

# FULFILLING IOWA'S PROMISE

Iowans benefit when all youth are engaged and contributing in their communities. Experiences and connections children and youth have growing up affect their success in school, in work, and in life.

## IOWA'S YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN • 2007 - 2010

*It's our belief that all young people should have the opportunity to be safe, healthy, successful and prepared for the future.*



**iowacollaboration  
foryouthdevelopment**

# VISION AND RESULTS ORIENTATION

Iowa is working through the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development and Iowa's Promise to ensure that all Iowa youth have the opportunity to be successful...in school, in a career, and in life.

Iowa's vision is for **All Iowa Youth to be Safe, Healthy, Successful and Prepared for Adulthood**. To communicate a set of measurable goals that reflects this vision, Iowa adopted a framework that articulates four shared results:

- All Youth have Safe and Supportive Families, Schools and Communities
- All Youth are Healthy and Socially Competent
- All Youth are Successful in School
- All Youth are Prepared for a Productive Adulthood

State agencies have worked with their regional and community partners to develop a strategic plan to achieve these results for Iowa's youth. This plan focuses on youth (defined as young people between the ages of 6 to 21) while Iowa's Community Empowerment initiative has developed a strategic plan for early childhood that addresses children from birth through age five.

Building on the lessons learned over the last several years and incorporating key principles of the Ready by 21™ Challenge, a youth development initiative designed by the Forum for Youth Investment, this plan links together efforts of multiple youth-serving agencies across systems, issues, age groups, and settings. The four *strategies for change* included in the plan are designed to improve the "way we do business" so that all youth, and especially the most vulnerable young people, have access to the services, opportunities and supports that they need to become engaged, productive citizens.

## INTEGRATED STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE RESULTS FOR IOWA YOUTH



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## Strategy 1: ALIGN POLICIES

**A coherent youth policy approach is essential to the most effective use of public resources.**

Over the years a wide array of children and youth policies and programs have been established and evolved into a myriad of funding streams, regulations, guidance and practice. Originating from a variety of federal and state legislative committees and administered by an even wider array of federal and state agencies, the logic of how all of these policies and programs fit together is often elusive.

We must make certain that public efforts to address children and youth issues are all “pulling in the same direction.” Aligning existing and new policies and programs to achieve shared results will ensure that public resources for youth are used more efficiently and effectively. Consistently tracking the contributions of initiatives and programs toward common indicators will enable policy makers and practitioners to make more informed decisions and direct resources to effective strategies.

**GOAL:** Align policies and coordinate resources and efforts to effectively address complex youth related issues and achieve shared results.

### **PRIORITY ACTION AREAS:**

- Take stock of young people’s progress and of our efforts to improve results.
- Foster collaborative relationships among youth-serving systems at the state and community levels and increase commitment to proactive individual and joint initiatives to achieve shared results.
- Develop joint strategies and share resources across systems to address vulnerable youth populations and high priority issues and ensure that every youth has the core resources necessary for success.
- Ensure that early childhood and youth systems are working together so that investments in early childhood are reinforced and maximized as children transition into school and adolescence.
- Ensure that youth and adult systems are working together to improve transitions from adolescence to adulthood.



# INTEGRATED STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE RESULTS FOR IOWA YOUTH

## Strategy 2: BUILD CAPACITY

Two decades of scientific studies and research have provided us with a wealth of new knowledge about what works in child and youth development. We know what factors place young people at risk and we know what experiences children and youth need to become healthy, successful, and productive citizens. Our task now is to consistently incorporate that knowledge into everyday practice, so that risks are reduced and positive outcomes are achieved.

Iowa is committed to improving the capacity of the state, communities, and child and youth serving systems to assess needs, identify resources, and support and implement high quality, research-based services.

Improving the knowledge, skills, and abilities of professional staff and volunteers will further ensure that children and youth have high quality experiences that lead to better results.

**Quality youth programs provide experiences and connections that young people need to become engaged, contributing citizens.**

**GOAL** – Build the capacity of state, regional, and local youth serving systems to improve their services and collective ability to achieve the shared results for Iowa’s youth.

