

**A CALL TO ACTION:**

# Recommendations on How to Keep the Promise

A REPORT FROM AMERICA'S PROMISE ALLIANCE

**Every Child  
Every Promise**

**TURNING FAILURE INTO ACTION**



We believe it is not only our obligation, but in our national interest to provide all of our young people with all of the foundational Five Promises they need to be successful. Their success will ensure America's continued prosperity.

**This is more than a moral imperative.**

**It has become an economic imperative as well.**

# VISION STATEMENTS FOR THE FIVE PROMISES

## **CARING ADULTS**

Every child and youth needs and deserves support and guidance from caring adults in their families, schools, and communities, including ongoing, secure relationships with parents and other family adults, as well as multiple and consistent formal and informal positive relationships with teachers, mentors, coaches, youth volunteers, and neighbors.

## **SAFE PLACES AND CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME**

Every child and youth needs and deserves to be physically and emotionally safe everywhere they are — from the actual places of families, schools, neighborhoods and communities to the virtual places of media — and to have an appropriate balance of structured, supervised activities and unstructured, unscheduled time.

## **A HEALTHY START AND HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT**

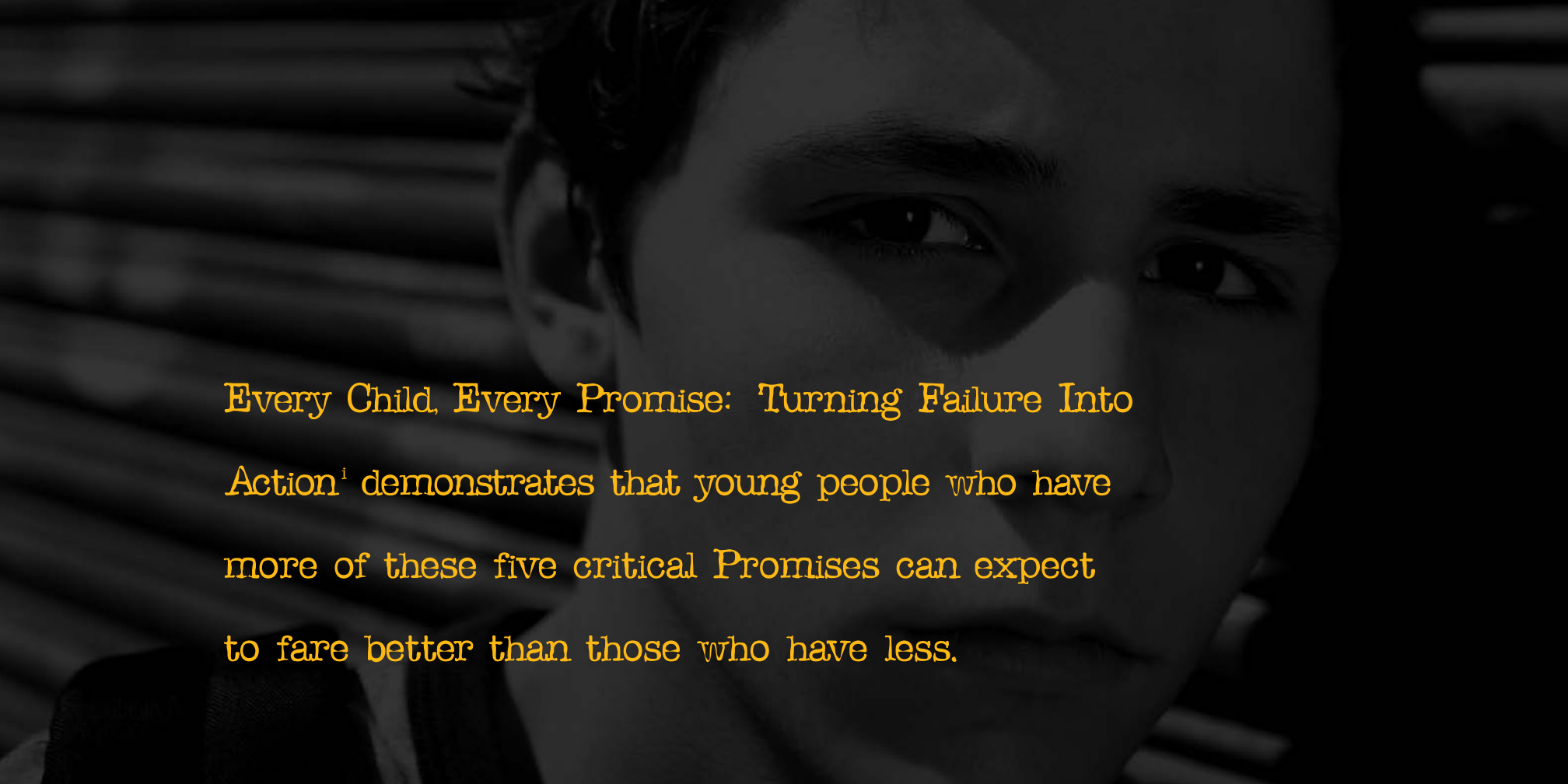
Every child and youth needs and deserves the healthy bodies, healthy minds, and healthful habits and choices resulting from regular well-child/youth health care and needed treatment, good nutrition and exercise, comprehensive health knowledge and skills, and role models of physical and psychological health.

