

# Dreams Deferred...

Reconnecting Youth to School, Work and Community

*What happens  
to a dream deferred?*

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore –  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over –  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

*Harlem* by Langston Hughes



MARCH 2013

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*“Getting from 16 to 24 can feel like a lifetime. All of us can remember back to our own teen years and many of us have watched our own children navigate the transition from teen to adult. How successfully we finish high school, go on to a promising first job or higher education and delay starting a family, how well we avoid the wrong turns and mistakes so easily made, can shape our lives for years to come.*

*Many young people may need a second or third chance to get it right. Otherwise, they run the risk of becoming “disconnected”-- from school, work, or other positive activities.”*

**Introduction to *Second Chances: Connecting Youth to School, Work and Community***

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Young adults (specifically ages 16 -24) who lack support in education, employment, housing and other basic necessities will find it difficult to make the transition to adulthood. Using *Measure for America’s* estimate that 14.7% of the youth population are affected, 15,000 young people are or are at risk of becoming disconnected in Westchester County. The cost in both dollars and opportunity lost is too great for us to ignore these young people. A recent study estimates the tax burden for each disconnected youth aged 16-24 at \$13,900 annually and a lifetime total lump sum burden of \$258,240. (Belfied, Levin, & Rosen, 2012) If youth remain disconnected, we will all bear the burden of a weaker economy, a smaller tax base, and higher expenditures on public benefits. (Treschan & Molner, 2008)

Paths to disconnection are varied, but certain themes can be discerned. Youth living without social, emotional and financial resources suffer greater consequences when they don’t “get it right” and have fewer opportunities to reach maturity and economic self sufficiency.

### **Our findings...**

- A disproportionate number of youth who are disengaged with school and eventually drop out are either members of ethnic and racial minority groups, young women who become pregnant before graduating, or those living in poverty.
- Entering the labor market is not only a rite of passage, but is one of the most significant role transitions of young adulthood. It provides income, offers training opportunities and contributes to skill acquisition. Youth who miss out on early work experience are more likely to endure later unemployment and less likely to achieve higher levels of career attainment. (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012)

- Research has shown within a year from release from the juvenile justice system only 30% of delinquent youth are in school, employed or have access to needed services. (Jim Casey Youth Opportunity, 2011)
- Youth and young adults who have severe and persistent mental illness confront functional impairments that make it harder to engage in daily life activities.
- Lack of family support, limited skills, learning disabilities and health and emotional problems result in a high number of foster youth becoming disconnected after they age out of foster care.
- Young people not connected to family, peers or community are often marginalized by those around them, which can lead to disconnection – emotionally and sometimes literally, as in the case of homelessness.

Best practices suggest that: 1) early and preventive measures to identify those at risk and avoid disconnection; 2) family involvement and supports; 3) youth involved in their own decision making; and 4) stable and consistent adult role models, are all crucial to engage young people in school, work and community. In Westchester County there is a robust environment of systems and programs in place to prevent youth from becoming disconnected and to improve outcomes for those who have become disconnected. But the various systems (for example, k-12 school systems, child welfare, and juvenile justice) often have conflicting priorities, are too limiting in their targeted populations and lack data to validate success. Despite cross-system initiatives, programs and funding remain fragmented. Too many road blocks are in place for youth and young adults to access the help they need to reengage. Finally, leadership across sectors is needed to develop tenable solutions.

## Summary of Recommendations:

### Immediate Solutions:

1. Fully replicate the Yonkers truancy/absenteeism model in Westchester's other major city school districts and offer County support
2. Enhance County, State and Federal youth employment programs
3. Raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18
4. Expand Medicaid to 26 for those aging out of foster care and those with serious mental illness
5. Engage young people in planning and decision making

### Long term solutions:

1. Reduce exclusionary/disciplinary and suspension practices in school and encourage restorative practices
2. Improve timely transitional supports for those aging out of foster care, coming out of the juvenile justice system and graduating from special education
3. Increase minimum wage
4. Enhance cross systems collaboration
5. Support the Dream Act

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## ***DREAMS DEFERRED...***

### ***RECONNECTING YOUTH TO SCHOOL, WORK AND COMMUNITY***

*Meet Charles\*, a 20 year old young man...*

- *He had participated in a Teen Drop-In Center*
- *Had been a junior counselor at local day camp for one season*
- *Had graduated from High School, went on to Westchester Community College*
- *Had a part time job at White Plains Hospital*
- *“Got distracted” around 19 years old, “money not coming in fast enough”*
- *Began hanging out with the wrong crowd, not using drugs but wanted “fast money”*
- *Became part of a group that had not graduated from high school*
- *Lost his job at White Plains Hospital*
- *Got arrested with a Class D Felony for passing counterfeit bills locally*

*... Currently: Charles is believed to have been released on bail.*

*\*Name has been changed*



## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Successful transition from childhood to adulthood is not guaranteed, and acquiring the necessary life skills can be challenging, even for children fortunate enough to grow up in supportive environments. For various reasons, some young people do not succeed in this transition and instead become “disconnected youth,” young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not engaged in school, work or other age appropriate activities within the community. They are at risk of having poor health outcomes, becoming permanently disengaged from the labor market, and being unable to contribute to our economy and community. It is incumbent upon all of us to determine who these youth are, find ways of reconnecting them, and learn how to prevent disconnection in the first place so that resources and human potential can be maximized. This report will explore the reasons for disconnection, describe Westchester’s disconnected youth, identify key best-practice principles to address the issues confronting this population, and present recommendations.

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## II. BACKGROUND

The impetus for Westchester Children’s Association’s (WCA) investigation into disconnected youth arose from prior work on youth aging out of foster care.

In 2003, Westchester Children’s Association conducted a study of teens in foster care to understand the services and supports they need to optimize their life chances. Based on this study, which included a review of successful approaches throughout the country for youth aging out of foster care, WCA issued a report calling for Westchester County to dramatically improve the services and supports it offered to young people in foster care. Two years later, the County Department of Social Services initiated a program called Pathways to Adulthood (PAD), which included many of the elements recommended by WCA, and contracted with Children’s Village to implement the program. A PAD Advisory Group was formed, comprising representatives from Westchester County Department of Social Services, voluntary foster care agencies, other service providers and advocates. Co-chaired by WCA, the Advisory Group represented a unique collaboration among public and private stakeholders to improve preparation for adulthood for this vulnerable group of teens.

Through several years of work with the PAD Advisory Group, it became clear that many of the challenges facing youth in foster care are shared by a much wider group of young people who may come to the attention of another system or of no system at all. All of these young people share the experience of being “disconnected” from normative developmental activities or milestones. WCA decided that, while we would continue to advocate for the needs of teens in foster care, we should broaden our work to include the needs of this larger group of “disconnected” youth.

In November 2009, WCA convened an initial meeting of non-governmental stakeholders to assess interest in forming a group to collaborate on improving outcomes for disconnected youth in Westchester. Representatives from 14 organizations and agencies attended the meeting and voiced great concern about this population. At that time our broad definition included young people 16-24, who were not engaged in normative, age appropriate activities, and who lacked support. These included youth who are high school dropouts, under educated, unemployed, teen parents, aging out of foster care, incarcerated, gang involved youth, or homeless.

### YOUTH VOICES

“I was just like no boundaries. I knew where I wanted to go. I just didn’t know the right path to take to get there.”



“No matter what the consequence was, whether it was a negative one or a positive one, I would just be doing it.”

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Participants from the initial stakeholder meeting identified several common areas in which young people often need help in order to make healthy transitions to adulthood. Missing supports in these areas can contribute to young people becoming disconnected including ....

- **Education:** School is often where disconnection begins. School services may be lacking or cognitive and/or emotional difficulties may interfere with student’s ability to engage and succeed in school. Poor attendance and performance in middle grades is often a harbinger of dropping out before graduation.
- **Housing:** If young people are not living in stable family situations, safe housing becomes a major barrier to their own stability. Lack of affordable housing for both families and young adults and lack of adequately supported transitional programs for young people are barriers to youth’s ability to successfully make the transition to adulthood.
- **Employment:** Even in good economic times, it is difficult for young people to find work that allows self-sufficiency. Engaging teens and young adults in “long term thinking” is a challenge; they need a lot of support to see the value of such thinking, which would enable them to participate in unpaid or low-paid training in order to get a better job later on.
- **Adult support:** Several participants mentioned the importance of strong relationships with adults, whether family members or mentors. Trusted adults can offer youth a sounding board and guidance about a variety of issues such as interpersonal relationships and jobs.
- **Fragmentation of systems:** Professionals working with young people are often unfamiliar with the many resources available in systems other than their own. A number of participants mentioned that they would like to see easier access to cross-systems resources.
- **Mental health services for teens:** Services are not readily available, and it is difficult to connect teens with counseling or other traditional mental health resources.



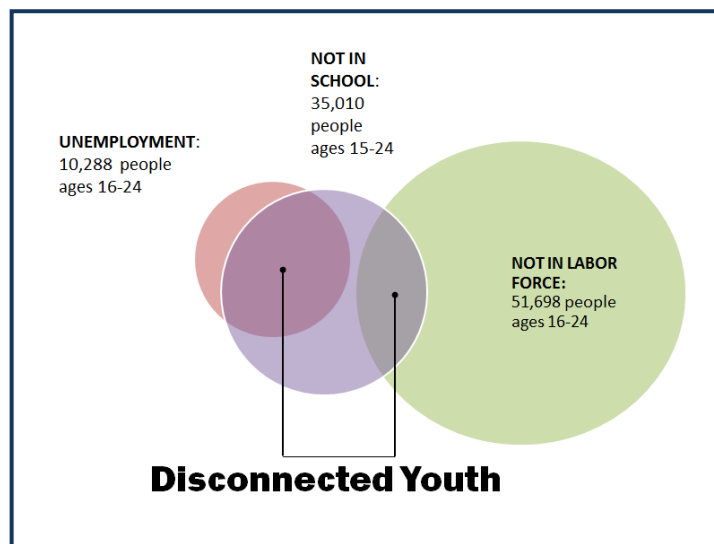
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### III. WHO ARE WESTCHESTER’S DISCONNECTED YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS?

According to the 2010 American Community Survey there are 105,271 youth aged 16-24 in Westchester County, representing 12.5% of the population. There are 65,588 young people in the traditional high school age range of 15 – 19. There are 52,595 young adults ages 20 -24. Currently, there are 11,622 young adults 16-24 living in poverty.

As of 2012, 10,288 Westchester young people ages 16 to 24 were unemployed. (US Census, 2010b) This means they are not in school, and they are actively looking for a job. But there are many others who aren’t in school, and who have given up on finding a job. Those who have given up on finding a job are not counted as unemployed nor are they counted as a member of “the labor force”. There are approximately 51,698 young people not in the labor force in Westchester. (US Census, 2010b) At the same time, 35,010 people ages 15 – 24 are not enrolled in school. (US Census, 2010a) It is the intersection of these populations that represent disconnected youth (as shown in diagram below).



It is not possible to calculate the actual number of disconnected youth. Using a national estimate of 17% (Bridgeland & Milano, 2012) there are an estimated 18,000 young people who are disconnected in Westchester. A more conservative national estimate of 1 in 7 or 14.7% estimate used in a recent report by *Measure for America* yields an estimated 15,038 disconnected young people in our county. Nationally, African-Americans have the highest rate of youth disconnection at 22.5% and Latinos have the second-highest national youth disconnection rate, at 18.5%. (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012)

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## IV. METHODS

WCA used several approaches and activities to learn about disconnected youth, across the United States and in Westchester County. We looked at reasons for disconnection, the services available, best practices and model programs.

