence of the problems youth face; they really connect with the message.”

Others appreciated the strategy because it

echoed their sensibilities and revived the best aspects of their experiences as a youth. “It spoke to me,” said one informant. “This is the way I was raised.”

Others were attracted to the marketability of the model. Concerned about the challenges they might face getting the survey instrument into schools, several of the informants tilted toward SI because they believed that measuring assets would be much less objectionable to school administrators and parents than asking explicit questions about risk behaviors, particularly sexuality and suicide. (Note, however, that the SI survey does include questions about these risk behaviors, and some communities reported encountering difficulties because of them.)

Similarly, many respondents believed that SI would be the most successful approach by attracting and maintaining widespread community support and involvement. It was described as “user friendly” and founded on principles and language all community members could understand. Several respondents regarded SI as “easier” than other strategies because it promotes changes in the underlying philosophy of the community—an endeavor that may require the time and commitment of persons ready to spread the word but not substantial increases in funding for new programs. This approach, often identified as a shift in *paradigm* rather than *program*, was the cornerstone of SI’s perceived capacity to foster community mobilization.

As one respondent said: “There began to be a critical mass of people—leaders, youth, other adults—who understood what assets are and who began to talk about it in their daily lives. Asset building is part of all youth-serving programs. People have found ways to build in asset-based components without adding to the cost of the program. It does not require money; it’s a paradigm shift.”

Another informant noted: “The best thing to come out of it has been coalition building at the community level. There is a strong sense of community ownership. The effort to help children and families drew people together who hadn’t worked together before.”

SI, with its emphasis on what is known in the field of public health as universal primary prevention, appeals to decision makers.

Communities relying primarily on SI were seeking an approach they believed would make their community a better place to live in for all their children rather than an approach aimed at specific target populations. They were content to address broad community issues, knowing their efforts may not show measurable effects for more than a decade.

Timing was another factor identified in interviews with people reporting on communities using SI. Many of them had begun to seek or had been exposed to a formal youth development model five or more years ago when the Search Institute began to enjoy nationwide popularity. Indeed, all the communities initiating a formal youth development project prior to 1998 used SI or TAP. None of these communities considered CTC an option when they first decided to use a specialized youth development survey. Some of the communities that began using SI have now moved to a hybrid approach as needs not well addressed by SI have become evident.

Why Communities That Care?

"Search doesn't help at all with the specific problems youth face. This is where CTC comes in. It's data driven, it plans across systems, it's quantitative, and so it's good with service providers and planners."

This statement captures what users liked best about CTC (while also indicating how hybrids arise). CTC clearly delineates steps for assessing and prioritizing needs, for collaborating among service systems, and for identifying and implementing researched-based programs tailored to fit the needs of individual communities. The scientific base of the approach, respondents said, appeals to funders and to social service professionals wanting well-defined programs to fit specific populations and needs. The SICA grants recently awarded by OASAS illustrate this advantage. Using CTC as a youth development strategy was a fundamental stipulation of the grant. For some communities this has meant exclusive adoption of CTC. For communities that have already initiated another comprehensive youth development strategy, SICA funding has promoted diversification and experimentation with hybrid models.

Those who agreed with the statement above

also emphasized, explicitly or implicitly, targeted secondary prevention (again using public health terminology). This was especially evident in communities that began using SI but then incorporated CTC. They all agreed that SI is best for making a community a good place for children but that they needed something more specific for their most vulnerable and troubled youth. As one respondent stated, "The Search Model is a good community mobilization tool, but CTC is a great community planning tool, and we need that now." The CTC strategy of identifying and prioritizing needs, coupled with its ability to prescribe a tailored menu of programs empirically known to address those needs, was regarded by many as powerful and highly desirable. CTC's capacity to walk communities through the process of developing a youth development initiative was a key selling point.

Several respondents referred to CTC's "jazzy way of getting folks interested" as another appealing aspect of the approach. Its creative use of geographic information system (GIS) mapping technology and powerful ability to gather, break down, manipulate, and interpret multiple types of data from a variety of sources held widespread appeal. In fact, several communities that had recently commissioned CTC to assist in their community development efforts had decided to supplement the CTC survey with existing data sources and use CTC's support services in consolidating and analyzing large composite data sets.

Why the Teen Assessment Project?³

"The beauty of TAP is the breadth of it. It's very much a community development approach.... Since the instrument is developed by the community, they are ready to run with the results."