## **EFFECTIVE EDUCATION FOR MARKETABLE SKILLS AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

Every child and youth needs and deserves the intellectual development, motivation, and personal, social-emotional, and cultural skills needed for successful work and lifelong learning in a diverse nation, as a result of having quality learning environments, challenging expectations, and consistent formal and informal guidance and mentoring.

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE THROUGH HELPING OTHERS**

Every child and youth needs and deserves the chance to make a difference — in their families, schools, communities, nation and world – through having models of caring behavior, awareness of the needs of others, a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to larger society, and opportunities for volunteering, leadership and service.



**Every Child, Every Promise: Turning Failure Into Action<sup>i</sup> demonstrates that young people who have more of these five critical Promises can expect to fare better than those who have less.**

**OUR CHALLENGE IS THAT 34 MILLION AMERICANS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 6 AND 17 ARE RECEIVING TOO FEW OF THE CORE RESOURCES THAT CORRELATE WITH SUCCESS.**

This shortfall helps to explain a number of troubling indicators that we see among children and youth today:

- > One in 12 high school students tried to kill themselves in 2005.<sup>ii</sup>
- > Roughly 70% of eighth-graders scored below proficient in reading and math in 2005.<sup>iii</sup>
- > On average, four young people were murdered each day in 2002.<sup>iv</sup>

**THE 5 PROMISES:**  
CARING ADULTS  
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# As a nation, we are called to action.

**THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION STATES THAT CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN FAMILIES DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO WELL WHEN THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES.** All of us have roles to play in building such communities. The job is too big for any single sector alone. Yet every American has the power to change the life of a child by helping to provide one or more of these critical Five Promises.

In doing so, we must recognize that, while all young people need support, too many start out at a disadvantage. Our study, *Every Child, Every Promise: Turning Failure Into Action*, found sharp disparities in the receipt of the Promises among white, African-American and Hispanic children. African-American and Hispanic children are half as likely to receive four or five Promises than white children. Stark disparities also exist between children from upper- and lower-income families. These gaps contribute to outcomes that involve high social and economic costs:

- > Only half of African-American and Hispanic students graduate from high school on time, if at all, according to some estimates.<sup>v</sup>
- > African-American youth are four times more likely than white youth to be murdered.<sup>vi</sup>
- > Roughly one-third of all young black men will spend time in prison or jail at some point in their lives.<sup>vii</sup>

These inequities should be unacceptable for a country that was built on the premise of equal opportunities for all. We must confront the deficiencies and disparities that are holding back the nation.

**AND WE CAN.**

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Our challenge is that 34 million Americans between the ages of 6 and 17 are receiving too few of the core resources that correlate with success.

Our findings, supported by many other studies, show that when young people receive the resources needed to succeed — regardless of race or income — they can thrive. We must redouble our efforts to support all young people and reduce the obstacles to the delivery of the Promises. Then, we must focus with laser-like intensity on those most in need.

Identifying the problem is only the first step. We must work toward solutions. First and foremost, at the national, state and local levels, we must work together for better, more integrated solutions to the needs of children. It will take all of us to change the outcomes for our young people.

**Nationally**, the America’s Promise Alliance invites all organizations from all sectors to **join with us** and lend support — time, money, program resources, creative vision — to change the lives of 15 million disadvantaged young people over the next five years.

**At the state level**, governors, state organizations and corporations can unite for a more focused commitment to their young people.

**Locally**, partners in the America’s Promise Alliance that work every day to strengthen the lives of children and youth need and deserve the support of every American to help the nation’s children reach their full potential.

In no way do we claim to have all of the answers; however, we feel strongly that we must:

- > **Commit to collaboration.** All sectors must unite to make children an urgent national priority. We must design and redesign systems and approaches that support young people and meet their holistic needs. Health care is vital, but it isn’t enough. Education is vital, but alone is insufficient. Every child needs every Promise.
- > **Strengthen families and support their economic success.** Family is the most important influence in the life of a child. We must promote public policies and business practices that strengthen the ability of families to raise *the nation’s children*.

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- > **See that every child has caring adults in their lives.** Roughly 8.5 million young people do not have the caring adults in their lives who are essential to helping them negotiate the basic milestones of “growing up.” Further, the *National Promises Study*<sup>viii</sup> reports that only one in 12 young people has access to a formal mentor. A first priority is to strengthen families to provide this basic resource. However, other caring adults have immense capacity to help young people as well. Formal mentoring relationships provide the focused one-to-one time and attention lacking in the lives of the most disadvantaged, such as children living in poverty, children of incarcerated parents and children in foster care. Often they become the portal for access to the other four Promises. Most importantly, formal mentors give this time and attention because they choose to. It’s not their job or familial responsibility, and therein lies the transformational power for a child’s future.
  
