



# On the Road to Adulthood

A Databook about Teenagers and Young Adults in the District



THE URBAN INSTITUTE



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*Prepared for The World Bank Group by the Urban Institute and DC Alliance of Youth Advocates*

## The World Bank Group Community Outreach Program

This databook received support from The World Bank Group's Community Outreach Program, which seeks to leverage local dollars and opportunities to improve outcomes for nonprofit organizations in the metropolitan Washington area.

The Community Outreach Program's mission is to improve the quality of life of families and youth in lasting, sustainable ways in the metropolitan Washington area. Over the last decade, the Community Outreach Program has collaborated with the public and private sectors, as well as with nonprofits, to promote knowledge sharing among nonprofits, to ensure direct support to select nonprofits, to encourage Bank Group staff to volunteer in the community, and to promote workplace giving.

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We also thank the nonprofit organizations that enabled us to conduct focus groups with their teenagers and youth adults and the nonprofit organizations that submitted descriptions of the important work that they do.

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# Introduction

The problems facing children and youth in the District of Columbia have never been more pressing than they are today. Poverty among families with children remains stubbornly high, and many young people live in families supported by a single parent. Youth violence and gang participation have become a growing concern in recent years. Young people are becoming sexually active at early ages, exposing them to risks of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. And the District's public education system, which ranks among the poorest performing urban school systems nationwide, has been plagued with inadequately maintained facilities and low student achievement.

The poor education of the District's children has emerged as a key area of concern, and Mayor Adrian Fenty has made public school reform a priority for his administration. The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), along with other District departments that focus on education, have changed significantly in Mayor Fenty's first term in office. Most notably, the D.C. Council passed the District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007, which, among other things, established DCPS as an agency under the mayor and transformed the former D.C. Board of Education into the D.C. State Board of Education; created and reorganized the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, the Office of Public Education Facilities



Modernization (OPFM), and the State Education Office (now called the Office of the State Superintendent of Education); and appointed a new DCPS chancellor to overhaul the public school system.

In addition, to tackle the broader issues affecting young people, Mayor Fenty's administration has built a mechanism to review how at-risk children and youth are served in D.C. The District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 created the Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission (ICSIC), headed by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education. ICSIC consists of 26 District agencies from education, public safety, justice, health, and human services; its overarching purpose is to create a forum where agencies can collaborate and coordinate to improve the lives of children and youth. ICSIC plans to use data to track how agencies are serving at-risk children and share resources to create cross-agency programs. ICSIC also intends to pilot early intervention initiatives with schools and other agencies.

ICSIC has six citywide goals for children and youth:

- Children Are Ready for School
- Children and Youth Live in Healthy, Stable, and Supportive Families
- Children and Youth Succeed in School
- Children and Youth Are Healthy and Practice Healthy Behaviors
- Children and Youth Are Engaged in Meaningful Activities
- Youth Make a Successful Transition to Adulthood

According to the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, ICSIC has started implementing new programs to improve the lives of children. It has created an interagency memorandum of understanding for data sharing, implemented an interagency process for vetting out-of-school-time programs in DCPS schools, developed and piloted a school preparedness assessment, and

increased the number of year-round youth employment slots for older youth.

While the progress made by ICSIC and the initial public school reforms have been laudable, these efforts have focused primarily on young school-age children. The District's older youth, who also deserve the city's focused attention, have been left out of many of these initiatives.

Many young people in our community are failing to make a successful transition to adulthood. They may not have completed high school or college, and they now find themselves ill-prepared for a labor market that increasingly demands highly skilled workers. Many other older youth are in dire situations and may be dealing with unresolved health or development issues from their childhood. They desperately need attention and assistance to become fully productive members of the community.

Further, while public school reform is certainly necessary to increase the likelihood that young people in the District of Columbia will succeed, school reform efforts by themselves cannot hope to address all the complicated social, emotional, and economic conditions that hold back the progress of D.C. youth. Schools and teachers are only one of the influences that affect a young person's development. As such, the family and the community also need to be fully engaged in the commitment to help young people.

A key way that the community influence can be exerted is through the efforts of nonprofit organizations that work with young people, their families, and their neighborhoods. The District of Columbia is fortunate to have many committed and dynamic nonprofit organizations working in numerous areas to support young people. Nonprofit organizations provide both in-school and out-of-school-time programs that supplement and reinforce the educational goals of the schools. Without the full engagement and support of nonprofits, school reform efforts will not fulfill their promise of better educational outcomes.

To better understand the challenges facing older youth in our city today, and to help city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local funders devise better programs and strategies for helping older youth, this databook describes the current conditions for young people age 12 to 24 in the District of Columbia. The Urban Institute, in collaboration with the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DCAYA) and its member organizations, developed this report as a valuable resource for planning, advocating, and evaluating programs designed to help youth make a successful transition to adulthood as well as to highlight the important role nonprofits play in the lives of our older youth. This databook is part of the World Bank Group-funded *East of the River Initiative*.

The data presented here include the following:

- Indicators showing current conditions and trends for District of Columbia older youth in economic well-being, health, education, risky behavior, and positive extra-curricular activities. Wherever possible, data are provided at the ward level and by race and ethnicity. We also provide data by gender and poverty status when significant to the indicator.
- District youth perspectives and experiences gathered from focus groups that help illustrate the data indicators and inform when quantitative data are lacking.
- Profiles from local community-based youth development organizations about their activities and scope.

## Organization of the Databook

The data in this report are loosely organized based on the District's Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission's six citywide goals for children and youth. The databook begins with the demographics of teenagers and young adults in the District. Whenever possible, we analyze teenagers, age 12 to 17, and young adults, age 18 to 24, separately.

Next, we follow with four sections based on the ICSIC goals:

- Teenagers and Young Adults Live in Healthy, Stable, and Supportive Families
- Teenagers and Young Adults Succeed in School
- Teenagers and Young Adults Are Healthy and Practice Healthy Behaviors
- Teenagers and Young Adults Are Engaged in Meaningful Activities

The first ICSIC goal, Children Are Ready for School, pertains to early education and does not apply to teenagers and young adults, so it is not included in this databook. The sixth goal, Youth Make a Successful Transition to Adulthood, is not treated as a separate goal in this databook as we weave information about young adults age 18 to 24 throughout the report.

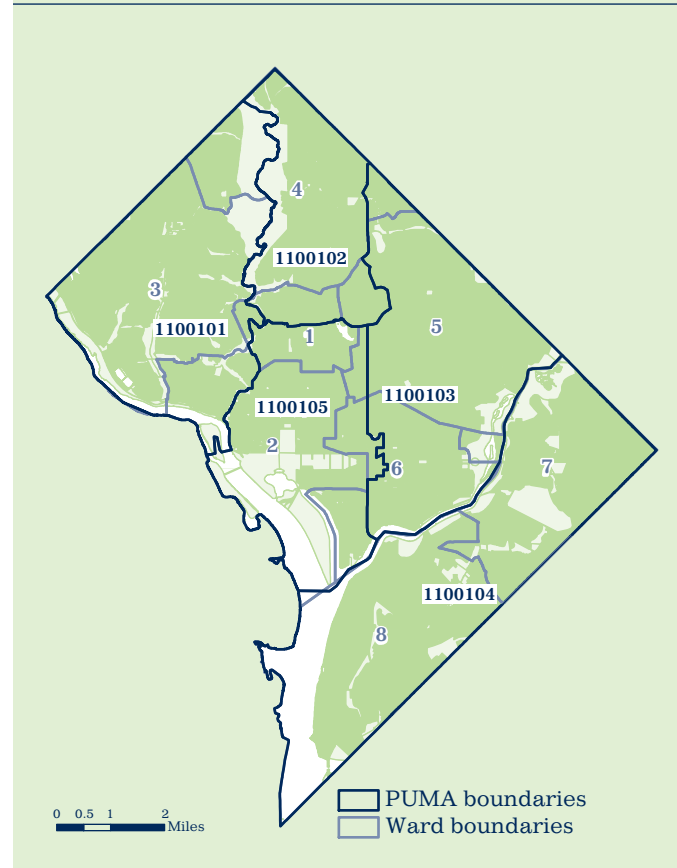
## Data Sources

The sources used in this databook include the 2005–06 American Community Survey (ACS) micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) from the Minnesota Population Center (Ruggles 2008). We averaged the 2005–06 ACS data together for more reliable estimates. The micro-level data from ACS are more current and better reflect the youth living in the District today than the 2000 decennial census; we can disaggregate older youth into the two age groups we are interested in (12 to 17 and 18 to 24 years old); and IPUMS data are available for Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs), which allows us to compare different areas of the city. Map 1

## DC Alliance of Youth Advocates

The DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DCAYA), founded in 2004 and staffed in 2006, is a coalition of youth-engaged organizations, youth, and concerned residents formed to ensure that all District of Columbia youth can access high-quality and affordable developmental opportunities. DCAYA envisions a community where no youth is considered at risk and where all youth are respected as valued community members. For more information, see DCAYA's full profile in the appendix.

**MAP 1.** District of Columbia Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs), 2000, and Wards, 2002



Source: NeighborhoodInfo DC.

shows the boundaries of the District's eight wards in relation to the five PUMA boundaries.

We also rely on two national surveys: the National Survey of Children's Health and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. The National Survey of Children's Health, administered by

the National Center for Health Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), provides a representative sample of all children age 0 to 17 for the nation and the District of Columbia (CDC 2003). The National Survey of Children's Health allows for analysis by race and ethnicity and for analysis of teenagers age 12 to 17. While this survey includes many important indicators of health and well-being of children and teenagers, the data are somewhat dated (most current data are from 2003) and do not provide any subcity geographies, such as wards.

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) is also administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2007a, b). The national YRBSS data represent 9th- to 12th-grade students in private and public school, and the District YRBSS data represent 9th- to 12th-graders in public school only. The data are more recent, as of 2007. However, because of the small sample size of white public school students in the District, YRBSS data for the District can only be disaggregated for African American and Hispanic public school students. Smaller levels of geography, like wards, are also unavailable.

District administrative data are provided through the Urban Institute's NeighborhoodInfo DC project. NeighborhoodInfo DC, in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation in D.C., has assembled a data warehouse of District administrative and federal survey data that provides a wide variety of indicators over time and at small neighborhood geographies, such as wards.

We also included the perspectives of teenagers and young adults that we collected from focus groups. We targeted the collection of focus group data on youth who often go unrecognized and unmeasured in the District: the homeless; gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning; and immigrants. We conducted five focus groups with a total of 30 participants (four focus groups had five participants and one focus group had 10 participants). Youth organizations affiliated with DCAYA

volunteered to recruit teenage or young adult participants, and the focus groups were held at their organizations. The five focus groups in the report include homeless teenagers temporarily living in the Sasha Bruce Youthwork Transitional Living Program; homeless young adult women associated with Covenant House Washington; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young adults who participated in programming at the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL); immigrant teenagers who participated with the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC); and immigrant teenagers and young adults who participated in programming at Asian American Leadership, Empowerment, and Development (AALEAD). We had hoped to recruit affluent teenagers and young adults from Ward 3 but were unable to find an organization that could recruit them.

We also included 14 profiles of community-based non-profits that work with District teenagers and young adults. The profiles highlight the efforts of local community-based organizations as they attempt to address specific needs of teenagers and youth. Throughout the databook, we refer to specific organizations in profile sidebars that work on the issues highlighted in the databook. Full organizational profiles can be found in the appendix.

While there are many youth-serving organizations in the District, we did not have the space to include them all. So we targeted the organizations affiliated with DCAYA and gave those organizations the opportunity to submit profiles. Organizations that responded were given priority in the databook.



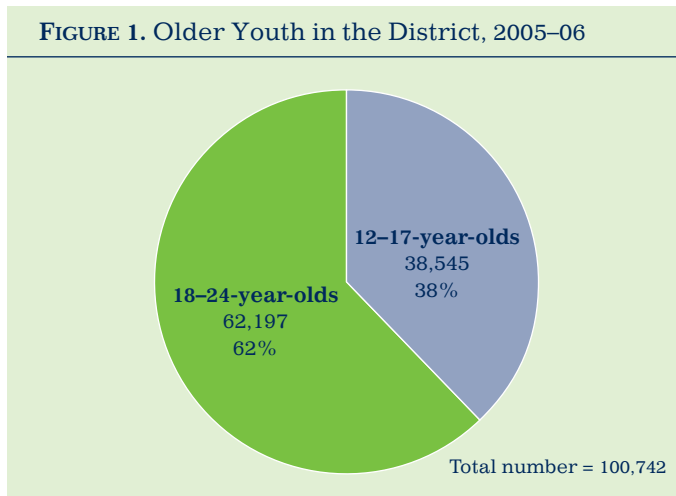
# Demographics of Teenagers and Young Adults

According to the 2005–06 American Community Survey, approximately 100,742 teenagers and young adults (age 12 to 24 years) were living in the District, making up 17 percent of the entire population. Of those 12- to 24-year-olds, 38 percent were *teenagers* age 12 to 17; the majority of them were African American and living in Wards 7 and 8. The remaining 62 percent of all 12- to 24-year-olds were *young adults* age 18 to 24 (figure 1).

## Teenagers

According to the 2005–06 American Community Survey, 78 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds were non-Hispanic African American, 10 percent were non-Hispanic white, 7 percent were Hispanic (of any race), and 5 percent were non-Hispanic Asian or other (figure 2a). Almost all teenagers spoke English as their primary language in 2005–06, although 7 percent primarily spoke Spanish and another 3 percent spoke languages other than English and Spanish.

