



This is the first Community Action Network (CAN) FAQ document addressing the broad issue of Youth Development. Please see FAQs on Education, After School Care, Child and Youth Mental Health, and Early Education and Care, which all contribute to the picture of youth development. For the purposes of this document, "youth" are young people 10-19 years of age. All data included are the most current available.

Q. What is youth development?

Youth development is the progression by young people along a developmental continuum from early childhood to young adulthood. By the time they reach young adulthood, young people need the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be:

- Ready for higher education and learning;
- Ready for work and career advancement;
- Ready to lead healthy lives; and
- Ready for positive social and civic connections and engagement;

Desired outcomes for youth development

Learning

All youth progress successfully through school and graduate from high school, ready for postsecondary education or training.

Working

All youth have learned about careers related to their interests, have skills and attitudes needed for work, and have the opportunity to experience work-based learning and/or paid work during their teen years.

Thriving

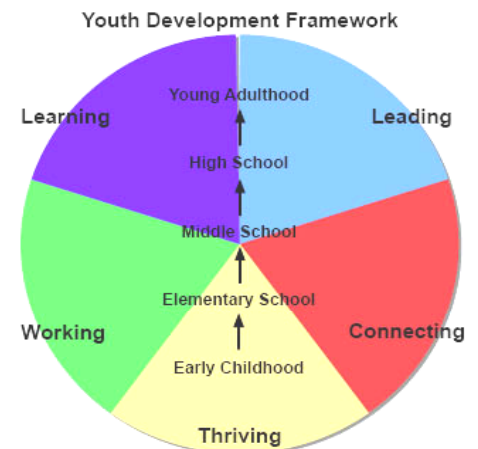
All youth are physically and mentally healthy, socially responsible (help themselves and others), and avoid violence, substance abuse, pregnancy, delinquency and other risk-compromising behaviors.

Connecting

All youth have a meaningful relationship with a supportive adult.

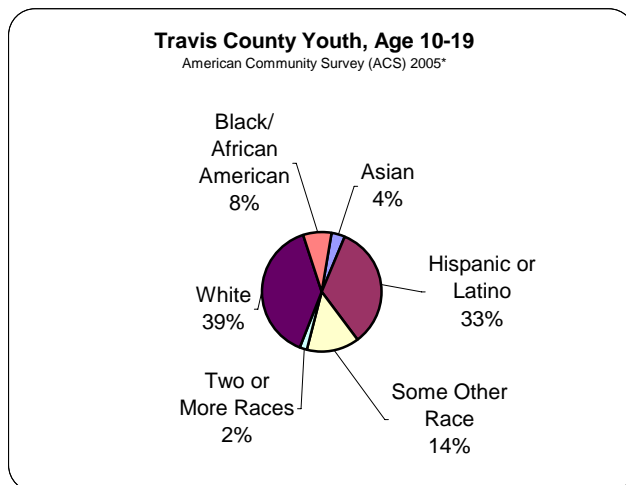
Leading

All youth are engaged in their communities and have opportunities to lead.



Q. Who are the youth in Travis County?

The Travis County youth population is growing more disadvantaged.



• By 2005, youth under age 18 had increased to 25% of the county's population, with 21% living below the poverty level up from 14% in 2000. (*U.S. Census 2000, American Communities Survey, 2005*)

• In the 2005-06 school year, more than 50% of Travis County K-12 public school students were considered economically disadvantaged, including more than 60% of AISD students, more than 75% of Del Valle students, and almost 70% of Manor students. (*Texas Education Agency website*)

*The ACS provided no information for *American Indian & Alaskan Native* and *Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander* categories. "Some other race" was a write-in category. Responses included a mix of information, some which could properly fall into other categories (e.g. some wrote in Mexican as a race, but did not check Hispanic/Latino).

There is hopeful news despite the challenges.