- > **Build a Culture of Mentoring.** As suggested by *The National Agenda for Action: How to Close America’s Mentoring Gap*,<sup>ix</sup> we must develop a culture where mentoring is viewed as integral to the health and well-being of young people and encourage and support formal and informal mentoring relationships, such as those offered by coaches, teachers and friends of the family. Additionally, we must export mentoring practices into more organizations that provide services for young people, and dramatically increase the capacity of mentoring organizations to match young people with formal mentors.
  
- > **Prepare all young people with a 21st century education.** Our economic prowess is challenged by our inability to adequately educate the nation’s young people. We must prepare every child with a rigorous and relevant education, which includes opportunities for quality early learning and development, as well as service-learning opportunities in and out of the classroom and throughout college. Positioning our young people for success positions our nation to be competitive in the global economy.
  
- > **Ensure the safety of all young people.** We cannot adequately measure the cost of crime and victimization in dollars and cents. Safe schools and safe communities should be the common experience of all young people. Safety should be a promise, not a privilege.

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- > **Provide all young people access to health care.** Every child deserves access to quality, affordable health care. While the proportion of children with health insurance has increased over the past decade, rising costs, decreasing rates of private coverage and federal deficits threaten the sustainability of this gain. We are starting to see this already, with the number of uninsured children growing by nearly 400,000 between 2004 and 2005.<sup>x</sup> The private and public sectors must both commit to ensuring every child has access to quality health care.
- > **Engage young people in America’s civic life.** Young leaders are a critical resource for solving the nation’s social problems. By engaging young people as agents of change, we will simultaneously create stronger communities, while sustaining our proud civic traditions for generations to come.

### **IT TAKES EVERYONE WORKING TOGETHER**

The ways that America and Americans can support the nation’s youth are as numerous as the challenges facing them. We make recommendations for specific sectors and groups of leaders that impact children and youth; however, we emphasize the need for collaboration and integration across sectors. For example, strengthening education is not solely the responsibility of schools — business leaders, policy-makers, youth-serving leaders, faith leaders and others have important roles to play as well. Further, young people need more than a strong education; they need the full array of developmental resources to succeed in school and in life.

*It will take a united effort, across the nation  
and in each neighborhood, to provide every  
child with every Promise.*

In addition to the recommendations on the following pages, please also visit [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org) for information on ways individuals can get involved with the nonprofit and business partners of the America’s Promise Alliance. They are leading the charge to support our nation’s young people.

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# What Business Leaders Can Do<sup>xi</sup>

**THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN SERVE AS A POWERFUL ADVOCATE AND AGENT OF CHANGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. LOCALLY, BUSINESSES ARE AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY PROGRESS, ALWAYS HELPING TO ENSURE A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR FAMILIES.** Nationally, corporations have always been at the forefront of America's response to critical challenges. Business leaders are often the most innovative problem-solvers.

## EDUCATION

American competitiveness in the modern global economy depends on the quality of the American workforce. The Business Education Network at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that corporate support for education in 2005 approached \$4.5 billion, including \$2.5 billion focused on K-12 activities.<sup>xii</sup> It was a wise investment in our future. Businesses can continue to invest in our long-term economic well-being by helping to provide every child with quality, lifelong learning experiences. Recognizing that every business is unique, and that many are already active in their support of children and youth, we encourage business leaders to consider how they can best get involved or strengthen their current efforts. Companies around the country can:<sup>xiii</sup>

- > **Help to defray the high cost of quality child care and early childhood education through employer-matched flexible spending accounts** (allowing employees to set aside pre-tax dollars for child care and early childhood education). Quality child care and preschool education are crucial to a child's success.
- > **Inspire young people to take challenging courses in school, provide real-life learning experiences to students through quality internships and work with school districts to develop curricula/standards that meet employers' needs.**

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- > **Work with schools and community organizations to develop programs for high school dropouts that reconnect them to school and work.**
- > **Provide flextime or paid time off for employees to volunteer as mentors or tutors for disadvantaged children and youth during and after school.**
- > **Train and support employees and future retirees** to bring their skills and experience into the classroom by serving as adjunct teachers, starting a second career in teaching, and volunteering as mentors and tutors.
- > **Help make sure children are safe** by partnering with schools and community-based organizations to connect employees with opportunities to volunteer as mentors and tutors in and after school. Studies show that effective mentoring reduces violent behavior in young people, which makes children safer both in and outside of school.<sup>xiv</sup>
- > **Leverage the influence of the business community to advance public policies for children and youth**, such as improving math and science education.<sup>xv</sup>

### **WORK-FAMILY ISSUES**

Businesses can further address the needs of young people by instituting flexible workplace options for all employees, making it easier for working parents and caregivers to be active participants in their children’s lives. A number of workplace flexibility strategies have proven to positively impact business operations, client service and employee health and well-being.<sup>xvi</sup> To support greater parental involvement, businesses can:

- > **Offer flexible options for addressing dependent care needs** and participation in school- and community-related activities.

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- > **Make available technologies and/or telecommuting options that allow employees to maintain communication or access information from remote locations.**
- > **Coordinate volunteer opportunities for employees** and allow them a specific amount of paid time (e.g., one hour per week) to serve children and families in need.