FIGURE 1. Older Youth in the District, 2005–06

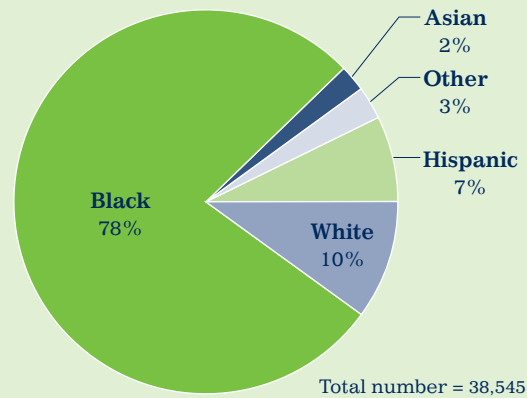
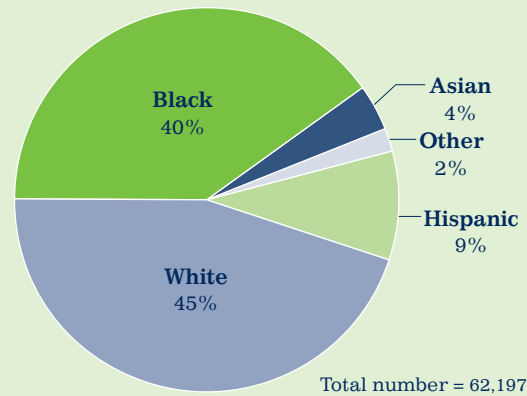


Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

## FINDINGS

- Approximately 38,600 teenagers age 12 to 17 lived in the District; the majority of them were African American and lived in Wards 7 and 8.
- Approximately 62,200 young adults age 18 to 24 lived in the District.
- Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of all young adults were either in college or had already graduated from college.
- The remaining 37 percent of young adults had either some years of college, had only a high school diploma, or had not yet graduated from high school.
- The majority of young adults with some college experience and those who had not yet graduated from high school were African American (78 percent each).
- Among high school graduates, a little more than half were African American, almost one-third were non-Hispanic white, and 14 percent were Hispanic.

**FIGURE 2. Race of Teenagers and Young Adults in the District, 2005–06****A. Teenagers, age 12–17****B. Young adults, age 18–24**

Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Almost half (48 percent) of all teenagers lived east of the Anacostia River in PUMA 104 in 2005–06 (as shown in map 2), and virtually all these children were black (96 percent). The next greatest share of teenagers (17 percent) lived in PUMA 103, which approximates Wards 5 and 6; 88 percent of them were black, and 7 percent were white. PUMA 101, which overlaps primarily with Ward 3, had the least number of teenagers (10 percent), and three-quarters of them were white.

## Young Adults

The demographics of 18- to 24-year-olds, or young adults, differ from the demographics of teenagers. Whereas 78 percent of all teenagers in the District were black, only 40 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds were black (figure 2b). Correspondingly, there was a greater proportion of white young adults in the District: 45 percent of all young adults, compared with only 10 percent of all teenagers. The share of Hispanic young adults was just slightly higher than the share of teenagers at 9 percent

versus 7 percent. In addition, young adults were not concentrated east of the Anacostia River, like teenagers were; instead, most young adults lived in PUMAs 101 and 105 (map 3).

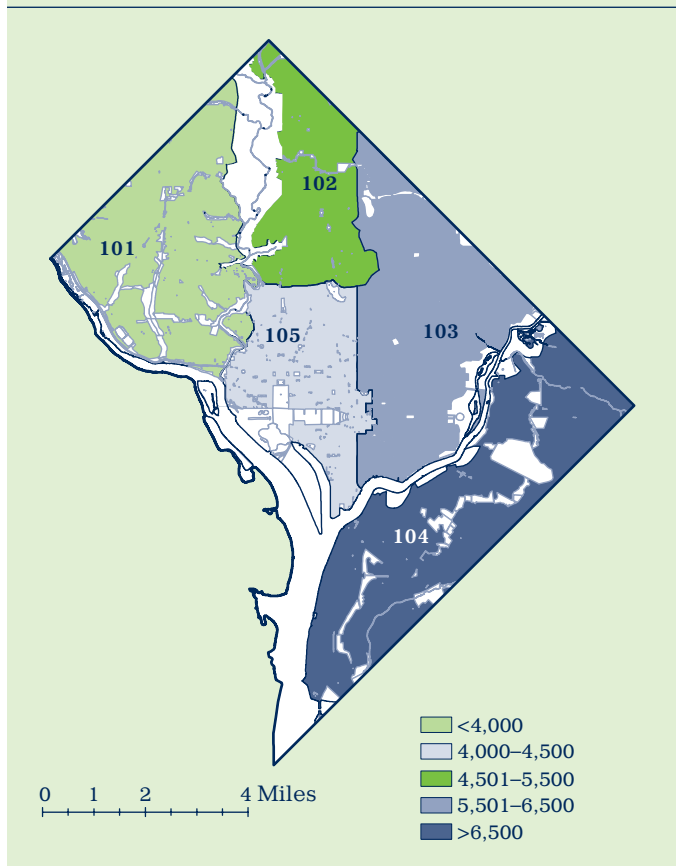
The District attracts many young adults from outside the area to local colleges and universities and to a multitude of job opportunities. To differentiate among these groups, we categorized young adults into five groups by educational attainment as of 2005–06:

- Graduated college (includes young adults with bachelor's degrees, as well as master's and doctorate degrees)
- Attending college (includes associate's programs)
- Some college experience (includes associate's programs) but had not graduated and was no longer attending
- Graduated high school but not currently in postsecondary school
- Had not graduated high school (this includes both dropouts and young adults still in high school)

The largest group of young adults was those in college in 2005–06 (37 percent); the next largest (26 percent) was young adults who had already graduated from college with a degree (figure 3). The remaining 37 percent were young adults with relatively low levels of education: high school graduates with some college but not currently attending (5 percent), high school graduates not enrolled in college (19 percent), and those not yet graduated from high school (13 percent). It is these remaining 37 percent that we focus on throughout the remainder of the databook. These youth are at an educational disadvantage compared to those already enrolled in or graduated from college, and they have more need for targeted programs and interventions.

The 2005–06 American Community Survey estimates the young adults who have not yet graduated from high school and whether they are enrolled or are not enrolled in high school. Of the 13 percent of young adults or approximately 8,300 who had not yet graduated high school, 42 percent were still enrolled in high school (or some equivalent) as of 2005–06, and 58 percent were not. We know from other research that young adults who have not yet graduated from high school



**MAP 2. Number of Teenagers by PUMA, 2005–06**

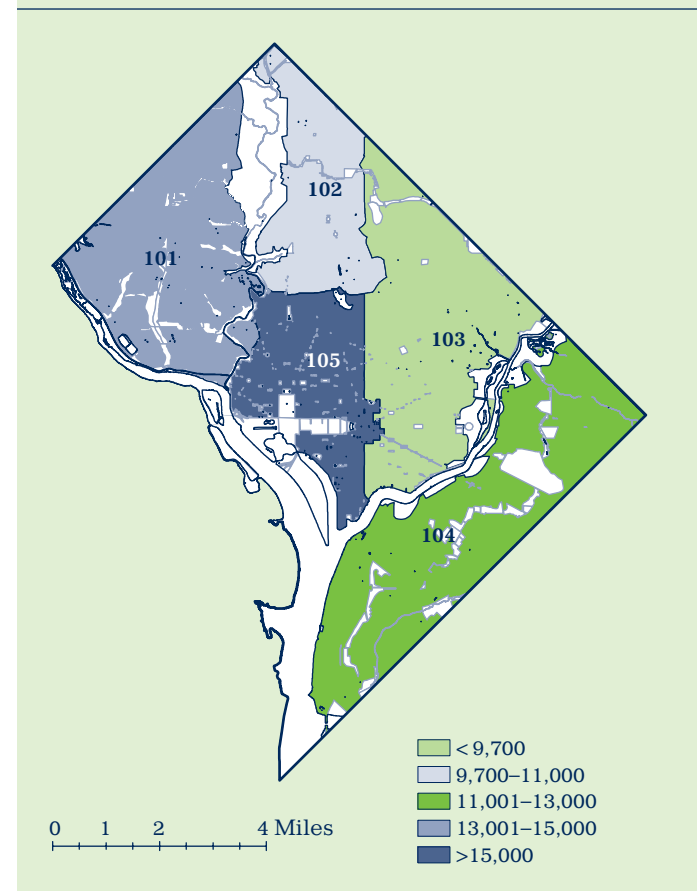
Source: American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series from the Minnesota Population Center, 2005 and 2006.

Note: Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) geographies are roughly equivalent to the District's wards.

and are not enrolled in high school are unlikely to graduate from high school because of their advanced age. This group can be considered high school dropouts. The young adults who appear to have dropped out of high school represent 8 percent of all young adults in the District.

As figure 4 shows, most young adults with high educational attainment (i.e., already graduated from college or currently enrolled in college) were white, while the majority of young adults with lower educational attainments were black and Hispanic. Almost three-quarters (73 percent) of all young adults who graduated from college were white while 11 percent were black, and 55 percent of all young adults currently enrolled in college were white while 34 percent were black.

Among young adults with some college experience, 78 percent were black, 11 percent were Hispanic, and 10 percent were white. Among high school graduates with no college experience, 54 percent were black, 30 percent were white, and 14 percent were Hispanic. Among young adults that had not graduated from high school, 78 percent were black, 19 percent were Hispanic, and 1 percent were white.

**MAP 3. Number of Young Adults by PUMA, 2005–06**

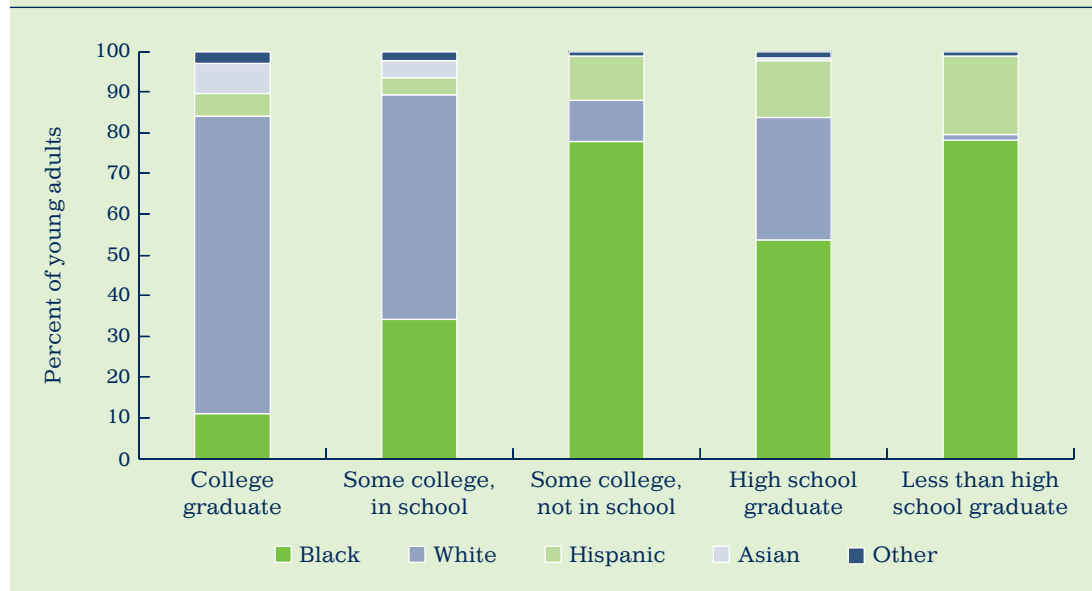
Source: American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series from the Minnesota Population Center, 2005 and 2006.

Note: Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) geographies are roughly equivalent to the District's wards.

Hispanics make up a relatively large portion of young adults without high school degrees, perhaps because a sizeable portion of Hispanics appear to be recent immigrants. Among all young adults with less than high school educations, 23 percent speak Spanish as their primary language, compared with 9 percent of high school graduates and 16 percent of those enrolled or graduated from college.

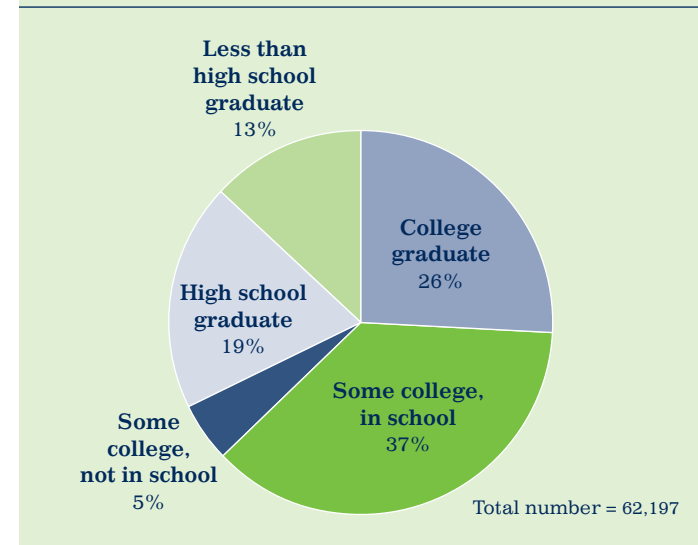
Nearly all (97 percent) young adults living in PUMA 101 were either in college or had already graduated from college; only 1 percent of the young adults in this PUMA had less than high school educations (map 4). Conversely, 18 percent of the young adults in PUMA 104, or Wards 7 and 8, were either enrolled in college or had already graduated, and 34 percent of the young adults east of the Anacostia River had less than high school educations.

FIGURE 4. Educational Attainment of 18–24-Year-Olds in the District by Race, 2005–06



Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

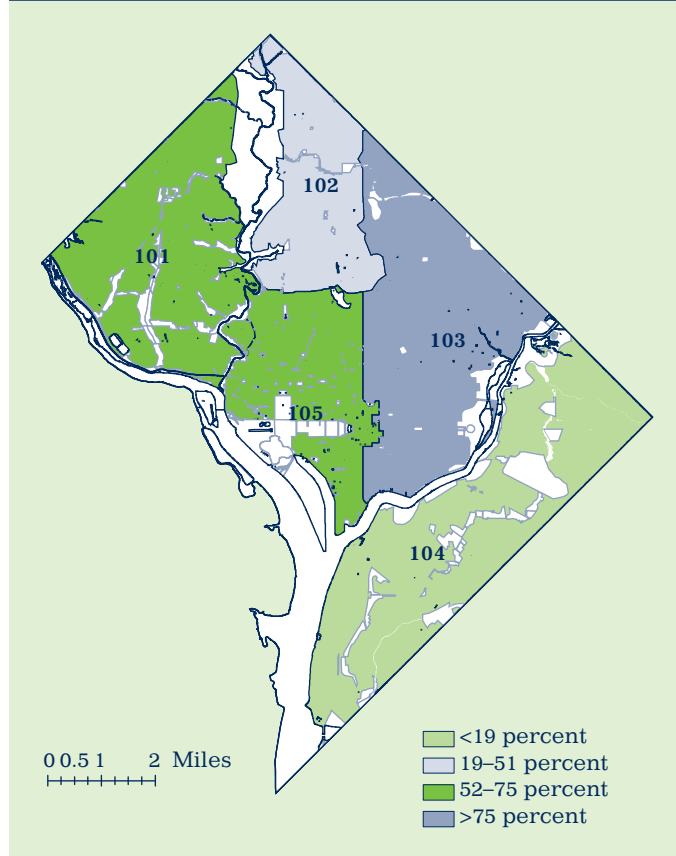
FIGURE 3. Educational Attainment of 18–24-Year-Olds in the District, 2005–06



Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

**MAP 4.** Share of Young Adults Graduated from  
or Enrolled in College by PUMA, 2005–06



*Source:* American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series from the Minnesota Population Center, 2005 and 2006.

