

At-Risk Youth Prevention Survey Results – West Virginia Child Care Association
Preliminary Analysis Provided by West Virginia University Division of Social Work
Carrie Rishel, Ph.D.

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

Role of respondents in the Child Service System:

- Social Service Agency = 127, 28.9%
- Education System = 74, 16.8%
- State Agency = 54, 12.3%
- Juvenile Justice System = 31, 7.0%
- Law enforcement = 14, 3.2%
- Other = 139, 31.6%

Age of youth with whom respondents typically interact:

- Birth to 3 = 129, 29.3%
- 4-10 = 225, 51.1%
- 11-16 = 319, 72.5%
- 17-21 = 251, 57%

What risk factors do you and your organization deal with on a regular basis?

- Learning, emotional, or behavioral problems = 338, 76.8%
- Abuse and neglect = 328, 74.5%
- Substance abuse = 320, 72.7%
- Poverty = 320, 72.7%
- Poor educational and employment options = 259, 58.9%
- Peer pressure = 244, 55.5%
- Criminal activity not gang related = 185, 42%
- Gang activity = 61, 13.9%

Which risk factors do you believe lead children ages birth -3 in your community to be involved in future at-risk behavior?

- Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 305, 69.3%
- Poorly educated parents = 254, 57.7%
- Parental abuse/neglect = 238, 54.1%
- Poverty = 175, 39.8%
- Inadequate parental monitoring = 117, 26.6%
- Harsh and/or erratic discipline = 65, 14.8%
- Pregnancy and delivery complications = 38, 8.6%
- Antisocial behavior such as aggression = 26, 5.9%
- Hyperactive/impulsive behavior = 22, 5.0%

Which risk factors do you believe lead children ages 4-10 in your community to be involved in future at-risk behavior?

- Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 272, 61.8%

- Inadequate parental monitoring = 245, 55.7%
- Parental abuse/neglect = 227, 51.6%
- Poverty = 155, 35.2%
- Harsh and/or erratic discipline = 84, 19.1%
- Hyperactive/impulsive behavior = 65, 14.8%
- Lack or guilt, lack of empathy = 59, 13.4%
- Antisocial behavior such as aggression = 58, 13.2%
- Social isolation or target of school bullying = 54, 12.3%
- Violence in the media = 35, 8.0%
- Persistent lying = 11, 2.5%

Which risk factors do you believe lead children ages 11-16 in your community to be involved in future at-risk behavior?

- Inadequate parental monitoring = 253, 57.5%
- Early onset of substance use = 218, 49.5%
- Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 181, 41.1%
- Peer pressure = 143, 32.5%
- Lack of organized youth activities = 107, 24.3%
- Poverty = 96, 21.8%
- Early onset of sexual activity = 76, 17.3%
- Social isolation or target of school bullying = 63, 14.3%
- Antisocial behavior such as aggression = 61, 13.9%
- Harsh and/or erratic discipline = 32, 7.3%
- School practices and policies = 30, 6.8%
- Violence in the media = 16, 3.6%
- Presence of gang activity = 5, 1.1%

Which risk factors do you believe lead children ages 17-21 in your community to be involved in future at-risk behavior?

- Substance abuse = 328, 74.5%
- Unemployment = 193, 43.9%
- Peer pressure = 140, 31.8%
- Poverty = 128, 29.1%
- Parental abuse/neglect = 104, 23.6%
- Lack of access or opportunity for higher education = 102, 23.2%
- Antisocial behavior such as aggression = 96, 21.8%
- Lack of organized youth activities = 84, 19.1%
- School practices and policies = 37, 8.4%
- Harsh and/or erratic discipline = 26, 5.9%
- Presence of gang activity = 11, 2.5%

Which family characteristics do you believe lead to at-risk youth behavior?

- Poor parenting practices, such as lack of monitoring, lack of positive reinforcement = 368, 83.6%

- Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior = 295, 67.0%
- Poor parent-child communication = 166, 37.7%
- Parent conflict/divorce = 107, 24.3%
- Poorly educated parents = 106, 24.1%
- The prevalence of physical abuse = 66, 15.0%
- Parental psychopathology = 61, 13.9%
- A history of physical violence = 54, 12.3%
- Maternal substance abuse while pregnant = 41, 9.3%
- Antisocial parents = 18, 4.1%
- Large family size = 1, .2%

Which school or community characteristics do you believe lead to at-risk youth behavior?

