

At-Risk Youth Prevention Survey HIGHLIGHTS – West Virginia Child Care Association

**Preliminary Analysis and Highlights Provided by
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Presented at the WVCCA 2010 Annual Conference
Waterfront Hotel, Morgantown, WV**

This survey was completed by 440 child service professionals across the state of West Virginia.

Risk factors reported by **over 50%** of respondents (that they and their organization deal with on a regular basis):

- Learning, emotional, or behavioral problems = 76.8%
- Abuse and neglect = 74.5%
- Substance abuse = 72.7%
- Poverty = 72.7%
- Poor educational and employment options = 58.9%
- Peer pressure = 55.5%

96% of respondents **think at-risk youth behaviors could be prevented**, for the most part, with intervention prior to negative behaviors manifesting.

Respondents report the **biggest obstacles facing children in WV today** are:

- **For ages birth – 3**
 - Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 43%
 - Poverty = 25.9%
- **For ages 4-10**
 - Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 41.6%
 - Poverty = 25.7%
- **For ages 11-16**
 - Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 30.0%
 - Poverty = 16.4%
- **For ages 17-21**
 - Youth substance abuse/mental health issues = 37.3%
 - Lack of employment opportunities for youth = 19.5%

Respondents believe **parents** (85.2%) and **teachers** (70.5%) are the **most important people to train** to respond to high risk behavior.

Services available in their community reported by **over 50%** of respondents include:

- Counseling services = 78.6%
- Mental health treatment services = 75.7%
- Drug and alcohol treatment services = 61.6%
- Faith based services = 60.9%
- DARE = 54.3%

76% of respondents **would like to see programs/services that are not now available** to youth and their families developed in their community.

Most respondents (63.5%) report they would **like community and business leaders to become more involved** in preventing at-risk behavior.

The two top reported **strategies for agencies in communities to work together** in a more cohesive unit to better prevent at-risk youth behavior include:

- Coordinate prevention programs = 68.9%
- Sharing information = 63%

Most respondents reported **the majority of their and their organization's time is spent addressing at-risk behavior after it manifests** (50%) as compared to efforts to prevent to at-risk behavior (19%) or both equally (31%).

57% of respondents **report receiving NO professional training in prevention** of at-risk youth behavior.

The majority of respondents (56%) report that Universal prevention - which focuses on the entire population at risk and the identification of those conditions (personal, social, environmental) that promote at-risk behavior – **is the most lacking type of prevention** in their community (as compared to indicated prevention - which targets high-risk individuals who are exhibiting beginning symptoms or signs of the problem behavior (23.6%) – and selective prevention -which targets those individuals who have been identified at being at greater risk of becoming delinquent (20%).

Top ways respondents report stakeholders could be more responsive to preventing at-risk behavior include:

- **For parents**
 - Actively communicating with children = 73.6%
 - Being clear and consistent with discipline = 72.7%
- **For community and business leaders**
 - Establishing school-community partnerships = 64.1%
- **For schools**
 - Training school staff in all aspects of prevention of at-risk behavior = 59.8%
 - Providing more educational support (tutoring, assessment, remedial) = 47.5%
- **For social service agencies**
 - Implementing, evaluating, and revising a comprehensive prevention plan = 66.4%
 - Providing educational/training programs = 58.9%
 - Identifying and measuring the at-risk behavior problem in the community = 48.4%
- **For the courts**
 - Better support of youth who experience high family conflict, domestic violence in the home and divorce = 44.8%
 - Stricter punishments for parent/guardians who engage in behavior that increases the likelihood of their children being at-risk for future negative behavior = 43%
 - Enhancing access to safe and appropriate prevention and treatment services for youth and their families = 42.5%
- **For elected officials**
 - Building collaboration between and among federal, state and local agencies to pool resources and maximize use of effective approaches to the prevention of at-risk youth behavior = 297, 67.5%

Respondents report that the **internet** (55.9%) and **school-based outreach** (53.2%) are the **best ways to reach the greatest number of youth** with information about solutions to risk behavior issues.

Respondents report that **social skills and life skills training** (52%) and **positive youth development activities** (50.7%) are the programs that would be **most beneficial in preventing at-risk youth behavior**.