## **YOUTH SERVICE**

Youth are the nation’s future – but they are also our present. Business leaders can simultaneously help strengthen communities today and prepare the future workforce by supporting efforts to engage young people in service. Businesses can:

- > **Invest in youth-led service.** Corporations are an essential source for partnerships and financial support for global, national and local organizations that engage young people in quality volunteering and service-learning programs.
- > **Form an advisory board comprised of young people to help guide philanthropic efforts.**
- > **Engage employees and their children.** Through employee networks and established workplace volunteer programs, corporations have a powerful platform from which to make a call to service that includes employees *and* their children.
- > **Spread the message and award achievement.** Corporations have unique products and services, marketing outreach and branding tools that can be used to promote youth service and civic engagement and reward young people for making a difference in their communities.

# What Policy-makers Can Do

**WE MUST HAVE PUBLIC LEADERSHIP DEDICATED TO ENSURING THE WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE. FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN A VARIETY OF WAYS:**

- > **Make certain that the needs of our nation's children are a major issue in the 2008 presidential campaign.**
- > **Coordinate government programs so children receive comprehensive services.**  
According to the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, youth programs are spread across 12 federal departments.<sup>xvii</sup> Congress should fund, and the Administration should fully implement, the Federal Youth Coordination Act. This legislation will help to ensure better outcomes for youth by maximizing young people's access to quality services, supports and opportunities. Improved coordination at all levels will help to serve the needs of the whole child.
- > **Make affordable, accessible, high-quality health care available to every child.**  
A majority of the more than 8 million children without health insurance are eligible for coverage under Medicaid and/or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).<sup>xviii</sup> The reauthorization of SCHIP should maintain coverage for all currently enrolled children. Outreach efforts to enroll all uninsured, eligible children into the program should be continued and strengthened. Efforts also should be made to strengthen and increase access to affordable comprehensive employer-based coverage and other private sector coverage options.

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- > **Make funding available to expand community health centers to every medically underserved area** in the country to ensure that our nation's children are getting a "healthy start."<sup>xix</sup>
  
- > **Reaffirm a national commitment to ensuring that every child has a safe place and quality opportunities for development in and out of school.** Congress should reauthorize and, recognizing budget constraints, adequately fund such programs as:
  - 21st Century Community Learning Centers (comprehensive after-school programs);
  - Child Care and Development Block Grant;
  - Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities (including an emphasis on bullying prevention as proposed in H.R. 284, the "Safe Schools Act");<sup>xx</sup>
  - Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps and other national service programs;
  - The Mentoring for Children of Prisoners program in the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Mentoring Programs grants in the Department of Education; and
  - Prevention initiatives under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.
  
- > **Ensure every child has access to opportunities for early learning and development** through such means as reauthorizing and, recognizing budget constraints, adequately funding Head Start, as well as passing the Education Begins at Home Act.
  
- > **Pass the Calling for 2-1-1 Act**, creating a public/private partnership to facilitate nationwide availability of 2-1-1 telephone service so that every American will have easy access to information and referral services on how they can give and get help for children, their families and others in need of assistance.

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- > **Fully fund the education components of the American Competitiveness Initiative proposed by the Administration with widespread support.** Congress should also pass bipartisan legislation to support American competitiveness, such as the Science and Mathematics Education for Competitiveness Act and the Protecting America’s Competitive Edge through Education and Research Act.
  
- > **Make significant efforts to re-engage youth and young adults who have dropped out of school.** Policy-makers should:
  - Reauthorize and, recognizing budget constraints, adequately fund the Workforce Investment Act; and
  - Encourage schools and communities to develop alternative education pathways and transitional jobs and service programs designed to prepare young men and women for responsible, productive lives.<sup>xxi</sup>
  
- > **Make additional investments in research and evaluation of youth programs to ensure that federal dollars are spent wisely** and to increase the quality of programs available to young people. Programs found to be effective in improving outcomes for young people should be expanded, and funding from programs found to be ineffective should be redirected to programs that work.
  
- > **Support the long-term economic success of low-income families through asset-building opportunities** such as:
  - Universal Children’s Savings Accounts, such as the KIDS Accounts called for by the bipartisan ASPIRE Act;
  - Expanded Individual Development Accounts;

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- Continued efforts to help families access the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit; and
  - A unified family tax credit to strengthen and simplify tax policy for children and families.<sup>xxii</sup>
- > **Form a bipartisan Congressional caucus on workplace flexibility.** A healthy work-family balance can help children grow up with the values they need to be healthy, safe and productive now and in the future. However, developing public policies that support the work-family balance without adding costly burdens to small and large businesses is challenging. A bipartisan caucus would provide a vehicle for the discussion and development of innovative proposals to address this growing issue.<sup>xxiii</sup>
- > **Support *The National Agenda for Action: How to Close America's Mentoring Gap*.**<sup>xxiv</sup>
- Make the SafetyNET background check pilot program permanent;
  - Support the development of a nationwide framework and delivery system for mentoring support services; and
  - Establish a dedicated fund that supports mentoring research and rigorous investigations of how to best serve specific populations of young people.
- > **Fully implement the National Governors Association Compact on State High School Graduation Data,** calling for common, accurate measurement of high school graduation rates.<sup>xxv</sup>

