



Developmental Assets for Youth

Developmental assets are internal and external factors in young people’s lives that help them to “navigate” successfully through childhood and adolescence. The Search Institute has identified 40 assets that are recognized as important for healthy development (*see reverse side*). Twenty are “external assets,” which are positive developmental experiences that surround youth with support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and opportunities for structured time use. The other twenty assets are “internal,” which involve strengths, commitments and values within young people that guide their choices, priorities, and decisions. Research has shown that the more of these assets a particular child has, the more likely it is that the youth will make responsible lifestyle choices, do well in school and avoid alcohol and other drugs.

Everyone can help build assets in youth!

Here are ideas as to how different community members can help build developmental assets in youth:

Ideas for Parents

- Share at least one meal a day with your children. Use it as an opportunity to learn about each other.
- Limit television watching.
- Read to, or with, your children.
- Model competent, caring and healthy assets.
- Encourage active involvement in organizations, teams, and clubs at school, in the community, or in a congregation.
- Serve others in the community together with your children.
- Be a friend for the friends of your children; welcome them into your home.

Ideas for Business

- Develop policies that encourage parents to be active in their children’s lives.
- Provide opportunities for employees to build relationships with community youth through mentoring, volunteering, and internships for youth.
- Provide resources (donations, in-kind contributions, etc.) To youth developmental programs.

Ideas for Schools

- Make it a policy to provide caring environments for ALL students.
- Develop mentoring relationships between teenagers and elementary children.
- Expand efforts to promote healthy lifestyles.
- Integrate service learning, values development, relationship building, the development of social competencies, and other asset-building strategies into the curriculum.
- Use schools’ connections to parents to increase parental involvement and understanding as their roles as asset-builders.

Ideas for Local Government

- Make asset development a top priority.
- Partner with other organizations in creating child-friendly public places, and safe places for teenagers to gather and take advantage of opportunities.
- Strengthen or develop ordinances that reduce or eliminate youth access to alcohol and tobacco.
- Support and expand neighborhood-building initiatives.

***For more information about developmental assets,
call the Connecticut Assets Network at
1-800-991-8463.***

(continued)

40 Developmental Assets

Search Institute has identified the following factors in young people's lives that make them more likely to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

20 External Assets		
Type	Asset Name	Definition
Support	1. Family support 2. Positive family communication	Family life provides high levels of love and support Young person and his or her parent(s) communicate positively and young person is willing to seek parent(s) advice and counsel.
	3. Other adult relationships 4. Caring neighborhood 5. Caring school climate 6. Parent Involvement in schooling	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. Young person experiences caring neighbors. School provides a caring, encouraging environment Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
Empowerment	7. Community values youth 8. Youth as resources 9. Service to others 10. Safety	Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. Young people are given useful roles in the community. Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
	Boundaries and Expectations	11. Family boundaries 12. School boundaries 13. Neighborhood boundaries 14. Adult role models 15. Positive peer influence 16. High expectations
Constructive Use of Time	17. Creative activities 18. Youth programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
	19. Religious community 20. Time at home	Young person spends three or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.
20 Internal Assets		
Commitment to learning	21. Achievement motivation 22. School engagement 23. Homework 24. Bonding to school 25. Reading for pleasure	Young person is motivated to do well in school. Young person is actively engaged in learning. Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. Young person cares about his or her school. Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
	Positive Values	26. Caring 27. Equality and social justice 28. Integrity 29. Honesty 30. Responsibility 31. Restraint
Social Competencies	32. Planning & decision-making 33. Interpersonal competence 34. Cultural competence	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
	35. Resistance skills 36. Peaceful conflict resolution	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. Young person seeks to resolve conflict non-violently.
Positive Values	37. Personal power 38. Self-esteem 39. Sense of purpose 40. Positive view of personal future	Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." Young person reports having a high self-esteem. Young person reports that "my life has a purpose" Young person is optimistic about his or her personal future.

The material in this fact sheet was adapted from the Search Institute, Thresher Square West, 700 South Third Street, Minneapolis, MN 55415



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