### PRIORITY ACTION AREAS:

- Increase youth development knowledge and skills across youth-serving systems.
- Enhance the ability of state and local systems to effectively utilize data to identify needs, deploy resources, and track outcomes.
- Promote youth program quality and implementation of best practices by publicly-funded youth programs.
- Enhance digital communication tools and Web platforms to enhance networking opportunities and our capacity to broadly and efficiently share information and resources tailored to specific audiences.



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## Strategy 3: ENGAGE YOUTH

Youth not only represent future leaders, producers, and citizens, but they are an extremely valuable resource today. Thousands of Iowa youth volunteer their time and talents to state and community projects. Thousands more contribute economically through part-time employment. It is vitally important to cultivate young people's leadership potential. Not all learning and development takes place in the classroom. By providing young people with additional opportunities and supports, we give them the skills they need to fully develop as leaders and decision-makers.

**Youth engagement occurs when young people have the opportunity to not only serve their community, but to *transform* their community.**

We know that young people who have a say in and share responsibility for their schools, cities, and local organizations are invested in the future of their

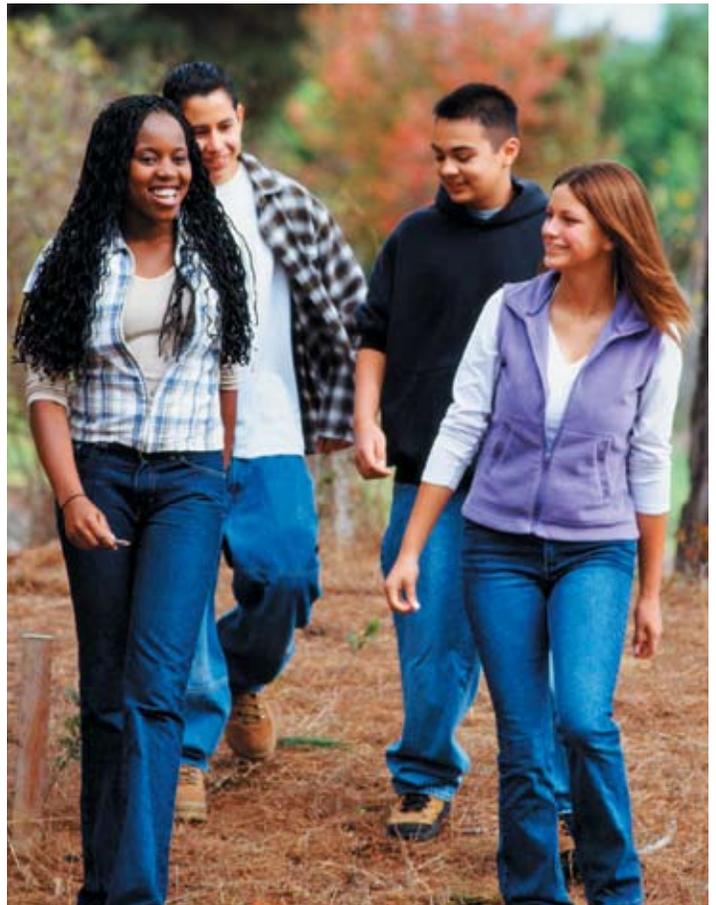
communities. Meaningful and developmentally needed leadership opportunities create and enhance young people's connections and contributions to the larger community. The skills young people develop through meaningful opportunities to be engaged can be used throughout their lives. Decision-making opportunities teach young people about communication, collaboration, critical thinking, community ownership, and democracy while building permanent connections to the people, communities, and organizations with which they are involved. By valuing full youth participation in addressing the issues that face our state and our communities, we recognize that youth are uniquely qualified to say what works for young people.

**GOAL** – Ensure that youth have a voice in decisions that affect them.

**Leadership is not simply taught . . . it is acquired through observation, practice, and participation.**

## PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

- Promote and support youth leadership development.
- Increase leadership opportunities for youth in state government.
- Encourage and support youth leadership opportunities in communities.



# INTEGRATED STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE RESULTS FOR IOWA YOUTH

## Strategy 4: MOBILIZE IOWANS

Providing all young people with consistent access to the experiences, connections, and supports they need requires the involvement and commitment of people throughout Iowa. By uniting and coordinating efforts toward a shared vision, engaging key champions, and broadening awareness of the importance of youth development, we can build the momentum necessary for sustained and effective change efforts.