The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) is not nearly as well known or as widely used as CTC or SI. It also is more limited, being primarily a survey tool coupled with a methodology for involving a range of people in customizing and administering the survey. However, among the communities that have used the TAP survey tool⁴, respondents exhibited great enthusiasm. Unlike the other models discussed, TAP affords community planning

³ The Teen Assessment Project has been updated by its originator, Stephen Small of University of Wisconsin, and is now called the Youth Enhancement Survey (YES).

groups a great deal of flexibility by encouraging them to work on the design of the survey tool. TAP and its updated version, the Youth Enhancement Survey (YES), are templates that enable communities to custom-design a survey to generate the specific type and quantity of data they need. For example, one respondent noted her frustration with the CTC and SI tools because they do not assess youth employment needs, which are very important to the young people in her community. Likewise, another respondent criticized the other strategies for excluding questions about basic needs—food and shelter—and praised TAP for permitting the addition of questions relevant to the needs of his community.

In New York State, Cornell Cooperative Extension supports communities using TAP. An extension educator generally assists locally, and a Cornell faculty member helps the community group create a survey that preserves the validity and reliability of the basic instrument, analyzes the data, and then helps the group interpret the results. The process is designed to solicit input from multiple stakeholders and tends to engender within the community planning group a strong sense of ownership and familiarity with the final tool and the data it provides. The downside, said some, is that the process requires energy and time. Overall, communities gravitated to the invitation TAP offers to assume control. TAP was designed specifically to enhance community capacity to define, generate, analyze, and use the data it needs. The raw data, although usually manipulated and stored by the Cornell researcher working with the project, become the property of the community that generates it, and community planning groups are encouraged to learn how to work with it as the process unfolds.

Hybrid Strategies

"I advocate a mixed methods approach.... This should be collaborative, not competitive."

Seven of the communities surveyed were in the process of using hybrid strategies. (All except one combined SI with CTC.) In five cases, OASAS funding (four SICA grants, one unspecified) instigated the move to a hybrid approach by requiring or permitting

the addition of CTC services and tools to existing efforts⁵. The representative of one of those communities noted that although their planning committee had formally decided to adopt both the CTC and SI strategies, they ultimately abandoned SI because their only funding source stipulated that they use CTC. One community moved to a hybrid model by bringing in CTC once they noticed gaps in the SI approach, specifically in its ability to address priority needs among at-risk youth. Two communities, after having explored SI and CTC, decided to customize a strategy by integrating what they perceived to be the strengths of each. The remaining two communities relied on SI to mobilize large segments of the community around ways to foster youth assets and on CTC to identify and address primary youth risk areas.

Several interviewees suggested that they were careful to avoid using either the CTC or SI labels for fear of setting them in opposition to each other. Instead, they distilled the most relevant messages from each, packaging and marketing a blended approach tailored to particular audiences. Even among the communities that were not actively using or planning to use a hybrid approach, respondents frequently mentioned that they informally used aspects of the other strategy and hoped to formalize an integrated approach.

Communities in the process of merging CTC and SI, although still at an early stage, imparted some potential lessons. Standing out among those is the fact that the two models exhibit different but, by most accounts, compatible strengths. The trick to creating a successful hybrid may be in the way they are sequenced and sold.

Lesson number one comes from a community that introduced the models simultaneously because each appealed to different constituents (CTC to funders and decision makers and SI to "community" representatives). Because CTC held the attention of the more powerful constituents, it ultimately received the funding support required to make it happen. Meanwhile, the focus on CTC seems to have stifled efforts in this community to promote SI's assets-based model. If it is true that the two different strategies appealed to different segments of the community, then introducing them simultane-

⁴ Although only 3 communities included here have used TAP, a total of 11 communities across New York State have used the survey at least once.

⁵ Two of the informants were not very knowledgeable about CTC efforts and were unable to describe their community's efforts in this area.

ously without broad support among key representatives may have caused de facto preference of one over the other.

Lesson two emerges from two communities with very successful hybrid approaches. Realizing that each model would appeal to different groups and address slightly different needs, both communities pursued a dual strategy. They purposely sold the SI approach to the broader community, which they generally defined as civic, parent, and religious groups, while marketing CTC to human service professionals dedicated to providing targeted services to more vulnerable populations of youth. As one informant remarked, "The [SI] developmental asset model provided the language that brings people to the table and gets them excited. Just to have everyone talking is unusual. Then they can progress to the [CTC] risk protective model."

