

Situation

Kansas youth between the ages of 10-19 make up 14% (402,705) of the total population in the state and in the nation. Most Kansas youth are healthy, are positively engaged with their families, schools and communities, and are on the path to becoming contributing and caring adults. However, there are areas of concern for Kansas youth:

- 19.9% of Kansas' ages 10-19 have had beer, liquor, wine in the past 30 days compared to 34.9% of youth in the United States.
- 22% of Kansas children between 6th and 12th grades report being bullied on school property when 19.6% of the nation's children report being bullied.
- 24% of Kansas teens have felt sad and hopeless for more than 2 weeks in a row, compared to 29.9% of the nation's teens.
- In 2013, 16.4% of Kansas teens considered attempting suicide – which is a 4.6% increase since 2011. A third of youth in the United States have considered suicide. (YRBSS, 2013: <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Results.aspx?LID=KS>)

According to the national “Ready by 21” collaborative, employers report that many high school students lack the skills needed for work. Those skills include decision making, goal setting and leadership. Additionally, experts with Ready by 21 state that only four in ten young people are really doing well, which means that they are in school or working, and are healthy and connected to their community (www.readyby21.org). These concerns were echoed in K-State Research and Extension's statewide survey in 2007 of 2,065 stakeholders who responded that it was very or somewhat important to help youth ages 10-19 years old “avoid harmful behavior” (89%) and “master positive life skills” (91%).

It is vital that Kansas youth are equipped with the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to lead productive and contributing lives. The United States Administration for Children and Families along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) agree that a positive youth development approach is necessary when helping young people thrive. Communities that promote positive youth development give youth opportunities to exercise leadership, build skills, and establish healthy relationships. Dr. Richard Lerner, Director of the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, has determined that effective youth-serving programs have three “big” features: 1) Positive and sustained relationships between youth and adults, 2) Activities that build important life skills, and 3) Opportunities for youth to use these life skills as both participants in and as leaders of valued community activities (Blum, 2003; Lerner, 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Programs and opportunities that focus on these “big three” elements foster five outcomes of positive youth development.

Most experts agree that positive development leads to young people having: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character (development) and Caring. The “5 Cs” are a guide for interacting positively with youth, and are benchmarks for designing effective programs that reach youth. The “5 Cs” was a focus of the national 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, which was a study of school-aged youth in the United States which began in 2002. A finding of the Tufts study was that a child or adolescent who develops each of the “5 Cs” is thriving. Developmental scientists believe that these thriving youth develop a sixth “C” which is Contribution to self, family, community and civil society (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). In the 2013 report of the 4-H study, Lerner and his team determined that 4-H'ers were nearly four times more likely to make contributions to their communities than were other youth (Grades 7-12), and

4-Hers were about 2 times more likely to be civically active (Grades 8-12). (Full reference details are available upon request).

Public Value

When you support K-State Research and Extension Positive Youth Development Programs, youth participants will develop strong work force skills, life skills and be contributing adults in society.

Outcomes

Short-Term (Knowledge)

Youth increase their awareness and knowledge of positive youth development, adopt new or different attitudes; develop opinions, new aspirations and/or new motivation related to:

- Competence – ability to act effectively in school, in social situations and at work;
- Confidence – an internal sense of overall self-worth and efficacy;
- Connection – positive bonds with people and social institutions;
- Character – respect for society and cultural rules, an inner moral compass; and
- Caring – a sense of sympathy and empathy for others and a commitment to social justice.

("The Good Teen. Lerner, Richard M., 2007. Crown Publishing Group, New York.)

Indicators

- Percentage of youth who increased their knowledge about mastery of skills
- Percentage of youth who increased their knowledge, awareness and skills about self-awareness
- Percentage of youth who learned how to build healthy interpersonal relationships
- Percentage of youth who increased their awareness and attitude for developing positive interpersonal skills
- Percentage of youth who increased their awareness and knowledge of serving others

Evaluation Question/Measurement Instrument Sources:

4-H Common Measures - Universal Items

Positive Youth Development Very Short Form - Younger Adolescents (Tufts University, 2013)

Positive Youth Development Very Short Form: Older Adolescents (Tufts University, 2013)

Medium-Term (Behavior)

Youth use and act on their skills attributed to positive youth development, i.e., practice new behaviors or demonstrate new positive youth development abilities. (The Good Teen. Lerner, Richard M., 2007. Crown Publishing Group, New York.)

Indicators

- Percentage of youth participating in opportunities to demonstrate competence such as project groups, competitions, academic achievements, etc.
- Percentage of youth practicing an internal sense of self worth
- Percentage of youth consistently participating in clubs, teams, groups
- Percentage of youth consistently demonstrating ethical behavior in society
- Percentage of youth consistently leading and participating in meaningful service-learning opportunities

Evaluation Question/Measurement Instrument Sources:

4-H Common Measures - Universal Items

Positive Youth Development Very Short Form - Younger Adolescents (Tufts University, 2013)

Positive Youth Development Very Short Form: Older Adolescents (Tufts University, 2013)

Long-Term (Change in Condition)

All youth will grow up fully prepared for and fully engaged in life by having the ability to participate effectively by caring for themselves and by giving of themselves at home, in the community and in civic life. (The Good Teen. Lerner, Richard M., 2007. Crown Publishing Group, New York.)

Indicators

- Youth are effective participants socially, at work and in school
- Youth are independent and self-confident
- Youth identify with people, social settings and everyday life
- Youth are law abiding citizens and contribute positively to society

- Youth are sympathetic and empathic to others
- Youth are generous with their time, resources and compassion toward community and other people

Evaluation Question/Measurement Instrument Sources:

4-H Common Measures - Universal Items

Positive Youth Development Very Short Form - Younger Adolescents (Tufts University, 2013)

Positive Youth Development Very Short Form: Older Adolescents (Tufts University, 2013)

Outputs

- 4-H Project groups
- 4-H Clubs
- 4-H Camps
- 4-H Teams
- 4-H Activities and Events
- Long term continuous contact with a caring adult
- 4-H After School Programs
- 4-H School Enrichment
- 4-H SPIN Clubs