*Note:* Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) geographies are roughly equivalent to the District's wards.



# Teenagers and Young Adults Live in Healthy, Stable, and Supportive Families

The economic security of the family unit has an enormous impact on youth during their childhood and into adulthood. Growing up poor can impede children's cognitive development and ability to learn (Smith et al. 1997); contribute to behavioral, social, and emotional problems (Duncan et al. 1994); and cause and exacerbate poor health (Korenman and Miller 1997). According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, children that are extremely poor throughout their childhood are at the greatest risk.

Family structure factors into whether children will grow up poor. Children living in single female-headed families are more likely to be poor than children living in married-couple families, and more than half of all teenagers in the District live in single female-headed families. Three-quarters of the teenagers in single female-headed households in the District are also poor.

Educational attainment also factors into whether young adults can secure well-paying jobs. Of those young adults who had some college experience but were not currently enrolled, one-quarter were poor, compared with a little more than half of young adults who had only graduated or not yet graduated high school.

## FINDINGS

- More than half (58 percent) of all teenagers in the District live in single female-headed households, and almost three-quarters of teenagers living in Wards 7 and 8 live in single female-headed households.
- Teenagers living in single female-headed families are more likely to be poor: 76 percent of all poor teenagers lived with single mothers, while only 8 percent of poor teenagers lived in married-couple families.
- The District's foster care population decreased between fiscal year 2003 and fiscal year 2007. Beginning in February 2008, the population increased for several months, then flattened and slightly decreased by the close of the fiscal year to 2,255 children and youth. However, the number of young adults (age 19 to 21) living in foster care has steadily increased over time.
- One-quarter (24 percent) of young adults with some college education were poor, 52 percent of young adults with high school diplomas were poor, and 54 percent of young adults who had not graduated from high school were poor.
- The number of homeless and unaccompanied District youth is unknown because it is difficult to quantify; however, homeless teenagers and young adults during our focus groups described their residential instability and the challenges of trying to find safe places to stay.

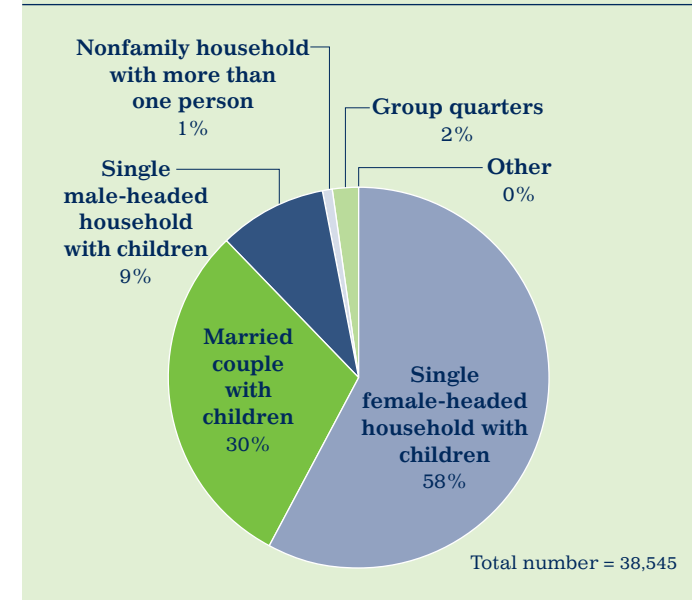
## Family Structure of Teenagers

Children that grow up in families headed by single women are more likely to be poor than children that grow up in married-couple families. (Poverty is defined as at or below the federal poverty level for the size of family. In 2006, the federal poverty level for one adult and two children was \$16,242.) More than half (58 percent) of all teenagers age 12 to 17 in the District lived in single female-headed households, and almost one-third (30 percent) lived in married-couple households (figure 5). Nationwide, only 25 percent of all teenagers lived in single female-headed families. Nine percent of District teenagers lived in single male-headed households, 2 percent lived in group quarters (college dorms), 1 percent lived in nonfamily households, and less than 1 percent lived in other household settings.

More teenagers living east of the Anacostia River are in single female-headed families than teenagers living elsewhere. Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of teenagers living east of the Anacostia River in 2005–06 lived in single female-headed households, compared with only 15 percent in PUMA 101. And, more than two-thirds (69 percent) of black teenagers District-wide lived in single female-headed households, compared with 31 percent of Hispanic teenagers and 11 percent of non-Hispanic white teenagers.

Teenagers being cared for by their grandparents are a relatively small but important family structure for youth, especially as child welfare agencies have made policy decisions to rely on kinship care as opposed to nonkinship care. Grandparents may become responsible for the welfare of their grandchildren informally through agreements within the family, or they may gain custody formally through child welfare agencies. Studies have found that kinship care providers are more likely to be poor, older, and single than other nonrelated foster care providers. A few studies have also found that grandparent caregivers' health worsened while taking care of their grandchildren, and that

**FIGURE 5. Family Structure for 12–17-Year-Olds in the District, 2005–06**



Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

grandparent caregivers were more likely to be depressed (Minkler, Roe, and Price 1992 and Minkler et al. 2000 from Geen 2003). Despite the challenges, some studies have shown that children placed in kinship care (either with a grandparent or other relative) are less traumatized and disruptive than children placed in nonkin care, and children feel “loved” and “happy” (Gleeson and Craig 1994; Johnson 1994; Wilson and Conroy 1999; and Zwas 1993 from Geen 2003).

According to the 2005–06 American Community Survey, approximately 4,400 teenagers living in the District, or 12 percent of all teenagers, reported living in the same house with their grandparent(s). Of those 4,400 teenagers living with their

grandparent(s), 64 percent (or approximately 2,800 teenagers) were cared for primarily by their grandparent(s). The vast majority of these teenagers were cared for by single female grandparents (87 percent), while the remaining 11 percent were cared for by married grandparents and 2 percent were single female grandparents with their own children (separate from their grandchildren). Of those teenagers being taken care of by grandparents, 46 percent were living in poor households. Most teenagers being taken care of by their grandparents lived in Wards 7 and 8 (PUMA 104, 33 percent), Wards 5 and 6 (PUMA 103, 30 percent), and Wards 1 and 2 (PUMA 105, 22 percent). Ward 3 (PUMA 101) had no teenagers being taken care of by grandparents.

A relatively small number of children also lived in foster care. Foster care is administered through the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to provide safe homes for children recognized as abused or neglected. A child is placed in foster care after CFSA investigates a report of abuse or neglect (many of which are reported through the agency's abuse and neglect hotline). If the investigation is substantiated, the child is removed from the home, and CFSA holds a family team meeting before the Family Court shelter care hearing. The family team meeting solicits the assistance of family members, relatives, social service workers, and the child's guardian to develop a safety plan for the child that will be presented to the judge at the Family Court hearing. CFSA's goal is to permit the child to remain at home whenever possible.

By the end of fiscal year 2008, 2,255 children and young adults under the age of 22 were in the District's foster care system, an increase of 1 percent since the end of fiscal year 2007 (figure 6). The District's foster care population has decreased steadily since the end of fiscal year 2003, when 2,945 youth were in out-of-home placements.

During fiscal year 2007, 661 family team meetings were held that included 1,006 children and 2,075 total family members. During fiscal year 2008, the number of family team meet-

**FIGURE 6.** Number of Children and Youth in the District Foster Care System, Fiscal Year 2003–Fiscal Year 2008



Source: D.C. Child and Family Services Agency.

Note: Children and youth in the foster care system are from 0 to 22 years old.

ings increased to 703, including 958 children and 1,959 total family members.

If children are removed from the home, CFSA can place children in two primary placement types: a family setting or a congregate care (group) setting. As of the end of fiscal year 2008, 72 percent of all children in foster care lived in family settings. Within family-based care, children and youth can be placed in either kinship care (with a family member who agrees and is licensed to care for the child) or with nonkinship or preadoptive foster parents. (This may include relatives who apply for adoption of the child.)

Nearly one-fifth (19 percent) of foster care children were placed in group or congregate settings in fiscal year 2008. Congregate care placements include traditional and specialized group homes, independent living programs, and residential treat-



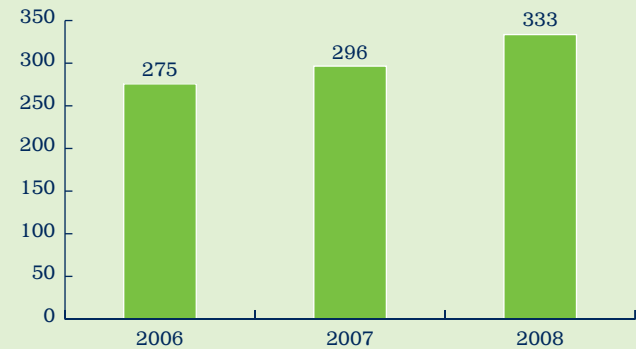
ment centers. At the end of fiscal year 2008, 423 children were placed in congregate care facilities, among which approximately 40 percent were placed in traditional and specialized group homes. The percentage of youth in group homes has steadily increased since fiscal year 2003, when 10 percent of youth in congregate care were placed in group homes. This may be related to the increasing number of older youth in the District's foster care population.

In 2008, 9 percent of children were placed in "other" placement settings, including children and youth in abscondence, college/vocational settings, correction facilities, hospitals, respite care, and substance abuse treatment centers.

One aspect of CFSA that makes it unique is that it allows young adults up to the age of 21 to remain in the foster care system. The agency is committed to preparing young adults who may have grown up in the foster care system for life on their own. It provides training programs and independent living programs designed to teach necessary life skills. Further, CFSA provides tuition assistance for students interested in attending college. Temporary allowance may also be provided to help with the transition from being a student to living as a working adult.

At the end of fiscal year 2008, 333 young adults age 19 to 21 were cared for in the CFSA foster care system, representing

**FIGURE 7.** Number of 19–21-Year-Olds in the District Foster Care System, Fiscal Year 2006–Fiscal Year 2008



Source: D.C. Child and Family Services Agency.

15 percent of the foster care population. This is an increase from the 296 young adults in foster care in fiscal year 2007, which represented 13 percent of the population (figure 7). This continues an upward trend in both absolute number and share of young adults in the foster care system.

### Foster Care in the District of Columbia

Removing District children from their home and placing them in foster care is accomplished through several steps.

- The D.C. Child and Family Services Agency investigates a report of abuse or neglect. If the investigation is substantiated, the child is removed from the home. CFSA holds a family team meeting before or within the 72-hour interval between removal of a child from home and the Family Court shelter care hearing. Within 72 hours of removing the child, D.C. Family Court holds a shelter care hearing or first appearance, and the court decides

where the child will live if the abuse/neglect allegations have probable cause and if remaining in the home is contrary to the welfare of the child. The court may conditionally release the child to her parents, or place her with a relative or in shelter care (i.e., temporary foster care). Shelter care is the most common placement in the District of Columbia.

- The child's case then enters the Family Court adjudication system. If the government successfully proves its allegations of abuse/neglect, a disposition hearing takes place. During this hearing, the court focuses on correcting the conditions of neglect or abuse and determining where the child will live until conditions are remedied—at home, with a relative, or in foster care ("committed to

CFSA”). The most common placement of D.C. children at the disposition hearing is in foster care. After the hearings, the Family Court and CFSA plan for permanent placement for the child and hold review hearings until a permanency hearing takes place.

- The Family Court is required to hold a permanency hearing for any child who has been removed from home within a year of the child’s entry into foster care. In addition to covering the issues that must be addressed at

review hearings, the court must decide whether children removed from their homes because of neglect or abuse should be reunified with their parents, placed in legal custody or guardianship, or adopted. If, for compelling reasons, none of these options are appropriate, CFSA and the court may try to place the child in another planned permanent living arrangement, or APPLA, such as kinship care, placement with another relative, or independent living.

Source: The Council for Court Excellence (2006).

## CFSA Troubles

The D.C. Child and Family Services Agency had a long history of troubles in the 1980s and early 1990s coinciding with the city’s fiscal crisis. In 1989, the *LaShawn A. v. Williams* case was filed in the U.S. District Court. A 4-year-old child, LaShawn A., had been in emergency foster care for two and a half years even though a law mandated children could be in emergency foster care for only 90 days. The court issued verdicts that the District reform its foster care system, but the reforms made were deemed inadequate and, in 1995, the District’s agency was put under receivership. In 2000, the District implemented the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which places CFSA’s priority on prompt, permanent, and safe placement of children over prolonged efforts at family reunification. In 2001 the receivership was terminated and the new Child and Family Services Agency was created. During the early to mid-2000s, the court recognized the newly reorganized CFSA was making improvements; however, in 2006, the Council for Court Excellence reported that CFSA needed still more reform, such as increasing its timely investigations of child neglect or abuse allegations, reducing the amount of time removed children spend in foster care before finding a permanent home, and finding permanent families for all the children in foster care, no matter their age or special needs.

The deaths of six children in 2008 brought more attention to the challenges of CFSA. In January 2008, four girls were

murdered by their mother (Banita Jacks) after CFSA investigated and closed the family’s case determining they did not need to intervene. Later that year, two infants were killed; one infant’s case had not yet been investigated by CFSA, and the other was under investigation. According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy (the court-appointed monitor for the *LaShawn A. v. Fenty* case), the review and hearing process following the Jacks murders revealed deficiencies in CFSA’s hotline and investigative practices; as a result, six CFSA employees were dismissed and corrective actions were put into place. After the Jacks murders, the public became more aware of the need to report potential abuse and neglect, and the agency was more likely to assign a case to investigation. This resulted in a large increase in the number of hotline calls and case-loads, stressing CFSA further. As of March 2008, the agency had 1,602 open investigations, 885 of which had been open for more than 30 days. In addition, 60 percent of CFSA workers were carrying more than 12 investigations, hindering their effectiveness.

