

WAYNE COUNTY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Strong Kids = A Strong County

VISION

Wayne County children will become healthy, productive and caring citizens. All citizens of Wayne County view the development of our youth as our joint responsibility. In Wayne County, where we measure our success by the success of our children, all citizens believe that because every child can learn and succeed, every child should have equal access to learning opportunities. Wayne County citizens acknowledge the connection between education and the quality of life and so dedicate the resources of the county to providing every child a solid foundation for life-long learning.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Over the course of the last several years, Wayne County organizations have collected a wealth of data to support the need for systematic and focused youth development. Analysis of the data reveals that Wayne County youth, when compared to their Indiana counterparts, are at higher risk in many key developmental areas. Identified problems include:

- Drugs are easily assessable and widely used by youth and adults in Wayne County.
- A significant number of youth in Wayne County report no involvement in community activities such as youth centers, youth activities, or volunteerism.
- Wayne County has significant economic deprivation leading to increased risk of substance abuse.
- A significant number of Wayne County youth live in homes where alcohol and other drugs are regularly used.
- Wayne County youth are at risk due to heightened child abuse and neglect rates and an increase in the number of offenses against families and children.
- Wayne County youth have consistently underperformed their Indiana counterparts on standardized assessments of Language Arts and Mathematics achievement.
- Trend data demonstrate a decline in school attendance rates.
- An unacceptable number of Wayne County students fail to earn a high school diploma.
- Wayne County youth have a much higher-than-average rate of suspensions and expulsions from school, with many of those related to drug and weapons-related offenses.
- Wayne County middle school students are at greater risk for alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.
- Wayne County teen pregnancy rates are alarmingly high.

In addition to the data collected to determine need, a number of organizations have conducted assessments resulting in identified plans of action, including the Wayne County Step Ahead Council (commissioned by the Wayne County Step Ahead Council, May, 2000), the United Way Needs Assessment (commissioned by the United Way of Whitewater Valley, July, 2001), the Communities in Schools Community Assessment (commissioned by the CIS Steering Committee, August, 2001), The National Center for Higher Education Report (Commissioned by the Richmond-Wayne County Chamber of Commerce, March, 2002), and the Economic Development Strategy (commissioned by the Economic Development Corporation, March, 2004). Youth development issues surfaced as recurring themes in these reports as well, including:

- A need to significantly reduce the drop-out rate in Wayne County Schools.
- A need to raise the achievement of all students in the school corporations in Wayne County to above average levels.
- A need to address teen diseases and to decrease the teen birth rate.
- A need to decrease juvenile delinquency in Wayne County.
- A need to reduce youth drug use in Wayne County.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

Wayne County Youth will develop and demonstrate:

- Mastery of academic knowledge in both content and skills.
- Proficiency in critical thinking and problem solving.
- A strong sense of self, self-respect and respect for others.
- Ability to develop a personal vision and personal goals.
- Competency in the use of technology to access, process, and apply information.
- A strong foundation in ethics, personal responsibility and empathy.
- A sense of community and philanthropy.
- Life style choices necessary for good health and safety.

COMMUNITY

GOAL

Providing for all youth, Wayne County will ensure a strong economy, a safe non-violent environment and a stable, wholesome living situation.

INDICATORS

1. Wayne County recognizes that economic vitality and healthy youth development are interdependent, and will work collaboratively to create and maintain a healthy economy.

- Families will have the opportunity to earn a living wage.
- The education level of all citizens will increase and each citizen will possess the skills to earn a living wage.
- Corporations will be family friendly with practices and policies supporting positive family and youth development.
- All parts of the county will work to protect and preserve all elements of the environment through a unified sustainability effort.

2. All neighborhoods will be centers of hope and opportunity.

- Neighborhoods will be safe, drug and crime free, clean and orderly.
- Neighborhood will be gathering places where family activities abound and will be well maintained.
- Strong and productive leadership will be prominent within all neighborhoods and communities.
- Community services will be available and easily accessible to all neighborhoods and communities.
- Neighborhood adults will be counted on to care for and support the youth.
- Youth activities, suitable for all ages and interests, will be accessible and engaging.

3. Safe, affordable and appropriate housing vital for the health and well being of our children will be readily available.

