



The Role of Grandparents in the Lives of Adolescent Grandchildren

Several recent trends have increased the prominence of the role of grandparents in the lives of their grandchildren. Increases in life expectancy mean that more grandparents are able to enjoy sustained relationships with their grandchildren into adolescence and adulthood. Grandparents may play a particularly important role for these children, potentially compensating for the time, attention, and money that is lacking due to the absence of a parent. And increasing numbers of grandparents are raising their grandchildren.

The *Parenting in Context Initiative* provides resources for professionals and family caregivers to help raise the children in their care. A greater understanding of these issues is resulting from a W.T. Grant Foundation research award that addresses the following questions. What roles do grandparents play in providing financial assistance, co-residing with grandchildren, and providing emotional support? What differences do grandparents make in the lives of their grandchildren, particularly those in a single-parent family, and what factors mediate the influence of grandparents on grandchildren? What are the sources of risk and resilience in families in which grandchildren are being raised by a grandparent?

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Promoting Food Skills and Positive Youth Development

When people have few preparation skills, the alternative is to rely on others for what they eat. Too often that means choices made at fast-food restaurants and selection of packaged or prepared foods at the supermarket. *Cooking Up Fun* is designed to promote both food skills and positive youth development. Youth, ages 9 to 15, are provided the time, space, and support to practice food skills. The experiential teaching method engages youth participants in defining their learning experiences. Adults facilitate learning by promoting natural conversations about ingredients and skills in each recipe.

Evaluation data shows that participants gained food skills and improved selected food preparation behaviors. Some participants prepared recipes they mastered for family and friends. In addition, adults reported improvement in social skills. Many described how youth gained communication skills and respect for each other as they worked together. *Cooking up Fun* has been used successfully in after-school settings intended to reach youth from low income families. Leadership is provided by 4-H staff and volunteers and paraprofessionals in the Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).



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Assets Coming Together for Youth

During the 30 days preceding the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System survey, numerous New York State high school students engaged in behaviors that are the four leading causes of adolescent and young adult death. 21 percent rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol; 14 percent carried a weapon; 44 percent drank alcohol; and 21 percent used marijuana. During the 12 months preceding the survey 32 percent of high school students were in a physical fight and 7 percent attempted suicide.



The Assets Coming Together (ACT) for Youth project integrates prevention strategies and builds developmental assets for young people aged 10-19. The ACT for Youth Center of Excellence, based in the Family Life Development Center and funded by the New York State Department of Health, supports communities across New York State to promote positive youth development and to prevent abuse, violence, and risky sexual behaviors among youth. Training and technical assistance includes program development and evaluation; research on youth development and health issues; prevention programs grounded in social/behavioral science; and community development.

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Advancing Youth Development

Across New York State numerous agencies serve youth; staff training is essential to effective work with young people. The Advancing Youth Development (AYD) Partnership demonstrates that a cooperative leadership approach from state agencies and systems can provide efficient, low-cost, and high-quality professional development for adults who work with young people.

AYD aims to institutionalize principles of youth development theory and practice in New York State agencies, increase community networks that serve youth, and recognize and bolster the professionalism of youth workers. To date, more than 2,200 community youth workers across the state have participated in the program's in-depth training experiences. A recently completed five-year retrospective study documents the partnership's effectiveness in helping youth workers transfer classroom knowledge into youth work practice.



Principal partnership members include Cornell Cooperative Extension, New York State Office of Children and Family Services, the ACT for Youth Upstate Center of Excellence located in Human Ecology's Family Life Development Center, and the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus. AYD leadership and training are provided by the college's faculty and Cornell Cooperative Extension educators.

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