Identifying Key Stakeholders

The range of stakeholders varied by county but tended to include the following:

- Educators (superintendents, school board members, school staff members)
- Community human service providers (private CBOs and county)
- Parents
- Youth
- Community groups (mostly civic groups or adults interested in youth development)
- United Way
- Faith groups
- Law enforcement (all branches)
- Elected officials
- Business community
- Media

Significant variation existed in the degree to which each of these groups was engaged in any given community, but virtually all respondents agreed on the importance of inviting most, if not all, of these constituents to the table. While two communities noted difficulty pulling in law enforcement and the business community, involving the school system, faith groups, the media, and youth presented the most complications.

Involving the school system occupied a unique role in the process, because administering surveys to a representative sample of the local youth population is virtually impossible without school buy-in and participation. In the vast majority of cases, however, the impetus for initiating a youth development strategy originated outside school-governed committees. Garnering school district support was often hindered by school district concerns about the nature of survey questions and questions about who would have access to the data and how the data would be used. Although there was no discernible pattern of school district concern and not all communities encountered resistance, just over half of the respondents had engaged in negotiations with their school districts.

Control over the data was the greatest concern of school districts. In the majority of cases, some or all of the school districts agreed to participate only if they were guaranteed exclusive access to the data and could maintain control over who was granted access to it and how it was used. Fear of bad publicity and potential public fallout motivated this concern among school administrators.

Additionally, school administrators in several communities expressed discomfort with survey questions they regarded as sensitive or invasive. Usually, these concerns focused on the sexual behavior questions included in the SI tool and the TAP template. One community's school district objected to questions on suicide as well.

Involving faith communities also seemed to present difficulties for several communities, in large part because of factional relationships within the religious community itself. One community managed to overcome some of the ideological tension between groups by convening a committee whose mission was to "make their community a better place for children and families." Similarly, another community found that working through a council of churches to recruit faith group participation rather than approaching groups individually produced greater involvement and less friction.

The media were identified by several as very important partners in youth development efforts. This was based in large part

on the media's substantial influence in shaping the character of the overall strategy, the survey results, and the outcomes. At least two communities complained of needing to engage in spin control as a result of how survey results were publicized. Conversely, the two communities that succeeded in forging a positive relationship with the media early on expressed general satisfaction with media portrayal of the strategy outcomes and specific survey data.

Involving Youth

Although not every community interviewed identified youth as critical contributors to the process, those that did emphasized the centrality of their participation. Virtually all struggled with finding an adequate way to involve youth in the decision-making processes. Serious logistical problems arose when meeting times conflicted with school and work hours, problems that also affected parent and community participation. Respondents agreed they saw limited value in appointing one or two youth to a committee. Not only did the youth become bored, but they couldn't represent the full range of youth perspectives regarded as important.

Respondents expressing the greatest satisfaction with youth participation had established separate youth advisory boards that functioned as an auxiliary committee to the primary decision-making committees. Using youth as trainers also was an effective technique for inviting youth participation.

One respondent, a seasoned facilitator of the TAP survey across two states, commented that many of the adults she worked with were resistant to including youth: "They think that including youth will slow down the process, that it's too cumbersome." In response, she pointed out that a process designed for youth without their perspectives is fundamentally flawed and that youth add a language and legitimacy to their efforts that appeal to other youth. As another respondent put it, "Youth development should be about getting their voices heard."

Spreading the Word: The Difference between Youth Surveys and Youth Development Strategies

The Search Institute, Communities that Care, and the Teen Assessment Project are all closely associated with their survey tools. However, all three, and especially the first two, have usually been used as part of a more comprehensive youth development strategy. All aim to bring youth issues into the community spotlight by clearly articulating the scope and nature of youth needs, by providing tools for grounding youth development in multiple contexts—especially family, school, peers, and community—and by producing tangible results that enhance the development of youth. SI and CTC are both promoted by organizations that support a broader youth development effort through training, curriculum, and other materials. TAP primarily is a flexible survey tool that invites participation by key community stakeholders.