- More families will own their own homes and other assets.
- Housing conditions will reflect consistent standards and will be carefully monitored.
- Consistent regulations and enforcement will ensure that rental properties are appropriate places to live.
- Property owners will understand the standards of proper housing conditions and will be empowered and capable to achieve them.
- All properties will provide a high quality physical environment.
- Communities will be actively and constantly working to improve the housing stock.

FAMILY

GOAL

Wayne County will promote and support strong families that are able to nurture all children and youth to healthy adulthood.

INDICATORS

1. Families will have knowledge of healthy, developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant community expectations for childrearing.

- Parents will have access to training and the opportunity to develop appropriate parenting and family life skills.
- Families will participate in cultural, school, recreational and spiritual activities with their children.
- Families will be connected to community services and networks.
- Children and youth will be fully cared for and not abused or neglected.

2. All youth will be physically, socially, mentally and emotionally healthy.

- Youth will maintain good health and will practice good health habits.
- All youth and families will have access to prenatal care.
- There will be a focus on childhood wellness with high rates of immunization, regular dental, physical, and optical check-ups.
- Health and wellness services of all types will be accessible, adequate and utilized fully.

PEER/INDIVIDUAL

GOAL

Wayne County will assure the development of social competence and positive peer relationships for all youth.

INDICATORS

1. Young people in Wayne County will possess clear, positive standards of behavior.

- All youth will display a positive identity and reflect a sense of personal power.
- All youth will demonstrate positive social competencies including planning and decision making, interpersonal skills and resistance skills.
- Children and youth will adopt positive social values of caring, social justice, integrity, honesty, and responsibility.

2. All youth will have the opportunity for positive relationships with caring adults.

- Wayne County youth will participate in developing youth-serving programs.
- Children and youth will be active participants in the community through philanthropy, decision-making participation and volunteerism.

3. Wayne County youth will be resilient.

- Wayne County youth will possess skills needed to avoid destructive behaviors.
- Wayne County youth will possess skills to develop and maintain positive interpersonal relationships.

4. Youth will be positively recognized and acknowledged for their efforts.

- Wayne County organizations will provide planned, formal recognition of youth accomplishments.
- Wayne County citizens will be encouraged to identify and acknowledge positive youth behavior in their communities.

SCHOOL

GOAL

Valuing the potential of all youth, Wayne County will provide quality schools that prepare students to work and live as productive, contributing citizens for the 21st century.

INDICATORS

1. Youth will have an educational environment that is conducive to learning and holistic development.

- All places of learning will be safe and free of weapons, violence and bullying.
- Schools will be interactive and relevant, leading to a student's ownership and participation in his/her learning.
- There will be a variety of accessible opportunities for youth involvement in extracurricular and co-curricular activities.
- Families and communities will be welcomed to be actively involved in the learning environment.
- A holistic approach will be utilized to meet student needs.

2. Wayne County's educational environment will guarantee success for each student.

- Students will perform at or above grade level.
- Students will complete high school prepared for work, further education and/or training.
- The importance of early childhood development will be recognized in all school corporations.
- Attendance and graduation rates will be high.
- Students will demonstrate educational achievement and competencies based on a clear understanding of the knowledge, skills and attributes important for today's world.
- 21st century skills will be integrated in traditional core academic subjects.
- Students will value knowing and working within a diverse group of people.

STRUCTURE

GOAL

The communities, systems and organizations of Wayne County will offer a purposeful, cohesive continuum of services and opportunities for all children and youth.

INDICATORS

1. All segments of the county will be mobilized to work for healthy youth development.

- Organizations will understand, focus on and apply the principles of positive youth development as they create programs and activities that fit Wayne County's plan.
- Major funding sources will use this plan to create funding opportunities and to disperse funds.
- A collaborative network between public and private sector will act to increase resources and promote advocacy for issues important to all youth.
- There will be increased accessibility to programs, services and activities for all youth.

2. A representative convening body that sustains and enhances the VISION/PLAN will be created.

- The need to support positive youth development will be actively communicated and understood throughout all segments of the county.
- Research-based best practices information and evaluation strategies will be utilized to monitor the progress and effectiveness of this plan.
- Appropriate data will be gathered and analyzed and will be made available to all organizations and programs.
- There will be an ongoing review of the plan to ensure that it reflects the overall vision for Wayne County Youth.
- Resources will be coordinated.
- Collaborations and partnerships will abound.
- An accountability and evaluation model will be universally accepted and used in Positive Youth Development efforts.