Iowa was designated a **State of Promise** by America's Promise in 2004 and adopted the "America's Promise" message to serve as a call to action for Iowans to support youth development by fulfilling Five Promises to Children and Youth. **Iowa's Promise** unifies Iowa's early childhood and youth development initiatives, providing a consistent message from state government about our shared responsibility for Iowa's children and youth. At the same time, **Communities of Promise** are coordinating local efforts to ensure that the connections and experiences young people need to succeed are available throughout Iowa.

### FIVE PROMISES

Caring Adults  
Safe Places  
Healthy Start  
Effective Education  
Opportunities to Help Others

**GOAL:** Mobilize Iowans to increase community demand for more and better supports and opportunities for youth.

### PRIORITY ACTION AREAS:

- Engage new stakeholders and institutionalize a state-level youth development infrastructure.
- Market a unified youth development vision by incorporating Iowa's Promise language in individual and joint communications.
- Support communities' efforts to build awareness, support families, and mobilize local partners to fulfill Iowa's Promise.
- Explore opportunities to partner with the private sector in employing and supporting youth, especially vulnerable youth, to meet current and future workforce needs.

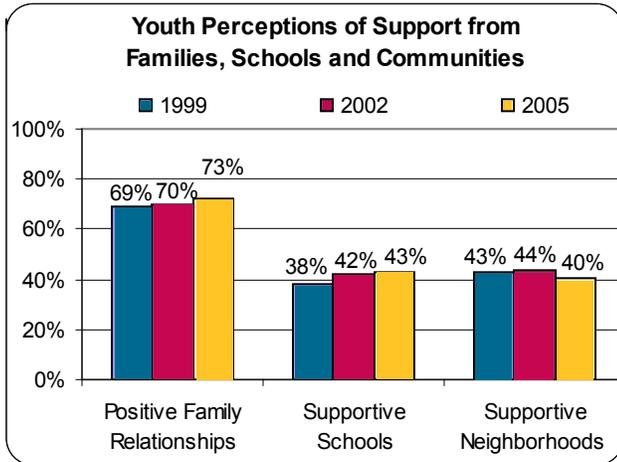


# HOW ARE WE DOING?

Collecting and analyzing relevant data, understanding the story behind the numbers, and continuing to track progress toward results are essential to informed decision-making. Leading youth development indicators can be tracked at the state and local levels and provide quantifiable markers of progress toward the shared results. The following are examples of the key indicators that are being monitored to help guide policy and program decisions. In-depth data analysis is underway to dig beneath the surface of these indicators and more fully understand trends among youth. For more information, see [www.icyd.org](http://www.icyd.org).

## SAFE & SUPPORTED

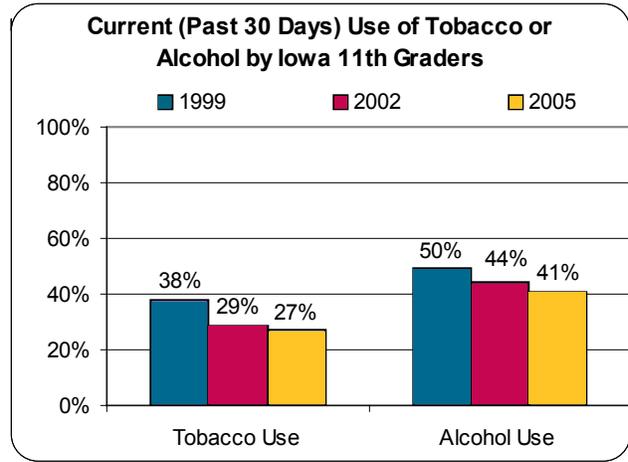
Youth need more support from the people around them.



Source: Iowa Youth Survey

## HEALTHY

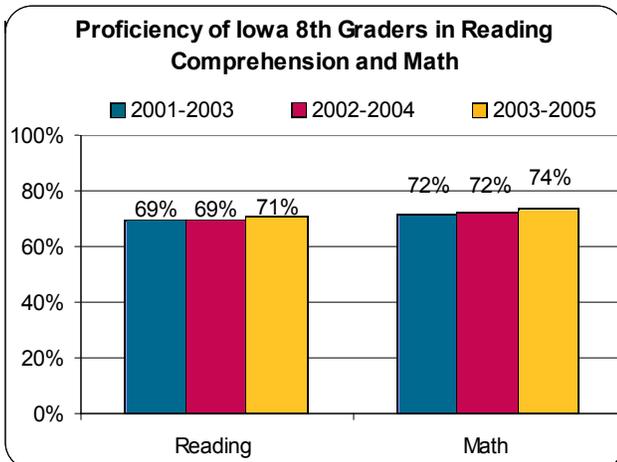
Youth are leading healthier lives.



