

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS AND YOUTH IN THE EXTRA-JUDICIAL SANCTIONS PROGRAM



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DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS AND YOUTH IN THE EXTRA-JUDICIAL SANCTIONS PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is to provide information to Youth Justice Committee volunteers about the concept of developmental assets, and how to integrate this into the consequences they assign youth in the Extra-Judicial Sanction (EJS) Program. The course is also appropriate, however, for the general public and those working with youth who wish to understand more about helping youth move toward positive and constructive behaviours and activities.

SECTION A: WHAT ARE DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS?

Reference: All information about developmental assets in this course was drawn from the Search Institute web site at www.search-institute.org.

Developmental assets refer to the sum of experiences and characteristics that young people experience, which serve as the building blocks that aid them in making wise choices and enable them to become responsible adults. The developmental assets also support young people in avoiding risky behaviours, providing them with an opportunity to thrive from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood.

The framework for the Developmental Assets, which was developed in the 1990's by the Search Institute, is based on literature and practices on youth development and resiliency. The framework for the developmental assets was initially formulated through studies of over 99,000 6th-12th graders in the United States; further studies resulted in additions to the framework. Through looking at the development of young people holistically, including both internal qualities and external influences, research on over 3 million young people across North America illustrates that the more assets a young person has, the more likely they are to thrive.

The 40 Developmental Assets

While developmental assets have been identified for early childhood (ages 3-5); middle childhood (ages 8-12) and adolescence (ages 12-18), this course will focus on the assets relating to adolescence.

External Assets

Support

- *Asset #1: Family support* - Family life provides high levels of love and support.

- Asset #2: *Positive family communication* - Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
- Asset #3: *Other adult relationships* - Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
- Asset #4: *Caring neighbourhood* - Young person experiences caring neighbours.
- Asset #5: *Caring school climate* - School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
- Asset #6: *Parent involvement in schooling* - Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment

- Asset #7: *Community values youth* - Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- Asset #8: *Youth as resources* - Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- Asset #9: *Service to others* - Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- Asset #10: *Safety* - Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighbourhood.

Boundaries and Expectations

- Asset #11: *Family boundaries* - Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
- Asset #12: *School Boundaries* - School provides clear rules and consequences.
- Asset #13: *Neighbourhood boundaries* - Neighbours take responsibility for monitoring young people's behaviour.
- Asset #14: *Adult role models* - Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behaviour.
- Asset #15: *Positive peer influence* - Young person's best friends model responsible behaviour.
- Asset #16: *High expectations* - Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time

- Asset #17: *Creative activities* - Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theatre, or other arts.
- Asset #18: *Youth programs* - Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
- Asset #19: *Religious community* - Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.

- Asset #20: *Time at home* - Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Internal Assets

Commitment to Learning

- Asset #21: *Achievement Motivation* - Young person is motivated to do well in school.
- Asset #22: *School Engagement* - Young person is actively engaged in learning.
- Asset #23: *Homework* - Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- Asset #24: *Bonding to school* - Young person cares about her or his school.
- Asset #25: *Reading for Pleasure* - Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values

- Asset #26: *Caring* - Young person places high value on helping other people.
- Asset #27: *Equality and social justice* - Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- Asset #28: *Integrity* - Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- Asset #29: *Honesty* - Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
- Asset #30: *Responsibility* - Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- Asset #31: *Restraint* - Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies

- Asset #32: *Planning and decision making* - Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- Asset #33: *Interpersonal Competence* - Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- Asset #34: *Cultural Competence* - Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- Asset #35: *Resistance skills* - Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- Asset #36: *Peaceful conflict resolution* - Young person seeks to resolve conflict non-violently.

Positive Identity

- Asset #37: *Personal power* - Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
- Asset #38: *Self-esteem* - Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
- Asset #39: *Sense of purpose* - Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
- Asset #40: *Positive view of personal future* - Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Why Are Developmental Assets Important?