The Research and Advocacy Committee of WCA began its investigation in the fall of 2010 with a **survey** of service providers working with disconnected youth. Eleven of seventeen youth serving agencies sampled, responded to the survey. (see Appendix A for survey questions and summary of findings)

The committee also conducted an extensive **literature review** searching for best practices and evidenced-based models to reengage young people to school, work and community. WCA's Director of Data gathered and **analyzed the available data** to give us a better sense of the disconnected population in Westchester. In 2012, WCA produced the video, *Second Chances* – which captured the **personal stories** of Westchester's disconnected youth and the adults who helped them successfully reengage. Finally the Research and Advocacy Committee **conducted numerous interviews** and **collected narratives** from various community stakeholders to further verify our information and augment the research with “true life stories”. Community members' words and thoughts are sprinkled throughout the report. All of the above activities have allowed us to compare and contrast research and findings with the front line, allowing us in the end to feel confident in our report and recommendations.

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## V. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

### YOUTH VOICES

“It’s all about the company you are around. So if you see an older person that you look up to like a brother or a cousin or a brother’s friend doing it...you’re going to want to do the same thing.”



David, 19

### ONE YEAR LATER

David is working full-time. Has been accepted to college and will be attending school starting in Fall 2013.

Research, as well as experience, indicates that the paths to disconnection are varied, but that certain common elements can be discerned. In an effort to identify the predictors of unemployment in the transition to adulthood, the term “capital” is used to emphasize that people possess different amounts of assets expressed in terms of resources, skills, connections and personal styles. (Caspi, Moffitt, Wright, & Silva, 1998) In their research, Caspi et al. examine human capital, social capital and personal capital. Human capital refers to the resources, qualifications, skills, and knowledge that are available to and acquired by an individual to maximize their employment potential; social capital refers to social relationships that provide access and control over various types of resources; and personal capital refers to behavioral characteristics and resources that affect both the motivation and capacity to work. (Caspi et al.) It is emphasized that personal, family, and social characteristics shape labor force outcomes long before youth enter the labor force.

The lack of these assets may also affect disconnection in areas beyond employment. Youth who become disconnected either lack these human, social and/or personal resources or have limited access to them. Youth who have poor reading skills, lack high school credentials, have low IQ’s, lack parental resources, live with family conflict, or exhibit anti-social behaviors are at increased risk for becoming disconnected. These youth and young adults may also be involved with the child welfare, foster care and/or juvenile justice/criminal systems or struggle with mental health, alcohol and substance abuse. In addition, some youth and young adults drop out of school due to teen pregnancy, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth may be rejected by family and community.

Researchers have identified family poverty, parental unemployment and low education levels, single-parent and step-parent family constellations as factors contributing to higher risk of becoming disconnected. (Hair, Moore, Ling, McPhee-Baker, & Brown, 2009) This is not to say that youth from middle class or affluent families cannot become disconnected. The difference is that youth living without social, emotional, and financial resources suffer greater consequences when they don’t “get it right” and have fewer opportunities to reach maturity and economic self sufficiency than those who have financial, social and emotional resources. Youth from all socio-economic backgrounds and racial/ethnic groups may stumble or take divergent paths to reach maturity. The consequence for youth living in poverty is that they come to the attention of public systems, while their counterparts have the luxury of remaining out of the public eye.

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Added to these individual and family factors is the recent economic recession that has led to a high unemployment rate and limited opportunities for young people to enter the job market. Youth with limited resources struggle even more to find an entrance to work in difficult economic times. According to the *New York Times*, only one in six in the young generation is working full-time and three out of five are living with their families or other relatives. (Rampell, 2012)

Even for youth with many risk factors, there are “protective” factors that may mitigate their risk. Youth who participate in job searches, job training, or school-to-work programs are less likely to become disconnected. Involvement with and support from adults, and engagement in structured programs can help youth living in poverty from becoming disconnected. (Hair et al.) In addition, researchers refer to youth who are “resilient” in the face of adverse conditions as being able to have positive outcomes. Youth who are resilient “take an active approach to solving problems, perceive even negative experiences constructively, have an ability to gain positive attention from others, and tend to draw on their faith to maintain a positive outlook on life.” (Hair et al.) Youth who are able to be resilient in spite of trauma, poverty, and/or stress usually have support of caring parents, other extended family members, mentors, youth leaders or members of their church. (Hair et al.)

## COMMUNITY VOICES

“Many of the kids have psychiatric, emotional, drug, and parental issues. Many, though in school, have few credits. Many of them do not have any positive role models.”

-Probation Supervisor

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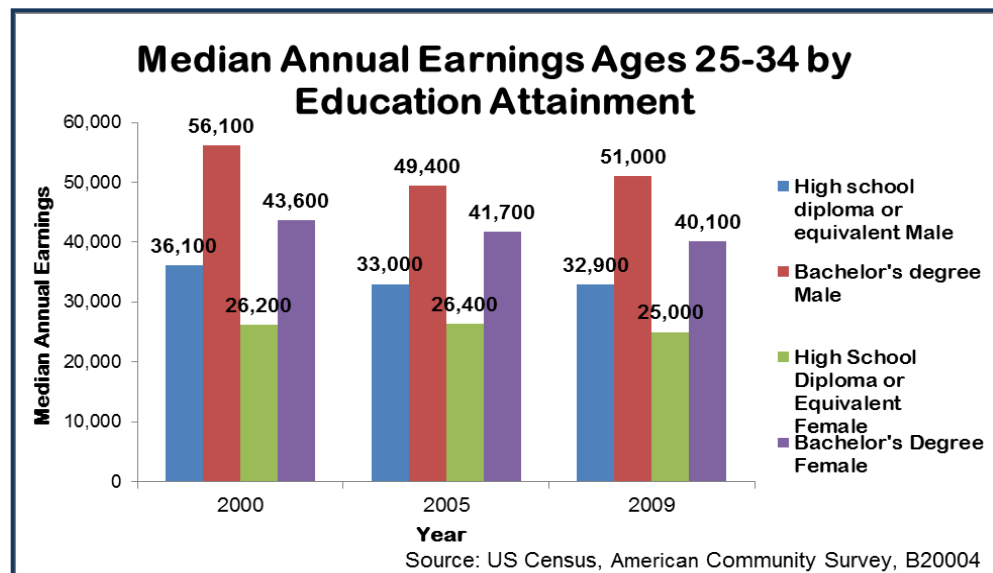
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## VI. Factors that Can Lead to Disconnection

To gain a better understanding of who the youth and young adults are who become disconnected, we looked at specific areas below:

### EDUCATION

High school students drop out of school for a variety of reasons. They may struggle with academic tasks because of lack of proficiency in English, inadequate preparation in early grades, or learning disabilities. They may become disengaged because of uninspiring teachers, lack of parental involvement, a chaotic or violent school setting, a poor fit between the school environment and the student, or a sense that there is little connection between finishing high school and securing fulfilling employment. They may drop out because of health issues, homelessness, the need to find employment to help support their families, or because they are pregnant or parenting.



Dropping out of high school is a process whereby students slowly disengage, academically and socially. (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morrison, 2006) Absenteeism from classes or school, deteriorating grades, retention issues, and lack of involvement in school activities are an indication of becoming disengaged from education. Chronic truants in middle school are more likely to do poorly in school, fail to earn high school credits, and drop out before graduating high school. (Betrand, 2009) When young people fail in school, it may be as a result of their own doing, but it may also result from trauma, lack of guidance, or a failure of the school system to identify a disability at a younger age. A student who is continually suspended for behavior could be manifesting a disability and therefore should warrant a review by a Committee on Special Education (“CSE”) and creation of an Individualized Education Plan (“IEP”) rather than being punished. (Student Advocacy Attorney, personal communication, January 2013)

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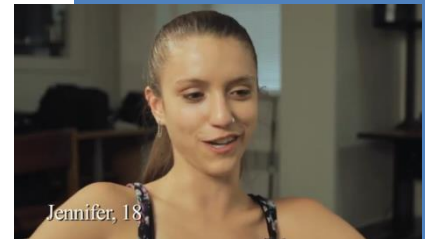
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A disproportionate number of youth who are disengaged with school and eventually drop out are either members of ethnic and racial minority groups, young women who become pregnant before graduating, or those living in poverty. Often, they lack the support or access to resources they need which results in their disconnection from school. Additionally, loss of school support staff, elevated public awareness and perceptions of violence have increased schools' reliance on suspensions, zero tolerance and other exclusionary discipline policies. Zero tolerance and the use of law enforcement to address minor disciplinary problems at school leads to a rise in the numbers of young people becoming involved in the juvenile justice system, which ultimately hinders their academic attainment. (Toldson, 2011)

- Of the 11,300 Westchester students who started high school in 2007, **486** had dropped out by 2011, the year they were expected to graduate. Additionally, of the 11,342 kids who started high school in 2005, **814** had dropped out by 2011, the year they would have graduated if it took them 6 years to graduate. (New York State Education Department, 2012a)
- In 2011, only **46.7%** of Westchester County high school graduates were adequately prepared for college (New York State Education Department, 2012a)
- In 2011, the GED pass rate for New York State was only **59.5%**, the third lowest pass rate in the country. The national average pass rate for 2011 was **72.2%**. (GED Testing Service, 2011) Starting in 2014, new GED test requirements will come into effect in New York State.
- In 2010, **2,648** of 43,842 high school students were suspended from high school in Westchester County (New York State Education Department, 2012b)

## YOUTH VOICES

“I really didn’t think I was going anywhere. I was just like I’m never going to graduate. I am never going to get out of here, I am probably going to wind up dropping out.”



“[at BOCES] you get more one on one time with the teachers...and then there was other people that were like you there”

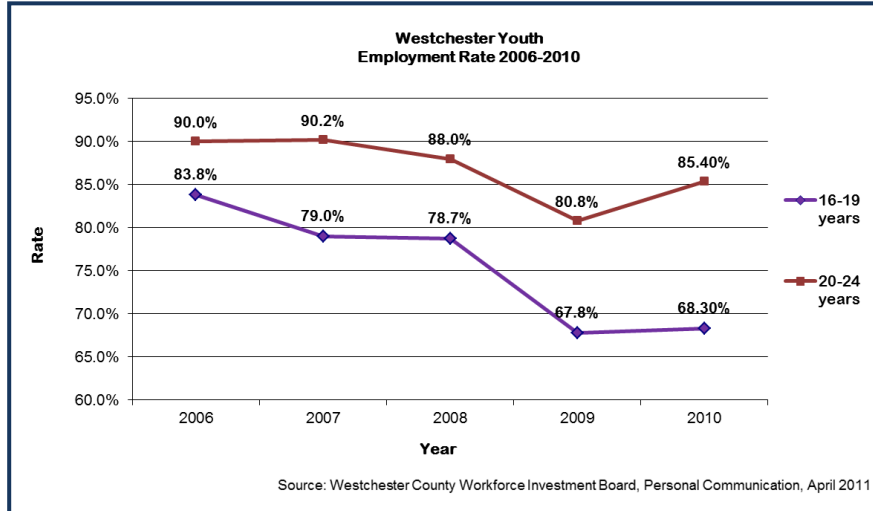
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## EMPLOYMENT

Youth may not engage in the work force for a variety of reasons, including that they have little or no work experience, lack transportation, have family responsibilities, lack family support or positive role models, engage in illegal activities, or are unable to navigate the workplace environment. Entering the labor force is one of the most significant role transitions of young adulthood. It provides income, offers training opportunities, and contributes to skill acquisition. Employment also provides a vocational identity for youths, a sense of mastery and purpose, as well as a “stake” in adult institutions. Finally, employment encourages shared experiences with persons outside one’s family and structures one’s time, thereby exercising social control over the activities of youth. (Caspi, 1998)

Studies show that youth who miss out on an early work experience are more likely to endure later unemployment and less likely to achieve higher levels of career attainment. (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012) Paid employment results in the acquisition of occupational skills as well as soft skills such as punctuality, communicating with co-workers and supervisors, attendance, and how to dress for work. Soft skills are largely learned on the job. Most individuals acquire these skills through their work activities during their teens and early twenties. (Harrington, Fogg, & Khatiwada, 2009)



In the current economy, employment sectors that traditionally hire young adults are less likely to do so. Fewer jobs are available in general, and jobs are going to older out-of-work individuals with more experience and training. Employment is essential for making a living but also has other wide-ranging positive effects. Employment matters for social inclusion, self-reliance, and a sense of purpose and has tangible advantages for physical and psychological health. (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012)

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## YOUTH VOICES

“I was never gang affiliated but I was always around the wrong people. I knew that but I felt like that’s all I had”



Since I’ve been here (Children’s Village) a year, they got me jobs, interviews, ... they help you with transportation... they got my confidence up.”

