

What Challenges Are Boys Facing, and What Opportunities Exist To Address Those Challenges?

Many adolescent boys are doing well. They graduate from high school, stay out of trouble, and reach adulthood prepared for the world of work and the responsibilities of family. For young men like these, opportunities have never been greater.

For some boys, the transition to adulthood is more difficult. In recent years, boys made up 64 percent of juvenile murder victims and 82 percent of all juvenile violent crime arrests.^{1,2} By graduation, more than a third of male high school seniors had reported binge drinking.³ Twelve percent of boys never made it to graduation.⁴ Beyond the more general statistics, we find disparities among boys based on race and ethnicity, family structure, socioeconomic status, and the places they live.

Defining the Challenges and Opportunities

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation has commissioned a review of the literature on the risks and assets that affect boys ages 10 through 18. By summarizing and synthesizing the existing literature, the project aims to pinpoint what strengths make some boys likely to succeed and what risks, or challenges, increase the likelihood that they will struggle.

A major goal of the project is to provide information about approaches that help boys stay on the right track. These approaches will range from formal programs, such as anti-drug or anti-gang programs, to environmental interventions, such as when a community bands together to create safe places for youth to congregate, to more informal approaches, such as when a concerned adult befriends a troubled adolescent.

The project will produce a brief on key findings and a final report. These products will focus on seven research areas, or domains: mortality and victimization, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, mental health, education, employment, and constructive use of time. The project will also look at the influence, both positive and negative, of boys' characteristics; their families, peers, and schools; and their communities. Most importantly, the project will stress the positive impact that caring adults in families, schools, and communities can have on the well-being of boys and young men.

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¹ Snyder, H.N., & Sickmund, M. (2006). *Juvenile offenders and victims: 2006 national report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/nr2006/downloads/NR2006.pdf>.

² Snyder, H.N. (2005). *Juvenile arrests 2003. OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/209735.pdf>.

³ Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2006). *Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2005: Volume I, secondary school students* (NIH Publication No. 06-5883). Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/vol1_2005.pdf.

⁴ Child Trends. High school dropout rates. Retrieved October 26, 2007, from the Child Trends DataBank: <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/1HighSchoolDropout.cfm>.