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Many teens doing well in Connecticut

Report highlights successes and challenges for youth in state

Many good things are happening with the state's teenagers, according to *A Profile of Connecticut's Youth*, a new report on youth well-being from Connecticut Voices for Children. Eight in ten feel very close to their parents/guardians and safe in their neighborhoods. Four in ten volunteer each week and more than half attend religious services weekly. And more than half say most of their friends participate in after-school activities.

"The teenage years are a time that makes grownups crazy. We worry about our teens and drugs, sex and other risky behaviors. And the media have even taught us to be fearful of them," said CT Voices Co-President Janice Gruendel. "Now it's time to match up our feelings with some facts about how teenagers are actually doing in Connecticut."

But our teens know that they face challenges as well. Two-thirds say their parents are not involved in their schools and many believe that their communities do not value youth. Data on risky behaviors confirm some important disparities in the well-being of teens between our wealthiest and poorest communities. Compared to children in the wealthiest Connecticut towns, teens in the state's poorest communities are 12 times more likely drop out of school and 14 times more likely to be arrested for violence. Young women in our poorest communities are also 37 times more likely to become a teen mother.

Not all disparities in indicators of youth well-being favor teens in wealthier communities. For example, teens in more affluent towns, who have more financial resources, are *more* likely to use alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes than teens in the poorest communities.

The report calls for more research on positive factors affecting youth in Connecticut. Most data gathered on teens depict negative rather than positive behaviors. "We know more about youth who fall through the cracks. We need more statewide surveys to identify teenagers who are succeeding and to better understand how to support positive youth development," said Priscilla Canny, Director of Research at Connecticut Voices for Children and lead author on the report. "Gathering this information can also help to counteract some negative stereotypes about youth."

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CT Voices for Children is a research-based policy and advocacy organization for children and families. Support for data analysis and production of the report came from Connecticut for Community Youth Development (CCYD) with grants from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice. CCYD is a statewide capacity building project working to create an infrastructure of services, supports, and opportunities to promote the positive development of 12- to 18-year olds in Connecticut.

The report and its parent publication, *The State of Connecticut's Youth 2003*, are available online at www.ctkidslink.org.

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