- As a whole, Austin students are performing well academically. For example, the average SAT score was 1513 out of a possible 2400 points, exceeding scores of their Texas counterparts on all three exam sections -- Reading, Math, and Writing. (*AISD Press Release: SATs, 2006*)
- Violent crimes committed by juveniles in Travis County have decreased by almost half over the last decade – from 208.4 per 100,000 in 1999 to 102.9 per 100,000 in 2005. (*Kids Count*)
- Young people are contributing to their communities. In 2002, 74% of young adults at the University of Texas stated that they performed volunteer service in the past academic year and 60% had made charitable donations (*RGK Volunteerism Survey*) and in 2003, more than 58% of young people between the ages of 12-17 in Texas had participated in community or volunteer work in the past 12 months. (*National Survey of Children's Health*)

Q. What does it mean to be “at risk”?

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) identifies “at risk” youth by factors that correlate with dropping out of school, such as: **lack of school success** (grades, test scores); **health and social support needs** (homeless, pregnant, parenting, or other home life issues); and **behavior** (referrals to alternative education or the criminal justice system).

Economically disadvantaged students have lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates across Central Texas. (*TEA Website, Region XIII*)

Trends show that individuals who do not achieve a

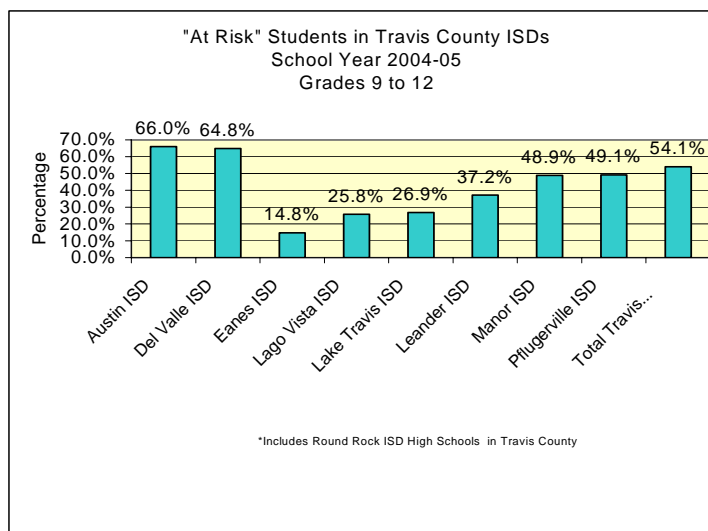
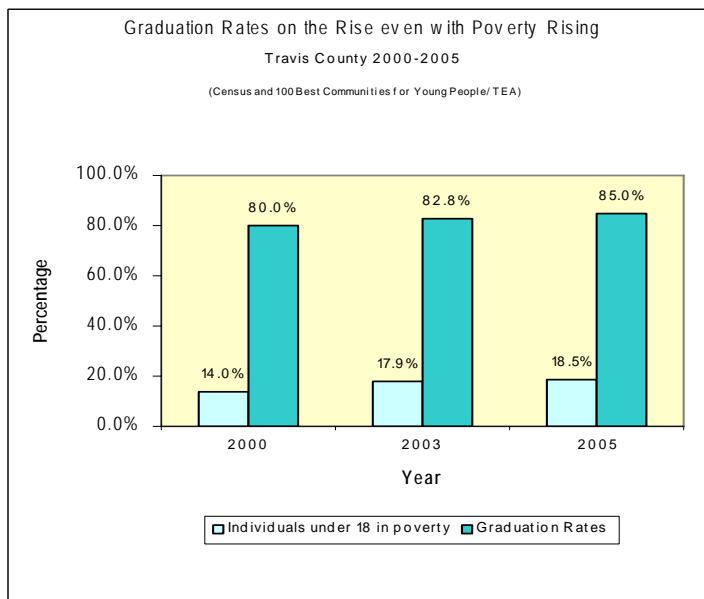
high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED) have lower rates of civic engagement and lower lifelong earning potential.

(*Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project 2006*)

Q. What challenges are youth facing?

Learning Youth face obstacles in progressing successfully through school to graduation and entry into college.

- **As students progress to higher grades, they have increasing difficulty succeeding in school.** In Travis County, only 66.9 % of 10th Grade students passed the TAKS Reading test in 2005, compared to 94.4% of 3rd graders who passed their TAKS Reading tests. Only 80.8% of youth expected to graduate in the class of 2004 actually graduated; another 4.1% received their GED. (*Kids Count*)
- **Perceptions of financial costs associated with higher education discourage students and families from applying.** In 2005, 70% of recent high school graduates surveyed for the High School Graduate Data Center Project applied for some sort of financial aid, and 59% completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Those not planning to attend college cited insufficient financial resources as the primary reason. Asian and Hispanic respondents reported difficulty understanding the financial aid process. (*High School Graduate Data Center Project*)



The chart above shows the percentage of at risk high school students, by district. The three districts with the lowest percentages of “at risk” students (Lake Travis, Eanes and Lago Vista) also have the three lowest dropout rates in Travis county.