These additional stressors to CFSA have hampered the agency’s ability to complete its reform plans in accordance with the *LaShawn A.* court order. The District has agreed to contract external child welfare experts to develop and execute an emergency plan to reduce its backlog of child abuse and neglect investigations, find permanent homes for children in custody, and stabilize its workforce.

## Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives

In 1996, the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency partnered with the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives to create a network of community partners that would work to provide neighborhood-based child welfare services to at-risk families. In 1997 the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities (HFTC) Collaborative Council was created to function as an advocate and policymaker for the collaboratives located across the city. Currently, seven neighborhood-based coalitions serve every ward except Ward 3: Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative, Georgia Avenue/Rock Creek East Family Support Collaborative, North Capitol Collaborative Inc., and South Washington/West of the River Family Strengthening Collaborative.

The collaboratives have three primary service areas that are provided under their partnership with CFSA:

- **Family prevention services:** These services are designed to strengthen families and help prevent child abuse and neglect whenever possible.
- **Family preservation services:** These services are designed to improve family functioning and to keep children safe in their homes when it is reasonable. These services support parents and community residents to gain the skills necessary to sustain and nurture their families.

- **Family stabilization services:** These services are for families formally involved with the child welfare system.

Each collaborative provides unique services that reflect the needs of the neighborhood in which it serves. Programs implemented by some collaboratives include the following:

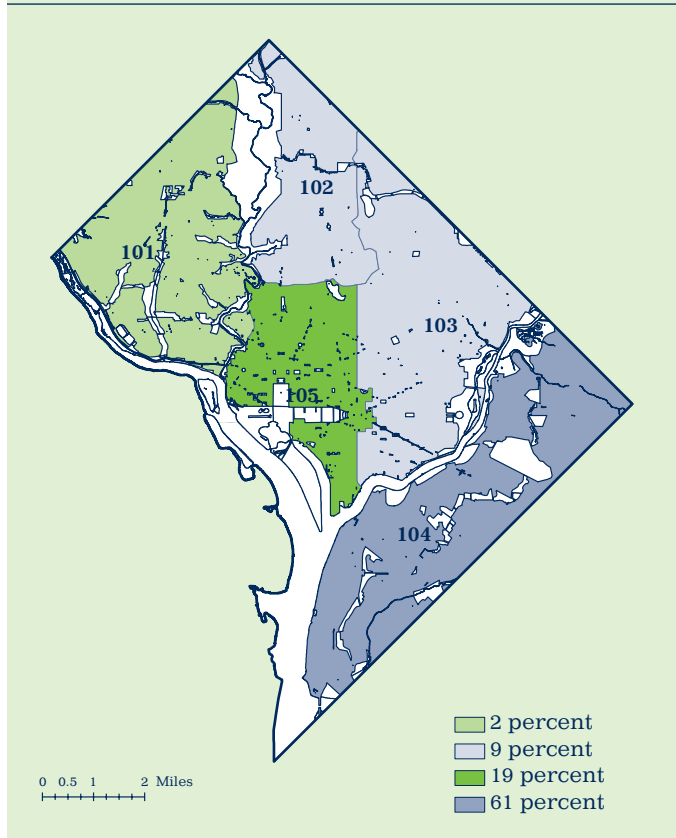
- **Fatherhood Education, Empowerment, and Development Program,** a federal fatherhood program funded by the Department of Health and Human Services that helps fathers become more stable, supportive participants in their children's lives.
- **System of Care Program,** funded by the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, in which a network of providers offers support services to families and their children who are at risk of entering residential care or are transitioning back into the community from residential care.
- **Prisoner Reentry Program (Father's Court Program),** funded by the D.C. Superior Court and the Department of Labor. This program supports ex-offenders who are fathers with securing employment and other life skills that will allow them to contribute positively to the well-being of their children.
- **Gang Intervention Program,** a program to reduce gang-related violence, decrease gang membership, reduce gang-related suspensions in schools, and increase the involvement of at-risk youth in recreational and other productive activities in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area.

## Teenage Poverty

In 2005–06, 33 percent of all District teenagers age 12 to 17 lived in poor families, compared with only 16 percent of all 12- to 17-year-olds nationally. The consequences of poverty, especially persistent poverty throughout a young person's life, include poor health, poor physical and cognitive development, and poor school achievement. More than one-third of all black and Hispanic teenagers living in the District were poor in 2006

(37 and 36 percent, respectively), while 7 percent of white teenagers were poor.

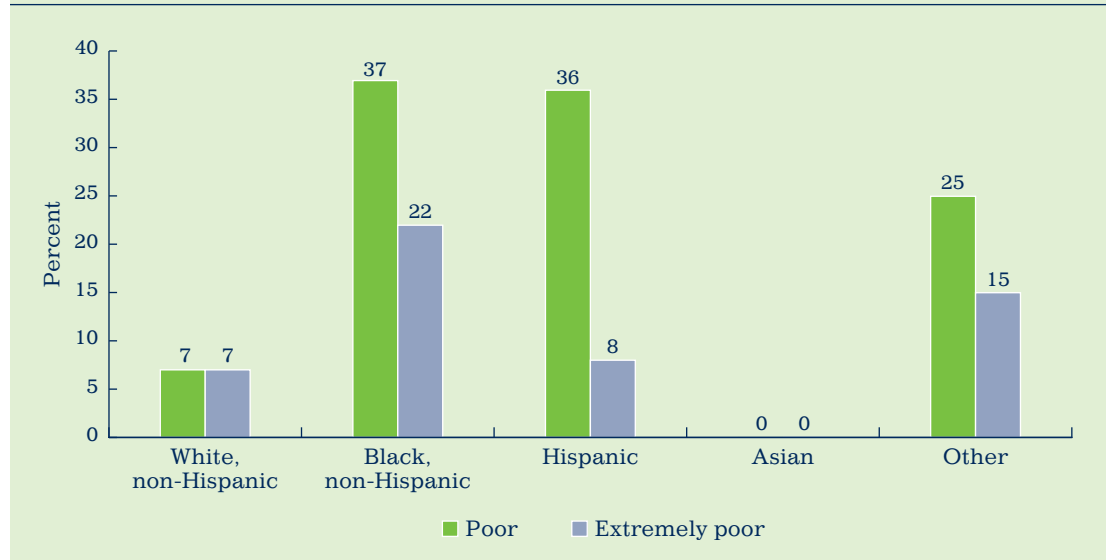
Almost two-thirds of all the poor teenagers in the District live east of the Anacostia River (map 5). In 2005–06, 61 percent of the poor teenagers lived in PUMA 104. The next largest share of poor teenagers lived in PUMA 105 at 19 percent. Only 2 percent of all poor teenagers lived in PUMA 101. More than three-quarters (76 percent) of all poor teenagers lived with single mothers; only 8 percent of poor teenagers lived in married-couple families.

**MAP 5. Where Poor Teenagers Live by PUMA, 2005–06**

Source: American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series from the Minnesota Population Center, 2005 and 2006.

Note: Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) geographics are roughly equivalent to the District's wards.

Black teenagers were not only more likely to be poor than white teenagers, they were also more likely to be extremely poor. We calculated the share of teenagers who lived in families with incomes less than 50 percent of the federal poverty level and found that almost one-quarter (22 percent) of black

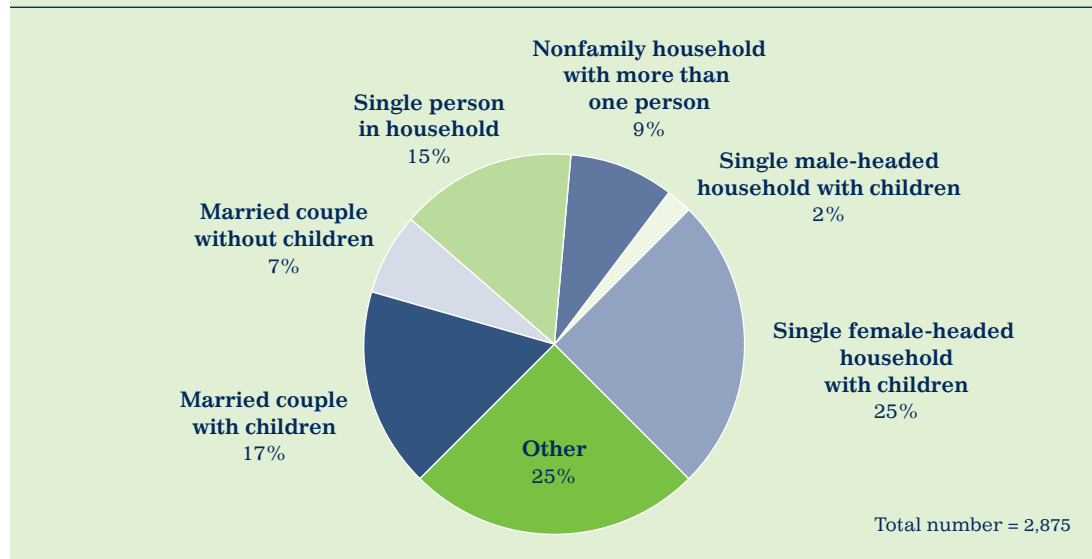
**FIGURE 8. Share of Poor and Extremely Poor 12–17-Year-Olds in the District by Race/Ethnicity, 2005–06**

Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: Teenagers are counted as poor if they live in a family with income at or below the federal poverty level for the family size. They are counted as extremely poor if they live in a family with income at or below 50 percent of the federal poverty level for the family size.

teenagers in 2005–06 lived in families that were extremely poor, compared with 8 percent of Hispanic teenagers and 7 percent of white teenagers (figure 8). Again, two-thirds of all the extremely poor teenagers lived in PUMA 104, and almost one-fifth of them lived in PUMA 105.

The fact that greater shares of children are poor in neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River negatively affects all the families living there, not just the poor families. Poverty affects more than just individual families: concentrated poverty can also negatively affect neighborhoods. D.C. Fiscal Policy's 2006 report *Disparities in the District of Columbia: Poverty Is Major Cause* shows how concentrated neighborhood poverty is related to negative social outcomes such as poor performing schools, higher crime rates, higher child abuse and neglect rates, and higher teen birth rates.

**FIGURE 9. Family Structure of 18–24-Year-Olds with Some College Experience, 2005–06**

Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: Young adults living in group homes were removed from the analysis because the sample size was too small to reliably estimate. Therefore, the total number of young adults with some college experience (2,875) does not match the number that can be imputed in figure 3.

## Family Structure of Young Adults

Family structures for young adults understandably differ from those of teenagers, as young adults are legal adults at age 18. In the District, few young adults live alone. Many still live in their parents' homes, some have married and have their own homes, and many more live in other household types such as with extended family or friends. Of those young adults with lower educational attainment (some college experience but not enrolled, a high school degree, and no high school degree), 12 percent have at least one child.

For young adults who had some college experience but were not enrolled in 2005–06, the most typical family struc-

tures included single female-headed households with children (as either the parent or the child) (25 percent); "other" living situations, which include young adults living with extended family relatives such as grandparents or aunts (25 percent); married couples with children (as either the parent or the child) (17 percent); and single persons living alone (15 percent), as shown in figure 9.

Among the approximately 700 young adults with some college experience who lived in single female-headed households, 25 percent were the heads of the household, and the other 75 percent were living in their single mother's home. Among the approximately 480 young adults who lived in married couples with children, 31 percent were married with their own children, and 69 percent lived in their married parents' home. Overall, 11 percent of all young adults with some college experience had at least one child.

For young adults who had high school degrees but no college experience, the most typical family structures were single female-headed households (either as the child or parent) at 34 percent, other household settings at 30 percent, married couples with children (as either the child or parent) at 15 percent, and married couples without children at 10 percent (figure 10).

Among the approximately 2,600 young adults with only high school educations who lived in single female-headed households, 26 percent were the heads of the household, and 74 percent were living in their single mother's home. Among the approximately 1,200 young adults who lived in married couples with children, 33 percent were heads or spouses of the household, and 67 percent lived in their married parents' home. Overall, regardless of family type, 12 percent of all young adults with only high school educations had at least one child.

For young adults who had not graduated from high school, the most typical family structures included 50 percent living in single female-headed households (either as the par-

ent or child), 23 percent living in other arrangements, and 14 percent living in married-couple households with children (either as the parent or child), as shown in figure 11. One percent lived alone, and only 2 percent lived in nonfamily households with multiple people.

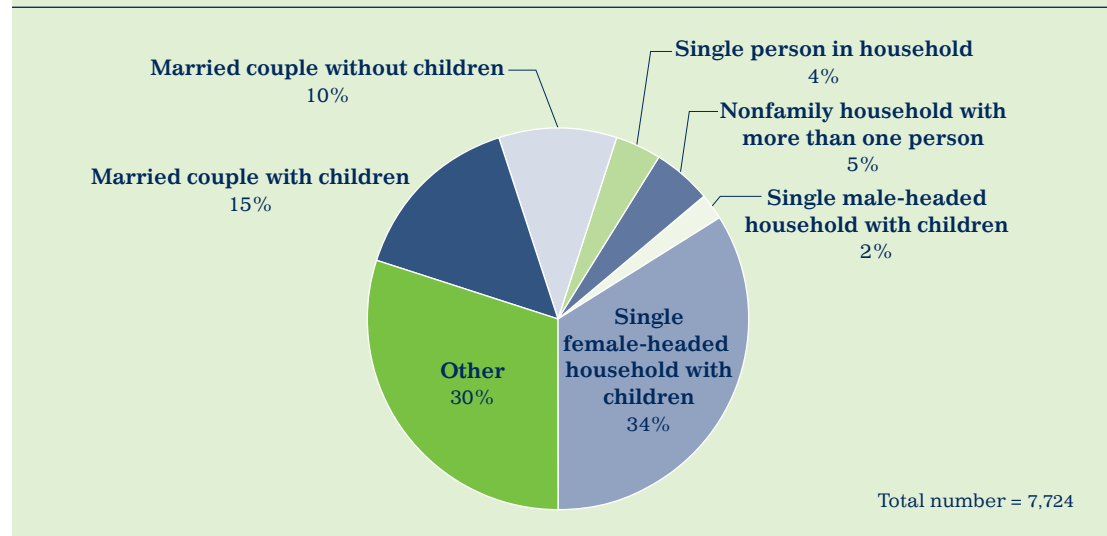
Among the approximately 3,400 young adults who had not yet graduated from high school and who lived in single female-headed households, 15 percent were the heads of the household, and 85 percent were living in their single mother's home. Among the approximately 900 young adults who lived in married-couple households with children, 8 percent were heads or spouses of the household, and 93 percent lived in their married parents' home. Overall, regardless of family type, 11 percent of all young adults with less than high school educations had at least one child.

