



# *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth*

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## **Greetings!**

This is the third newsletter entitled *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth*. Recently, a family and consumer sciences agent inquired if it was possible for agencies outside of extension that deal children, youth, and families to receive a copy of this newsletter. The answer is yes! If there is some agency that you would like to receive this, then please let me know by either email or phone. So far, the feedback has been positive about this newsletter, but I know it can always be better, so please send me your comments or suggestions related to improving this newsletter. Thanks for your continued support and have a great fall! Best regards.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins  
Associate Professor  
Family/youth Resilience and Policy



## **... What's Inside ...**

**Family Activity**

**Research Briefs**

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## **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Here are two activities that are fun for the family with preschoolers.

For the first activity, have the family write a book: record and illustrate stories and/or poems that spring from family members' play and imagination.

For the second activity, have the family create a gallery: choose a family member of the month and have everybody else paint a picture and tell a story which affirms that person. Display the finished pictures in a hallway, or the person's room, or put them in a scrapbook.

# RESEARCH BRIEFS

## ✓ **Community Stability and School Quality Matter for Youth**

A recent study examined the influence of community resources on adolescent problem behavior by addressing the following questions: (1) Do community characteristics influence an adolescent's willingness to take risks?; and (2) Do community characteristics matter in predicting adolescent problem behavior? Data were drawn from two sources: the 1990 U.S. Census and the 1994 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 Merged Mother-Child files to form a sample of 860 high-risk adolescents ages 14 to 18.

This study found that residential stability (i.e., high proportion of residents who live in the same household for five years or more) has a strong protective effect on adolescents' likelihood of taking risks. Moreover, residential stability might be an especially helpful resource for adolescents in larger families, when resources may be strained. The researchers also found that living in more residentially stable communities is associated with decreases in adolescent problem behaviors.

The other environmental factor found to be a protective resource was high quality schools, even after controlling for attributes of adolescents' family situation. High quality in schools was measured by parental ratings of the teachers' skills, communication between teachers and parents, the school safety, and how well the school helps adolescents differentiate right from wrong. School quality was especially helpful when family resources were stretched, such as in large families, where parents' ability to support children might be limited. Thus, resources that are expended on improving the quality of schools might have positive returns for adolescents, not only in terms of academic achievement, but also in preventing problem behaviors.

It is also important to note what was found not to be significant. Higher levels of community economic resources and higher proportions of female-headed families failed to have significant effects on adolescents' engagement in problem behaviors when considered simultaneously with other community resources. In addition, no differences in the results were found for gender or race/ethnicity.

Found in: Kowaleski-Jones, L. (2000). Staying out of trouble: Community resources and problem behavior among high-risk adolescents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 449-464.

The sheer magnitude ... promote learning, prepare a workforce and create a citizenry ... our schools are not standing alone. One of the most important, cross cutting social policy perspectives to emerge in recent years is an awareness that no single institution can create all the conditions that young people need to flourish, not only in school but in their careers, and as parents. An active, engaged community--beginning with parents, neighborhood leaders, public and non-profit service providers, and community-based organizations--has an enormous role to play supporting the mission not only during school but also before and after school, in the evenings and on weekends.

## ✓ **Study Reveals Children's Top Concerns**

*Weekly Reader*, the oldest and most widely circulated periodical for elementary schools, has gathered the top concerns of children: (1) school violence, (2) the environment, (3) education, (4) homelessness, (5) drugs, (6) health care, (7) racism, (8) child abuse, (9) animal rights, and (10) foreign relations.

## ✓ Good Parenting Can Prevent Teen Substance Abuse

Parents can prevent or delay their children's use of alcohol and marijuana by setting clear rules and expectations, according to a new study. The study by researchers at the University of Washington further showed parental rules work even if relationships between parents and children seem strained during the teen years. The study examined patterns of adolescents' first use of alcohol and marijuana. It used data from a large ongoing study of more than 800 Seattle, WA, school children, which began in 1985.