- Poor student-teacher relations = 207, 47%
- Poor academic achievement = 183, 41.6%
- Neighborhood crime, drugs = 183, 41.6%
- The prevalence of norms and values that support antisocial behavior = 178, 40.5%
- Inadequate rule enforcement = 139, 31.6%
- Residence in disadvantaged neighborhood, 100, 22.7%
- Poorly defined conduct rules/expectations = 92, 20.9%
- Little cooperation among teachers = 45, 10.2%
- Low levels of teacher satisfaction = 42, 9.5%
- Violence in the media = 40, 9.1%

Do you think at-risk youth behaviors could be prevented, for the most part, with intervention prior to negative behaviors manifesting?

- Yes = 422, 95.9%
- No = 17, 3.9%

The biggest obstacle in your opinion to prevent children ages birth-3 from engaging in at-risk behavior as they get older are:

- Lack of parenting skills = 196, 44.5%
- Lack of family support (e.g. isolated parents) = 130, 29.5%
- Transportation to programs/activities = 108, 24.5%
- Prevalence of poverty = 107, 24.3%
- Working single parent = 70, 15.9%
- Affordable and appropriate daycare = 62, 14.1%
- Lack of access to mental health services = 53, 12%
- Lack of parent education programs = 41, 9.3%
- Incarcerated parent(s) = 19, 4.3%
- Lack of access to medical services = 9, 2.0%
- Do not work with age group = 149, 33.9%

What is the biggest obstacle facing children ages birth to 3 in West Virginia today?

- Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 189, 43%

- Poverty = 114, 25.9%
- Lack of parental education = 72, 16.4%
- Lack of parental employment = 24, 5.5%
- Lack of access to medical services = 10, 2.3%
- Lack of housing = 2, .5%

The biggest obstacle in your opinion to prevent children ages 4-10 from engaging in at-risk behavior as they get older are:

- Lack of parenting skills = 156, 35.5%
- Lack of parental supervision = 127, 28.9%
- Money for programs and services = 117, 26.6%
- Lack of facilities/activities targeted for youth (e.g. after school programs, rec. centers, scouting activities) = 117, 26.6%
- Transportation to programs/activities = 117, 26.6%
- Lack of knowledge of existing services by the people who could benefit = 94, 21.4%
- Lack of family support (e.g. isolated parents) = 86, 19.5%
- Prevalence of poverty = 78, 17.7%
- Lack of educational support (tutoring, mentoring, oversight) = 60, 13.6%
- Lack of access to mental health services = 30, 6.8%
- Do not work with age group = 84, 19.1%

What is the biggest obstacle facing children ages 4-10 in West Virginia today?

- Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 183, 41.6%
- Poverty = 113, 25.7%
- Lack of parental education = 75, 17.0%
- Lack of parental employment = 31, 7.0%
- Lack of access to medical services = 6, 1.4%
- Lack of housing = 1, .2%

The biggest obstacle in your opinion to prevent children ages 11-16 from engaging in at-risk behavior as they get older are:

- Prevalence of drugs/alcohol = 210, 47.7%
- Lack of facilities/activities targeted for youth (e.g. after school programs, rec. centers, scouting activities) = 168, 38.2%
- Lack of parental supervision = 181, 41.1%
- Lack of parenting skills = 126, 28.6%
- Money for programs and services = 106, 24.1%
- Transportation to programs/activities = 90, 20.5%
- Prevalence of poverty = 86, 19.5%
- Lack of family support (e.g. isolated parents) = 84, 19.1%
- Lack of educational support (tutoring, mentoring, oversight) = 77, 17.5%
- Lack of access to mental health services = 27, 6.1%
- Do not work with age group = 22, 5.0%

What is the biggest obstacle facing children ages 11-16 in West Virginia today?

- Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 132, 30.0%
- Poverty = 72, 16.4%
- Children's substance abuse = 55, 12.5%
- Lack of parental education = 52, 11.8%
- Children's mental health issues = 39, 8.9%
- Early onset of sexual behavior = 26, 5.9%
- Lack of parental employment = 15, 3.4%
- Lack of access to medical services = 4, .9%
- Lack of housing = 0, 0%

The biggest obstacle in your opinion to prevent children ages 17-21 from engaging in at-risk behavior as they get older are:

- Prevalence of drugs/alcohol = 243, 55.2%
- Lack of educational support (tutoring, mentoring, oversight) = 131, 29.8%
- Lack of family support (e.g. isolated parents) = 119, 27.0%
- Lack of jobs for older teens = 115, 26.1%
- Lack of affordable activities for youth = 103, 23.4%
- Money for programs and services = 102, 23.2%
- Lack of parenting skills = 87, 19.8%
- Transportation to programs/activities = 71, 16.1%
- Prevalence of poverty = 68, 15.5%
- Lack of access to mental health services = 40, 9.1%
- Do not work with age group = 38, 8.6%

What is the biggest obstacle facing children ages 17-21 in West Virginia today?

- Youth substance abuse/mental health issues = 164, 37.3%
- Lack of employment opportunities for youth = 86, 19.5%
- Poverty = 51, 11.6%
- Parental substance abuse/criminal behavior/psychopathology = 44, 10.0%
- Lack of education for youth = 33, 7.5%
- Onset of sexual behavior = 14, 3.2%
- Lack of parental employment = 8, 1.8%
- Lack of housing = 3, .7%
- Lack of access to medical services = 0, 0%

What obstacles do WV youth face that are unique to them (not true of youth in other areas)?

- Geographical problems (such as living in a rural area) = 322, 73.2%
- Poverty = 226, 51.4%
- Attitude toward healthy lifestyles = 209, 47.5%
- Our own belief in Appalachian stereotypes = 125, 28.4%
- Obesity = 77, 17.5%

Are there obstacles that interfere with youth and their families accessing programs/services in your community?

- Yes = 379, 86.1%
- No = 60, 13.6%

Which obstacles do you believe impedes interagency information-sharing programs the most?

- The lack of adequate funding and resources to enable successful programs to continue = 212, 48.2%
- The difficulty of working effectively with other agencies = 102, 23.2%
- The burden of gathering and reporting information = 54, 12.3%
- The failure to conduct an evaluation = 14, 3.2%

Who are the most important people to be training to respond to high-risk behaviors?

- Parents = 375, 85.2%
- Teachers = 310, 70.5%
- Community members = 108, 24.5%
- Child welfare workers = 94, 21.4%
- Law enforcement = 88, 20.0%
- Counselors = 85, 19.3%
- School administrators = 73, 16.6%
- Youth leaders = 58, 13.2%
- Religious community = 28, 6.4%
- Medical personnel = 27, 6.1%

What services are available in your community for at-risk youth?

- Counseling services = 346, 78.6%
- Mental health treatment services = 333, 75.7%
- Drug and alcohol treatment services = 271, 61.6%
- Faith based services = 268 = 60.9%
- DARE = 239, 54.3%
- Parenting education services and support = 193, 43.9
- Teen pregnancy services = 174, 39.5%
- Teen pregnancy prevention services = 163, 37%
- School resource officer = 160, 36.4%
- Mentoring services = 150, 34.1%
- Employment services for youth = 85, 19.3%
- Gender specific services = 49, 11.1%
- Cultural specific services = 36, 8.2%
- Youth accountability board = 4, .9%

Are there programs/services that are not available to youth and their families that YOU would like to see developed in your community?

- Yes = 335, 76.1%
- No = 104, 23.6%

Which organizations ARE involved in at-risk youth behavior prevention in your community?

- Social service agencies = 375, 85.2%
- Juvenile justice system = 313, 71.1%
- Education system = 291, 66.1%
- Law enforcement = 266, 60.5%
- Federal/state agencies = 255, 58.0%
- Community or business leaders = 134, 30.5%

Which organizations would you like to have involved in efforts to prevent at-risk youth behavior in your community that are not already involved?

- Community or business leaders = 280, 63.6%
- Education system = 171, 38.9%
- Law enforcement = 142, 32.3%
- Juvenile justice system = 124, 28.2%
- Federal/state agencies = 122, 27.7%
- Social service agencies = 98, 22.3%

How could agencies in your community work together in a more cohesive unit to better prevent at-risk youth behavior?

- Coordinate prevention programs = 303, 68.9%
- Sharing information = 277, 63%
- Coordinate training programs = 217, 49.3%
- Developing a committee composed of all involved with at-risk youth to discuss and implement prevention methods = 209, 47.5%
- Reducing the overlap of at-risk programs = 76, 17.3
- Agencies in my community do not work together to prevent at-risk behavior = 45, 10.2%

What are the most important aspects of information sharing between agencies?