## Young Adult Poverty

Almost half (49 percent) of all young adults with low levels of education in the District were poor in 2005–06, rates even higher than the very high teenage poverty rate of 33 percent. However, young adults with some college education fared better than those with only high school degrees or less. One-quarter (24 percent) of young adults with some college education were poor (figure 12). Thirty-two percent of these poor young adults lived in PUMA 103, while another 26 percent lived in PUMA 104.

Among young adults with just high school educations, 52 percent were poor in 2005–06. These young adults were evenly distributed throughout the District, except for PUMA 101, which had only 1 percent of this population. More than half (or 54 percent) of those without high school degrees were poor, and 56 percent of these youth lived in PUMA 104. The remaining 21 percent lived in PUMA 103, and 14 percent lived in PUMA 102 (Wards 4 and 1).

**FIGURE 10. Family Structure of 18–24-Year-Old High School Graduates, 2005–06**



Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

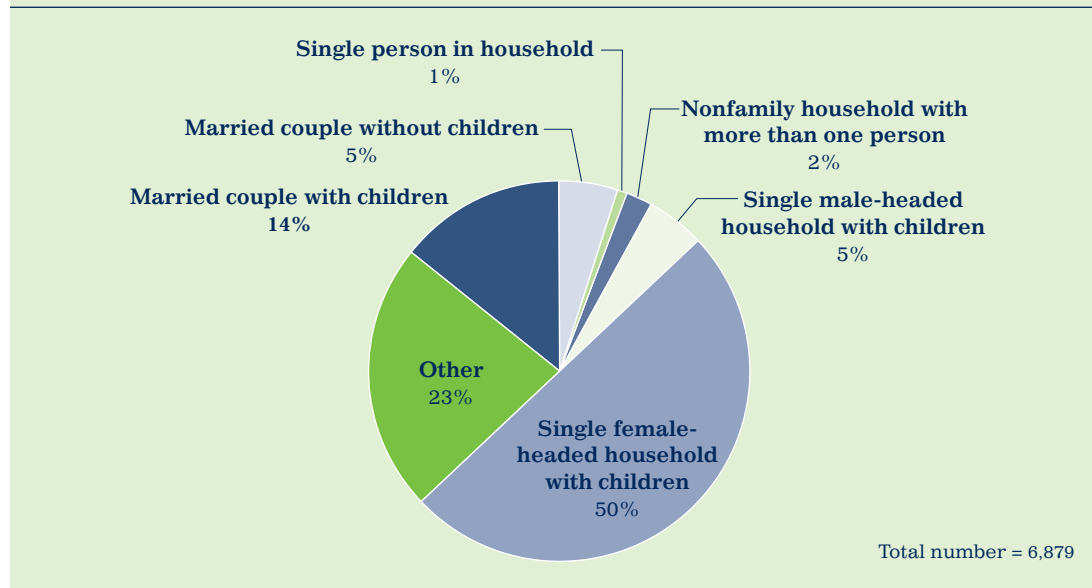
Note: Young adults living in group homes were removed from the analysis because the sample size was too small to reliably estimate. Therefore, the total number of young adult high school graduates (7,724) does not match the number that can be imputed in figure 3.

More than one-third of young adults who had only high school educations or less were also extremely poor. (The poverty threshold for one nonelderly adult was \$10,488 in 2006, and the threshold for an extremely poor adult was \$5,244.) Forty-four percent of high school graduates and 38 percent of those without high school diplomas were extremely poor in 2005–06. In comparison, 12 percent of young adults with some college education were extremely poor.

## Homeless Teenagers and Young Adults

Homeless and unaccompanied youth are difficult to quantify. The National Alliance to End Homelessness and DCAYA reported in 2006 that 1,384 unaccompanied youth were served



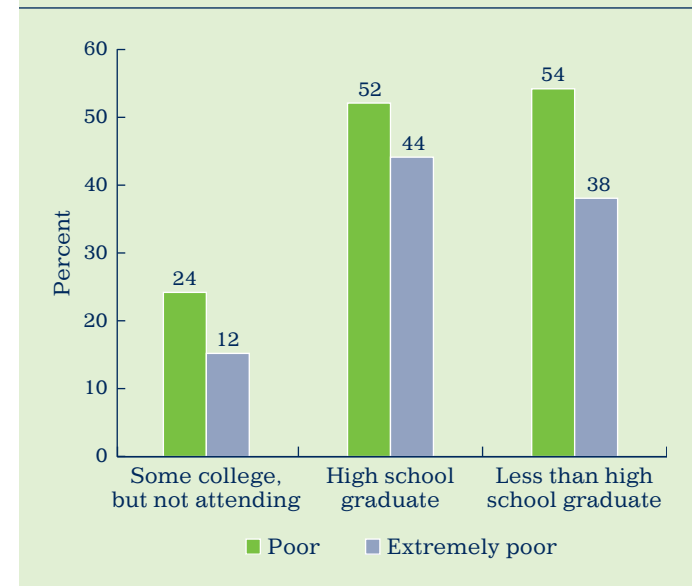
**FIGURE 11. Family Structure of 18–24-Year-Olds without High School Diplomas, 2005–06**

Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: Young adults living in group homes were removed from the analysis because the sample size was too small to reliably estimate. Therefore, the total number of young adults without high school diplomas (6,879) does not match the number that can be imputed in figure 3.

by local nonprofits, and virtually all (96 percent) were black. The same groups reported that the waiting lists for shelter beds and transitional living program (TLP) units were long: there were 38 shelter beds and 75 TLP units in 2006. Nonprofit organizations such as Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Covenant House Washington, and Latin American Youth Center serve homeless youth by providing temporary shelter, transitional living program units, and general equivalency diploma (GED) and job training services in the District.

Entire families can be homeless as well. The Homeless Services Planning and Coordinating Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments reported in 2008 that 4,566 persons in families were homeless, representing 39 percent of the literally homeless population

**FIGURE 12. Share of Poor and Extremely Poor 18–24-Year-Olds in the District by Educational Attainment, 2005–06**

Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: Young adults are counted as poor if they live in a family with income at or below the federal poverty level for the family size. They are counted as extremely poor if they live in a family with income at or below 50 percent of the federal poverty level for the family size.

(defined as those who are on the streets, in emergency shelters temporarily, in transitional supportive housing, and in precarious housing at imminent risk of loss and are looking into shelters). Children represented 25 percent (2,879 persons) of the 11,752 people counted as literally homeless in 2008 within the metropolitan region.

The number of young adults that age out of foster care at age 22 is another important subpopulation. While not technically homeless, these young adults are formally released from the system and no longer have permanent homes, nor do they have guardians to provide financial, emotional, or life



## Definitions of Homeless and Unaccompanied Youth

The National Coalition of the Homeless defines homeless youth as “individuals under the age of 18 who lack parental, foster, or institutional care.” The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2000 (federal legislation to assist the homeless) defines unaccompanied youth as minors not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, including those living in inadequate housing such as shelters, cars, or on the streets. Unaccompanied youth also include youth who have been denied housing by their parents and school-age unwed mothers who have no housing of their own.

The National Coalition of the Homeless describes three general reasons young people become homeless: family problems, economic problems, and residential instability. Homeless youth often leave home because of physical or sexual abuse, strained relationships with parents, or parent neglect. In addition, some youth become homeless when the entire family falls into financial hardship and no longer has housing. Families may be homeless together, but then the children and parents are separated because of shelter, transitional housing, or child welfare policies. Finally, children who are already in the foster care system and do not have stable residential options are more likely to become homeless at an earlier age and for longer periods.

skill assistance to live independently. While quantitative data about the foster care aging-out population are scarce, our focus group with older homeless youth provides insight into their experiences.

## Experiences of a Homeless Young Adult from the District

An 18-year-old woman who participated in our focus group had been homeless since she was 12 years old. As she described it, “I never had a childhood.” She flip-flopped between living in group homes, living with her mother, and living with a godmother, who also boarded some other youth for small amounts of pay. Switching between homes was a terrible experience. “Every time I got settled somewhere or got comfortable, it got messed up and I had to start all over again.” She also felt conflicted because she did not want to live in group homes but did not want to go home to her mother either. As she described it, she and her mother had anger issues.

Recently, the godmother asked all those age 18 and older to move out because there were too many boarders (six in total) in the house. The young woman’s little brother and sister continue to live with her godmother. Not knowing where to go, the young woman turned to Sasha Bruce Youthwork and had been staying in their youth shelter for only a few days before we met her. She described her fear and uncertainty of where she would go next.

“I really do not know . . . I am really scared. Once these amount of days or weeks or months go on, there is no apartment or permanent place I am going to be able to stay. ILP [Sasha Bruce Youthwork’s Independent Living Program] has a waiting list. TLP has a waiting list. Covenant House has a waiting list. Everywhere you go has a waiting list. There are a lot of people out there who want it just as bad as me or probably even more. That is the same way that I am feeling. I want it just as bad as anyone else. And to be honest, I do not think I am going to get it. Not in the time that I am supposed to stay at Sasha Bruce.”

The young woman described her life quietly as, “Hard. As hard as it gets.”

## More Youth Experiences with Homelessness

Two of our study's focus groups were with youth staying either at Sasha Bruce Youthwork's temporary youth shelter or at Covenant House Washington, which provides shelter, GED training, and other social services. All youth in these focus groups described extreme residential instability and mobility throughout their teenage years. These youth switched between their parent's homes (in some cases), group homes, foster homes, and "couch surfing" with friends and family. Some teenagers predicted that they would soon leave the temporary shelter at Sasha Bruce to return to their mothers' houses; however, they expected to return to Sasha Bruce soon because of continued conflicts with their mothers.

One youth said: "I try to do good while I am [at Sasha Bruce Youthwork]. I am here for a couple months and then go out [back] there for a month staying with mother or friends. [My counselor] said he is tired of seeing my face [at Sasha Bruce Youthwork] and so he is going to send me to independent living." Another youth predicted that he will continue to live in group homes after Sasha Bruce Youthwork's temporary shelter, especially since his mother is also homeless and he has not talked to his father in years.

Another young adult currently staying at Covenant House Washington described when she realized she needed to stop living with friends and on the street. "As a teen I did go through a lot of altercations as far as with the police and things like that. I came to a point to realize that [hanging out], hustling, trying to sell a bag . . . not gonna work. . . . I would go out to Baltimore [from the District] just to be there for a week. Now all of that stopped once I started getting focused on my education. Because doing that [living on the street] you can't really concentrate. You gotta worry about how you're going to wash your clothes, eat, maintain my hygiene, everything really that you need to appear in public."

### Sasha Bruce Youthwork

Sasha Bruce Youthwork's mission is to improve the lives of runaway, homeless, abused, neglected, and at-risk youth and their families in the Washington area. The organization provides shelter, counseling, life skills training, and positive youth development activities to approximately 1,500 youth and 5,000 family members annually. For more information, see Sasha Bruce Youthwork's full profile in the appendix.

### Covenant House Washington

Covenant House Washington was established in May 1995 to address widespread problems of homelessness and poverty among teenagers and young adults. As part of the international Covenant House organization—the largest privately funded child care agency—Covenant House Washington is guided by the principles of immediacy, sanctuary, values, communication, structure, and choice. The organization meets the basic needs of youth on the streets—shelter, food, and clothing—and extends its support to every aspect of life: physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. For more information, see Covenant House Washington's full profile in the appendix.

# Teenagers and Young Adults Succeed in School

The goal that all children and youth succeed in school is crucial to the well-being of District youth as they mature into adulthood. In this new global economy, high school degrees are expected and higher education is increasingly necessary for a promising career. However, less than half of the District's public school teenagers test at the federally mandatory proficient or advanced level on the D.C. Comprehensive Assessment System (DCCAS). Contributing to students' poor performance are higher rates of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and slightly higher rates of socioemotional or behavioral problems in District public high school students than the national average. Also, more District public school students are designated as needing special education assistance than students in other cities.

It is difficult to perform well in school when the school environment is unsafe. A greater share of District public school students report feeling unsafe in school or on their way to school than the national average (14 percent versus 6 percent). In addition, the share of District public high school students that have been in a fight on school property is almost double the national rate (20 percent versus 12 percent).

Parental expectations also factor into whether children perform well in school. More than three-quarters (86 percent) of white mothers with

## FINDINGS

- More than three-quarters (78 percent) of all District teenagers age 12 to 17 attended public schools (either DCPS or public charter); the remaining 18 percent attended private (either independent or parochial) schools. Of those attending public school, 69 percent attended a DCPS school and 31 percent attended a public charter school in 2007.
- Only 44 percent of all public school students (both DCPS and public charter) tested proficient or advanced in reading, and 42 percent tested proficient or advanced in math, although District public school students test scores have improved since the introduction of a new test in 2006.
- Teenagers living in the District have a number of obstacles to overcome in order to perform better in school: slightly higher reports of moderate to severe socioemotional or behavioral difficulties than the national average, and a significant share of public school children designated as needing special education.
- District public high school students reported feeling less safe than students nationwide either in school or on their way to school, and a greater share of District public school students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property than the national average. In addition, the share of District public high school students that had been in a fight on school property was almost double the national rate.

*(continued)*

## FINDINGS

(continued)

More than three-quarters (86 percent) of white mothers with 12- to 17-year-olds had at least some years of a college education compared with only 42 percent of black mothers and 15 percent of Hispanic mothers. Virtually all (92 percent of) mothers in PUMA 101 had at least some years of college, compared with only one-third of mothers in PUMAs 104 and 105.

- Black District high school seniors were less competitive when applying to college than their white counterparts. White District students scored twice as high as black District students in the advanced placement exam, and whites scored 200 points higher than blacks on the SAT.
- Reliable graduation rates and dropout rate data are not available from the District. However, the research report *Double the Numbers for College Success* states that only 9 percent of all incoming District public school 9th graders complete high school “on time,” and 43 percent graduate within five years.