- > **Increase the compulsory school age requirement to age 18.** In 32 states, students are legally allowed to drop out of school before they turn 18. If states increase the legal dropout age to 18, and provide the necessary resources to help students stay in school, we may be able to graduate more students from high school and place them on the road to success.<sup>xxvi</sup>
- > **Develop a high school accountability system** during the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind that relies on multiple measures, including disaggregated, accurate graduation rates to evaluate school performance. High schools should set meaningful goals for improvement, and interventions at the state, district, school and community levels should be developed and implemented to improve teaching, learning and student outcomes.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- > **Encourage and reward efforts of the business community to support youth by providing tax incentives to support expanded initiatives for children and youth,** such as those described for businesses above (see pages 9-11).
- > **Listen to young people.** Decisions that impact children and youth could be strengthened by engaging young people in the decision-making process. Policy-makers can create youth advisory councils and convene youth-led town hall meetings to learn the perspectives of young people.

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# What School Leaders Can Do

**SCHOOLS MUST CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO REACH THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL AND WORK WITH COMMUNITIES TO PROVIDE THEM THE RESOURCES TO DO SO.** There is no silver bullet; however, there are ways we can improve educational outcomes for students.

- > **Offer comprehensive support services to young people and their families,** especially youth at risk of failure or dropping out (and those who have already dropped out). Young people need a variety of resources to succeed academically (e.g., mentoring relationships, access to health services, etc.). Research shows that strategies that lead to academic success address students' needs both in and out of the classroom.<sup>xxviii</sup>
  
- > **Take concrete actions to improve high school graduation, such as:**
  - Develop and implement literacy plans for every school, district and state to improve the reading and writing skills of secondary school students by providing both targeted interventions for the lowest-skilled readers and reading support across the curriculum for all students;
  
  - Develop and implement state-level integrated longitudinal data systems to track the progress of every student over time and make better decisions on how to help every student succeed;<sup>xxix</sup>
  
  - Create early-warning systems to identify students at risk of dropping out well before they exit the school system;<sup>xxx</sup>
  
  - Improve evaluation and research on effective strategies to promote high school graduation;<sup>xxxi</sup>

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- Align high school graduation standards with college entrance requirements and employer expectations to ensure that curricula are rigorous and relevant and that students are successful in life after graduation;<sup>xxxii</sup> and
- Provide all students, especially those at risk of dropping out, with Personal Graduation Plans and connect them with support needed to graduate.

> **Expand access to health and mental health services by establishing more school-based health centers** and through partnerships between schools and community health centers.

> **Limit the availability and promotion of non-nutritious foods on school grounds and increase access to opportunities for physical fitness during the school day.**

> **Structure schools to provide students with a personalized educational experience.** Promising approaches that help to prevent students from dropping out include:

- Smaller learning environments that foster relationships;
- Connecting students to mentors and other caring adults who help reduce absenteeism and dropout rates and increase school connectedness; and
- Curricula that connect to student interests.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

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- > **Develop and implement school safety plans.** In 2003, students were the victims of 740,000 violent crimes at school.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Schools, parents and communities must work together to ensure that schools provide a safe environment for student learning. Elements of school safety plans include:<sup>xxxv</sup>
  - A comprehensive planning process that engages community stakeholders;
  - Implementation of research-based prevention and intervention strategies;<sup>xxxvi</sup> and
  - Evaluation and modifications to improve outcomes.
  
- > **Ensure that young people have safe places that promote their academic and social development when they are out of school.** The reauthorization of No Child Left Behind should direct states to prioritize Supplemental Education Services providers that deliver academic support in the context of a comprehensive after-school program with opportunities for youth development, including mentoring. Research demonstrates that young people need a variety of supports and experiences to succeed, and that interventions to support their development should be holistic.<sup>xxxvii</sup>
  
- > **Expand the integration of academic curriculum with community service by working with youth-serving organizations to provide service-learning opportunities to students during and after school.**<sup>xxxviii</sup>

# What Funders Can Do

**ACCORDING TO THE FOUNDATION CENTER, OVERALL FOUNDATION GIVING ROSE 5.5% IN 2005, TO AN ESTIMATED \$33.6 BILLION.<sup>xxxix</sup>** Foundations have targeted a significant amount of funding to a wide variety of programs serving children and youth. However, the needs of children and families can rarely be met by the programs of any single foundation. To better address these needs, foundations can:

- > **Prioritize and fund multi-sector collaboration to meet the holistic needs of young people.** No single organization or sector can meet the needs of youth on its own.
- > **Help service providers demonstrate results by providing sufficient funding to conduct rigorous outcome measurement** and connect grantees with the technical expertise necessary for quality evaluation.
- > **Invest additional resources in research and development,** disseminate findings through quality training opportunities and provide funding incentives for the use of research-based best practices.
- > **Consider making grants over longer periods that diminish over time,** allowing providers to develop and implement realistic sustainability plans — a major challenge for youth-serving organizations — while enabling them to avoid dependence on a single source of funding.

