



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

IDEAS FOR INTEGRATING DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Y strengthens the foundation of community when intentional efforts to integrate the asset approach are made. It is important that the Y nurtures the potential of all children and youth. With more assets, youth are more likely to succeed and to grow up to be caring, competent, responsible citizens.

Below are ideas for implementing assets into youth development programs and activities at the Y:

- Give each young person one-to-one attention at some point during the program
- Take photographs of young people and hang them up in your room or in the hallways.
- Use the asset framework in designing the program content of youth development programs and activities.
- Notice what's working. Tell young people when they are doing something right.
- Make a designated space (like a teen center or a teen room) an asset-building space where young people can hang out, be safe, and do homework.
- Recognize adults who are building assets in young people. Recognize the young people who are building assets in children and other teens.
- Teach, model, reinforce, and celebrate character development values: caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility while also teaching the positive values assets (assets #26-31). Confront behaviors that are inconsistent with these values. Help children understand the consequences of their choices.
- Assign each young person a particular program leader or volunteer so that each teen has at least one adult that he or she can form a close relationship with.
- Attend other activities that young people are involved in outside of your YMCA.
- Create a climate where young people's opinions and experiences are valued and respected.
- Set high standards for how program participants, staff members, and volunteers are expected to behave in your program. Set standards that emphasize the positive rather than the negative.
- Post the list of 40 assets in your program areas.
- Help shape young peoples' personal identity by helping them discover their sense of purpose and to help them internalize their faith and beliefs.
- Recognize and celebrate youth service.
- Meet with other staff members and volunteers within youth development and brainstorm six ideas on how to build assets.
- Recruit young people as volunteers to provide leadership in youth development programs and activities.
- Invite young people to discuss their experiences at the YMCA with board members. Encourage teens to give board members ideas on how to improve YMCA programming for children and teens.

- Offer youth programs during after-school hours so that young people have stimulating activities to do when their parents and guardians still are working.
- Engage teens as leaders and decision makers within your program area and in other YMCA program areas. For example, young people can become teaching assistants in child care programs, referees and assistant coaches in sports and recreation programs, leaders within your youth programs, and members of your YMCA board.
- Learn the names of all the young people who participate in your YMCA youth programs and activities. Get to know them and ask them about what's going on in their lives.
- Train staff members, volunteers, and program leaders in the asset framework. Explain why it is important.
- Spend time getting to know parents and guardians (i.e. during drop-off and pick-up times).
- When you photograph events, get double prints. Keep one set for you program and give the extra photographs to young people in the photo.
- Provide teen internships with concrete learning opportunities, good supervision, and plenty of support and guidance.
- Offer parent-education classes so that parents and guardians can learn how to support their children and teenagers.
- Teach young people about the 40 assets and help them set goals for building their asset base.
- Encourage youth to explore their passion, talent or spark.
- Help young people create life-planning portfolios that include goals and dreams. Have youth follow it for one year before updating it and tracking their challenges and accomplishments.
- Consider using *The YMCA Purple Kit: A Tool for Evaluating Asset Building for and with Young People* to evaluate your youth programs.