## SIX MONTHS LATER

Jonathan was working odd jobs in construction.

Part of the challenge for young people seeking employment is the gap between their skills and the qualifications needed for available positions. (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012)

Over the past 25 years or so there has been a shift of employment from the manufacturing sector to the service sector requiring higher education and skills. Furthermore, as production processes become more technologically sophisticated, the manufacturing sector is also employing more college educated workers. (Harrington et al, 2009)

Young people with certain criminal records face even greater barriers in finding employment with a livable wage.

- Young adults disconnected for three or more years are about **14 times more likely** to be poor and earn about **two and one half times less** in earnings and are **about two to three times** less likely to be employed full-time than young adults who had never been disconnected. (Wight, Chau, Aratani, Schwarz, & Thampi, 2010)
- More than **three-quarters** of job openings in the next decade will require skills beyond high school. (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012)



## JUVENILE JUSTICE

In New York, a young person’s journey to becoming a disconnected youth can begin with the juvenile justice system, as early as their seventh birthday. New York is one of only two states in which the Juvenile Justice system does not have jurisdiction over youth above the age of 15. Many of the youth entering the juvenile justice system are from families in which there was parental abuse and neglect. Frequently, youth have drug or alcohol abuse problems, mental health problems, and suffer with learning disabilities. It has been argued that changing the juvenile justice system to one that is more focused on treating the traumas at the root of illegal behavior would result in less recidivism. (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011) Many of the evidence based interventions for juvenile justice are designed to effect change and reduce criminal behavior of juveniles prior to them entering the system. Research shows that successful programs must address improving family function, peer involvement, and school and community connections. (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011)

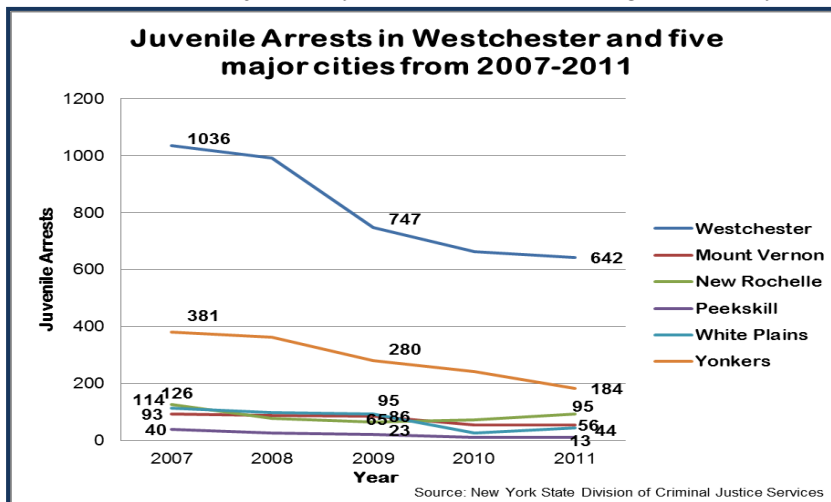
The majority of criminal acts committed by children and adolescents are misdemeanors. When young people are treated as juveniles the recidivism rates are lower than those of a similar age who are processed through an adult system. (Sobie, 2010) For those young people who have committed more serious offenses, putting them together for extended periods of time simply serves to provide opportunity for negative peer modeling and deviancy training. (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011) As a young person reaches the point of aging out of the juvenile justice system they receive fewer services instead of more. It has been determined that the availability of effective services is important for older youth leaving the juvenile justice system in order to help them avoid future contact with the criminal justice system. (Altschuler, Stangler, Berkley, & Burton, 2009)

## YOUTH VOICES

“It wasn’t really the thug life...I wanted cash and my moms wasn’t around like that so I did what I had to do”



“I know a lot of kids that I grew up with that are locked up...My friend is realizing it now but it took him a 2 and a half year bid for him to realize what it really is”



Research has also shown that within a year of release from the juvenile justice system, only 30% of juvenile delinquents (defined in chart below) are in school, employed or have access to needed services. (Chung, Little, Steinberg, & Altschuler, 2005) Youth who are identified as delinquents and who are part of the juvenile justice system are seven times more likely than non-adjudicated youth to be arrested for crimes as adults. (Szalavitz, 2009) Youth who are identified as delinquents are more likely to be involved with drugs and to have mental health issues than their peers who were not in the juvenile justice system. (Altschuler, et al.) Having an arrest record impacts access to employment, further hindering a young person's ability to become reconnected.

**2011 Westchester Juvenile Justice** statistics for young people under the age of 16:

**568** Juvenile Delinquents    **1,015** PINS

**342** young people were in Secure Detention (254 are Juvenile Delinquents, 32 are Juvenile Offenders)

**276** young people in Non-secure detention (105 are PINS, 71 are Juvenile Delinquents)



- A "Juvenile Offender" is a youth 13 to 15 years of age who is charged and tried as an adult for committing one or more of 18 specific crimes.
- A "Juvenile Delinquent" is a person at least seven and less than 16 years of age who commits an act which would be a crime if he or she were an adult, and is also found to be in need of supervision, treatment or confinement.
- A "PINS" is a person under the age of 18 in need of supervision for status offenses, i.e. actions, such as truancy, that would not be a crime if committed by an adult.



**965 young adults (16-21) were arrested for property crimes in 2011**

**816 young adults (16-21) were arrested for drug use/possession/sale in 2011**

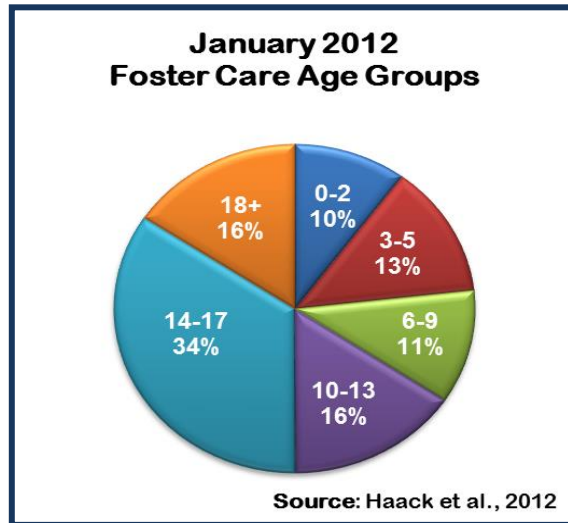
**503 young adults (16-21) were arrested for violent crime in 2011**

Source: New York State Council on Children and Families, Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse. Westchester County Department of Probation, personal communication, July 2012

- New York criminal justice system agencies estimate a recidivism rate of **72-76%** for youth and adults ages 16-24 incarcerated in County correctional facilities (University of the State of New York, 1995)
- Nearly **70%** of incarcerated youth in New York State are parents. (University of the State of New York, 1995)

## FOSTER CARE

Youth in foster care often have limited skills, a lack of family support, learning disabilities, and health, emotional and behavioral problems. (Hair et al.) Teens who are or who have been in the foster care system have a much higher rate of teen pregnancy. (Boonstra, 2011) All of these factors coupled with the difficult transition to adulthood result in a large number of foster youth becoming disconnected after they have aged out of care.



Over the past ten years, New York State has shifted its practice of placing children into foster care and residential facilities, putting a greater emphasis on keeping families together by providing preventive, community-based, and in-home services. Some of the approaches used in support of this policy shift include Family Assessment Response (FAR) which aims to provide more intensive services to families that have been reported to Child Protective Services; Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP), which encourages placement with relatives for children who are removed from their parents; and closure of juvenile justice facilities in favor of placements closer to children's families as part of New York's Close to Home Initiative.

- **Less than 3%** of youth aging out of foster care will earn a college degree by age 25. (Altschuler et al.)
- Young people aging out of foster care are at **high risk** of becoming homeless with estimates ranging from **one in ten** to **one in three** foster care youth who are homeless after they age out of care. (Dworsky, Dillman, Dion, Coffee-Borden, & Rosenau, 2012)

## COMMUNITY VOICES

"I grew up in group homes since about the age of eight...about 16-17 I ended up in a juvenile delinquency center where I met a social worker who followed me out of the jail...and I went back to the group home and continued to get into trouble...but the social worker continued to follow me."



"I decided one day to go in the right direction and she [the social worker] helped me do that...convinced me that I could, you know, enter into Westchester Community College."

- A total of **680** children and youth were in foster care and institutions in Westchester County in October 2011, of whom **322** were youth ages 16-21 (Haack, Befus, & Kuhn, 2012)
- In 2011, **71** youth aged out of the foster care system in Westchester (Westchester County Department of Social Services, personal communication, July, 2012)

## MENTAL HEALTH

Youth and young adults who have severe and persistent mental illness confront functional impairments that make it harder to engage in daily life activities and relationships. Youth with a history of mental disorders therefore often struggle in life. They are at higher risk for dropping out of school, abusing drugs or alcohol, becoming pregnant, not finishing college, or being unemployed. (Gralinski-Bakker et al., 2005)

In addition, transitioning from school to the adult world is complicated by overlapping and confusing eligibility requirements and different terminology in the mental health service sector. (Podmostoko, 2007) Parents, schools and medical providers can miss opportunities for early detection of mental health disorders. There is a lack of affordable insurance and a shortage of providers who specialize in adolescent mental health. (Murphy, Vaughn, & Barry, 2013) Cost and/or dissatisfaction with mental health services often deter youth and young adults from receiving appropriate care. Finding professionals who are culturally competent and speak languages other than English also poses challenges. However, recovery is possible with the availability of comprehensive and coordinated psychological interventions such as supported employment, housing, and education.