Research on developmental assets shows that they serve as an insulating factor for young people; that is, the more assets a person has, the less likely he/she is to engage in risky or damaging practices and behaviour, and the more likely he/she is to be involved in positive activities that allow him/her to thrive.

In particular, developmental assets have been shown to:

- support success at school
- prevent involvement in risky behaviours and increase community involvement; and
- assist young people in making wise safe life choices

While the presence of developmental assets has a positive effect on young people, research shows that only 8% of young people report experiencing between 31-40 assets while 17% report experiencing less than 10 assets. 32% report 21-30 assets while the largest group, 42%, report having only 11-20 assets. The significance of this research can be illustrated by the following tables which outline how powerful developmental assets are in preventing risky behaviours and promoting positive behaviours.

	0-10 Assets	11-20 Assets	21-30 Assets	31-40 Assets
Problem Alcohol Use	45	26	11	3
Violence	62	38	18	6
Illicit Drug Use	38	18	6	1
Sexual Activity	34	23	11	3
School Problems	44	23	10	4
Anti-Social Behaviour	47	22	7	1
Gambling	27	18	10	3

Table 1: Percentage (%) of young people (6th- 12th grade) who report that they have been engaged in 4-types of high-risk behaviours by the number of developmental assets they report having.

	0-10 Assets	11-12 Assets	21-30 Assets	31-40 Assets
Exhibits Leadership	48	66	78	87
Maintains Good Health	27	48	69	88
Values Diversity	39	60	76	89
School success	9	19	34	54
Delays gratification	9	19	31	44
Overcomes adversity	56	67	78	86

Table 2 - Percentage (%) of young people (6th- 12th grade) who report positive behaviours and attitudes by the number of developmental assets they report having.

As shown in these tables, youth with more developmental assets report engaging in less risky behaviour and more pro-social and positive activities. This research shows that there is little difference between the number of assets reported based on gender (males report an average of 17 assets while females report an average of 20). In addition, young people report a dropping off of assets as they progress from grade 6 (an average of 23 assets) to grade 12 (an average of 18 assets).

SECTION B - DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS & YOUTH JUSTICE COMMITTEES

The Search Institute's website lists a number of ways in which individuals who work with you can help build developmental assets in the young people they see. While we acknowledge that youth justice committee volunteers have a very specific role, there are ways that volunteers can incorporate these practices into their work.

Here are a few ways that you can integrate the research on developmental assets into the work you do as a youth justice committee volunteer.

External Assets

Support

- Smile at young people.
- Learn the names of young people. Greet them when you see them.
- Ask young people about themselves and their interests. Listen to them.

Empowerment

- Invite young people to share their gifts and talents.
- If you sense that young people aren't safe doing something or being in a certain area, intervene immediately to ensure their safety.
- Notice when young people are doing something right. Say something and encourage them to continue acting in similar ways.

Boundaries and Expectations

- Know the boundaries for your organization that everyone agrees on.
- Enforce boundaries when you see an infraction. Instead of being harsh with young people, redirect them to a better activity or a better way of acting. Think of your enforcement as a teaching method.
- Talk and act in ways that you want young people to follow. You're a role model, and young people are always watching and listening to you.

Constructive Use of Time

- Ask young people about the activities they're involved in and which ones they most enjoy.
- Make the time you spend with young people meaningful. Play with children. Talk with teens.

Internal Assets

Commitment to Learning

- Share your values of learning. Ask young people about school and whether they're completing their homework.
- Ask young people to tell you about a good book they've read recently.
- Attend a school function for a young person, such as a play performance, a game, a recital, a concert, an open house. Connect with the young person so he or she knows you're there.

Positive Values

- Talk about the values you have with young people and why you have them.
- Own your mistakes. If you tell a white lie, admit it. If you were too tired to care, say so. Show young people that acting on values isn't always easy and that admitting when you haven't also is a positive value—integrity.
- Teach young people how to solve problems with the values they have.

