

**KRONKOSKY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

TOPIC: At-Risk Youth
DATE: June 24, 1998
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PARTICIPANTS

Invited Agency Representatives

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OVERVIEW

This discussion of at-risk youth generally includes children between the age of 0-17 years

Indicators of "at-risk" status:

- low school performance and attendance
- family with history of substance abuse
- single parent home
- low socioeconomic status
- children of incarcerated parents

Interventions for children at-risk include:

- educational
- substance abuse
- day care
- alternative and diversionary activities
- development of job skills

Educational Interventions

- Children at-risk are usually in need of support for educational achievement. Activities which include opportunities to enhance educational performance include:
 - a. tutoring
 - b. mentoring
 - c. GED classes
 - d. computer literacy
 - e. English as a second language
- Staff for delivery of services in this area are usually limited but links with other service providers can be made so that needs are met; this is an area where volunteers can be successfully utilized.
- The cost of equipment (e.g. computers) is usually not a funding allowable cost unless the program's primary goal is to teach computer literacy; thus, unless students are receiving computer training in the schools, they are lagging behind in this area of technology.

Substance Abuse

- Substance abuse continues to be a problem with "at-risk" children in our community.
- There is not enough affordable treatment available for adolescents in this area. This limits the effectiveness of an intervention if the child needs residential treatment and there are no treatment beds available.
- Alcohol and marijuana use is prevalent and can lead to the use of harder drugs.
- The use of chemicals, (e.g. inhalants) causes brain damage and interrupts development, yet adolescents continue to abuse these substances. More outreach and education is needed.
- The Inman Christian Center has a residential program for adolescents needing treatment for inhalant abuse.

Day Care

- Poverty continues to be a factor that causes "environmental deprivation."
- As a community, we need to change the way we view day care and use a holistic approach in day care settings.
 - This includes providing day care which encompasses nutritional meals for brain development, a curriculum that will stimulate intellectual growth, and a staff/child ratio that will facilitate personal attention and care.

Alternative Activities

- Alternative activities should be a diversion strategy that draws out the strengths in each individual child.
- These activities are more productive when they include opportunities for other skill development in areas such as conflict resolution, intercultural/ethnic diversity and leadership. The incorporation of daily "critical events" enriches the activities.
- Activities are more meaningful to youth when they have an opportunity to provide input and are allowed to take a leadership role in the development of the activities (e.g. Good Samaritan Center's Peace Council, girls volleyball league, and break dancers.)
- There is a need for staff training so that direct care staff can function in various capacities. For example, training in basic counseling techniques can be very helpful when an adolescent needing someone to talk to seeks out a staff member.
- Youth Workers need to be skilled at challenging youth's erroneous thinking and must be able to provide "common sense" counseling.

Development of Job Skills

- Programs that promote self-sufficiency are needed. It gives the youth in the community hope that they will be able to break free from the poverty they live in.
- In order to be more productive, the job skills taught need to be practical. Vocational counseling is needed so that youth can have an opportunity to choose from areas of interest.

Statistics

- Of the children who live in the near west side of San Antonio, 47.2% live in poverty.
- Over 69% of the adults in the same community have no high school diploma; 49.4% failed to complete the 9th grade
- 31% of the children live in single parent homes

How to Implement Systemic Change

- Changes must begin in the community; citizens will need to also value children from low socio-economic backgrounds
- The four major areas that need attention for systemic change are poverty, education, substance abuse and employment. These areas serve as barriers to self-sufficiency.
- The development of support systems is a key factor in addressing the teen pregnancy issue. Teen parents benefit from adult mentors who can model parenting.
- The community needs strategies that will focus on a positive change in attitude toward youth. As attitudes change, the barriers to self-sufficiency will decrease and the cycle of dependency will also decrease.

Needs

- Funding for staff salaries
- Vehicles and staff for providing transportation for service delivery
- Programs for teenage girls
- Residential treatment for substance abuse
- Daycare for teen parents
- Meaningful jobs for teens

Attachments

House of Neighborly Service Fact Sheet
Good Samaritan Center Fact Sheet