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# What Youth-Serving Leaders Can Do

**ORGANIZATIONS THAT SERVE YOUTH ARE CRITICAL TO HELPING YOUNG AMERICANS ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL. RESEARCH DEMONSTRATES THAT YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS CAN PLAY A UNIQUELY EFFECTIVE ROLE IN PROMOTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.<sup>xL</sup>**

To strengthen these efforts, youth-serving organizations can:

- > **Improve collaboration among organizations with distinct areas of expertise** to provide young people with a comprehensive array of opportunities for growth and development throughout their childhood and adolescence.
- > **Focus on young people who are unlikely to receive all Five Promises.** For example, organizations could place special emphasis on providing Hispanic youth with access to health services and opportunities to help others, since they are far less likely than their white peers to have access to such opportunities.
- > **Continue to invest in quality program models and ongoing staff development** to ensure that young people receive high-quality developmental opportunities. Special efforts should be made to increase the ability of youth workers to develop long-term, caring relationships with young people by integrating mentoring practices and concepts into staff training and programming.

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- > **Integrate family-centric approaches into service delivery models that traditionally focus primarily on youth.** For example, while serving a child in daycare, providers could determine the needs of the family and connect parents and caregivers to such resources as job training and assistance with tax preparation. Providers should also pay special attention to the needs of the many grandparents now raising children.
  
- > **Train the next generation of leaders by creating youth advisory boards or giving seats to young people on boards of directors.**
  
- > **Seek funding for evaluation from foundations and other funders,** then use the findings to improve service delivery and demonstrate impact.

# What Faith Leaders Can Do

**WHILE DIFFERENT FAITHS HAVE VARYING TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS, A DEEPLY ROOTED SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AND HELPING OTHERS IS FUNDAMENTAL TO THEM ALL. TO EXPAND THEIR SUPPORT FOR YOUTH, CONGREGATIONS OF FAITH CAN:**

- > **Identify the needs of young people in the congregation and connect them to supports in the community** so more children can receive the Five Promises.
- > **Inspire members to volunteer and connect them with opportunities to help others.** Congregations are an excellent resource, providing a pool of mentors and after-school tutors for young people.
- > **Use congregational buildings to provide safe places for children and youth during nonschool hours.**
- > **Serve as the moral voice of the community,** communicating the needs of young people to political and business leaders and mobilizing their support.

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# What Community Leaders Can Do

**IN EVERY COMMUNITY, RESOURCES EXIST TO HELP ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE. EVERY COMMUNITY SHOULD DEVELOP A FORMAL MECHANISM TO ENGAGE ALL SECTORS TO WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THEIR YOUTH. SPECIFICALLY, COMMUNITIES CAN:**

- > **Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for identifying and meeting the needs of children, youth and families.** This process should engage representatives from all sectors, especially youth themselves, and develop coordinated strategies to maximize resources for greater impact.<sup>xii</sup> The plan should address the needs of all youth, but especially those in disadvantaged situations, including those in the juvenile justice system, foster care system and youth who have dropped out of school.
- > **Launch an awareness campaign to raise the visibility of children's needs in the community** and the services available to meet them.
- > **Conduct a robust study on the presence/absence of the Five Promises.**
- > **Develop a structure, such as a youth advisory council, to involve young people in community decision-making.**

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# What Young People Can Do

**OUR NATION SIMPLY CANNOT SOLVE THE MYRIAD SOCIAL PROBLEMS YOUNG PEOPLE FACE WITHOUT THE COMMITMENT AND LEADERSHIP OF YOUTH THEMSELVES. YOUNG PEOPLE CAN:**

- > **Identify problems in their communities and design service-learning projects to solve them.** For opportunities, visit [www.servenet.org](http://www.servenet.org).
- > **Advocate.** Young people should communicate with public officials to ensure that the decisions they make address the needs of youth.
- > **Volunteer to mentor a younger child or serve as a peer counselor, and help fulfill the Five Promises for him or her.** In schools and communities without such opportunities, youth can work with adult allies to create them.
- > **Reach out to caring adults** who are already a part of their lives and engage them in an informal mentoring relationship.
- > **Spread the message of the importance of the Five Promises.** There is no more powerful messenger about the needs of young people than youth themselves.

#### THE 5 PROMISES:

CARING ADULTS  
SAFE PLACES  
HEALTHY START  
EFFECTIVE EDUCATION  
OPPORTUNITIES  
TO HELP OTHERS

# What Parents, Grandparents, Caregivers and Other Individuals Can Do

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH CAN BEST RECEIVE THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO SUCCEED WHEN PARENTS AND MANY OTHERS JOIN TOGETHER.** Here are several ways that parents and others can help young people succeed:


- > **Be a mentor.** For opportunities, visit MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership's Web site at: [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org) or Big Brothers Big Sisters of America's Web site at: [www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org](http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org).
- > **Ask younger children to name grown-ups they know and admire to make sure they have caring adults they can rely upon.**
- > **Know where children are and whom they are with when they are not in school,** and make sure they have a safe place to go. The hours after school are the most likely time for young people to get hurt or in trouble.<sup>xiii</sup>
- > **Make sure children have regular doctor and dentist visits, exercise regularly and eat three healthy meals a day.** It is important for children to know about healthy snack options and to learn simple food preparation skills.<sup>xiii</sup>
- > **Be involved in children's education.** Support them by recognizing hard work and improvement as much as achievement and good grades, and help them learn the importance of time management and good study skills.
- > **Teach children what it means to be a good member of the community.** Talk to youth about current events, volunteer in the community and encourage children to do the same.