Social Competencies

- Break down skills into manageable steps for young people to learn. Being a friend means knowing how to listen, negotiate, express affection in appropriate ways, resolve conflicts peacefully, stand up for yourself, express anger in appropriate ways, ask for help.
- Notice when young people have skillfully stood up for themselves, resisted a dangerous situation, or asked for something they needed. Tell them what you admired about how they acted.
- Integrate skill building into your programs and activities.

Positive Identity

- Compliment young people.
- Discuss how community and world events can influence a person's outlook of the future. Talk about how to have a positive outlook when life gets difficult.
- Ask young people about their talents and abilities. Help them identify and strengthen them.

SECTION C - CREATIVE CONSEQUENCES

Creative consequences that are logical and meaningful to youth and work to reconnect the youth with their community can have a significant impact on reducing their chance of re-offending. Creative consequences are also a tool to get the youth to see their future in a positive light, by highlighting their ability to make positive choices and to use their talents effectively.

Whether you are aware of it or not, creative consequences often hit on many of the developmental assets identified by the Search Institute which contribute to giving youth a positive self-image, assist them in making more positive choices and allow them to develop a more resilient attitude.

These tips are intended to help youth justice committee volunteers think of consequences for youth which may be more creative in nature. We hope that in reviewing these suggestions, YJCs may be encouraged to use some of these ideas and to design their own 'creative consequences' which focus on their individual communities.

Take Home Projects

- *Non-Profit Organization Special Events Assistance* - Contact local non-profit organizations in your area and ask if they have opportunities for youth to participate in assisting them with preparation for newsletter distribution or special events. Check to see if organizations have any 'assembly' projects which the youth might be able to take home with them to complete. Look on the Volunteer Calgary website for a listing of organizations via geographical quadrant of the city – you can locate the website at www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca.
- *Assistance with Children's Projects* - Daycares, day homes and elementary schools often have projects on the go, which take considerable time to prepare. For example, an elementary school teacher or daycare worker may need several cardboard cut-outs made for a craft class. A youth may be able to pick up the project to complete at home. For a listing of Calgary day home agencies and daycare facilities, go to www.calgary.ca.
- *Researching Community Service Placements* - Ask the young person to investigate and document possible community service placements in their community, by using the form provided.

Short-Term Volunteer Opportunities

- *Helping Out With a Special Event Listed Through Volunteer Calgary* - Log onto www.volunteercalgary.ca to find current special events which youth may be able to help with.
- *Participation in City of Calgary Library Project* - Some libraries have shown an interest in being a liaison for YJCs. Call your local library and explore how you might work together with them. Ideas suggested in the past by librarians have been: self-guided tours of the library; letter and poster creation for displays; cleaning computers; clerical tasks. For listings, see 'Calgary Public Library' in the white pages.
- *Linking the Consequence with the Youth's Area of Interest* - During the course of a Panel Hearing, find out about what the youth is interested in. Do they have a talent they could share with others? Past consequences have included asking a youth to play an instrument at a seniors' care facility, and then share her experience with the Panel Members.
- *Youth Volunteer Corps* - Consider referring a youth to Child & Youth Friendly Calgary's Youth Volunteer Corps. The youth will be able to complete community service hours by participating with other youth in a community service project, supervised by Child and Youth Friendly Calgary staff. Youth benefit from this opportunity by connecting with other youth in the Calgary community, and by taking part in a volunteer project that will benefit others.
- *Community Association Special Events Assistance* - Ask the young person to help out with a special event at their local community association, such as a teen dance or a barn dance.

Graffiti

- *Reporting Graffiti* - A consequence for a youth who has perpetrated graffiti is to make a list of all graffiti in a certain area and report it to the City of Calgary.
- *Self-Directed Graffiti Clean-Up* - For young people who have perpetrated graffiti, ask them to return the area to its original state and maintain it for a period of one month.
- *Graffiti Abatement* - Youth can be given the task of going around their community and cleaning up graffiti by spraying it with a chemical and wiping it off the surface. The chemical is non-toxic. Ensure that an adult is available to go with the youth to pick up the supplies.