## Public School Reform in the District

The District’s public school system has changed tremendously in the past 10 years, and the Fenty administration substantially reorganized the public schools systemwide starting in 2007 (codified when the D.C. Council passed the District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007) with the intention to revamp school operations and improve school performance. The mayor is now directly responsible for D.C. public schools, which had previously been under the control of the D.C. Board of Education, and he created four new positions as part of the public school reorganization. Mayor Fenty established a new deputy mayor for education, who is responsible for an education strategy that incorporates DCPS, public charter schools, the voucher program, and the University of the District of Columbia. The mayor also appointed a new chancellor of D.C. public schools, responsible for all DCPS schools, and a new executive director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization, responsible for modernizing DCPS buildings. These functions were previously the responsibility of the superintendent of schools, a position that was eliminated as part of the reorganization. Lastly, Mayor Fenty appointed the first ombudsman for the District’s educational system. The ombudsman is now the “face of customer service” for DCPS, the D.C. Public Charter School Board, the University of the District of Columbia, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, addressing questions, comments, and problems from parents and students.

During summer 2007, the D.C. Board of Education was dissolved and replaced with the D.C. State Board of Education. The new board now works directly with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, or OSSE (formerly the State Education Office, or SEO) on issues focused around school and student achievement. The new D.C. State Board of Education has nine members: five elected members from various areas of the city and four members appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. OSSE’s new state-level functions include setting quality standards for all education programs, providing resources and supports to meet the standards, and holding all pertinent agencies accountable for implementing the standards.

Responding to continually decreasing enrollment, DCPS and Mayor Fenty decided in spring 2008 to close 23 of the 157 DCPS schools and special programs for the 2008–09 school year. By reducing the number of facilities, DCPS hopes to have the budget to enhance academic curriculum and offer such programs as Montessori; gifted and talented; and science, technology, engineering and mathematics schools across many DCPS schools. The Renew, Revitalize and Reorganize plan, announced in November 2007 by the mayor and chancellor, is also hoped to result in considerable savings to the school system in administrative and maintenance costs.

teenagers have at least some college experience, compared with only 42 percent of black mothers and 15 percent of Hispanic mothers.

Owing to the poor standardized test scores, unsafe school environments, and relatively low education attainment of single mothers, District public school students are less competi-

tive when applying for college than the national average. The combined average Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) score of District public school students is 278 points lower than the national public school average combined score. In fact, approximately 4,800 young adults in the District have dropped out of high school altogether.

## Enrollment in Public and Private School

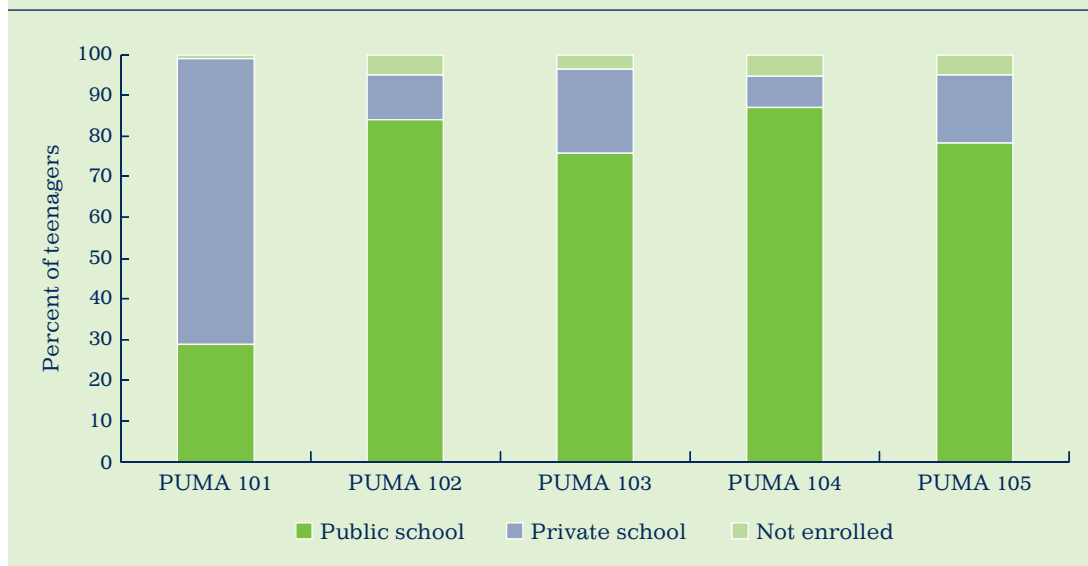
Most teenagers in the District attend public school. According to 2005–06 micro-level American Community Survey data, 78 percent of all District youth between the ages of 12 and 17 (who did not live in college dorms) attended public school (either DCPS or public charter), an estimated 30,000 teenagers. The remaining 17 percent (or approximately 6,500 teenagers) attended private independent or parochial schools, and 4 percent (or almost 1,700 teenagers) were not enrolled in school at all, presumably because they either had dropped out or were being home schooled. The share of youth who attended public versus private school varies significantly by ward (figure 13). PUMA 101, a close approximation of Ward 3 with the most affluent residents and highest number of white residents, had by far the greatest share of youth enrolled in private school: 30 percent were enrolled in public schools, and 70 percent were enrolled in private schools. PUMA 104, the area that consists of Wards 7 and 8, had the highest share of youth in public school and the lowest share in private school: 87 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds attended public school, compared with 8 percent enrolled in private school and 5 percent not enrolled at all.

Most public school students were black in 2005–06, while the share of District youth attending private schools was more racially mixed. More than three-quarters (85 percent) of all public school secondary students were black, while only 7 percent were Hispanic and 4 percent were white.

For those District youth attending secondary private schools (independent and parochial), 45 percent were black in 2006 and 45 percent were white. Hispanics made up only 5 percent of District teenagers attending private school.

Of those students that attended public school in school year 2007–08, 69 percent attended a DCPS school, and 31 percent attended a public charter school. Enrollment in DCPS schools has been declining dramatically during the past 10 years, owing

**FIGURE 13.** Share of Public and Private School Enrollment for 12–17-Year-Olds in the District by PUMA, 2005–06



Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

Note: See map 1 for how PUMAs correspond with wards.

to the increasing availability of charter schools and the slightly decreased number of school-age children living in the District. In the 2007–08 school year, 49,497 students were enrolled in 157 DCPS schools and special programs, a reduction of 3,148 students (or 6 percent) from the previous school year and a decline of 23 percent since the 2002–03 school year.

Enrollment in public charter schools (started in 1997), on the other hand, has increased annually, absorbing most of the loss in student population from DCPS schools. As of the 2007–08 school year, 21,947 students were enrolled in public charter schools, an increase of 11 percent (or 2,214 students) from the previous year. Public charter school enrollment has almost doubled in the past five years, increasing 92 percent since the 2002–03 school year.

## Performance of Youth in Public School

According to the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, public schools must meet proficiency standards, which affect whether schools meet their adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements. AYP is based in part on the percentage of students performing at a proficient or advanced level. NCLB specifies that all public students must perform at proficient or advanced levels 12 years after NCLB standards have been put in place.

Most District public school students—both DCPS and public charter—tested in the seven grades performed poorly on the 2008 DCCAS test. Only 44 percent of all public school students tested proficient or advanced in reading in 2008, and 42 percent tested proficient or advanced in math (table 1).

**TABLE 1.** Percent of All Public School Students Testing Proficient or Advanced in Reading and Math in the District, Spring 2006–08

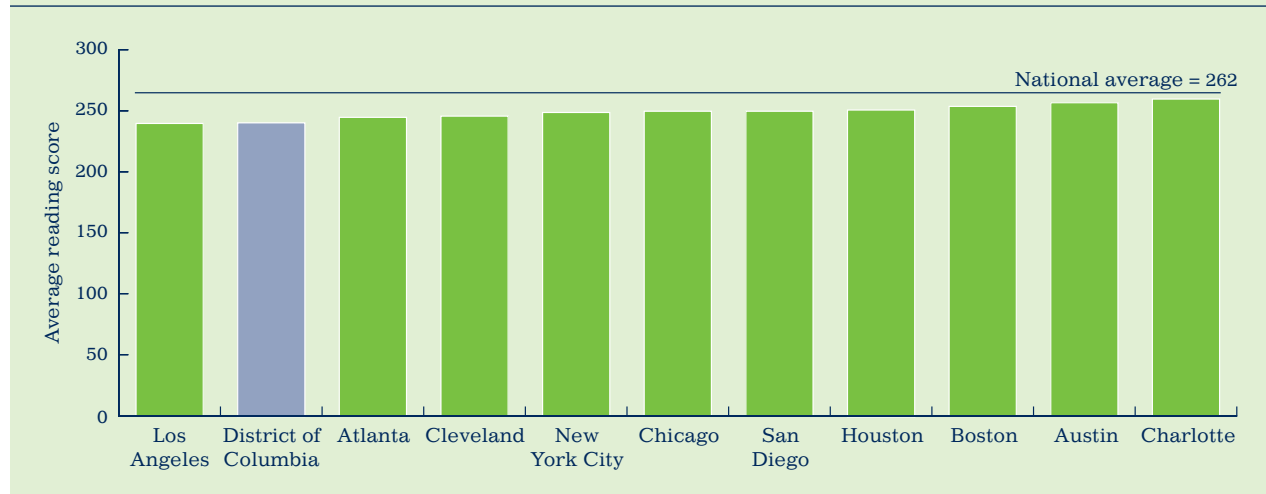
	2006	2007	2008
<b>Reading</b>	36%	37%	44%
<b>Math</b>	27%	32%	42%

Sources: D.C. Public Schools, Public Charter School Board, and Board of Education.  
Note: Includes DCPS and public charter students.

While less than half of the District's public school students are meeting required proficiency standards, District public school students are testing better on average since the DCCAS test was first introduced in 2006. For instance, between 2006 and 2008, the share of students testing proficient and advanced for reading increased 8 percentage points, and the share of proficient and advanced scores for math increased 15 percentage points. Some of these increases can be explained by the students and teachers becoming more familiar with the new test, but that cannot explain all of the increase.

District public school students have consistently ranked at or near the bottom on standardized test scores of U.S. cities. Every few years, the National Assessment of Educational Progress administers a standard test to a sample of public students in every state and in 11 cities. The District ranked next to last, with Los Angeles trailing behind, among all tested cities for the share of 4th- and 8th-grade students testing at a basic or higher level in both mathematics and reading in 2007 (figure 14). The city's performance was similarly poor in 2003 and 2005.

**FIGURE 14.** National Assessment of Educational Progress Grade 8 Reading Scores for the District and Other Urban Cities, 2007



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress.



## High-Performing DCPS and Public Charter Schools

While the average public school student—both DCPS and public charter—did not perform particularly well on the 2008 DCCAS test, some public schools in the District have high average test scores. For instance, almost all students at Benjamin Banneker Academic High School and School Without Walls High School tested proficient or above on the DCCAS test (over 90 percent of students from both schools tested proficient or above in both reading and math). Also, more than three-quarters of the students at KIPP Key Academy Public Charter School tested proficient or above in reading and math, and roughly three-quarters of students from Washington Latin Public Charter School tested as high. However, none of these high-performing schools (except KIPP Key Academy) are located east of the Anacostia River, where the majority of students live.

Top-performing high schools like Banneker and School Without Walls attract students from all over the city. Many District public school students travel far to attend high-performing DCPS and public charter schools. For instance, the median distance that students traveled to School Without Walls in school year 2006–07 was 4.3 miles, and students from Banneker traveled a median distance of 2.9 miles. These distances to selective schools are much further than the median distance of 1.5 miles that all other secondary DCPS students travel to school (Turner et al. 2008).

## Impediments to School Performance

Three broad factors can influence a child's success in school: the child's own ability and disposition, the teachers' success in instruction and the school's environment as conducive to

learning, and the family expectations of school and further educational attainment.

## Teenagers' Medical Disposition

First, we focus on the child's disposition as measured by three medical conditions or behaviors that help determine whether a child needs additional resources to excel in school: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, socioemotional behavior problems, and special education status.

According to the National Survey of Children's Health, in 2003, the District had the same share of teenagers age 12 to 17 diagnosed with ADHD and taking medication as the national average, 5 percent.

Within the District, more white non-Hispanic children (age 0 to 17) were taking medication for ADHD than black non-Hispanic and Hispanic children. The share of white youth age 0 to 17 diagnosed with ADHD and taking medication as of 2003 was 5 percent, compared with 3 percent of black non-Hispanic children and 3 percent of Hispanic children.

The National Survey of Children's Health also surveyed whether children have socioemotional or behavioral problems.

## Kid Power

Kid Power is a civics-based organization that provides academic, artistic, and service-learning opportunities for youth in the District of Columbia. Kid Power empowers youth to become informed and engaged advocates for change in their own lives and in their communities.

Kid Power was incorporated in March 2002 and initiated educational activities in October 2003. Kid Power serves students at the following sites in Wards 1, 2, 6, and 7: Miner Elementary School (2003), Tubman Elementary School (2004), Ross Elementary School (2006), the Chinatown middle school program (2006), Amidon Elementary School (2007), Sousa Middle School (2007), Reed Elementary School (2008), Jefferson Middle School (2008), Kimball Elementary School (2008), and Webb-Wheatley Elementary School (2008). Kid Power also offers service-learning programs at three independent schools: Georgetown Day, Edmund Burke, and Sidwell Friends. For more information, see Kid Power's full profile in the appendix.

## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (or ADHD) is often recognized in children in the early school years. The disorder is characterized as children who have difficulty controlling their behavior or paying attention in the classroom. ADHD can be treated with behavioral modifications as well as medications. For a child with ADHD to succeed in school, he or she needs help and guidance from both his or her family and the school system.



This is defined as children and youth having “moderate or severe difficulties in the areas of emotions, concentration, behavior, or being able to get along with other people.” In 2003, 13 percent of children age 12 to 17 in the District had moderate to severe socioemotional or behavioral difficulties. This share was slightly higher than the national rate of 11 percent.

A greater share of black non-Hispanic children (age 0 to 17) in the District had moderate or severe difficulties with emotions, concentration, behavior, or being able to get along with other people than white non-Hispanic children (12 percent compared with 6 percent).