<b>Number of Emergency Room Visits for Mental Health and Substance Abuse by Age in Westchester County 2009</b>							
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>1-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-17</b>	<b>18-24</b>
<b>TOTAL ER VISITS (all reasons)</b>	109,774	7,904	23,629	17,122	16,416	12,654	32,049
<b>Mental health and substance abuse</b>	4,627	14	20	210	865	1,190	2,328
<b>Percent of total</b>	4.22	0.18	0.08	1.23	5.27	9.40	7.26

**Source:** Westchester County Department of Health

- Youth with emotional disturbances are **three times more likely** to live in poverty than youth who drop out of high school (Woolsey & Katz-Levy, 2008)
- The **greatest prevalence** of Serious Mental Illness (SMI) is among young adults ages 18-25 (APA Public Interest Government Relations Office, 2003)

- Employment rates for people with SMI ranges from **10 to 20 percent** (APA Public Interest Government Relations Office, 2003)
- More than **60%** of transition youth with SMI do not complete high school (APA Public Interest Government Relations Office, 2003)

## MARGINALIZATION

Marginalization leads to disconnection. When young people are not accepted by their families, their peers, or their communities (whether it is their school community, their work community, their faith based community, etc.) it can have devastating effects.

Marginalization can lead to mental health problems, alcohol and substance abuse, dropping out of school, joining gangs and becoming homeless. Teens who become pregnant, young single parents, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth often experience rejection, judgment, stigmatization and marginalization by those around them. In addition, undocumented immigrant young adults, upon graduation from high school, are often faced with limited opportunities for higher education and employment. This isolation and victimization naturally leads to disconnection – emotionally and sometimes literally, as in the case of homelessness. (Murphy, Vaughn, & Barry, 2013)

### Teen Pregnancy

Many young women become disconnected from school, employment and community to assume parenting responsibilities. Teen parents are less likely to finish high school, more likely to be poor as adults, and more likely to rely on public assistance compared with youth who delay childbearing. (Hoffman & Maynard, 2008) Fewer than 2% of teens who have a baby before age 18 attain a college degree by age 30. (Guttmacher Institute, 2011)

## YOUTH VOICES

“I told people that I had a child, and peoples was like...oh you are so young...and I felt kind of like outside. I knew there was other teen mothers but there wasn't that many.”



Deonna, 21

“I had nobody, just me and my daughter.”

## ONE YEAR LATER

Deonna is enrolled in programs at Children's Village and has an internship. She is still striving to become enrolled in college to study to become a nurse.

<b>Number of Total Pregnancies, Live Births, Spontaneous Fetal Deaths, and Induced Abortions by Age—Westchester County, 2010</b>				
	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-17</b>	<b>18-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>
<b>Total Pregnancies</b>	22	288	647	2,359
<b>Live Births</b>	11	123	347	1,465
<b>Spontaneous Fetal Deaths</b>	0	0	6	21
<b>Induced Abortions</b>	11	165	294	873

**Source:** New York State Department of Health, Vital Statistics

- In 2010, **1,946** were born to Westchester mothers ages 10-24 (New York State Department of Health, 2010)
- Girls in foster care have a teenage pregnancy rate of **more than double** their peers (Boonstra, 2011)

## Homeless/Runaway Youth

### COMMUNITY VOICES

“[Homeless] students are stigmatized in school: not just socially, but due to new educational standards.”

-School Homeless Liaison

Once a young person is disconnected, accessing health care or other appropriate services becomes more difficult and negative outcomes are likely. Because runaway and homeless youth have no permanent home and are often hidden, underground, or reticent to seek services, they face significant barriers to accessing services and supports that would enable them to become reconnected.

- **2,233** Westchester children/youth who are homeless attended school in 2011 (New York Education Department Student Information Repository System, 2013)
- The number of students without a stable home has increased **40%** from school year 2007-2008 to 2010-2011. The number of students living in temporary housing with relatives, friends or other individuals rose from **811 to 1,241** and the number of students in shelters increased from **556 to 669** in the same time period. (Easley, 2012)
- In 2011, **189** single 18-24 year olds entered the homeless system in Westchester County. This is over a 100% increase since 2009 (U.S. Department of HUD Homeless Management Information System/Westchester County Continuum of Care, personal communication, May 2012)

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## Drug or Alcohol Addiction

A drug or alcohol addiction hinders a young person's ability to stay in school, pursue higher education, and may result in difficulty finding and keeping a job. Without access to rehabilitation programs and support, young people with an alcohol or drug addiction will continue to struggle with addiction and will remain disconnected.

- According to the 2009 Youth Development self-reported survey, which assesses risk and protective factors of substance use in high school students, **21%** of 7-8th graders and **32%** of 9-10th graders in Westchester County have tried an illicit drug and **19.5 %** of 7-12th graders binge drank within the two weeks prior to the survey (New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services)

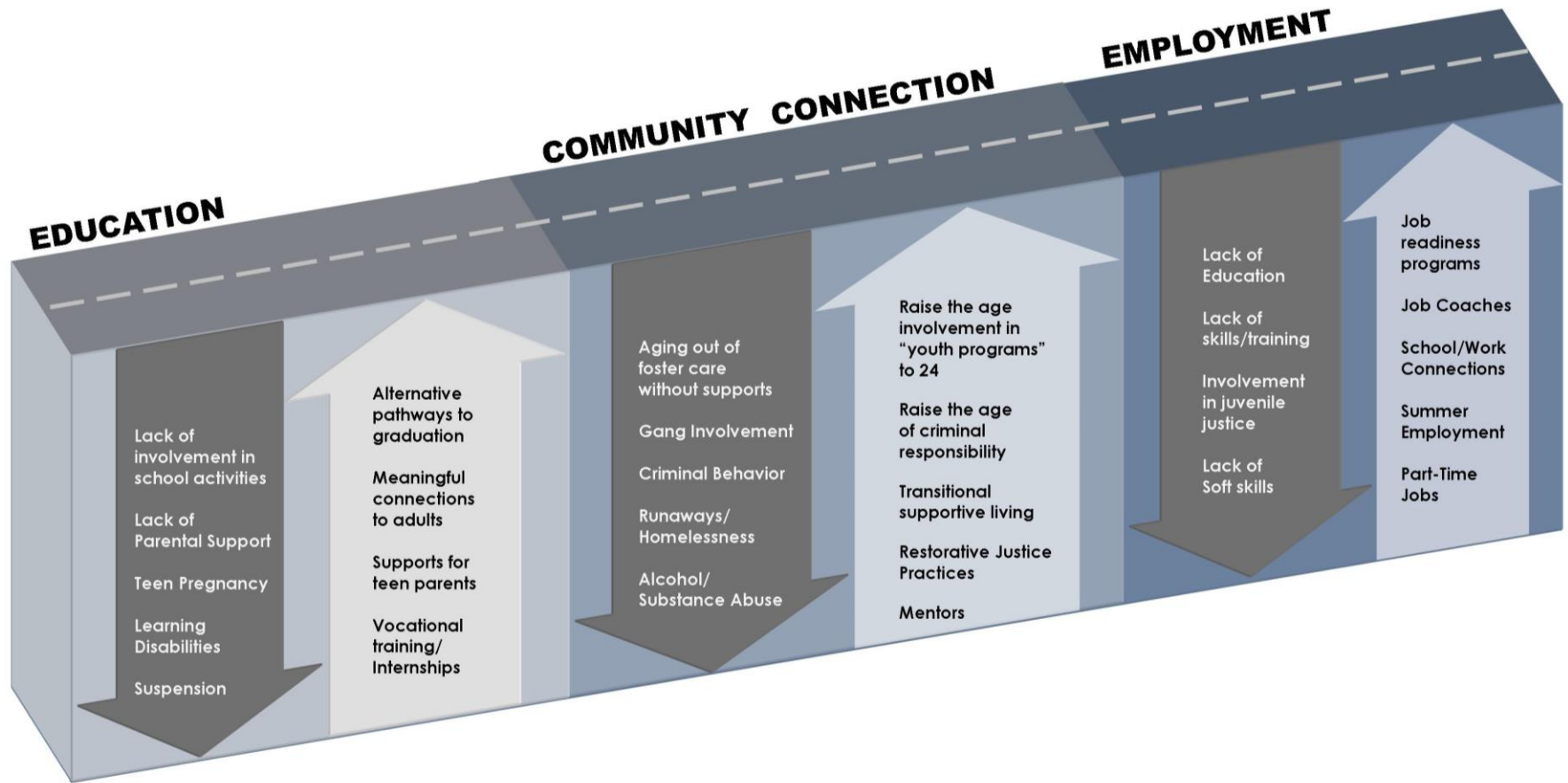
## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth

LGBTQ adolescents who lack family acceptance are more likely to have negative mental and physical health outcomes. Interventions that promote parental acceptance of LGBTQ adolescents and acceptance in schools and by faith based communities are needed to reduce health disparities. School victimization and bullying of LGBTQ students is stigmatizing and stressful and impacts school achievement. (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010)

## Immigrants

Immigrants are a growing population in Westchester. The unique barriers that non-citizen young people face as they transition to adulthood are helping to create a growing sub-set of disconnected youth. Undocumented young people are unable to pursue work permits and driver's licenses; their future beyond high school is often limited without financial assistance for higher education or the ability to enter the US armed forces. (The White House Blog, 2010)

# Road to Success





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## VII. BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES/EFFECTIVE POLICIES

Though the problems in this report seem daunting, there is a growing body of knowledge that recognizes best practices for working with young adults facing challenging difficulties as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. One overarching principle is that it is essential to start early with youth and families to plan for the future. Some studies even suggest that the preschool years are not too early to intervene to prevent future employment problems. (Caspi et al., 1998; Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2007)

The problems faced by disconnected young adults are complex, thereby requiring the services of multiple service systems. Interagency collaboration practices, such as common identifiers for youth as they move between systems, multiple points of entry, and co-location of services, are highly recommended. (Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2009) A holistic, life course perspective that connects the different domains of transition including employment, education, housing, health, and socialization is needed.

Family involvement and supports to the family and youth need to be provided before, during and after the young person's transition to adulthood. Appropriate services have to be provided for youth at all levels of skill and work readiness. This can be achieved by utilizing student-focused planning practices that use assessment information, student self-determination, and designated student post-secondary goals to be achieved by age 25 in the planning process. When youth voices are incorporated into the development and implementation of program services and policies, youth are empowered to advocate for themselves. Available services need to be developmentally appropriate and not co-mingled with older adults. (Altschuler et al.)

When youth and young adults do not have adequate family supports, research shows that they greatly benefit from an adult mentor who can help them deal with any issues they face in life. A meaningful relationship between a young person and an adult is important to positive development, and mentors can help children overcome behavioral, social and academic problems. When the relationship is youth centered, connected, consistent, and long in duration, it can be very influential on a young person's development. (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006)

Involvement of the community is also critical to enhance opportunities for youth transitioning to adulthood. Collaboration practices that involve community businesses, organizations, and agencies in transition should include interagency agreements, articulation of roles and responsibilities, and communication with the goal of providing school-based and work-based learning opportunities. We must provide more evidence-based workforce preparation programs prior to high school graduation, including opportunities for low-level learners. (Treschan & Molner, 2008)

### COMMUNITY VOICES

“Students often drop out if they lack necessary educational skills, have low self-esteem, family problems or lack of support. However, the presence of one adult, for example a social worker, a teacher, a mentor, or relative who has had a continuing caring relationship with that young person, can make a difference.

-School Homeless Liaison

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We must revise policies and practices to support young adults. States should develop and implement The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), which is produced annually by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to gather data and share information across agencies. (Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2009) States need to fund more pilot demonstration projects that implement and evaluate promising practices to support youth and young adults in transition. Additionally, services should be expanded to include young people to the age of 24 by merging certain adult and youth funding streams.