- *Urban Youth Worx: Mural Projects* - This program works on a project-by-project basis and focuses on youth and community development through art. During the summer, the Urban Youth Worx puts on a mural event. A professional artist leads youth in creating a mural on a site which has previously experienced a high volume of graffiti. In 2003, the project ran from June 28 – August 31. There are projects happening during the fall and winter months, but they are less frequent.

Theft

- *Buy & Donate* - Ask the young person to buy the item they stole and donate it to a charity of their choice. Request that they bring a receipt of purchase and a receipt of donation from the agency they have donated to.
- *Donation to Charity/The Children's Hospital* - Ask the young person to donate the dollar amount for the damage they caused to a charity of their choice. Again, request that they bring a receipt of the donation to a follow-up meeting with Panel Members. The youth can also make a donation to the Alberta Children's Hospital or any charity that donates to children.
- *Giving to People Less Fortunate* - Have the young person purchase fashionable clothes for a dollar amount, for donation to a less fortunate person.
- *Interview with a Store Manager* - For young people who have shoplifted, arrange an interview with a local store manager and share with them how shoplifting impacts consumers.
- *Movies* - Have the youth watch a movie like Pay It Forward or The Grinch Who Stole Christmas; if you choose, the youth could watch the movie with YJC members. Have the youth explore whether they think one person can make a difference. Ask them how they feel they can make a difference; when and where will they do that; how will others view them?

Self-Esteem Creative Writing Assignments

- *Book Writing Assignment* - Librarians at your local branch may be able to suggest self-esteem based books which the youth could read and report on such as Steven Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens or Chicken Soup for the Soul.

Career Path Building

- *Job Shadow* - Find out what a youth's interest is in possible employment opportunities. Have them job shadow someone at their place of employment for one day and report back.
- *Career Building* - Ask youth to go to the Youth Employment Centre and research any one of the following topics:
 - Resume development
 - Job Search
 - Preparing for Interviews
 - Career Planning
 - Portfolio Development
 - Self-Esteem and Motivation
- *Career Circuit* - Career Circuit is an on-line program which offers practical solutions and techniques for youth, including helping youth develop their motivation and a sense of hope for their future. Youth Justice Committees can search the Member's Directory of over 5,500 youth serving agencies nationally, and 481 in Alberta. See www.thecircuit.org.

Crime Impact

- *Interview with a Victim* - Have the youth find an article on victimization from the newspaper. Alternatively, have them interview someone they know (not the victim of their crime) who has been a victim of crime. Have the youth complete the questionnaire included in this section of the binder, and bring it back to the Panel for discussion. The intent here is to instill empathy in the youth by having them think about how it would feel to be personally impacted by a crime. Also, have youth remember a time when they have been a victim of crime – have they ever experienced having their personal property taken?
- *Interview with a Store Manager* - For young people who have shoplifted, arrange an interview with a local store manager and have the manager share with them how shoplifting impacts consumers.
- *Essay/Poster on Consequences of a Criminal Record* - Ask the young person to research and write an essay that explains how having a criminal record may affect their future goals. If the young person is an artist, ask them to draw a poster and explain their artwork to the Panel.

- *Essay Focusing on Peer Pressure* - discuss how others (peers) may have interfered with their ability to make positive choices.
- *Family Impact* - Ask the young person to write an essay on how the offence affected their family and on how they will avoid being in conflict with the law in the future.
- *Creating a Life Plan* - Ask the young person to create a life plan, researching the cost of supporting themselves for one year, as well as the education and employment needed to earn the appropriate wage and how a criminal record will interfere with this goal.
- *Youth Court Attendance* - Ask the young person to attend youth court to understand the process and report back.
- *Poetry* - If the youth are interested in writing poetry, ask them to share it with you, or to write a poem on their experience of being involved with the youth criminal justice system.
- *Collage* - Ask the youth to make a collage on a topic meaningful to them.