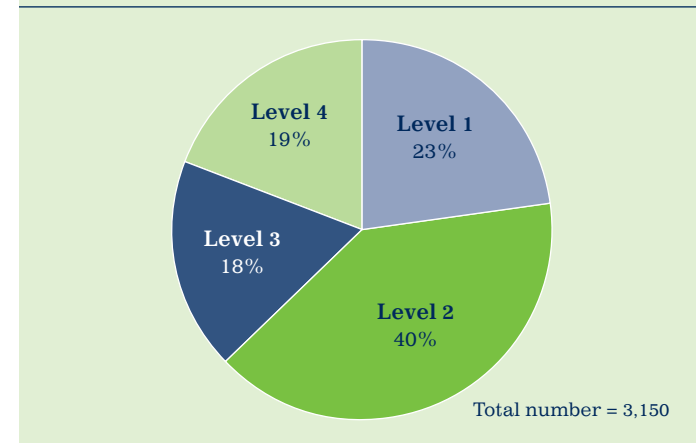
Another category of children with possible medical conditions needing attention is those with disabilities who are in need of special education instruction and related services. The range of disabilities for special education youth varies from learning disabilities (such as ADHD) to cognitive impairments (such as mild to severe mental retardation) to physical disabilities (such as inability to walk, see, or hear). Some students have multiple disabilities.

In 2007, 12 percent of all District public students (DCPS and public charter) were identified as having individual education plans (IEPs): 11 percent of students from public elementary schools and 14 percent of students from public secondary schools (Thompson et al. 2007). In other high-poverty urban school districts such as Chicago and Baltimore, the share of special education students ranges between 10 and 15 percent of the student population, putting the District in the middle of the spectrum (American Institutes for Research 2007).

Students with IEPs are assigned a special education level (level 1–4), which is determined by the number of special education hours needed (see sidebar). Of the 3,150 secondary public school students with IEPs in 2007, 23 percent were designated as level 1, 40 percent as level 2, 18 percent as level 3, and 19 percent as level 4 (figure 15).

According to a recent study, special education students (like the overall public student population) are concentrated east of

**FIGURE 15.** Special Education Level for Secondary Public School Student with Individual Education Plans, 2007



Source: Thompson et al. (2007).

the Anacostia River in Wards 7 and 8, and a disproportionate share of black public school students are classified as special education students compared with white and Hispanic public school students (Turner et al. 2008). However, 49 percent of non-Hispanic white special education students were enrolled in private special education schools that were paid for by DCPS in 2006, compared with only 17 percent of black special education student and 10 percent of Hispanic special education students.

### School Environments Conducive to Learning

Another important factor that affects student performance is whether school environments are conducive to learning. The first basic criterion is that schools are safe, and some District public high school students report that their schools are not. The 2007 YRBSS reported that 7 percent of 9th- through 12th-grade students carried a weapon on school property

## Special Education in the District

Identifying whether youth need special education assistance is a mandated process. First, a student is usually identified by a parent or teacher as needing assistance, the child is evaluated, and an individualized education plan is developed. Next, the child may be recommended to a program anywhere in the city that meets the child's needs; this may include a traditional neighborhood school or one of the 15 DCPS schools dedicated to special education. (A handful of public charters is also dedicated to special education services.) If a child's needs cannot be met by existing DCPS programs, he or she may be assigned—often through a settlement agreement or a hearing officer decision—to a nonpublic program, which is paid for by DCPS.

Special education levels 1 through 4 are defined as follows:

- Level 1: 8 hours or less per school week of specialized services
- Level 2: Between 9 and 16 hours per school week of specialized services
- Level 3: Between 17 and 24 hours per school week of specialized services
- Level 4: More than 24 hours per school week of specialized services, which may include instruction in a dedicated special education school other than residential placement

In 2006, a class action lawsuit was filed against the District by parents of children with learning problems in the DCPS system (*Blackman v. District of Columbia*). The suit was settled by a consent decree that required the District to reduce the backlog of decisions by hearing officers retained to mediate disagreements between parents and school officials over appropriate service levels for children. The backlog was to be eliminated by the end of 2008. However, in September 2008, the U.S. District Court reported that DCPS was failing to comply and that there was still a significant backlog of decisions to be mediated.

within the month before the survey, a share that was not statistically different from the nation of high schoolers as a whole. However, 14 percent of District high schoolers reported not going to school because they felt unsafe in school or on their way to school, compared with only 6 percent nationally, and 11 percent of District students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, compared with only 8 percent of all high school students nationally. In addition, 20 percent of District high school students had been in a physical fight on school property one or more times during the past year, while

only 12 percent of high school students nationally reported the same.

According to the YRBSS, Hispanic high schoolers in the District were slightly more likely to carry a weapon to school than black students (8 percent versus 6 percent). Hispanic students were also more likely to skip school because they felt threatened than black students (19 percent versus 13 percent). African American students, however, were

## Firsthand Experiences of Unsafe School Environments in D.C.

Some teenagers from the focus groups described the fighting and chaos in their schools. One teen described his previous school before he transferred: "It was vicious, man, it was like a ghetto down there. Every day people racking. I saw the best fight in the world I ever saw, it was like all gangs and them, I ain't ever going to see that again, man." His current school has less fighting.

Other teens described more general mayhem at their schools such as, "They're smoking in the hallways, having sex in the hallways. The teacher not even teaching because the teacher is too busy telling the students to stop doing this." And, "People are smoking in the cafeterias, smoking everywhere. They don't get caught," as well as "You can walk the halls all day, not get in trouble." And finally, "I couldn't be focused because no one else around me was focused."

A young adult high school graduate proud of her southeast high school had recommendations to improve the safety of the school: stricter rules and more security guards. She did not feel safe there. "People would bring knives and mace to school. Shame you got to bring that to school. You should not feel that way."

But not all teenagers felt unsafe in their schools. One reported feeling safe in his high school because there were security guards everywhere, and the Asian immigrants who attended high schools in northwest D.C. had no particular comments about unruly behavior in their schools.

more likely to report being in a physical fight than Hispanic students (20 percent versus 14 percent).

Male high schoolers in the District were less likely to feel safe and more likely to be threatened at school than female District high schoolers. Sixteen percent of District high school males reported not going to school because they felt unsafe in school or on their way to school, compared with 12 percent of District high school females; 14 percent of male District students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, compared with only 9 percent of female District high school students; and 23 percent of male District high school students had been in a physical fight on school property one or more times during the past year, while only 16 percent of female District high school students reported the same.

### Family Expectations

The third factor that can influence a child's education and future education is his or her parents' level of education. According to Child Trends, higher levels of parental educational attainment are positively associated with children's higher educational achievement as well as other positive factors such as school readiness and pro-civic activities such as volunteering. Limiting the analysis to mothers' education levels (as more than half the teenagers in the District live in single female-headed homes) almost half (46 percent) of the mothers in the District with teenagers age 12 to 17 had attended some years of college or more.

However, mothers' educational levels starkly differ by race and ethnicity. More than three-quarters (86 percent) of white mothers with 12- to 17-year-olds had at least some college experience, compared with 42 percent of black mothers and 15 percent of Hispanic mothers. The differences by PUMA were also stark: virtually all (93 percent) mothers in PUMA 101 had at least some years of college, two-thirds of mothers in PUMAs 102 and 103 had the same high education level (62 and 67 percent, respectively), and only one-third of mothers in PUMA 104 and 105 had the same education level (34 and 36 percent, respectively).

## College Competitiveness

Another measure for overall student performance is how competitive District high school students are when they apply for college. The two indicators to measure this are performance on advanced placement exams and SAT tests.

Students can demonstrate their skills for and dedication to continuing onto college by taking advanced placement (AP) exams on specific subjects. (The College Board is responsible for administering the tests.) The tests are intended to show that high school students have a college-level understanding of the specific topics, and some colleges and universities credit incoming freshmen with introductory college classes in subjects that they tested well on.

In 2007, District students' (including public and private) scores on advanced placement tests were higher than the national average. The District's average AP test score was 3.06 (out of 5), compared with the national test average of 2.89. While the College Board does not differentiate between students enrolled in private and public schools, in 2007, the average AP score for white non-Hispanic students was twice that of black non-Hispanic students: 3.11 compared with 1.41.

There were similar racial disparities in the SAT Reasoning Test (formerly called the Scholastic Assessment Test), which is also administered by the College Board. Many colleges and universities take students' SAT scores into account (as well as students' grade point averages, extracurricular activities, and other factors) when determining who to accept to their institution.

In 2007, the mean SAT test scores for math, reading, and writing for all District students were 478, 462, and 471, respectively, or 1,411 total. This was 100 points below the national average of 502 for math, 515 for reading, and 494 for writing (1,511 in total). However, when examining just public school students, District students' mean combined score of 1,217 was 278 points lower than the national public school mean combined score of 1,495.

## Beacon House

Beacon House was founded in 1991 by a retired District of Columbia youth counselor who returned to one of the worst neighborhoods he had worked in, the Edgewood Terrace community in Ward 5, to start a youth center that would provide alternatives to the violence and drugs that pervaded the streets. Today, Beacon House serves more than 400 low-income, at-risk children and youth age 5–18 a year, with various academic, mentoring, and enrichment programs. Roughly 85 percent of the participating children are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program, and the vast majority come from single-parent households with annual incomes of approximately \$20,000. Beacon House's mission is to guide and nurture children and youth through the successful completion of high school, armed with the academic and social skills necessary to lead lives of financial security and personal dignity. For more information, see Beacon House's full profile in the appendix.

Within the District, religiously affiliated— and independent-school students scored significantly higher than public school students in all test subjects and over all years. In addition, white students scored over 200 points higher than black students, in all test subjects and over all years. This same trend appears nationally, but the gap between races is less pronounced.

## Graduation Rates and High School Dropouts

In this global economy, it is increasingly crucial for young adults to not only graduate from high school but also continue on for further education. Currently, there are no reliable graduation rate data from DCPS or public charter schools. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education is creating a longitudinal student database that will be able to reliably determine graduation rates. In the meantime, the next best approximation of graduation rates come from the Common Core of Data from the National Center of Education Statistics. The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center used the cumulative promotion index (CPI) method to estimate that a little more than half (58 percent) of District public school students graduated with a high school diploma in 2003–04, ranking the

District 22nd in graduation rates among the 50 largest cities in the United States. (The CPI uses the four key steps a student must take in order to graduate: three grade-to-grade promotions [9 to 10, 10 to 11, and 11 to 12] and ultimately earning a diploma [grade 12 to graduation].) However, this District average hides the wide variation in graduation rates between students that attend high-performing selective schools and low-performing schools.

The 2005–06 American Community Survey also provides estimates of young adults that have not yet graduated from high school and whether they are currently enrolled in high school. Of the 13 percent of young adults or approximately 8,300 young adults who had not yet graduated high school, 42 percent were still enrolled in high school (or some equivalent) as of 2005–06, and 58 percent or 4,838 young adults were not. The young adults who had not yet graduated from high school and were not currently enrolled can be considered high school dropouts, or students not expected to receive their high school degrees. These dropouts represent 8 percent of all young adults in the District.

The research report *Double the Numbers for College Success* states that only 9 percent of all incoming District public school 9th graders complete high school “on time,” and only

## Reasons for Dropping Out of High School

A number of teenagers and young adults from our focus groups had dropped out of high school and described their reasons. During the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) focus group, two of the five participants dropped out of high school because of significant physical and emotional harassment in school due to their sexual orientation and lack of administrative support in the school. (Another LGBTQ participant dropped out of school because he was with the “wrong crowd” and was “lazy”—not because of harassment due to his sexual orientation.)

The two participants who were physically and emotionally harassed for their sexual identity tried telling teachers and administrators about the incidents, but the teachers did not intervene and the situation worsened. Eventually the two teenagers stopped turning to anyone and instead resorted to physical violence to defend themselves. Neither could handle the harassment at school any more: one dropped out when he was in 9th grade and the other between 10th and 11th grade. When the gay youth who dropped out in 9th grade from Ballou Senior High was asked if he had thought about transferring schools, he said that he should not have to transfer—the source of the problem was other students. “I think that’s why a lot of gay, lesbian, transgender, questioning youth drop out of school. Due to the fact that staff or faculty members and

the children in the school harass the gay community.” He dropped out of high school and moved out of his mother’s house and lived with friends.

As a point of comparison, two LGBTQ participants attended the same public high school in Prince George’s County, Maryland, that had a large gay and lesbian student population. Although the focus group participants did not believe the teachers or staff were particularly supportive, the fact that so many of Prince George’s County’s gay, lesbian, and transgender students transferred to this school made it a safe place, and they experienced minimal harassment.

However, the gay youth who went to school in Maryland also expressed frustration with this concentration of LGBTQ students because, in the words of one participant, “We shouldn’t all have to transfer to one school to be comfortable.” A transgender young adult expressed concern that the concentration of LGBTQ students made the school a target for harassers: “You’ve got people waiting outside for you afterwards because you’re going to a gay school.”

During the focus group with homeless youth (mainly under age 18), all participants agreed that graduating from high school was their personal goal. In fact, one had graduated already—a semester early—by taking night classes. (She was currently working at a low-paying service industry job.) As one high school student who had been homeless “forever” said, “Graduating high school is my ulti-

mate dream. I do not care if I do nothing else in life. I just want to walk across that stage on June 8th.”

Another homeless 9th grader, who had anger management issues and conflicts with her mother, said she wanted to go college and become a paramedic. “If that doesn’t work, I am going to give up.” Another homeless youth who was originally from a surrounding county in Virginia and was temporarily living in a shelter in the District aspired to go to the Naval Academy and become a medical doctor.

Four of the five formerly homeless women from Covenant House Washington dropped out of high school, one as early as the 9th grade. One succinctly summed up the group’s reasons for dropping out: “If I’m not in a stable place, I can’t focus.”

Another formerly homeless young adult who now has housing through Covenant House Washington said, “Like, before I came to the Covenant House, I had a place to go, but the places I was staying at weren’t doing nothing for me. I was going to school but I didn’t finish school because I couldn’t concentrate because I was trying to figure out what was going to go down at the place I was staying that night.”

Another young adult said she had dropped out in 12th grade because of a succession of traumatic experiences: in 10th grade she was diagnosed with cancer, in 11th grade she became pregnant, and in the 12th grade, her brother died. Finally, she said, “Forget it . . . there was no point.”



## Latin American Youth Center

Founded in the late 1960s to address the absence of services for the emerging Latino community, the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) is a leading provider of high-quality youth development programs in Washington, D.C., and Maryland. Throughout its history, LAYC has assisted successive generations of low-income immigrant and minority youth, most of whom are “disconnected” from mainstream society, to make a successful transition to young adulthood. For more information, see LAYC’s full profile in the appendix.

