

The Developmental Assets Framework



Young people need internal and external assets—positive supports and strengths—to successfully navigate the world. Internal assets focus on social-emotional strengths, values, and commitments. External assets center on the relationships and opportunities they need in their families, schools, and communities. The Search Institute has identified 40 developmental assets, known as the Developmental Assets Framework, that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Internal Assets

Positive Identity

- *Personal power*—Youth feels they have control over “things that happen to me.”
- *Self-esteem*—Youth reports having a high self-esteem.
- *Sense of purpose*—Youth reports that “my life has a purpose.”
- *Positive view of personal future*—Youth is optimistic about their personal future.

Positive Values

- *Caring*—Youth places high value on helping other people.
- *Equality and social justice*—Youth places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- *Integrity*—Youth acts on convictions and stands up for their beliefs.
- *Honesty*—Youth “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
- *Responsibility*—Youth accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- *Restraint*—Youth believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies

- *Planning and decision making*—Youth knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- *Interpersonal competence*—Youth has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- *Cultural competence*—Youth has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- *Resistance skills*—Youth can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- *Peaceful conflict resolution*—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

- The Developmental Assets Framework has been developed by the Search Institute and consists of 40 internal and external assets that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.
- Internal assets focus on social-emotional strengths, values, and commitments, such as positive identity, positive values, social competencies, and commitment to learning.
- External assets center on the relationships and opportunities that youth need in their families, schools, and communities, such as support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time.

Commitment To Learning

- *Achievement motivation*—Youth is motivated to do well in school.
- *School engagement*—Youth is actively engaged in learning.
- *Homework*—Youth reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- *Bonding to school*—Youth cares about their school.
- *Reading for pleasure*—Youth reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.



Wheeler

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External Assets

Support

- *Family support*—Family life provides high levels of love and support.
- *Positive family communication*—Youth and their parent(s) or caregiver(s) communicate positively, and youth is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s) or caregiver(s).
- *Other adult relationships*—Youth receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
- *Caring neighborhood*—Youth experiences caring neighbors.
- *Caring school climate*—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
- *Parent or caregiver involvement in schooling*—Parent(s) or caregiver(s) are actively involved in helping youth succeed in school.

Empowerment

- *Community values youth*—Youth perceives that adults in the community value young people.
- *Youth as resources*—Youth are given useful roles in the community.
- *Service to others*—Youth serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- *Safety*—Youth feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries And Expectations

- *Family boundaries*—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the youth's whereabouts.
- *School boundaries*—School provides clear rules and consequences.
- *Neighborhood boundaries*—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
- *Adult role models*—Parent(s) or caregiver(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- *Positive peer influence*—Youth's best friends model responsible behavior.
- *High expectations*—Both parent(s) or caregiver(s) and teachers encourage the youth to do well.

Constructive Use Of Time

- *Creative activities*—Youth spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- *Youth programs*—Youth spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
- *Religious community*—Youth spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
- *Time at home*—Youth is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.

Connecting Developmental Assets And Developmental Relationships

The 40 developmental assets identify strengths and resources across many areas of young people's lives, including family, school, and community. The key to building these assets in youth is to strengthen their positive relationships. The Search Institute has created the Developmental Relationships Framework, which offers strategies to deepen and strengthen young people's relationships. Please see the Connecticut Clearinghouse Fact Sheet, “The Developmental Relationships Framework,” for more information.

Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental
Health and Addiction Services
www.ct.gov/DMHAS

CT Department of Children and
Families
www.ct.gov/DCF

National Resources

The Search Institute
www.search-institute.org

Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

