

ADOLESCENCE, DEFINED AS THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE AGES OF 9 TO 25, IS A DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE COMPRISED OF GREAT CHANGE AND OPPORTUNITY.

Youth are moving from a period of childhood in which they have things done for and to them, to a period of incrementally becoming more independent and self-reliant. The physical, social and psychological changes young people undergo can not only impact their behavior and how they interact with the world, but can also impact how the adults around them respond to this transformation. During this time of significant transition and increasing independence for youth, resources and systems for youth must be constructed in a developmentally appropriate approach.

Understanding adolescence through a developmental lens:

- Guides adults towards supporting adolescents in ways that are developmentally appropriate, with an end goal of helping youth transition into adulthood successfully.
- Gives cause for the integration of a positive youth development approach into all the work we do with and on behalf of young people, as it meets young people where they are, and addresses the needs they have in meaningful and relevant ways.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In practice, positive youth development incorporates the development of skills, opportunities and authentic relationships into programs, practices and policies so that young people reach their full potential.

STRENGTHS BASED: We take a holistic approach by focusing on the inherent strengths of an individual, family or community, then build upon them.

INCLUSIVE: We address the needs of all youth by ensuring that our approach is culturally responsive.

ENGAGES YOUTH AS PARTNERS:

We ensure the intentional, meaningful and sustained involvement of youth as equitable partners in the programs, practices and policies that seek to impact them.

COLLABORATIVE: We create meaningful partnerships within and across sectors to effectively align our work.

SUSTAINABLE: We address long-term planning through funding, training, capacity building, professional development and evaluation in order to ensure ongoing support and engagement of youth.



THE EVIDENCE-BASE FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Research demonstrates that youth with more developmental assets, such as positive family communication, caring school climate and sense of purpose, have reduced morbidity and better health outcomes. In addition, key protective factors such as connectedness to parents and family, connectedness to school and optimism, promote healthy youth behaviors and outcomes.

A DUAL STRATEGY OF RISK REDUCTION AND PROMOTION OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS THROUGH AN INTENTIONAL POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH HOLDS THE GREATEST PROMISE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH.

A variety of national organizations and initiatives are promoting the use of a PYD approach such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs and the National Association of City and County Health Officials.



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LEARN MORE:

colorado.gov/cdphe/positive-youth-development

COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



Promoting a sense of safety



Providing appropriate structure



Creating supportive relationships



Providing opportunities to belong



Providing positive social norms



Providing youth with responsibilities and challenges



Providing opportunities for skill-building



Coordinating family, school and community programming