"We know from previous research that kids who initiate substance use early are at greater risk for having problems with these substances later on," said Rick Kosterman, a research scientist with the University of Washington's Social Development Research Group and lead author of the paper. Good parenting can make a big difference in preventing early alcohol and marijuana use. Good parenting includes having clear family rules, knowing where your kids are and who they are with, rewarding good behavior, and having consistent and moderate discipline.

The report made several recommendations for parents. "You need to sit down with your children and tell them what your hopes for their future are and set clear expectations," said Hawkins. "If you are going to set a no-drinking policy you need to say why and make the message clear. Just trying to be a good friend isn't enough." Hawkins said parents also should "monitor their kids and keep track of them in a non-intrusive way. Children need to know if they violate rules that there will be consequences. They also need to know that if they follow the rules they will get family recognition. This is important in reinforcing the rules. We are too often good at noticing the bad and terrible but not at noticing the good in our children." Researchers also stressed that parents should not give up on their standards and good parenting even if teens express anger, antipathy or distance in response to their parents' efforts. "These efforts and school prevention programs can help blunt

the influence on teens of peers, siblings and others who use substances," the researchers wrote.

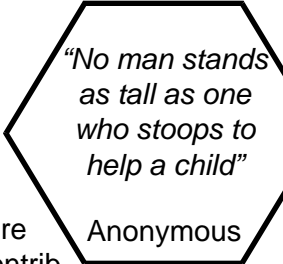
Found in: Kosterman, R., Hawkins, J. D., Guo, J., Catalano, R. F. & Abbott, R. D. (2000). The Dynamics of Alcohol and Marijuana Initiation: Patterns and Predictors of First Use in Adolescence. *American Journal of Public Health, 90*, 360-366.

## ✓ Dads Matter

According to a recent literature review of research, fathers contribute their children's healthy development in ways that are unique from mothers. For example, fathers promote their children's intellectual development and social competence through physical play, whereas mothers promotes these skills through verbal expression and teaching activities. In addition, the parenting style of the father was also found to have important implications for a child's well-being. For instance, boys whose fathers offered them praise and compliments performed better on tests of cognitive achievement than boys whose fathers were cool and aloof.

Fathers' involvement can affect children's social, cognitive, and academic development. For example, higher levels of father involvement in activities with their children--such as eating meals together, going on outings, and helping with homework--are associated with fewer behavior problems, higher levels of sociability, and a high level of school performance. Thus, participating in a child's life in meaningful ways does have a positive influence on that child. The research clearly suggests that fathers do contribute to their children's well being.

Found in: Menestrel, S. L. (1999). What do fathers contribute to their children's well-being? *Child Trends Research Brief*. Washington, DC: Child Trends. Available on line at: [http://www.childtrends.org/r\\_fh.cfm](http://www.childtrends.org/r_fh.cfm)



"No man stands as tall as one who stoops to help a child"

Anonymous

## WEB RESOURCES

✓ **Web Site on Reclaiming Family Time**  
<http://www.FamilyLife1st.org>

“Families have lost the ability to spend time together,” says William Doherty, director of the marriage and family therapy program at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul. This is the driving force for the creation of a website that gives instructions on how communities can organize to foster family life in the face of overscheduled family hyperactivity and the consumer culture of children.



✓ **Web Site on Family Group Decision Making**  
[http:// www.fgdm.org](http://www.fgdm.org)

Since 1995, with the support of U.S.-based foundations, the American Humane Association (AHA) has been at the forefront of the family group decision making (FGDM) movement in the United States. FGDM offers a new approach to working with families involved with the child welfare system. Families are engaged and empowered by child welfare agencies to make decisions and develop plans that protect their children from enduring further abuse and neglect. This web site contains important and timely information on this child welfare practice. For example, it provides access to research/evaluation suggestions, policies and protocols, and practice tips.

✓ **Federal Website for Parents**  
<http://www.parentingresources.ncjrs.org/>

“Parenting Resources for the 21st Century” has information on child and youth development and federal programs for educating and caring for children and youth, out-of-school activities, and more. This website covers the full spectrum of parenting—from locating child care for a newborn to getting treatment for a youth who may be abusing drugs to finding information on college scholarships for a son or daughter graduating from high school. The site links users with material on a variety of topics, such as infant development, organized sports, domestic violence, the Family and Medical Leave Act, nutrition, volunteer activities, learning disabilities, and mental health. The site also informs users of recent research and statistics, new books and other publications, upcoming conferences, and other valuable resources.