Regardless of the approach taken, establishing procedures for effectively making decisions, disseminating information, delegating tasks, and assessing progress is critical in moving beyond the survey stage. The interviews we conducted were not intended to assess exactly how communities did this, but several themes did emerge, most prominently, the importance of committee structure to the establishment of a larger youth development strategy. In all communities represented here, effective communication channels seemed to rely entirely on a committee structure that

- includes or has access to most or all of the community's key players;
- contains one or more central committees with a *unified* understanding and commitment to their overall goal(s) and the methods (i.e., survey tool or tools) they plan to employ to achieve those goals;
- includes members who are willing to invest time, energy, and funding to accomplish their goals; and
- incorporates an oversight committee (at the county level, for example) to foster ownership within participating communities.

There was very little support for the assumption that one dynamic individual can be the deciding factor in whether an initiative succeeds. The interviews suggest that a single individual may be a critical factor in determining whether an initiative gets started, but the success of the youth development strategies appeared to hinge on how effectively the message was picked up, amplified, and disseminated by others. And, in this case, “others” include as many of the most influential players in a community as possible.

The experiences of the communities represented here suggest that establishing a solid, committed network before investing resources in training and surveys may be critical to the success of a strategy. Lack of buy-in by key stakeholders was the number one reason cited for a strategy’s failure. This results from the fact that key leaders in law enforcement, school administration, business, and local government control the funding and the support needed to focus a community on youth issues. Communities that were quickly able to assemble and unify key stakeholders fared much better than those that lacked such capacity. The network of relationships established early on also serves as a vehicle for disseminating survey results and for producing cooperative plans to enhance youth development efforts.

In six of the communities surveyed, greater horizontal and vertical integration of services was an unexpected but extremely beneficial spin-off of the youth development strategy. For example, one respondent noted that when he initiated the SI strategy, he used an existing consortium of county agencies, churches, and mental health and drug and alcohol prevention providers. This consortium’s work on their local youth development strategy has positioned them to become a sounding board for funding proposals for youth and families. Their ability to demonstrate success in undertaking cooperative ventures has placed them in a much more competitive position for state and federal grants.

Similarly, another respondent noted that through their work on identifying CTC’s “promising approaches” for their community, their planning group has consolidated its

focus on addressing the unmet needs of families and has successfully convened agency leaders around this broad mission.

Do Youth Development Strategies Make a Difference?

This question is the most critical yet the hardest to answer. Evaluating comprehensive community initiatives for youth development is complex and expensive, prohibitively so for most communities and many researchers. SI and CTC suggest different approaches to fostering positive youth development and reducing risky behavior, reflecting their distinctive theories and philosophies. A summary of activities that communities have devised in connection with SI and TAP is provided below. The CTC strategy had not progressed far enough beyond the survey stage in any community interviewed to result in activities clearly inspired by it.

In addition, it was very difficult to gain a detailed picture of activities in each community. The fact that only one informant per community was interviewed, that no communities are systematically tracking outcomes, and that virtually all communities using CTC were in preliminary stages prohibited a comprehensive assessment of their impact to date. In most cases, the informant was not in a position to provide an exhaustive list, so what appears below is, at best, a selective snapshot of combined activities.

Furthermore, the lack of impact information for CTC prohibits even a cursory assessment of the similarities and differences between the strategies in terms of impact. What was striking, however, were the variation and creativity of the community response to the survey data and frameworks being used to advance youth development in their communities.

Search Institute’s Developmental Asset Model

- Kick-off celebration drawing people from all sectors of the community—e.g., corrections system, town leadership, youth, school administrators, and youth-serving agencies

- Mini-grants to local municipalities to integrate asset concepts in programs and services
- Asset-Building Award—given to parks for being a safe place for families to come
- Asset Ambassadors—designated by each neighborhood in the community to hand out newsletters focusing on youth issues
- Increased funding for programs
- Senior Citizen Ball—pairing senior citizens and youth in dance activities
- Youth council, which met monthly with town supervisor to provide youth perspective on town issues
- Sermons targeted at promoting asset language and concepts
- Interagency collaboration on grants and programs
- Increased effort to make youth feel part of community decision making—e.g., youth were recruited to work with town leaders to build a skateboard park
- Preparation of youth to provide training to adults and other youth
- Annual recognition award—given to youth who persevere and inspire others
- Brochure targeted to the community and service providers to promote asset language and concepts
- Rotary-sponsored youth forum—bringing multiple community sectors together to create local action plans
- Incorporation of youth on planning teams
- Youth leadership conference—to prepare youth and adults to be asset builders

