



A COMMITMENT TO HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH

“Our Nation's youth, particularly at-risk boys, need caring adults in their lives to help them become healthy and successful adults.”

Mrs. Laura Bush

Calling Our Nation to Action

Helping Youth Reach Their Full Potential. In his 2005 State of the Union Address, President Bush announced a broad initiative to engage all Americans in helping young people become healthy adults. The President asked Mrs. Laura Bush to lead this important effort, which became known as the *Helping America's Youth* initiative. *Helping America's Youth* is a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the challenges facing our youth, particularly at-risk boys, and to motivate caring adults to connect with youth in three key areas: family, school, and community.

Caring Adults Are the Key

Young People Need to be Surrounded by Caring Adults. President and Mrs. Bush believe parents and family are the first and most important influence in every child's life, providing a foundation of love and support. By becoming actively involved in the lives of young people in their community, grandparents, teachers, mentors, clergy members, neighbors, coaches, and other community members can support parents and help youth contribute to their communities and make better choices that lead to healthier, more successful lives. Research has shown that supportive relationships are crucial to an adolescent's well-being. Boys, in particular, need caring adults in their lives because they are at greater risk than girls for illiteracy, developing learning disabilities, dropping out of school, violence, juvenile arrest and early death caused by violent behavior. Visit www.helpingamericasyouth.gov for more information.

Partnerships that Connect Families, Schools and Communities. Caring adults are most effective when they are part of a community effort. Community partnerships bring together individuals such as teachers, mentors, parents, clergy members, police officers, social service providers and others that can have a positive impact on a child's life. Research has shown that youth are less likely to engage in risky behaviors when they are connected to parents, family, school, community, and places of worship.

A Guide to Making Community Connections

The *Community Guide to Helping America's Youth* assists caring adults in connecting with youth in their families, schools and communities. It encourages Americans to make an even bigger difference by forming partnerships to implement programs that have been proven to help youth. The *Community Guide* includes:

- Ideas of how individuals can “Get Connected” with youth in families, schools and communities.
- A **Community Assessment Guide** that offers partnerships a step-by-step approach for learning more about their community, including what type of youth-related problems occur and where, who is most affected by those problems, and what local resources and assets the community can use to address those problems.
- A **Community Resource Inventory** which localities can use to identify and track partners and programs that are already at work in their neighborhood.
- A searchable **Program Tool** that provides information about promising and proven interventions to prevent adolescent risky behaviors and promote positive youth development.



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The *Community Guide to Helping America's Youth* Reflects the Most Up-to-Date Research on Youth Development and Effective Programs. The Guide was developed by a coalition of experts from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, Education, Agriculture, Labor, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, and Interior; the Office of National Drug Control Policy; and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Guide is available at www.helpingamericasyouth.gov.

Regional Conferences to Bring Communities Together

Helping America's Youth Regional Conferences Throughout the Country. On October 27, 2005, Mrs. Bush convened The White House Conference on Helping America's Youth at Howard University in Washington, DC. More than 500 parents, civic leaders, faith-based and community service providers, foundations, educators, researchers, and experts in child development gathered for this National conference to discuss the challenges facing America's youth and to share best practices shown to be successful in overcoming those challenges.

Building upon the success of the October 2005 White House Conference on Helping America's Youth, Mrs. Bush is working with state and local partners to host regional conferences throughout the United States. The regional conferences—held in Indianapolis, IN in June 2006, Denver, CO in August 2006, Nashville, TN in April 2007, Saint Paul, MN in August 2007, Dallas, TX in November 2007 and Portland, OR in February 2008—help to increase public awareness and encourage adults to connect with youth in their communities.

Background: America's Youth

Youth Are Making Progress. Research indicates that an increasing number of American children are on the path to success.

- The percentage of youth who report being substance-free during the past 30 days has increased since 1997.
- Birth rates among 15 to 19 year old females have declined more than one-third since 1991, from about 62 per 1,000 female teenagers to about 40 per 1,000 female teenagers in 2005, the lowest rate ever reported in the United States. Birth rates increased slightly from 2005, to 42 per 1,000 female teenagers in 2006, but continue to remain near the low. The birth rate among 10 to 14 year old females has continued to decline since 1991, from 1.4 per 1,000 female teenagers to 0.6 per 1,000 female teenagers in 2006.

But Many Young Americans Are At Risk. Too many young people still face persistent challenges that hold them back from reaching their full potential. Statistics show:

- Injury and violence are the leading cause of death among youth ages 5-19; motor vehicle crashes account for 36% of all teen deaths; and almost one-third of young drivers (ages 15 to 20) involved in fatal crashes had been drinking alcohol.
- Teens who engage in high-risk behaviors, such as substance use (both genders) and sexual activity (especially females), are more likely to be depressed and consider or attempt suicide.
- Statistics show boys are at greater risk than girls for developing learning disabilities, illiteracy, dropping out of school, violence, juvenile arrest, and early death caused by violent behavior. As boys grow older, risky behaviors, such as alcohol and drug abuse, become more prevalent and gang involvement increases.

Sources for the above statistics can be found on *Facts About America's Youth* at www.helpingamericasyouth.gov.