✓ **Web Site on Family Violence**  
<http://www.cyfernet.org/parent/violence.html>

This web site is part of the Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network. It offers a major literature review of research on domestic violence and on risk factors for partner abuse.

✓ **Web Site for Youth**  
<http://www.americasteens.gov/>

The web resource for youth provides a gateway to federal and other publicly supported websites for youth. On this site, teens can find information to help them do their homework, pursue a hobby, or choose a career. The website is part of the very informative afterschool.gov web site.

✓ **Web Site about Adolescent Health Concerns**  
<http://www.epi.umn.edu/mch/pages/hg.html>

Healthy Generations is an effort to share the resources available in the maternal and child health program at the University of Minnesota. The Healthy Generations periodical is a practical publication issued three times a year. The premiere issue (May 2000) addressed adolescent tobacco use. The second issue will be on childhood obesity. As a part of this effort, there is link to a series of electronic resources such as: PowerPoint presentations, fact-sheets and web sites associated with the relevant topic.

✓ **Web Site on Low-Literacy Health Education**  
<http://itsa.ucsf.edu/~hclinic/handouts.dir/lowlit.dir/lowlit.html>

The University of California, San Francisco has developed a series of patient education handouts that address health issues. The handouts themselves are written in simple and clear language and make use of a number of line drawings in order to convey their message to persons who may not read English very well. Some of the handouts have blank spaces where you can write in information that will be specific to your area.

## ***INSERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS***

✓ **Inservice on 21st Century Learning Center Grants**

Look for an email about an inservice workshop at University Park for family and consumer sciences agents and 4-H youth development educators interested in writing a 21st Century Learning Center grant with a local school or school district. The training will take place in November around the extension conference.



✓ **Fathering Inservice**

Four inservices will be conducted for family and consumer sciences agents about a fathering curriculum. The inservices are being presented in the super-regions. Information about these in-service is on the Staff Updates website <http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/casadmin/cashr/staffdev.html>. Please register on the website early as space is limited. Most of the inservices are attached to regional Family Living Educators meetings.

October 26 -- 1:00-3:00  
PSU Wilkes-Barre Campus  
(Northeast & Susquehanna Regions)

October 27 -- 9:30-12:00  
Centre County (North Central & South Central)

December 5 -- 9:30-12:00  
TBD (Southeast & Capital)

December 13 -- 9:30-12:00  
Lawrence County (Southwest & Northwest)

## **POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES**

### **\$ Community Facilities Funds Still Available** <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/index.htm>

Loans and grant funds to build schools and other facilities in rural America are still available from USDA's Rural Housing Service. The Community Facilities Program provides flexible financing for a variety of projects, including schools, health care clinics, police and fire stations, childcare, and community centers. Funds go to communities under 20,000. Funding is primarily in the form of guaranteed and subsidized loans, with approximately \$50 million still available this fiscal year.

### **\$ Searching for Grants on the Web** <http://fdncenter.org/searchzone/>

This is a fast, easy way to search many grantmaker site on the web, whether they be private, corporate, community, or a grant-making public charity. Check out The Foundation Center's Grantmaker WebSearch.

### **\$ Best Buy Children's Foundation** <http://www.bestbuy.com/about/CommunityRelations/ChildrensFoundation.asp?m=435&cat=463>

The Mission of the Best Buy Children's Foundation is to enhance the quality of life of school-age children in communities where Best Buy Co., Inc. maintains a presence through support of programs and organizations that offer leadership and educational opportunities. The Foundation invests in organizations and programs committed to making a difference in the lives of children. The Foundation's funding priorities include program development, direct program support, curriculum development, student aid for participants in life skills or mentoring programs, and volunteer time.

*Check out our new FYRP Website:  
<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/fcs/dp/fyrrp.html>*

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