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- > **Be an advocate.** Ask your school system about graduation rates. Push for a curriculum that is rigorous and relevant, preparing every child for college or post-secondary training for the world of work. Make sure there are enough places and meaningful activities in your community for every child's out-of-school time.
- > **Enroll youth in a wide variety of activities (social, academic, cultural and recreational) at school, church, or in the community.** Encourage them to take a leadership role in the activities they enjoy.
- > **Every time you see a child demonstrate a value like caring, honesty, respect, or responsibility, name that behavior and compliment him or her on demonstrating that value.** The process of building character takes time and requires many adult-child interactions.
- > **Show interest in a child's life by being an active listener.** Ask questions about his or her interests, activities, family and friends. Attend events in which the child is involved. Relationships that provide warmth, guidance and support are vital to promoting children's positive development.
- > **Help young people see the practical value of education.** Be a classroom volunteer lecturer to bring your business expertise to youth. If you have a business or workplace that will allow it, offer apprenticeship or internship opportunities. Encourage youth to explore their personal strengths, interests and hobbies, and how they can be used in different career fields.

For additional ideas on parenting, visit Search Institute's Web site for parents:  
[www.MVParents.com](http://www.MVParents.com).

For additional information on how you can help close the mentoring gap, see *The National Agenda for Action: How to Close the Mentoring Gap*. Available online at [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org).



There is much that can be done. Only our imagination and commitment limit us. But there is at least a minimum that *must* be done for our children, especially our most disadvantaged, to ensure they have every opportunity to realize their own potential.

**EVERY CHILD MUST  
HAVE EVERY PROMISE.**

## NOTES

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- ii Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2005*. Surveillance Summaries, June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No. SS-5), 10. Available online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/SS/SS5505.pdf>.
- iii U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2006). *The Condition of Education 2006* (NCES 2006-071). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 131 and 136. Available online at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006071.pdf>.
- iv Snyder, Howard N. and Melissa Sickmund (2006). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 22. Available online at: <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/nr2006/downloads/NR2006.pdf>.
- v Greene, Jay P. and Marcus Winters (2005). *Public High School Graduation and College-Readiness Rates: 1991-2002*. New York: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 7. Available online at: [http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/ewp\\_08.pdf](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/ewp_08.pdf).
- vi Snyder and Sickmund, 22.
- vii Edelman, Peter; Harry Holzer and Paul Offner (2006). *Reconnecting Disadvantaged Young Men*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 1.
- viii The *National Promises Study* is one of three studies that serve as the basis for *Every Child, Every Promise: Turning Failure into Action*.
- ix MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership (2006). *The National Agenda for Action: How to Close America's Mentoring Gap*. Washington, DC: MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 18. Available online at: <http://www.mentoring.org>.
- x DeNavas-Walt, Carmen; Bernadette D. Proctor and Cheryl Hill Lee (2006). *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005*. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-231. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 25. Available online at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p60-231.pdf>.
- xi For more information on these and other ways businesses can support young people, visit the Business Education Network's Web site at: <http://www.businesseducationnetwork.com>, or the Corporate Voices for Working Families' Web site at: [www.cvworkingfamilies.org](http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org).
- xii Business Education Network (2006). *Business-Education Partnerships in the United States: Committed to the Future*. Washington, DC: Business Civic Leadership Center, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 12.
- xiii For specific examples of ways businesses are supporting education, see Business Education Network (2006).
- xiv Tierney, Joseph, Jean Baldwin Grossman and Nancy Resch (2000). *Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures. Available online at: [http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/111\\_publication.pdf](http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/111_publication.pdf).
- xv The TAP 2015 (Tapping America's Potential) effort led by Business Roundtable and U.S. Chamber of Commerce provides an excellent example. The goal of TAP 2015 is to double the number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates with bachelor's degrees by 2015. For more information, visit <http://www.tap2015.org>.
- xvi Corporate Voices for Working Families (2005). *Business Impact of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion*. Washington, DC: Corporate Voices for Working Families. Available online at: <http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org>.