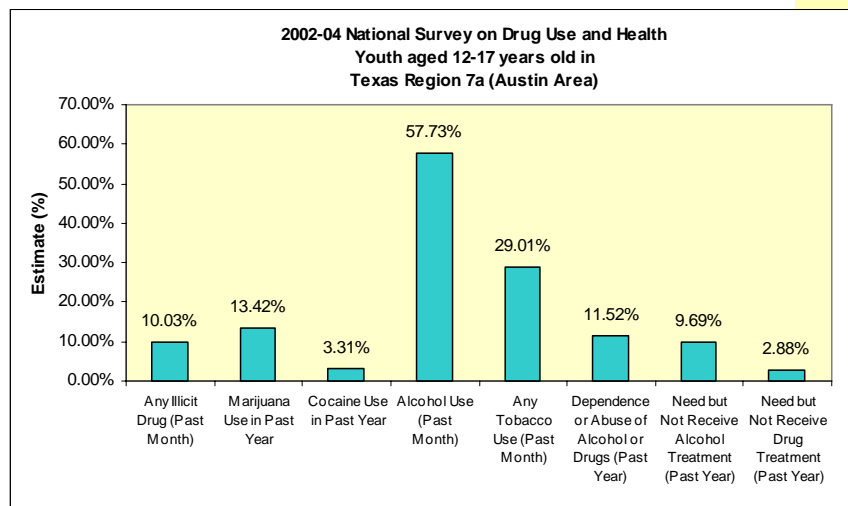
Facts and Questions About Youth Development

Working Opportunities for work and work-based learning, internships, professional guidance and job support increase youth preparation for work and career advancement after high school and postsecondary learning.

- **Youth view employment as a benefit, and securing employment as a challenge.** In focus groups conducted through the Ready by 21 Coalition (RB21) in Travis County, youth said that they needed jobs and help getting jobs (not just help writing resumes), and that it was frustrating that they “couldn’t get a job without work experience, but needed a job to get work experience.” (*RB21 Youth Focus Groups, 2004*) Of Travis County youth who responded to a 2005 survey, 67% said they had been employed at some time and 60% said they would be working “now” if they had a choice. (*RB21 Youth Survey, 2005*).
- Youth reported that parents and relatives (48%) or friends and acquaintances (45%) helped them get jobs, compared to school counselors (12%), teachers (13%), or career center staff (less than 1%). Sixteen percent said they received no help. (*RB21 Youth Survey, 2005*)
- Of youth ages 16-19 in Travis County, 30% of those in high school, 71% of those who graduated from high school, and 63% of those who did not graduate and were not in high school were currently working. (American Communities Survey, 2005). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, of students who eventually graduated from high school, more than half of high school freshmen and 75% of seniors held jobs during the year. (*National Survey for Children’s Health, 2003*)

Thriving Physical and mental health and safety affect the ability of youth to be successful in school, prepared for work, and able to connect well with others.

- Three out of four 16 to 24-year-old Texans have personally experienced dating violence or know someone who has. (*Texas Council on Family Violence*)
- Children in Travis County were confirmed victims of child abuse or neglect at the rate of 9.6 per 1000 in 2003. (*Child Well-Being Report Card for Austin-Travis County 2006*)
- In response to a 2003 survey of 420 runaway and homeless youth ages 16-20 years living in the Austin area, 32% reported that they had experienced abuse (sexual, emotional, physical, abandonment, neglect) and/or were pushed out of their home before the age of 17. (*UT School of Nursing and LifeWorks, 2003*)
- One-third of Texas school children are either overweight or obese, significantly higher than the Healthy People 2010 goal for children of 5%. Childhood obesity is correlated with early onset Type II (Adult) diabetes. Type II diabetes cases among Texans aged 0-20 are increasing in all racial/ethnic groups, and grew from 13,500 in 2000 to 15,200 in 2004, a 13% increase. (*CAN Health and Wellness FAQ- Aug 2004*)
- In 2005, only 43% of Texas children with current emotional, developmental, or behavioral problems received some type of mental health care in the past year. (*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*)
- In 2003, the teen pregnancy rate for 13-17 year olds in Travis County was 31.6 per 1000, and the teen birth rate was 24.1 per 1000. (*Texas Department of Health, 2003*)
- In 2005, 35% of chlamydia cases and 28% of gonorrhea cases in Texas were among young people ages 16-19. (*2005 HIV/STD Surveillance Report*)
- Of youth responding to the Ready by 21 survey who said they were sexually active, only 54% reported using any form of birth control. (*RB21 Youth Survey, 2005*)