Source: Iowa Youth Survey

## SUCCESSFUL

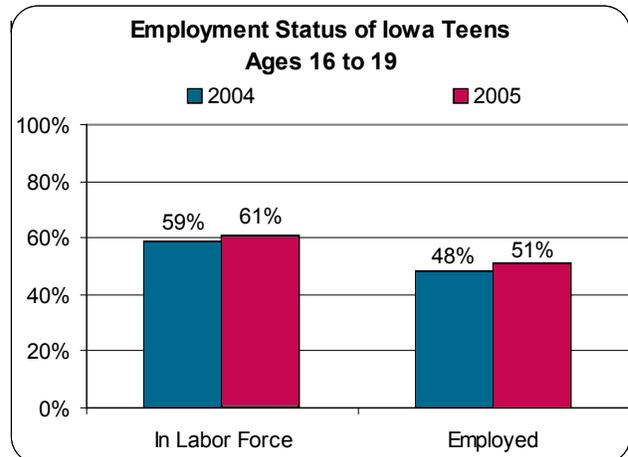
Students are doing better in school.



Source: Iowa Condition of Education Report

## PREPARED

More young people are seeking and getting work experience.



Source: US Census, American Fact Finder  
 Note: 'In Labor Force' refers to those youth currently either employed or actively seeking employment

**WHILE PROGRESS IS BEING MADE,  
THERE IS MORE WORK TO BE DONE.**

# IOWA'S PROMISE

Building from America's Promise—The Alliance for Youth, Iowa's Promise is a mechanism to bring together people and resources to increase opportunities and supports for young people. The Five Promises represent the fundamental resources that all children and youth need.

## The Five Promises are:

1. *Caring adults.*
2. *Safe places* and constructive use of time.
3. *Healthy start* and healthy development.
4. *Effective education* for marketable skills and lifelong learning.
5. *Opportunities to make a difference* through helping others.

The Promises provide a *call to action* for everyone to fulfill the promises to youth. Children need all five of the promises and the more they have, the better off they are. Iowa's Promise calls upon all Iowans to make commitments to reach more children and youth with all five promises.

Coordinated by the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, Iowa's Promise leaders are working to engage state level partners from the private sector and are supporting Promise efforts in communities across Iowa. In 2006, the Iowa Legislature appropriated \$150,000 to support Iowa's Promise, enabling ICVS to hire a full-time coordinator for the effort. See [www.iowaspromise.org](http://www.iowaspromise.org) for more information.

## IOWA COLLABORATION FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) is a non-statutory network of state agencies committed to improving results among Iowa's youth through the adoption and application of positive youth development principles and practices at the state and local levels. Since its formation in 1999, ICYD has participated in a variety of state and national youth initiatives and has been recognized nationally for its work in coordinating youth development efforts at the state level. In partnership with the Forum for Youth Investment, ICYD has adopted several key principles of the Ready by 21™ youth development initiative. ICYD has leveraged more than

\$4.5 million in new federal and private funding to support youth development in Iowa, and it continues to serve as a multi-system forum for the improvement and coordination of state youth policy and programs.

Agencies within ten state departments representing all the major public systems that address the needs of the more than 625,000 youth and young adults (ages 6 to 21) in Iowa, actively participate in the Collaboration. A policy-level Steering Committee of agency administrators and a work group of state program managers comprise the core collaborative team.

See [www.icyd.org](http://www.icyd.org) for more information.



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### PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCIES

Iowa Department of Education • Iowa Department of Human Services • Iowa Department of Public Health  
Iowa Workforce Development • Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning  
Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy • Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service  
Iowa State University Cooperative Extension, 4-H Youth Development • Iowa Vocational Rehabilitative Services  
Iowa Department of Management, Office of Empowerment • Iowa Child Advocacy Board