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- CARING ADULTS
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- xvii White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth (2003). *The White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth Final Report*. Washington, DC: White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, 30. Available online at: <http://www.ncfy.com/publications/disadvantaged/FinalReport.pdf>.
- xviii State Health Access Data Assistance Center and Urban Institute (2005). *Going Without: America's Uninsured Children*. Washington, DC: Covering Kids and Families/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 4. Available online at: <http://www.rwjf.org/files/newsroom/ckfresearchreportfinal.pdf>.
- xix Community health centers serve one out of seven low-income children. For more information, visit the National Association of Community Health Centers' Web site at: <http://www.nachc.com>.
- xx Introduced in the first session of the 109th Congress, H.R. 284 would make bullying prevention an allowable use of Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act funds.
- xxi For additional information on strategies to reconnect out-of-school youth, see Martin, Nancy and Samuel Halperin (2006). *Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-Of-School Youth*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum. Available online at: <http://www.aypf.org/publications/WhateverItTakes/WITfull.pdf>.
- xxii Additional information on asset development is available online through the Asset Building program at the New America Foundation at: <http://www.newamerica.net>. Additional information on tax policy is available online through the Tax Policy Center, a joint venture of the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution, at: <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org>. Additional information on a variety of strategies to advance family economic success is available online through the Annie E. Casey Foundation at: <http://www.aecf.org>.
- xxiii Additional information on issues related to workplace flexibility is available online through the Workforce and Family program at the New America Foundation at: <http://www.newamerica.net>; the Twiga Foundation at: [www.twigafoundation.org](http://www.twigafoundation.org); the Center for Law and Social Policy at: <http://www.clasp.org>; Workplace Flexibility 2010 at: <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/workplaceflexibility2010/index.cfm>; and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation at: <http://www.sloan.org>.
- xxiv MENTOR, 2006, available online at: <http://www.mentoring.org>.
- xxv All 50 governors have signed a compact committing to take steps toward a standard measurement of the high school graduation rate. For additional information on the National Governors Association's work to improve high school graduation, visit <http://www.nga.org>.
- xxvi For additional information, see Bridgeland, John M.; John J. Dilulio, Jr. and Karen Burke Morison (2006). *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises, 16. Available online at: <http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pdf>.
- xxvii For additional information, see Pinkus, Lindsay (2006). *Who's Counted? Who's Counting? Understanding High School Graduation Rates*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 27; and Losen, Daniel (2004). Graduation Rate Accountability Under the No Child Left Behind Act and the Disparate Impact on Students of Color in *Dropouts in America*. Edited by Gary Orfield. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 41-56.
- xxviii Dynarski, Mark (2004). Interpreting the Evidence from Recent Federal Evaluations of Dropout-Prevention Programs: The State of Scientific Research in *Dropouts in America*. Edited by Gary Orfield. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 265. Communities In Schools is an excellent example of a program that meets the holistic needs of children by coordinating and delivering a variety of services to students at school. For more information, visit Communities In Schools' Web site at: <http://www.cisnet.org>.
- xxix For additional information on strengthening data collection to improve student achievement, visit the Data Quality Campaign's Web site at: <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org>.

- xxx For additional information, see Bridgeland; Dilulio and Morison (2006), 15.
- xxxi The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has issued two reports highlighting the need for additional rigorous evaluation and research on dropout interventions and dissemination of effective practices (GAO, *No Child Left Behind Act: Education Could Do More to Help States Better Define Graduation Rates and Improve Knowledge about Intervention Strategies*. GAO-05-879. Washington, DC: September 20, 2005. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05879.pdf>; and GAO, *School Dropouts: Education Could Play a Stronger Role in Identifying and Disseminating Promising Prevention Strategies*. GAO-02-240. Washington, DC: February 1, 2002. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d02240.pdf>.) See also Dynarski, Mark (2004), 255-267.
- xxxi For more information on the connection between high school graduation requirements and college and workplace expectations, visit Achieve's Web site at: <http://www.achieve.org>.
- xxxi See GAO-05-879; GAO-02-240; Dynarski, Mark (2004); and Fashola, O.S. and R.E. Slavin (1998). Effective Dropout Prevention and College Attendance Programs for Students Placed At Risk. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, 3, 159-183.
- xxxi DeVoe, Jill; Katharin Peter; Margaret Noonan; Thomas Snyder and Katrina Baum (2005). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2005* (NCES 2006-001/NCJ210697). U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- xxxi For additional information on school safety plans, see Dwyer, K. and D. Osher (2000). *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide*. Washington, DC: U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, American Institutes for Research. Available online at: <http://cecp.air.org/guide/actionguide.asp>.
- xxxi For examples of effective violence prevention programs, visit the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence's Web site at: <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints>.
- xxxi National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002). *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*. Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer A. Gootman, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- xxxi For additional information on service-learning research and practice, visit <http://www.servicelearning.org>.
- xxxi The Foundation Center (2006). *Highlights of Foundation Yearbook*. New York: The Foundation Center, 1. Available online at: <http://www.foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/fy2006highlights.pdf>.
- xi National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002).
- xii One such model is the City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth, developed by the National League of Cities. For more information, visit [http://www.nlc.org/iyef/a\\_city\\_platform](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/a_city_platform).
- xiii Snyder and Sickmund, 34 and 85.
- xiii For helpful information on nutrition, visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Web site at: <http://www.nutrition.gov>.

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# 1 in 12

high school students has

## attempted suicide

Approximately  
1 in 6 American  
children between  
ages 6 and 19  
are overweight.

One-third of teens  
and 20% of younger  
children do not have  
quality relationships  
with their parents.

Nearly  
**1.6 million**  
12- to 19-year-olds are  
victims of  
violent crime

The America's Promise Alliance  
is grateful for State Farm's  
generous support of  
*Every Child, Every Promise:*  
*Turning Failure Into Action*



[www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)