Connecting Youth who are “disconnected” during transitional young adult years have significantly higher poverty and incarceration rates than young people who have one or more “connection” factors. (America’s Disconnected Youth, 1999)

- Ten percent of Travis County youth responding to a survey strongly disagreed with this statement: “There is at least one adult at my school whom I can go to if I have a problem.” (RB21 survey 2005)
- Between 2004 and 2005, the percentage of Austin ISD students who stated that student racial tension was a daily occurrence increased from 18% to 22%, and the percentage stating that gang activity was a daily occurrence increased from 10% to 18%. (AISD Student Substance Use and School Safety survey)
- On the 2004-05 AISD Student Climate Survey, over 75% of middle and high school students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Teachers at this school care about their students,” while almost 16% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed.
- Despite the decrease in violent crime, referrals from law enforcement, schools, and service providers for alleged offenses by youth rose 9% between fiscal years 2004-2005, from 5,550 to 6,077. (Travis County Juvenile Probation Department)

Leading Lack of opportunities for youth to experience leadership positions in their schools and neighborhoods means that young people are an underutilized community resource.

- Almost 36% of young people who participated in the RB21/YAG survey stated that they have NEVER been the one to plan activities for any group. (RB21/YAG survey 2005)
- Sixty percent of students responding to the Ready by 21 survey stated that they have NEVER made a decision that affected their school or community. (RB21/YAG survey 2005)
- There is no centralized way for youth to make input into decisions that affect them in Travis County.

What can I do to help?

- Urge community leaders, policy makers, and elected officials to pursue **systemic efforts** for youth development. “Siloed” and late response efforts are less effective and more expensive than preventative, coordinated programs and initiatives.
- Build on efforts that are already working. Challenge organizations to support **best practices** identified by respected organizations like the Search Institute www.search-institute.org/
- Listen to youth. Support a community **Youth Council** for youth voice and youth leadership. Encourage youth you know to take part in leadership opportunities with youth service organizations.
- Volunteer as a **mentor or tutor** with a youth service organization or at a school (See the specific youth service/support focus of organizations on the Members link at www.readyby21austin.org, or search www.austinpartners.org or www.handsoncentraltexas.org for volunteer opportunities)
- Engage in the **High School Redesign** process in your community. You can find out more about this process for the Austin Independent School District at: www.austinisd.org/inside/initiatives/redesign2004/

Who produced this document?

This FAQ was developed by the Ready by 21 Coalition for Austin/Travis County, which is sponsored by **WorkSource** and serves as the CAN’s Youth Issues planning body. Special assistance was provided by the Ready by 21 Steering Committee and Debbie Wise of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin, Katie Ryan of CommunitySync, Gloria Souhami of Travis County, and Laura Landsman. For more information, please visit www.readyby21austin.org or contact Bob Rutishauser, Chair, at (512) 597-7107 or Suzanne Hershey, Facilitator, at info@readyby21austin.org



This FAQ uses findings from the Ready by 21 Youth Survey, where youth contributed to survey design, dissemination, and data management, and Youth Focus Groups conducted by trained youth facilitators. The Coalition’s youth development framework and Ready by 21 “brand” are adapted from materials developed by the Forum for Youth Investment.



Additional Information

- To obtain a copy of this document or additional, current information regarding Youth, Education, After School Care, Children’s Mental Health, Early Education and Care or any other CAN report, go to www.caction.org. Copies available at CAN offices, 1111 W. 6th Street, Ste. B220, Austin, Texas, 78703, 512-414-8203
- Please let **CAN** know if and how you use this document.

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