- Providing appropriate programs and services to deter at-risk youth from delinquent behavior = 302, 68.6%
- Improving interagency collaboration = 163, 37%
- Providing appropriate programs and services to intervene with juveniles currently involved in juvenile justice system = 155, 35.2%
- Leveraging resources and training programs through coordination = 145, 33%
- Developing a formal structure and process for interagency collaboration = 106, 24.1%
- Increasing the safety of the community and its children by reducing juvenile crime = 97, 22.0%
- Eliminating the duplication of services = 78, 17.7%
- Improving case and management level decision-making = 72, 16.4%
- Identifying processes and data systems for resource collection and dissemination = 69, 15.7%

Do you and your organization spend the majority of your time preventing at-risk youth behavior in your community OR addressing the at-risk behavior once it has already manifested?

- Addressing the at-risk behavior after it manifests = 220, 50%
- Both equally = 136, 30.9%
- Preventing at-risk youth behavior = 83, 18.9%

Have you received any professional training in prevention of at-risk youth behavior?

- No = 250, 56.8%
- Yes = 189, 43%

Which type of prevention efforts do you feel is most lacking in your community?

- Universal prevention which focuses on the entire population at risk and the identification of those conditions (personal, social, environmental) that promote at-risk behavior = 247, 56.1%
- Indicated prevention which targets high-risk individuals who are exhibiting beginning symptoms or signs of the problem behavior = 104, 23.6%
- Selective prevention which targets those individuals who have been identified at being at greater risk of becoming delinquent = 88, 20.0%

Which strategies are most needed to prevent at-risk youth behavior in your community?

- Mobilizing community leaders and residents to plan, strengthen, or create new opportunities or linkages to existing organizations for at-risk youth = 245, 55.7%
- Providing or facilitating access to academic, economic, and social opportunities = 226, 51.4%
- Conducting at-risk youth behavior prevention activities and holding at-risk youth accountable = 220, 50%
- Facilitating organizational change and development to help community agencies better address at-risk youth problems through a team 'problem-solving' approach that is consistent with the philosophy of community-oriented policing = 208, 47.3%
- Using outreach workers to engage at-risk youth = 128, 29.1%
- Screening policies to facilitate early identification of those most at-risk in order to be able to provide targeted services = 106, 24.1%

If the following were readily available in your community, the number of at-risk youth would be reduced.

- Money for programs and services = 241, 54.8%
- Transportation to programs/activities = 186, 42.3%
- Knowledge of existing programs/services by the people who could benefit = 162, 36.8%
- Facilities targeted for youth = 160, 36.4%
- Employment opportunities in general = 124, 28.2%
- Coordination of community programs = 122, 27.7%
- Drug/alcohol education or programs = 102, 23.2%
- Support groups for parents = 82, 18.6%
- Jobs for older teens = 55, 12.5%
- Daycare = 21, 4.8%

If parents consistently used the following skills in raising children, the number of at-risk youth would be reduced.

- Encouragement = 266, 60.5%
- Role-modeling = 227, 51.6%
- Consequences = 218, 49.5%
- Listening = 159, 36.1%
- Discipline = 158, 35.9%
- Support = 137, 31.1%
- Praise = 85, 19.3%
- Tough-love = 19, 4.3%
- Spanking = 4, .9%
- Punishment = 3, .7%
- Parents as friends = 1, .2%
- Lecture = 0, 0%

Parents could be more responsive to preventing at-risk behavior by:

- Actively communicating with children = 324, 73.6%
- Being clear and consistent with discipline = 320, 72.7%
- Getting involved with school and community organizations and activities = 217, 49.3%
- Identifying positive and negative behaviors = 142, 32.3%
- Limiting the children's exposure to and experience with crime and violence = 94, 21.4%
- Recognizing antecedents of problem behavior = 89, 20.2%
- Participating in family management training or counseling opportunities = 74, 16.8%
- Keeping guns and other weapons out of reach of unsupervised children = 10, 2.3%

Community and business leaders could be more responsive to preventing at-risk behavior by:

- Establishing school-community partnerships = 282, 64.1%
- Offering resources to local schools = 170, 38.6%
- Identifying and measuring the at-risk behaviors problems in the community = 161, 36.6%
- Providing internships and employment opportunities = 147, 33.4%
- Identifying appropriate research-based programs and services = 127, 28.9%
- Providing flexible work hours and leave to parents and volunteers = 119, 27.0%
- Providing training in basic job skills = 105, 23.9%
- Curfew enforcement = 65, 14.8%

Schools could be more responsive to preventing at-risk behavior by:

- Training school staff in all aspects of prevention of at-risk behavior = 263, 59.8%
- Providing more educational support (tutoring, assessment, remedial) = 209, 47.5%
- Addressing and preventing youth truancy = 128, 29.1%
- Providing all students access to school psychologists and counselors = 122, 27.7%
- Designing an effective discipline system = 116, 26.4%
- Providing wider availability of alternative school settings = 115, 26.1%
- Educating teachers on child abuse/neglect = 112, 25.5%
- Reaching out to communities and businesses to improve safety of students = 90, 20.5%

- Building local law enforcement partnerships = 39, 8.9%

Social Service Agencies could be more responsive to preventing at-risk behavior by:

- Implementing, evaluating, and revising a comprehensive prevention plan = 292, 66.4%
- Providing educational/training programs = 259, 58.9%
- Identifying and measuring the at-risk behavior problem in the community = 213, 48.4%
- Identifying appropriate research-based programs and strategies = 161, 36.6%
- Providing affordable daycare = 116, 26.4%

The courts could be more responsive to preventing at-risk behavior by:

- Better support of youth who experience high family conflict, domestic violence in the home and divorce = 197, 44.8%
- Stricter punishments for parent/guardians who engage in behavior that increases the likelihood of their children being at-risk for future negative behavior = 189, 43%
- Enhancing access to safe and appropriate prevention and treatment services for youth and their families = 187, 42.5%
- Holding parent/guardian accountable for child's behavior = 111, 25.2%
- Working in clear coordination with other agencies in the child welfare system = 103, 23.4%
- Intervening at a younger age = 100, 22.7%
- Improving how the law addresses system "cross-over" youth, those youth who cross over from the foster care system into the justice system due to unresolved risk factors in their past and current situations = 105, 23.9%
- Support changes in law and policy to promote positive youth outcomes = 94, 21.4%
- Voices of youth better heard in the legal and judicial process = 73, 16.6%
- Promote more youth related legal and judicial education = 40, 9.1%
- Disseminate information on best practices for aiding at-risk youths = 27, 6.1%

Elected officials and government agencies could be more responsive to preventing at-risk behavior by:

- Building collaboration between and among federal, state and local agencies to pool resources and maximize use of effective approaches to the prevention of at-risk youth behavior = 297, 67.5%
- Providing leadership to schools/communities for prevention of at-risk youth behavior = 203, 46.1%
- Responding within 24 hours of receiving a child maltreatment complaint = 158, 35.9%
- Educating communities about maltreatment and maltreatment reporting = 148, 33.6%
- Supporting at-risk youth behavior prevention research = 112, 25.5%
- Beginning a discussion of key legislative issues in prevention of at-risk youth behavior = 108, 24.5%
- Preventing maltreatment of youth = 99, 22.5%

How can we reach the greatest number of youth with information about solutions to at-risk behavior issues?

- Internet = 246, 55.9%

- School-based outreach = 234, 53.2%
- Television = 195, 44.3%
- Peer-based outreach = 158, 35.9%
- Youth centered community groups = 103, 23.4%
- Parent-focused outreach = 94, 21.4%
- Sporting events = 57, 13.0%
- Radio = 56, 12.7%
- Local service providers = 38, 8.6%
- Church based outreach = 33, 7.5%
- Billboards = 20, 4.5%

Which programs do you think would be beneficial in preventing at-risk youth behavior?

- Social skills, life skills training = 229, 52%
- Positive youth development activities = 223, 50.7%
- After-school /mentoring programs = 175, 39.8%
- Parent training = 155, 35.2%
- Home visitation to provide counseling, support, monitoring for at-risk families = 143, 32.5%
- Bullying prevention programs = 93, 21.1%
- Behavior techniques for classroom management = 57, 13.0%
- Behavior monitoring reinforcement = 57, 13.0%
- School transitional environmental programs = 45, 10.2%
- Building school capacity = 37, 8.4%
- Cooperative learning = 32, 7.3%