## VIII. WESTCHESTER IN CONTEXT

In seeking ways to improve outcomes for disconnected youth in Westchester, it is important to note a number of existing systemic and programmatic initiatives that already exist and that incorporate elements of the best practices referenced above. While Appendix B highlights a sampling of programs (both prevention and intervention programs) in operation in the County, this section describes some of the significant systemic and programmatic elements that help shape the environment in which all programs operate.

- Westchester County has developed a public/private **System of Care** to connect services for vulnerable children and families. It is built on collaboration between and coordination across systems, communities, agencies, families and youth that promote the physical, emotional, intellectual and social wellness of children and youth across their lifespan. In partnership with youth and families, Westchester's System of Care consists of a coordinated community-based network of services and supports that are characterized by multi-system sharing of resources and responsibilities. Within Westchester County's System of Care, systems, service providers and natural supports join with families and with youth to develop an integrated and individualized plan to address identified needs, under the concept of “one family, one plan.” The System of Care is built on the core principles and values of providing services which are: family driven, community based, team supported, strength-based, individualized and culturally competent.

An important and illustrative element of the System of Care is Youth Forum, which embodies the “youth voice” for the system. Youth Forum provides support, advocacy and recreational opportunities for older adolescents and young adults, ages 16 to 23, with special needs who are, or have been involved in, mental health services. This is a peer-driven initiative where participants provide support for each other and learn to be advocates for their own needs. (Family Services of Westchester, n.d.)

- **Community mobilization for youth:** Fourteen Westchester communities are engaged in building community coalitions (formally Communities That Care) of professionals, families and community members to incorporate prevention and early intervention into local planning and activities to address underage drinking and substance abuse.
- **Addressing racism:** Westchester County Department of Social Services (DSS) has sponsored extensive anti-racism training for staff and community partners through The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's “Undoing Racism” workshop. This training focuses on understanding what

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racism is, where it comes from, how it functions, and why it persists. Over the past several years, DSS began offering the workshop to their senior staff as a response to the disproportionality of minority youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This has continued with DSS opening workshops to more staff as well as community partners.

Judge Kathie E. Davidson, Supervising Judge for Westchester County Family Court, in partnership with DSS, spearheaded an effort to identify specific practices within the Family Court process that may contribute to the disproportionate number of African-American and Latino youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Hunter College School of Social Work is conducting a research study as part of this effort and will report findings to the Court.

- **Alternatives for youth in the criminal justice system:** Since 1977, the Youth Shelter Program of Westchester has offered an alternative to incarceration for young men, ages 16-21, who are awaiting adjudication in Westchester’s criminal courts. Judges can remand young people—usually first or second-time non-violent offenders—to the 12-bed community residence. Residents participate in counseling, drug treatment, community service, education and group living as they await their sentencing.

The pilot Adolescent Diversion Program in Mt. Vernon, begun in 2012 under the auspices of Judge Helen M. Blackwood, the Mt. Vernon school district, and Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS), allows the Judge to offer alternatives to incarceration for first time offenders, ages 16 and 17, involved in non-violent crimes, and to develop an individual treatment plan. The Judge has at her disposal the support of the school district to ensure that the young person complies with school rules and attendance. WJCS offers screening, counseling and other supports.

For many years, Southern Westchester BOCES has provided educational programs in the County Jail, allowing young offenders to continue their education while incarcerated. Unfortunately, the social worker position in the jail has been eliminated due to attrition and funding cuts.

- **Employment:** Westchester County Workforce Investment Board has designed a College Internship Clearinghouse, which will be a resource for local businesses to register internship opportunities for students who attend local colleges and universities. The County also plans to develop a public relations campaign aimed at high school students, the READI campaign (Respect, Enthusiasm, Attitude, Dependable, Initiative) to promote the “soft work skills” employers expect youth to have when they come to work.

## COMMUNITY VOICES

“There are great programs but (a) parent has to make contact/referral. Often the parent is ill equipped to do this, for example language barrier, no phone to make contact etc., and help is never received.”

-Probation Supervisor

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Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed the NY Youth Works Program into law on December 9, 2011 to encourage businesses to hire unemployed, disadvantaged youth. The program supports job training and employment for eligible youth ages 16 to 24 in the Westchester cities of Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle and Yonkers. Businesses can earn tax credits for employing qualified youth and young people can earn money for expenses while being trained by an authorized NY Youth Works provider.

In 2012, Westchester Workforce Investment Board selected contractors to implement the nationally recognized Youth Build program, which allows young people ages 18 to 24 to gain a GED and valuable construction skills as they build affordable housing. In March 2013, programs will begin in Peekskill and Mt. Vernon.

- **Education:**

*Alternative high schools:* During the 2011-2012 school year, Student Advocacy conducted a research project on alternative high school education programs serving Westchester students. (For full report see Appendix C) 48 alternative schools were identified; these encompass special education programs, alternative learning programs and “last chance” programs. When developed and used appropriately, alternative schools can prevent dropout and disconnection of at-risk youth by reducing truancy, discouraging inappropriate and destructive behavior, minimizing suspension and expulsion, and increasing academic skill attainment and achievement. (quoted in D’Angelo and Zemanick, 2009) Additionally, alternative schools have the capacity to serve youth who have dropped out but later return to complete their education. It is important to note that these alternative schools serve young people from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and from communities throughout Westchester County.

Student Advocacy reached out to all the alternative schools. Fourteen responded. The alternative schools surveyed differed significantly from traditional schools in key factors pertinent to disconnected youth:

- Criteria for admission encompassed many elements related to disconnection, including social concerns, academic concerns, chronic lateness, absenteeism and/or truancy, and being at-risk of dropping out.
- Students who apply for admission to alternative high schools often share characteristics with disconnected youth: they have experienced social, family, emotional and/or behavioral issues; they have faced legal issues and/or have drug involved backgrounds; they are disorganized and unmotivated; they feel disenfranchised and disengaged; traditional high school has not worked and/or they feel they do not fit in; they have academic potential but have not been meeting it.
- Students in alternative schools are seeking smaller, more individualized, more personalized, supportive settings; a community where students support each other to go for the best in themselves; a combination of classroom and experiential learning; meaningful education that rekindles or grows a love of learning.

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- Attributes of the alternative high school program included: getting students to believe that they can be successful; recognizing that each youth has his or her own strengths and challenges; accommodating individual needs; emphasizing the personal, nurturing approach in a supportive, family-like atmosphere; flexible, experiential and democratic; and rediscovering the joy of learning.

*Attendance/Truancy prevention programs:* Community activists promoted a 2009 Yonkers study that identified the link between truancy and juvenile crime. This led to new truancy prevention programs in Yonkers and Mt. Vernon. These data-driven programs call for early intervention by school staff when an elementary or middle school student is frequently absent. When absences reach a high level, school personnel must file a Child Protective Services (CPS) complaint alleging Educational Neglect. DSS then deploys workers from a special unit to work with families and alleviate the barriers to the child's school attendance. In two years the number of chronically truant Yonkers students in targeted grades 1-8 dropped 18.6%. (Bertrand, 2009)

*Community Schools:* Several school districts have adopted the strategy of community schools that brings a range of community services into schools, establishing them as hubs of their communities and making a variety of needed services available to students and their families. The most fully realized version of this strategy in Westchester is at the Thomas Edison School in Port Chester, which includes a school health center, evening English as a Second Language and computer classes for parents, and many other elements that are available to the children, parents and community throughout the year and well beyond the traditional school day.

*Community College:* Westchester Community College serves not only post-high school students, but provides many opportunities for non-traditional students. Through the Gateway Center and other offerings, adults, including those learning English, can acquire post-secondary and vocational credentials.

- **Youth Voice:** In addition to Youth Forum, there are other initiatives that seek to capture the voice of young people in order to inform programs and policies. For example, the Westchester Youth Councils, housed within Family Services of Westchester, teaches middle and high-school students leadership skills and engages them in identifying and solving community problems.

In addition, two key forums in 2012 presented youth an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences. The Annual Myra Alfred's Roundtable Presents: What Helps, What Harms, 2012 sponsored by Department of Community Mental Health was an opportunity for youth involved in mental health and other high-need service communities to share their experiences and recommendations. The need for more diverse, youth conscious, socially aware and supportive staff and personnel was a theme throughout the presentation. Westchester Children's Association's Speak Out for Youth 2012 (<http://bit.ly/SpeakOutReport>) involved 130 young people from across the County who gathered to discuss issues that affect their lives, and develop ideas of how to address them. Youth expressed that effective responses to their issues will involve a combination of personal responsibility, family/community action and government intervention.

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## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues identified in this report are many and complex. Disconnected youth often present with multiple issues and have in the course of their young lives often touched multiple systems. On the road to becoming disconnected (See “Road to Success”) youth can come to the attention of a school guidance counselor, a police or probation officer or social worker. Any success at reengagement must include an overarching commitment to find solutions and funding on both a county-wide and local levels. State, county, and local funding for preventive programs has continued to decrease over recent years. Commitment to innovative practices must be maintained and fully funded to achieve successful outcomes for children, youth and young adults.

To address these issues based on our understanding of the resources available at this time in Westchester and our review of best practices, we offer the following recommendations:

### Immediate Solutions

**1. Fully replicate the Yonkers truancy/ absenteeism model in Westchester’s other major city school districts and offer County support**

Schools no longer have funding for truancy prevention. Chronic truancy can be addressed by (1) enforcing the law on mandatory school attendance and (2) using the Child Protective Services’ (CPS) educational neglect reporting process to trigger an investigation and assessment of the family situation, followed, when necessary, by support services and/or court intervention. (Bertrand, 2009) CPS intervention is a way to secure resources. However, the downside of this approach is involving families with Child Protective Services and “criminalizing” parents, a concern of many community members. The County could address truancy problems by creating funding for targeted districts.

**2. Enhance County, State and Federal youth employment programs**

Provide local funding in support of NY Youth Works and other youth employment initiatives to (1) help small businesses overcome barriers to participation such as assistance in completing the certification process and (2) provide mentoring and job coaching to help augment sustained employment success of youth.

**3. Raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18**

New York and North Carolina are the only two states which have not increased the juvenile delinquency jurisdictional age to age 18. There are several models to achieve this including: (1) raising the age of Family Court jurisdiction to 18 such that every juvenile delinquency case would be initiated in the Family Court and every provision from arrest to disposition apply (2) a “hybrid” approach whereby a “youth part” is established within the criminal court and the “convicted” youth would be deemed a juvenile delinquent with the same array of dispositional

### COMMUNITY VOICES

“Continued severe budget cuts have had a negative impact on programs and connecting youth to programs.”

-Youth Advocate

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alternatives as available in Family Court. The issue continues to be debated by New York's legislators and concerns of legal representation, violent offenses and cost have to be considered. "The essential goal should be to raise the age...in the most equitable, effective and feasible manner" (Sobie, 2010)

**4. Expand Medicaid to 26 for those aging out of foster care and those with Serious Mental Illness (SMI).**

The Affordable Care Act makes it possible for young adults to remain on their parents insurance to age 26. Youth aging out the foster care system should be afforded the same opportunity from their "guardian," the State. In addition, young adults with mental health issues need appropriate care and support. Those with SMI should remain eligible for Medicaid as they transition from the youth to adult systems.

**5. Engage young people in planning and decision making**

Create real and sustainable means for young adults to have a seat at the table by (1) coordinating existing youth voices (councils, forums, speak outs, etc.) to utilize their input in setting public priorities and implementing programs (2) investigating use of Community Cafes or other proven methods to encourage ongoing dialogue and feedback from young people. Resulting plans will be more effective with youth endorsement and the process provides an opportunity for them to work and learn alongside adults.