Teen Assessment Project

- Development of a “Teen Talk Line”
- Organization of a youth summit and an on-going youth council that represents kids from each school district
- Use of survey data to support various grant applications and new positions
- Use of survey data to train professionals, parents, and volunteer mentors

- Presentations by students to teachers and the Board of Education
- Publication of a 12-page news supplement to detail survey results and solicit responses from individual community members
- New projects generated
- Support for increased awareness of youth issues

Costs

Actual and In-Kind Costs

It is not possible to calculate actual costs associated with each model because of enormous variability in the scope of services purchased, the extent of in-kind services available to the community, the interpretation of “cost” by the informant (for example, whether a full-time position was included in the calculation), and the stage of the process the community had reached when the interview was done. The SI and CTC tools and services carry a roughly similar price tag. Communities reported spending as little as \$7,000 over the course of several years and as much as \$65,000 per year (to buy services for multiple communities in a county). TAP users spent very little because of the free support provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension and because TAP is not accompanied by the same range of materials, curriculum, and training services offered by both CTC and SI.

Professional Time

Virtually all respondents emphasized the sizable time commitment needed to initiate and maintain a youth development strategy. Some communities were fortunate enough to have (or were in the process of hiring) a full-time position to devote to the effort, while others relied on the leadership of the Youth Bureau or Cornell Cooperative Extension and delegated tasks among remaining committee members. Most agreed that the time required to initiate the project was greater than the time needed to maintain it, largely because planning and coordinating administration of the survey took a great deal of time. However, many of the follow-up activities, such as conducting presentations and training, required

Attachment A

Use Summary by Model

Stage Definitions

Stage 1: Committee currently exploring options or has recently initiated approach(es). May have secured some support services (training, curriculum, written guides, etc.), but has not administered survey or initiated community-wide initiatives

Stage 2: Decision about which model(s) to use made. Survey, if used, recently completed or in the process of completion; data not yet widely available or used. Community-wide initiatives or programs just getting off the ground.

Stage 3: Selected approach(es) have gained a secure foothold, and data generated from survey(s), if used, has been integrated into community-wide initiatives or programs.

Search Institute Asset Model

Total number of communities employing asset model framework as primary or as part of hybrid model: 11

Total number of communities employing asset model framework as exclusive model: 5

Total number at stage 1: 3

Total number at stage 2: 4

Total number at stage 3: 6

Total number adopting framework without administering survey: 1

Note: Two counties contain communities simultaneously at different stages.

CTC's Social Development Model

Total number of communities employing social development model as primary model or as part of hybrid model: 11

Total number of communities employing social development model as exclusive model: 4

Total number at stage 1: 7

Total number at stage 2: 4

Total number at stage 3: 0

Total number adopting framework without administering survey: 2 (incorporating existing data)

Teen Assessment Program

Total number of communities employing TAP model as primary model or as part of hybrid model: 3

Total number of communities employing TAP as primary model: 2

Total number at stage 1: 0

Total number at stage 2: 0

Total number at stage 3: 3

Note: Although only 3 communities included in the study were using TAP, 11 to 12 communities across New York State have used TAP at least once.

Hybrid Models

Total number of communities using hybrid model: 7

Strategy and Phases by Community

A summary of tool use and phase by county is presented below. Please bear in mind that the sample of communities included in the survey is composed entirely of those known to us to have used one of the three tools or strategies and that were available to be interviewed. The sample is not an accurate reflection of the actual number or proportion of New York State communities using one or more of the tools. Also, because only one informant per county was interviewed, because various communities are included in a single county, and because not all school districts in a community were surveyed simultaneously, it is possible that the table below fails to accurately represent the precise stage and combination of tools used in a given county.

Summary of Tool Use and Phase by County

Community	SI Developmental Assets			CTC Social Development			Teen Assessment Program		
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
	Monroe County			X		X			
Wyoming County		X		X					
Dutchess County		X	X	X					
Herkimer County	X				X				X
Jefferson County	X				X				
Broome County				X					X
Oneida County									X
Sullivan County					X				
Oswego County				X					
Lewis County				X					
Orange County			X						
Washington County		X							
Livingston County			X						
Cattaraugus County		X	X						
Town of Amherst (Erie County)			X						
City of Kingston (Ulster County)				X					
Tompkins County (wants to use hybrid approach; currently in process of securing funding)	X			X					

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