Drugs

- *Website Research* - Ask the youth to do research on the negative effects of alcohol and drugs. Refer them to the AADAC site at www.aadac.com. To appeal to teens, one icon on the home page includes information on alcohol, drugs, gambling, personal development and recovery issues. It includes interactive features, such as surveys, quizzes, and forums, as well as showcasing youth views and talent. There is also an icon youth can hit entitled 'Truth about Tobacco'.

Violence

- *Museum of the Regiments* – Consider asking the youth to attend the Museum of the Regiments with a parent. The museum is free and there is a quiz available for youth to complete. The intent here would be to increase a youth's awareness around the negative impact of weapons' use. This is a consequence, which should be used with great sensitivity both around a youth's cultural background and around the degree to which a youth thinks positively about weapons' use.
- *Bowling for Columbine* - Consider asking youth to view this movie - you may choose to have them watch the movie with an YJC Member. The movie is a humorous documentary by filmmaker

Michael Moore, and deals with the issue of gun control in the United States. The movie is suitable for mature level youth, and should not be used with youth who glorify gun use. The movie-maker interviews a number of people and engages viewers in a serious debate.

Building Futures

- *Young Offender Mentoring Program* – To access the Calgary Young Offender Centre's 'Young Offender Mentoring Program', please call Dawn Fraser, Program Coordinator, at 662-3563 (dawn.fraser@gov.ab.ca).
- *Coaching Questionnaire* – Have more mature youth complete the coaching questionnaire, which gets them to identify a specific goal and work through the steps they might take to complete that goal.
- *Get to Know Your City* - Have youth find out more about Calgary. Consider getting free passes to pro-social events for youth.

CONCLUSION

Youth Justice Committees do not have a great deal of time or ongoing contact with youth in the EJS Program. As such, it is difficult to come to know the youth in a truly indepth manner. However brief, the EJS Program does provide a window of opportunity to interrupt youths' negative behaviour, steer them toward a more direction, and hopefully prevent future occurrences of offending. By gathering specific information prior to and during the Panel Hearing, you may be able to identify existing assets that can be strengthened further, and/or areas in which to promote new assets in the consequences assigned.

APPENDIX A: DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS GUIDE FOR YOUTH JUSTICE COMMITTEES

Here are some useful indicators and questions that you can use while working with young people too illustrate whether or not they may have the Developmental Assets.

External

Family

- Does the young person experience high levels of love and support from his/her parents?
- Is there open and positive communication between the young person and his/her family?
- Does the young person know what is expected of him/her (rules)? Does he/she know what the consequences are for breaking these rules?
- Does the young person feel safe at home?
- Does the young person have other adult relationships?

School

- Does the young person view school as a caring and encouraging environment?
- Does the young person feel attached to school i.e. school pride, involvement in activities?
- Does the young person have good interpersonal skills (e.g. empathy, sensitivity, friendship skills)?
- Does the young person know what behaviour is expected (formal and informal rules) at school?
- Does the young person know what to expect if these rules are broken?

Internal

Social and emotional

- Does the young person value helping others?
- Is the young person aware of social injustice in his/her community i.e. homelessness, poverty? Is he/she interested in addressing these issues?
- Does the young person have a standard of behaviours that he/she sticks to regardless of others?
- Does the young person take responsibility for his/her actions?
- Does the young person exercise restraint in regards to se/drugs/alcohol etc?

- Does the young person exercise good decision making and planning strategies?
- Is the young person aware of/comfortable with others from different cultural/ethnic/racial groups?
- Does the young person exercise impulse control and conflict resolution?

Positive Identity/Personal Power

- Does the young person believe that he/she has control over things that happen in his/her life?
- Does the young person have a high self-esteem?
- Does the young person believe that his/her life has a purpose?
- Is the young person optimistic about his/her future?