## **Long Term Solutions**

**1. Reduce exclusionary/disciplinary and suspension practices in school and encourage restorative practices**

A sense of community is key to helping students stay connected to school and their peers even when they have made a mistake or been involved in serious wrongdoing. Building stronger relationships and alternative approaches to discipline should be explored and implemented. (1) Increase number of schools participating in the Positive Behavior Intervention model (PBIS), a school discipline system proven highly effective in minimizing disciplinary problems in a way that engages students. PBIS is strongly supported by Westchester's Department of Community Mental Health. (2) Create new standards for New York in line with Connecticut's Education Law PA-07-66 implemented in 2009-10 that required student suspensions be in-school suspensions, unless the administration determined the pupil posed a danger to persons or property or a disruption of the educational process. Each school does not have to have an individual school suspension location; a district wide location, with appropriate transportation services, is acceptable. (Dugas, 2009) (3) Implement "Restorative Justice" - a systemic response to wrongdoing that involves a four step process to: hold the offender accountable; provide victims a safe place; include community members in developing a moral stance...to help offender in making things right; and develop an effective alternative to traditional discipline. (Restorative Solutions, 2006) This requires a culture change from punitive to relational.

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## COMMUNITY VOICES

“When [young adults] are involved as community leaders, the decisions are more relevant, reliable and more likely to be embraced by them. Perhaps most importantly, their innate understanding of their generation allows them to develop more authentic solutions to the issues they face.”

-The White House Council for Community Solutions, June 2012

### **2. Improve timely transitional supports for those aging out of foster care, coming out of the juvenile justice system and graduating from special education**

Transition planning to assist youths’ movement into adulthood must begin well before exit dates from foster care, juvenile justice system and special education. By law or best practice principles, planning should begin around the age of fourteen and include the youth in the process and decision making. A signed transition contract, based on the documented plan that is currently required for foster youth applying for an Independent Living Grant, should be developed for youth leaving all systems. Youth leaving any systems should have their own copies of all relevant documents.

### **3. Increase minimum wage**

Most low-income children live in families with parents who are working, but in jobs that don’t pay enough to meet basic needs. Westchester is an expensive county and living in poverty, even for a short period of time has life-long consequences for children including: increased risk of having poor health, dropping out of school, becoming a teen parent, and living in poverty as an adult. (The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2012) Efforts to make work pay a “livable wage” and ensure that young people can meet their needs are crucial. Notably, Governor Cuomo’s 2014 proposed budget includes an increase in the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.75.

### **4. Enhance Cross Systems Collaboration**

Since the problems faced by disconnected youth and young adults are complex, solutions require collaboration of the multiple service systems. Establishing common identifiers across service systems and departments would allow for shared data to be used in collaborative decision-making, integrated service plans, and ease tracking of youth who are engaged in multiple systems. Interagency collaboration practices such as 1) universal identifiers 2) multiple points of entry, and 3) co-location of services are concrete steps that can be taken at the county and local levels. Stakeholders need to be engaged across sectors to make this happen.

### **5. Support the Dream Act**

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), announced last summer by the Obama administration, will help undocumented youth with work permits. However, this is not a path to citizenship and it is up to each state if driver’s licenses will be given. The Dream Act is a first step towards helping immigrants remain connected to the community. The legislation is limited and targeted to allow only young people in good standing, brought to the U.S as minors through no fault of their own, to earn their legal status after a rigorous and lengthy process. It gives to students who grew up in the United States a chance to contribute to our country’s well-being by serving in the U.S armed forces or pursuing higher education. (The White House Blog, 2010)



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## **X. CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this report is to raise public awareness about this hidden group of young people aged 16 to 24 who are disconnected and to suggest policies and programs that would improve their potential to succeed and follow their dreams. Across the United States, there are several examples of community-wide initiatives that have made a difference in the lives of youth. Evidence-based interventions that have shown success should be explored for possible replication. Improving opportunities for disconnected youth will require the combined efforts of elected officials, government agencies, philanthropy, business, and community based agencies, families and young adults. If we don't act, the opportunity lost and cost of "dreams deferred" will impact us all.

**This is our wake-up call.**

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## **APPENDIX A**

### *Survey of Service Providers Working with Disconnected Youth*

#### **SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS**

In the fall of 2010, the Research and Advocacy Committee of Westchester Children's Association asked seventeen service providers working with disconnected youth to complete a survey. The survey was designed to document the issues and concerns faced by youth at risk for disconnection.

The main findings of the survey were that there are many reasons for youth becoming disconnected: e.g. dropping out of high-school, teen parenting, under/unemployment, involvement in foster care or the juvenile justice system, mental health issues. There is also overlap in the conditions that lead to poor outcomes: poverty, lack of necessary family supports, lack of employment and housing, undiagnosed mental health problems, lack of access to health care, as well as alcohol and substance abuse problems and other health disparities.

# Disconnected Youth

## 1. Introduction

Dear Community Partner:

Westchester Children's Association is working to identify the "Disconnected Youth" population in Westchester County.

We plan to identify services and programs available for these young people as well as document the issues and concerns unique to the population.

Your input is crucial to this process. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey below. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Working Definitions

"Disconnected Youth" -- Young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in school or enrolled in further education, not working, nor otherwise positively engaged.

"At-Risk Youth" -- Young people in danger of becoming disconnected youth.

## 2. Organizational/Contact Information

### 1. Please provide Organizational Contact Information:

**Company:**

**Address:**

**Address 2:**

**City/Town:**

**State:**

**ZIP:**

**Phone Number:**

### 2. Please provide Individual Contact Information:

**Name:**

**Email Address:**

**Phone Number:**

### 3. My role with this agency/organization is:

### 4. What is the mission/purpose of your organization?

# Disconnected Youth

## 3. Disconnected Youth -- Where? Who? Why?

**1. What geographic area do you serve for disconnected/at-risk youth? Please check all that apply.**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All of Westchester County (may skip forward if this answer is checked) | <input type="checkbox"/> Irvington      | <input type="checkbox"/> Port Chester  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ardsley  | <input type="checkbox"/> Larchmont      | <input type="checkbox"/> Pound Ridge   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedford  | <input type="checkbox"/> Lewisboro      | <input type="checkbox"/> Purchase      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Briarcliff Manor   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mamaroneck     | <input type="checkbox"/> Rye           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bronxville   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mount Kisco    | <input type="checkbox"/> Rye Brook     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buchanan   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mount Pleasant | <input type="checkbox"/> Scarsdale     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cortlandt  | <input type="checkbox"/> Mount Vernon   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleepy Hollow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Croton-on-Hudson   | <input type="checkbox"/> New Castle     | <input type="checkbox"/> Somers        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dobbs Ferry  | <input type="checkbox"/> New Rochelle   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tarrytown     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eastchester  | <input type="checkbox"/> North Castle   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tuckahoe      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Edgement   | <input type="checkbox"/> North Salem    | <input type="checkbox"/> Valhalla      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elmsford   | <input type="checkbox"/> Ossining       | <input type="checkbox"/> White Plains  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greenburg  | <input type="checkbox"/> Peekskill      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yonkers       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harrison   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pelham         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yorktown      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hastings-on-Hudson   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pleasantville  |  |

**2. What is your operating definition of "disconnected" or "at-risk" youth?**

**3. Why do you think the youth you serve are at-risk or disconnected?**

## 4. Disconnected Youth -- Programming

# Disconnected Youth

## 1. What program(s) does your organization offer to disconnected/at-risk youth? Please check all that apply.

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health                          | <input type="checkbox"/> GED preparation                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis support                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse counseling             | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Social activities              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health services                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational support (tutors, coaches) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural enrichment activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth workforce development/employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational re-engagement             | <input type="checkbox"/> Life skill training            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summer employment                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth offender transition assistance  | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult advocates                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career exploration                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster care integration program       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic remediation                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless/runaway services/shelter     |   |

Other (please specify)

## 2. How many youth participate in your program(s)? Please provide an unduplicated count.

## 3. Do you have a waiting list for services?

## 4. How are youth selected to participate? Please check all that apply.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self referral                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Court system referral             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School referral               | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster care system referral       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health care provider referral | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless/runaway shelter referral |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)        |  |

## 5. Disconnected Youth -- Program Goals, Indicators, Collaborations

### 1. What are three measurable outcomes/goals of the program(s)?

### 2. What data or indicators do you examine to determine whether your program(s) meet their outcomes/goals?

## Disconnected Youth

**3. What other organizations or programs do you most often collaborate?**

**4. What other organizations are doing valuable or significant work with disconnected or at-risk youth?**

## 6. Disconnected Youth -- Challenges, Etc.

**1. Please identify some of the greatest challenges to or constraints on your work, other than funding.**

**2. Anything else you would like to share regarding disconnected or at-risk youth?**

Thank you!

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## **APPENDIX B**

### *Sampling of Programs in Westchester County Serving Youth & Young Adults*

The following chart was compiled from 2011-2013 and is based on information from responding agencies serving young people ages 16-24. This is a sampling of programs serving youth and young adults in Westchester County. WCA made every attempt to reach agencies and accurately present their responses.

WCA acknowledges the chart is not a complete representation and regrets any discrepancies. For more information about a specific program, contact the agency directly.

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>The Children's Village</b>            One Echo Hills            Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522            914-693-0600            www.childrensvillage.org</p>	<p><b>Alternative to Detention Program</b></p>	<p>Youth who have PINS or JD cases pending but who are not in need of a non-secure detention program</p>		<p>Provides resources and services to these youth to help them meet their probation orders and assist them if a crisis arises</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Family Court Assistance Program</b></p>	<p>Youth who have committed petty crimes or whose families have filed PINS petitions</p>	<p>12 boys &amp; 12 girls</p>	<p>Non-secure detention program that provides a safe place to reside and clinical services for youth while they are involved with the court. Also provides diagnostic information to the court to help determine the most appropriate placement for the child</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Louis Jackson Rapid Intervention Center</b></p>	<p>5 to 17 Year Olds</p>	<p>10 beds</p>	<p>Supports youth in crisis and/or in need of mental health services</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Multi-Systemic Therapy</b></p>	<p>11 to 17 Year Olds with chronic, violent, delinquent behavior, and/or serious emotional disturbance</p>	<p>Up to 800 cases annually</p>	<p>Provides evidence based treatment and services to troubled youth to help them stay in their home environment</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>



Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>The Children's Village</b>            One Echo Hills            Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522            914-693-0600            www.childrensvillage.org</p>	<p><b>Residential School at Dobbs Ferry</b></p>	<p>At-risk males ages 6 to 20 years old</p>	<p>144-192 youth residents</p>	<p>Provide housing, education, psychological support, medical services, recreation, job preparation, and supervision to at-risk youth</p>	<p>Prevention &amp; Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Sanctuary Shelter</b></p>	<p>12 to 17 year old runaway or homeless youth</p>	<p>14 youth</p>	<p>Provides short-term safe housing and assistance to runaway or homeless youth</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Supported Housing</b></p>	<p>16 to 21 Year Olds</p>		<p>Provides supervised living and life-training services to youth without access to other resources</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Systematic Therapy Empowerment Program</b></p>	<p>Foster care youth discharged from residential treatment or therapeutic foster bordering homes to be reunited with family</p>		<p>Ensures that the reunification of youth and family is successful and provide support to those going through the reunification process</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> </ul>
<p><b>Family Services of Westchester</b>            Main/Corporate Office            One Gateway Plaza, 4th floor            Port Chester, NY 10573            914-937-2320            www.fsw.org</p>	<p><b>Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention &amp; Services</b></p>	<p>At risk male and female teens up to 21, pregnant teens, parenting teens</p>		<p>Provides intensive case management, counseling, pregnancy and parenting education, and workshops to prevent teenage pregnancy. Also provides support to pregnant and parenting teens</p>	<p>Prevention &amp; Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teen Pregnancy</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>Family Services of Westchester</b>  Main/Corporate Office  One Gateway Plaza, 4th floor  Port Chester, NY 10573  914-937-2320  www.fsw.org</p>	<b>Bienvenidas</b>	At-risk immigrant girls at Port Chester High School		Prevents teenage pregnancy and school dropout for females, especially recent immigrants, at Port Chester High School	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Teen Pregnancy</li> </ul>
	<b>Community Residence for SED Youth</b>	13 to 18 Year Olds with Severe Emotional Disturbances(SED)	8 resident beds and 1 respite bed	Provides short-term rehabilitation and residence to youth with SED	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	<b>Fathers Count/Re-entry Plus</b>	Men ages 18 and older in Westchester who are on probation, parole, about to be released, or have recently been released		Offers men the opportunity to make a new start in their transition back into the community, and encourages fathers to support their children emotionally and financially by teaching responsible parenting skills, financial literacy, and the importance of building and maintaining healthy relationships.	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Child Welfare</li> </ul>
	<b>Gang Prevention Services</b>	At-risk 10-15 year olds in Mount Vernon who have been truant, suspended from school, involved with gangs, in trouble with the law		Helps at risk youth in Mount Vernon refrain from anti-social behavior	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>Family Services of Westchester</b>  Main/Corporate Office  One Gateway Plaza, 4th floor  Port Chester, NY 10573  914-937-2320  www.fsw.org</p>	<p><b>Jerome Wagner Youth Residence for Boys / Evelyn Sachs Steiner Residence for Girls</b></p>	<p>13 to 21 Year Old boys/girls</p>	<p>8 male residents &amp; 8 female residents</p>	<p>Provides a safe supportive home for young males and females in respective homes who are unable to live in their family home for a variety of reasons including abuse, neglect, and family conflict. Social workers manage individual cases, and other services such as tutoring, career planning, life skills training, and recreational skills are offered</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> </ul>
	<p><b>New Directions</b></p>	<p>10-17 Year Olds in Yonkers at risk of PINS and/or truant</p>		<p>Provides family support, peer groups, and teen/parent mediation to decrease truancy and delinquent behaviors, promote higher education rates, and improve families</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Respite and Camp Success</b></p>	<p>5 to 17 Year Olds with Severe Emotional Disturbances(SED)</p>		<p>Provides recreational and therapeutic activities to children and youth with SED</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Therapeutic Foster Care</b></p>	<p>5 to 18 Year Olds</p>		<p>Provide a safe and warm home to children and youth unable to live with their own family</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Youth Forum</b></p>	<p>16 to 23 Year Olds with special needs and who are or have been involved with mental health services</p>	<p>50-60 youth</p>	<p>Provides a peer support group for older youth with histories of mental health issues</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>Family Ties of Westchester, Inc.</b>  112 East Post Rd, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  White Plains, NY 10601  914-995-5238  www.familytieswestchester.org</p>	<p><b>Community Resource Center</b>   <b>Daughters of Destiny</b>   <b>MAPP</b>   <b>Every Kid Counts</b>   <b>COPE Family Network</b>   <b>Grandparents ROC</b></p>	<p>Families of children with emotional and behavior challenges in Westchester County</p>	<p>500+ annually</p>	<p>Community based, parent-driven support and advocacy services including: peer support, parenting skills classes, individual advocacy, systems navigation, case management, "wrap-around" planning, foster parent training and certification, connection to community resources, respite opportunities and youth development activities.</p>	<p>Prevention &amp; Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Substance Abuse Prevention</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Child Welfare</li> </ul>
<p><b>Foster Teen Employment Network</b>  62 Bowman Ave  Rye Brook, NY 10573  914-939-1111  FTEN@AdoptGold.com</p>		<p>Foster youth ages 18-21</p>	<p>1-100</p>	<p>Provides youth workforce development/employment, summer employment, career exploration, and mentoring</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> </ul>
<p><b>Greyston Foundation</b>  21 Park Avenue  Yonkers, NY 10703  (914) 376-3900  www.greyston.org</p>	<p><b>Leaders of the Future Program</b></p>	<p>5-15 year olds from southwest Yonkers who are at risk for gang involvement, substance abuse, academic failure, maladaptive behaviors</p>	<p>Approx. 30 children/ youth</p>	<p>Guides youth and increases their knowledge of entrepreneurship, improves their life skills and decision-making skills, and achieve substance abuse resistance</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>The Guidance Center of NY</b>            256 Washington Street, Mount Vernon,            NY 10553            914- 636-4440  <a href="http://www.theguidancecenter.org">www.theguidancecenter.org</a></p>	<p><b>The Center for College and Careers</b>   <b>Project CREATE</b>   <b>VESID MTP Program</b></p>	<p>Westchester County, from young children to senior citizens.</p>	<p>Over 500</p>	<p>Provides support to males and females between the ages of 11 &amp; 19 who face consistent, systemic barriers to success due to their lack of integration in supportive social systems &amp; statistical likelihood of exposure to harmful social influences.</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	
<p><b>Neighbors Link</b>            27 Columbus Ave            Mt. Kisco, NY 10549            914-666-3410  <a href="http://neighborslink.org/">http://neighborslink.org/</a></p>		<p>Recent immigrants residing in Bedford, Mount Kisco, &amp; Pleasantville</p>	<p>1-100</p>	<p>Educational support (tutors, coaches) , social activities, and parenting skills for kids at risk for not making it through high school</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nepperhan Community Center Inc.</b>            342 Warburton Avenue            Yonkers, NY 10701            914-965-0203  <a href="http://www.nepperhancc.com">www.nepperhancc.com</a></p>	<p><b>Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention</b></p>			<p>Works with youth to reduce violent behaviors, provocative behaviors, school delinquency, substance abuse, and sexual behaviors</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Teen pregnancy</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Gateway Summer Basketball Program</b></p>	<p>17-26 year olds</p>		<p>Offers a recreational basketball league as a means of reaching youth and providing them with job readiness training, career counseling, education assistance, and techniques for job searching</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>Nepperhan Community Center Inc.</b>            342 Warburton Avenue            Yonkers, NY 10701            914-965-0203            www.nepperhancc.com</p>	<p><b>Jobs For Life</b></p>	<p>Adults 18 years old or older, especially those who were previously incarcerated</p>		<p>By partnering with Kingdom Baptist Church, provides 32 hours of biblically based training in Career Development, as well as counseling, mentorship, employment skills training, educational referral, and advocacy</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Say Yes to Life Basketball Program</b></p>	<p>13-16 year olds</p>		<p>Offer a basketball program that requires all participants to attend life skills workshops and a two week boot camp</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Street work Project</b></p>	<p>13-21 year olds</p>		<p>A weekend Learning Center provides youth with tutoring, academic assistance, cultural awareness, recreation, and social interactive skills, as well as outreach for appropriate program referrals</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> </ul>
<p><b>North American Family Institute</b>            2269 Saw Mill River Road,            Building 3, Suite G-2            Elmsford NY 10523            914-355-7423            www.nafi.com</p>	<p><b>NY Westchester Wraparound</b></p>	<p>High needs youth ages 12-17 in foster care, at risk of involvement or with histories of past involvement in the justice system</p>	<p>22 youth</p>	<p>Provides intensive, clinical therapeutic foster care and community services as well as a Placement Program for youth returning from out-of-state residential placements</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>Peekskill Youth Bureau</b>  828 Main St  Peekskill, NY 10566  914.734.8418  cityofpeekskill.com/youthbureau</p>	<p><b>Summer Youth Employment</b></p>	<p>14-18 year olds</p>		<p>Provides youth with employment, skills, and training to help them succeed in the job market</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Westchester Workforce Development Academy for Youth In School</b></p>	<p>14-18 year olds</p>		<p>Provides youth with subsidized and unsubsidized summer work experience, as well as education and social skills to help them find unsubsidized employment and attain academic success</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Westchester Workforce Development Academy for Youth Out of School</b></p>	<p>16-21 year olds</p>		<p>Assists youth with meeting GED requirements, defining career goals, obtaining job readiness skills, and making decision about careers to help them find full-time, unsubsidized employment</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Southern Westchester BOCES</b>  17 Berkley Drive Rye Brook, NY 10573  (914) 937-3820  www.swboces.org</p>	<p><b>Incarcerated Youth Educational Program— Westchester County Jail &amp; Penitentiary</b></p>	<p>16-21 year old inmates of Westchester County Jail &amp; Penitentiary</p>	<p>251-500</p>	<p>Offers academic remediation, GED preparation, educational reengagement, youth offender transition assistance, and crisis support to help these youth pass GED while incarcerated, enroll in a school or training program upon release, and prevent future incarcerations</p>	<p>Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<b>Student Advocacy</b> 3 West Main Street, Suite # 212 Elmsford, NY 10523-2414 914-347-7039 www.studentadvocacy.net	<b>Kids in Transition</b>	Youth in or transitioning from foster care, residential care, shelters, & homelessness	65 youth annually	Provides support and educational resources to youth to ensure that their education is not significantly interrupted	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>
	<b>Overcoming the Odds</b>	Youth at risk of school failure or dropping out of school	350 youth annually	Provides educational advocacy services and empowers parents of youth to collaborate more effectively with schools	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> </ul>
<b>Westchester Jewish Community Services</b> Headquarters 845 North Broadway White Plains, New York 10603 914-761-0600 www.wjcs.com	<b>Center Lane</b>	Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning teens		Provides a safe place for LGBTQ youth to socialize, find support, and prevent isolation	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBTQ</li> </ul>
	<b>DBT Program</b>			Provides teens with effective coping strategies through Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	<b>Family Matters</b>	SED youth		Provides case management and clinical services to SED youth and their families	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	<b>LINKAGES New Rochelle Juvenile Justice Program</b>	Court involved youth in New Rochelle, Pelham, and Mt. Vernon		Prevents the institutionalization of court-involved youth, provides support to these youth and their family, and treats mental health and substance abuse problems	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>



Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<b>Westchester Jewish Community Services</b> Headquarters 845 North Broadway White Plains, New York 10603 914-761-0600 www.wjcs.com	<b>Off The Streets</b>	Mt. Vernon High School Students		Provides training and employs students as tutors and mentors for local elementary school students in after-school programs	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> </ul>
	<b>Safety Net</b>	SED youth, youth exhibiting risky behaviors, and sexually abused youth		Provides counseling and case management services to SED youth, youth exhibiting risky behaviors, and sexually abused youth	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Advocacy</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	<b>Young Parent's Achieve / Latino Peer Education</b>	Pregnant and parenting Teens		Provides case management for pregnant and parenting teens, promotes high school graduation, and works to prevent further teenage pregnancies	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teen Pregnancy</li> </ul>
	<b>Youth Success</b>	Youth enrolled in LINKAGES or Family Matters		Provides job training and apprenticeships to youth to prepare them for the workforce	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
<b>Mary J. Blige Center for Women (operated by Westchester Jewish Community Services)</b> 489 South Broadway Yonkers, New York 914-965-9140	<b>A Different Start</b>	Low income pregnant and parenting women ages 16 to 22		Provides education, career exploration, employment, GED classes, and life training	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Teen Pregnancy</li> </ul>
	<b>Legacy</b>	Women ages 22 and older		Provides support groups and education about careers, family, relationships and health	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<b>Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc.</b> 470 Mamaroneck Avenue White Plains, NY 10605 914-428-4507 www.wroinc.org		Individuals at risk of losing their homes and mentally-ill adults		Homeless and runaway services/shelter; aims to promote equal, affordable and accessible housing opportunities for all residents of Westchester	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
<b>Westhab, Inc.</b> 85 Executive Blvd Elmsford, NY 10523 914-345-2800 www.westhab.org	<b>Elm Street Youth Center, Yonkers</b>  <b>PEAK Center, Mount Vernon</b>  <b>Coachman Family Center, White Plains</b>  <b>After-School @ Calcagno and Schlobohm Housing, Yonkers</b>  <b>FirstSteps Youth Housing, County-Wide</b>	Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, White Plains, & Yonkers' low-income families	2,000	Provision of 30+ distinct program offerings to 2,000 youth/annually in 5 Youth Centers. Other agency activities include the development of affordable housing, community development in distressed neighborhoods, and employment services.	Prevention & Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Teen Pregnancy</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> <li>• Housing</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<p><b>White Plains Youth Bureau</b>  11 Amherst Place  White Plains, NY 10601  914-422-1378  whiteplainsyouthbureau.org</p>	<p><b>Youth Employment Service (summer and year round jobs)</b></p> <p><b>Workforce Development – Academy for Out of School Youth</b></p> <p><b>Private Sector Summer Employment</b></p> <p><b>Project Hope</b></p> <p><b>Neighborhood Services</b></p> <p><b>Alternative Services</b></p> <p><b>Boys Step Up Youth Development</b></p>	<p>White Plains youth ages 16-24</p>	<p>500+</p>	<p>Provides employment counseling, life skills development and exposure to careers that will help the individual to find and keep a job, and develop a personal life plan. Provides services that address economic, social and educational barriers which will ultimately help the individual to develop problem solving and coping skills to overcome environmental challenges in his or her life.</p>	<p>Prevention &amp; Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Teen Pregnancy</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Homeless / Runaway</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Substance Abuse Prevention</li> </ul>
<p><b>Workforce Investment</b>  120 Bloomingdale Rd  White Plains, NY 10605  914-995-3910  www.westchesterputnamonestop.com</p>	<p><b>Foster Care Youth Employment</b></p>	<p>Foster youth ages 16-21</p>	<p>53</p>	<p>Provides summer employment through the Westchester County Recreation Department to youth in the foster care network</p>	<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare &amp; Foster Care</li> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>

Agency	Program	Population Served	# of Youth Served	Service	Prevention/ Intervention	Issues Addressed
<b>Workforce Investment</b> 120 Bloomingdale Rd White Plains, NY 10605 914-995-3910 www.westchesterputnamonestop.com	<b>Private Sector Summer Employment</b>	Youth ages 18-24	400 recruited	Provides summer work opportunities for youth throughout Westchester County	Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
	<b>Summer Jobs Express</b>	Youth ages 14-21	180		Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
	<b>Summer TANF Program</b>	Youth ages 14-20	192		Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
	<b>Youth Build</b>	Youth ages 18-24 in Mt. Vernon and Peekskill	60	GED preparedness programs while providing construction training through working on renovating houses that when completed will be used for transitional housing	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>
<b>Youth Shelter Program of Westchester, Inc.</b> 220 East Eighth Street Mount Vernon , New York 10550 914-668-4702		Males ages 16-21 awaiting court trial	150 youth annually; 12 bed residential facility	Provides alternative education, clinical services, vocational training, and after care support upon discharge back to the community	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>

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## APPENDIX C

### *Connecting Youth Project– Alternative Education Report*

By: *STUDENT ADVOCACY*

January 2013

Youth become disconnected and disenfranchised from school for a variety of reasons. Those who have dropped out of high school or who are most vulnerable to dropping out face barriers to education such as poverty, family stress or responsibility (including being a pregnant or parenting teen), learning disabilities (which are often unidentified), academic failure, a lack of adult support, health issues, chemical dependency, involvement in the juvenile justice system and/or being suspended or expelled. (Zweig) Other students simply do not “fit” in the public school system—the proverbial round pegs in square holes—even if they do not carry other risk-factors that would predict academic failure and disconnection. (Kershaw and Blank)

Many students who face barriers to education or become disinterested in school say that they do not see classroom material as being relevant to their future and they do not feel as if school personnel care about them as individuals. In fact, some studies find that school-related reasons are more commonly cited by dropouts as the catalyst for discontinuing their education than are personal reasons. (quoted in May and Copeland) The lack of relevancy and caring perceived in a traditional high school make many at-risk students believe that it is not worth it to overcome the barriers they face in order to earn a diploma.

Alternative school students who remain academically connected and engaged in the face of obstacles are more likely to cite characteristics of the school, as opposed to personal characteristics, as fueling their persistence. (May and Copeland) Indeed, when developed and used appropriately, alternative schools can prevent dropout and disconnection of at-risk youth by reducing truancy, discouraging inappropriate and destructive behavior, minimizing suspension and expulsion, and increasing academic skill attainment and achievement. (quoted in D’Angelo and Zemanick) Additionally, alternative schools have the capacity to serve youth who have dropped out but later return to complete their education.

A range of alternative programs exists. Most reviews of alternative school practices cite May Anne Raywid’s 1994 typology of alternative schools. The three types are interpreted by Aron (2006) as: **Type I** (*sometimes referred to as schools of choice*): “Full-time, multi-year, education options for students of all kinds, including those needing more individualization, those seeking an innovative or challenging curriculum, or dropouts wishing to earn their diplomas. A full instructional program offers students the credits needed for graduation. Students choose to attend. Other characteristics include divergence from standard school organization and practices (deregulation, flexibility, autonomy, and teacher and student empowerment); an especially caring, professional staff; small size and small classes; and a personalized whole-student approach that builds a sense of affiliation and features individual instruction, self-paced work, and career counseling. Models range from schools-within-schools to magnet schools, charter schools, schools without walls, experiential schools, career-focused and job-based schools, dropout-recovery programs, after-hours schools, and schools in atypical settings like shopping malls and museums.”

**Type II** (*sometimes referred to as last-chance schools*): The distinguishing characteristic is “discipline”, which aims to segregate, contain and reform disruptive students. Students typically do not choose to attend, but are sent to the school for specified time periods or until behavior requirements are met. Since placement is short-term, the curriculum is limited to a few basic, required courses or is entirely supplied by the ‘home school’ as a list of assignments. Familiar models include last-chance schools and in-school suspension.”

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**Type III** (*sometimes referred to as remedial schools*): “Short but therapeutic settings for students with social and emotional problems that create academic and behavioral barriers to learning. Although Type III programs target specific populations—offering counseling, access to social services, and academic remediation--students can choose not to participate.”

These three general models illustrate the competing philosophies for educating at-risk youth: changing the student or changing the school. Research shows that Type I schools are the only true ‘educational alternatives’ and are the most successful because they are permanent placements which focus on tailoring instruction to students’ unique needs and making education more accessible. (Aron 2003) Types II and III are much less effective in reducing dropout and disconnection.

During the 2011-2012 school year, Student Advocacy conducted a research project on alternative high school education programs serving Westchester students. One of the purposes of the project was to support the Connecting Youth endeavor under the Westchester Children’s Association auspices by contributing information about alternative high school programs. Several activities were built into the project:

1. Developing a complete list of alternative high school education programs that serve Westchester residents.
2. Creating an interview instrument to capture essential characteristics of these programs.
3. Conducting interviews with key personnel either by phone, mail or e-mail.
4. Writing up the phone interviews and obtaining approval of the write-ups by key personnel.

Almost 50 programs were included on the list. The largest group was school-district based programs, which are most often limited to students residing in that school district. Other programs fell under the categories of special act school districts, programs affiliated with either Southern Westchester BOCES or Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES, and other day and residential programs exclusively for students classified for special education.

The interview instrument consisted of 11 questions. All programs were contacted either by phone, e-mail and/or mail. Surveys were completed for 14 programs. Two of the larger, more diversified school districts are responsible for 5 of the 14 programs. We were unable to obtain information from three key school districts with a high potential for having disconnected youth.

Although it is impossible to draw conclusions about alternative high school programs from only 14 responses, some themes emerged:

1. Most programs were at capacity. Some felt that the capacity met the need; others did not. One administrator commented that in a district like his, there will always be more students who could benefit from an alternative school environment.
2. Most programs had rolling admissions, if there was room in the program.
3. While criteria for admission differed somewhat from program to program, key factors included:
  - Social concerns;
  - Academic concerns;
  - Chronic lateness, absenteeism and/or truancy; and
  - At-risk to drop out.
4. Several factors from the following list characterize the students who apply to alternative high school programs:
  - They experience social, family, emotional and/or behavioral issues.
  - They have faced legal issues and have drug involved backgrounds.
  - They are disorganized and unmotivated.
  - They feel disenfranchised and disengaged.

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- Traditional high school has not worked and/or they feel they do not fit in.
  - They have academic potential but have not been meeting it.
  - Smaller, more individualized, more personalized, supportive settings work much better for them.
  - They want to be part of a community where students support each other to go for the best in themselves.
  - They want a combination of classroom and experiential learning.
  - They want meaning in their education, and to rekindle or grow a love of learning.
5. Most curricula meet the requirements for a NYS Regents diploma. Although the programs usually are not more innovative or challenging, classes are smaller, more individualized support is provided, and the schools tend to be more family-like.
  6. The graduation rate from alternative programs is very high, although students sometimes need one or two more years to earn their diplomas. In response to the question about estimating what percentage of students in the program might have dropped out if they hadn't attended an alternative program, some stated that students who return to visit often state how important the program was in getting them through high school. Others gave an actual percentage ranging from 5% to 95%!
  7. There was an almost unanimous affirmative response to the question: Do you believe that your program prevents students from dropping out and becoming disconnected youth?
  8. The strongest attributes of the alternative high school program included
    - Getting students to believe that they can be successful.
    - Recognizing that each youth has his or her own strengths, difficulties and obstacles.
    - Accommodating individual needs.
    - Emphasizing the personal, nurturing approach in a family-like atmosphere.
    - Creating a supportive community from teachers and peers.
    - Rediscovering the joy of learning.
    - Flexibility, experiential and democratic.
  9. Very few of the programs fit simply into the Type I, Type II or Type III typology. While a few stated they were closest to Type I or Type III, most felt they combined different aspects of two or even all three types.

Student Advocacy strongly believes that having a range of alternative high school programs is a critical component to enabling at-risk students to avoid disconnection by dropping out of school. Many students who become our clients are well-served by these programs. If these options were not available, we know that a great many students who struggle in school would never finish. Their risk of becoming disconnected increases dramatically when the right educational program is not available to them.

Although students reside in individual school districts and in large measure attend schools within their districts, they are still Westchester County youths. The county suffers when they drop out from school. We believe that the county, perhaps through the Department of Probation, could play an important role in helping to preserve existing programs and develop additional ones, especially for students who are at high risk of dropping out and reside in districts that do not appear to offer alternative programs.

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## Connecting Youth Project– Alternative Education Report

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## Dreams Deferred...

### Reconnecting Youth to School, Work and Community

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- *Leading* coalitions working to address children's issues
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