43 percent graduate from high school within five years (Kernan-Schloss and Potapchuk 2006). The rates are worse for youth living in Wards 7 and 8: roughly one-third of students living there finished high school on time. Female District students starting 9th grade are twice as likely to attain a postsecondary degree on time as male District students.

Judging from the very low DCCAS, AP, and SAT scores of average District public school student, many public school youth are clearly at an academic disadvantage when applying to college. As one District senior high school student said during the focus group, “When you try to do good, you always mess up. When I go to school and be trying to learn and sometimes my teachers don’t be there or my teachers say, ‘They don’t be paying me my money.’” He continued his frustration by saying, “We are in a lose-lose situation because these teachers and principals are so phony . . . Inside those school doors [it is different] . . . Everybody thinks my school is all smart because I go to [a selective DCPS school], and that is crazy. That is crazy. They gave us all this money and half of the computers do not work. We got substitutes teachers for the entire year.”

He did not have plans to attend college because DCPS had not adequately prepared him, in his opinion. Competing against students from other states, “We are two or three steps behind. I will have to take all these classes just to get ready to take my course credits and feel that that is a waste of time. Until DCPS steps up their game, I am not going to go to college.”

## Continuing Education

While the graduation rate is relatively low in the District and the dropout rate relatively high, many youth that grow up in the District do go on to attend college. Unfortunately, there are no consistently collected local administrative data regarding the number of young adults from the District that continue on to college either in the District or elsewhere. Instead, the census counts the number of students enrolled in higher education who live in the District but may not actually be from the District (approximately 18,000 young adults or 29 percent of all young adults living in the District in 2005–06).

A number of the participants in the focus groups expressed the desire to continue on for higher education. The most emphatic of all the youth in the focus groups were the Asian immigrant youth. (Ten high school students participated in the focus group; many had recently immigrated from China, Cambodia, and the Philippines.) School clearly played an important role in their lives, and they all said they planned on going to college, with some naming competitive colleges like Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University of Pennsylvania. The social services organization Asian American Leadership, Empowerment, and Development for Youth and Families played a critical role in preparing these youth for college. AALEAD helps youth with their homework, SAT preparation, and college and scholarship applications.

The Asian immigrant participants also discussed their families’ support and expectations that they continue on for more edu-

## Asian American Leadership, Empowerment, and Development

Asian American Leadership, Empowerment, and Development's (AALEAD) mission is to promote the well-being of Asian American youth and families through education, leadership development, and community building. Founded in 1998, AALEAD is the District of Columbia's first youth development organization to focus mainly on assisting the area's low-income Asian American population. AALEAD operates year-round academic enrichment, mentoring, and family support programs that have helped hundreds of low-income Asian American children and their families stabilize their lives, succeed academically, and gain a voice in the community. For more information, see AALEAD's full profile in the appendix.

cation, especially in business and medicine. Most participants' parents did not have college or advanced degrees, and as one youth said, "I'm going to be the first [to make it]."

All 10 participants also stressed that to attend college, they would need scholarships. Finances were their biggest hindrance to continue on to college, and most of them spoke about the competition to be awarded a scholarship.

But recent immigrants were not the only youth that stressed the need to go on for more education. During the focus group with young adults from Covenant House, one young mother of a

toddler was studying nursing at the University of the District of Columbia. She wanted to continue on for her master's degree, and then move to California. Another pregnant young adult with three children wanted to earn a business degree and have her own auto mechanic shop. Another wanted to go to college for business management and open her own restaurant. And another young woman, who had been hustling drugs on the streets of Baltimore just a year earlier, wanted to earn college credits to be a correctional officer; invest her money in an apartment complex, bookstore, and laundromat to improve her neighborhood; and then offer youth sports classes like karate.

The youth from the Latin American Youth Center all agreed that education was important—they all planned on graduating from high school and going on to college. As one LAYC youth said when asked why he would graduate from high school, "I got to be somebody." Another said, "I'll graduate, I got to, I need to go to college." One youth reported wanting to be an engineer, another said she wanted to be a pediatrician.

## Programs to Assist D.C. Youth to Attend College

The District has several programs to assist District students to attend college. For instance, the non-profit organization District of Columbia College Access Program (DC-CAP) partners with D.C. public schools to provide counseling and financial assistance for low-income students who want to attend college. DC-CAP provides college counseling, parent education, financial aid assistance, and small stipends for college tuition to students.

Another program is The Posse Foundation's Posse Scholar. The organization selects high school students from public high schools in the District and

five other urban cities. It puts the students through a precollegiate training program and provides them each a full-tuition scholarship from universities partnered with The Posse Foundation.

The number of Posse scholarships awarded to D.C.-area students more than doubled between 2004 and 2007, from 20 students to 42. The largest increases in scholarships were awarded to students in areas surrounding the District (Prince George's County, MD; Arlington, VA; Fairfax County, VA; Montgomery County, MD; and Anne Arundel County, MD).

A District-administered program is the DC Tuition Assistance Grant Program (DCTAG) administered by Higher Education Financial Services (HEFS)

under the Office of the State Superintendent of Education. To be eligible for this program, students must be a resident of the District for at least 12 months before applying, have a high school diploma or GED, be accepted for enrollment in an undergraduate program, meet satisfactory academic progress as defined by the university, be age 24 or younger, and have a federally adjusted gross income of less than \$1 million annually.

Over 450 colleges and universities participate in the DCTAG program. Eligibility for colleges includes all public colleges and universities throughout the United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico; all public and private historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) throughout the United States, Guam,



and Puerto Rico; and all private colleges and universities in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

DCTAG awards financial grants of up to \$10,000 per academic year toward the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition at public colleges and universities in the United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico, and up to \$2,500 per academic year for private HBCUs nationwide and private colleges and universities in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. DCTAG also administers up to \$2,500 per academic year toward the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition at two-year community colleges, for a lifetime maximum of \$10,000.

According to the HEFS web site, as of school year 2005–06, the DCTAG program had provided

\$30.5 million to more than 4,700 college students. More than one-third (38 percent) of DCTAG recipients were the first in their families to attend college, and more than two-thirds of DCTAG awards (68 percent) were provided to students with very low or low income levels. Almost all awards were for full-time students (90 percent), and the majority attended public colleges or universities (79 percent). The District government provided \$3 million annually for students through the DC Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership program (DCLEAP), a 5-to-1 match to federal funding.

A new program dedicated to helping District public students go on to college is the District of Columbia College Success Foundation (DC CSF),

which works in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. DC CSF runs the Achievers Scholarship Program that provides scholarships and mentoring to highly motivated, low-income students from six District public high schools annually. The six schools are in Wards 7 and 8 and are Anacostia Senior High School, Ballou Senior High School, H. D. Woodson Senior High School, Maya Angelou Public Charter School (Evans), Friendship Collegiate Academy Public Charter School, and Thurgood Marshall Public Charter School. DC CSF's goal is for 2,250 District of Columbia students to receive more than \$110 million in scholarships and support in the next 15 years. The first cohort of 250 District Achievers Scholars entered college in fall 2008.

## Trinity Washington University

Trinity Washington University, located in northeast Washington, D.C., has a strong commitment to providing quality postsecondary educational opportunities to District youth. Trinity enrolls more District residents than any other private university in Washington, D.C., or in the nation. Nearly half of Trinity's 1,750 students in school year 2008–09 were originally from the District, and more than 20 percent of the students were from Wards 7 and 8. Trinity offers an associate's of arts degree and a master's in nonprofit management degree at THEARC—Town Hall Education, Arts and Recreation Campus—in Ward 8, the only university to offer college classes east of the Anacostia River.

In school year 2007–08, Trinity awarded approximately 270 D.C. residents age 17 to 24 a total of \$1,607,680 in Trinity scholarships; the average Trinity scholarship to District residents was \$6,400. These students also receive Pell, DCTAG, and DCLEAP grants. In 2008, Trinity welcomed its first students with grants from the District of Columbia College Success Foundation.

Trinity recently redesigned its curriculum to provide a strong academic foundation to its increasing District public school graduates and provide students with the academic tools to succeed in college. Trinity's new first-year curriculum focuses on developing strong skills in critical reading, writing, mathematics, critical reasoning, and communication. In addition, Trinity provides comprehen-

sive services to ensure a successful transition to college, including tutoring, academic support services, disability services, health and wellness services, and mental health counseling.

According to a Trinity Washington University study, 65 percent of the 551 Trinity students who have participated in the DCTAG program since its inception in 2000 have completed their college degree or are still enrolled at Trinity. This is a higher retention and graduation rate than the average national graduation rate for African American students of 39 percent. After students graduate from Trinity, many go on to secure jobs in business, communication, nonprofits, education, and government service, and many pursue graduate school.



# Teenagers and Young Adults Are Healthy and Practice Healthy Behaviors

This section focuses on a broad array of indicators of teenagers' health including physical and mental health as well as more risky behaviors such as using cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs. The final section focuses on sexual activity, teen birth rates, and sexually transmitted diseases. District public high school students' physical health was worse than the national average. District public high school students were more likely to have been diagnosed with asthma and diabetes, they were more likely to be obese, and they watched more TV than the national average. They were as likely to be depressed as the national average but more likely to attempt suicide, especially Hispanic District students.

Fewer District public school students smoked cigarettes or abused alcohol than the national average, although they were as likely to smoke marijuana and use cocaine as the national average.

District high school students were more sexually active than their national counterparts, although they were also more likely to use a condom. Teen birth rates have increased in the District, but this mimics a growing national trend. The number of sexually transmitted diseases has also increased for District teenagers and young adults but can be attributed to a new test that can be used more widely. Finally, the number of new

## FINDINGS

- A greater share of District public school 9th–12th graders had been diagnosed with asthma than the national average, 26 percent versus 20 percent.
- District public high school students were more likely to be obese than the national average (18 percent versus 13 percent), and the District's rates are rising.
- Diabetes affected a relatively small number of children in the District, although the rate was double the national average (1.6 percent versus 0.7 percent).
- District public high school students got slightly less than the national recommended amount of physical activity, although the District's rate recently doubled.
- District high schoolers were more sedentary than their national counterparts. More than half of 9th–12th graders in the District reported watched three or more hours of television on an average school day, compared with one-third of all high schoolers nationally.
- Slightly more than one-quarter of District high school students reported being depressed, a rate not unlike the national average. However, the District's suicide attempt rate for high school students was 12 percent, compared with 7 percent nationally. Hispanic 9th–12th graders in the District were more likely to attempt suicide than black youth.

*(continued)*

## FINDINGS

(continued)

- District high school students were less likely to smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol than their national counterparts, although rates of marijuana and cocaine use were similar to the nation as a whole.
- High school students in the District were more likely to be sexually active and to have been with multiple partners than the national average, but they were also more likely to have used a condom.
- The share of births to teenage mothers increased for the first time in 10 years in the District in 2006, mirroring a national trend.
- Cases of the three most common sexually transmitted diseases (chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis) substantially increased for teenagers and young adults in the District, but this increase may be the result of more widespread testing.
- New cases of HIV for teenagers increased 45 percent between 2001 and 2007. The number of new AIDS cases diagnosed for young adults in the District decreased 30 percent between 2006 and 2007, in contrast to the steady upward trend in AIDS diagnoses that occurred from 1999 to 2006.

HIV and AIDS diagnoses has increased for teenagers, although the numbers are relatively small; and, while the number of new diagnoses for young adults is much higher, it has decreased over time.

### Physical Health

This section focuses on six indicators that measure the physical health of teenagers and youth in the District: asthma diagnoses, rates of childhood obesity, diabetes rates, amount of physical activity, time spent watching TV, and time playing video games.

Asthma can affect teenagers in the early years and into adulthood, and it is the leading cause of chronic illness in children. Asthma can begin at any age, although many teenagers have their first symptoms by age 5. There are many risk factors for developing childhood asthma: presence of allergies in the house, family history of asthma or allergies, frequent respiratory infections, low birth weight, exposure to tobacco smoke in utero and after birth, and being raised in a low-income environment.

According to the YRBSS, 26 percent of high school students (9th–12th graders) in the District were diagnosed with asthma in 2007. This District rate was higher than the national rate of 20 percent.

More black youth were diagnosed with asthma nationally and in the District than Hispanic children. For example, in 2007, 27 percent of black public high school students had been diagnosed with asthma, compared with 16 percent of Hispanic students. (There are no separate rates for non-Hispanic white children from YRBSS because the white student sample size is too small.)

The District's rate of diagnosed asthma and the national rate have both increased since 2005. The

share of District teenagers diagnosed with asthma increased from 21 percent to 26 percent between 2005 and 2007, and the national share increased from 17 percent to 20 percent. Other research using the National Survey of Children's Health suggests that asthma rates are increasing nationally; some possible explanations may be that children are being exposed to more allergens such as dust, air pollution, and secondhand smoke. Also, children may not be exposed to enough childhood illnesses to build up their immune systems.

Another condition that has been worsening nationally and has received significant media attention is childhood obesity. Children are deemed overweight when they weigh between the 85th and 94th percentile of their body mass index for their age and gender; obese children are those whose body mass index is in the 95th percentile or higher for their age and gender. Children that are well over a normal weight can have a lifetime of such health issues as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Excessive weight can also contribute to low self-esteem and higher anxiety and depression, all of which can contribute to poor mental health and poor performance in school. The best strategies for families to improve their children's weight is regular exercise and good nutrition for the entire family, although keeping extra pounds off over time is as significant a challenge for youth as it is for adults.

District high school youth are more likely to be obese than the national average, and the rate is rising. In 2007, 18 percent of 9th–12th graders in the District were overweight compared with 16 percent nationally, which was not statistically different. However, 18 percent of District 9th–12th graders were obese compared with only 13 percent nationally, representing a statistically significant difference (figure 16). This was a 7 percentage point increase in the District over the 11 percent who were obese in 2005.

Black youth are slightly less likely to be overweight than Hispanic youth according to the YRBSS. In 2007, 18 percent of black youth were overweight, compared with 20 percent of

Hispanic youth. (Data are not available for non-Hispanic white high school students.)

A side effect of childhood obesity can be childhood diabetes. Fortunately, diabetes affects a relatively small number of children in the District, although the rate is higher than the national average. The National Survey of Children with Special Health Needs reports that in the 2005–06 school year, 1.6 percent of children age 0–17 were diagnosed with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes. This was double the national rate of 0.7 percent during the same year. (Rates of diabetes for 12–17- and 18–24-year-olds were not available from this survey.)

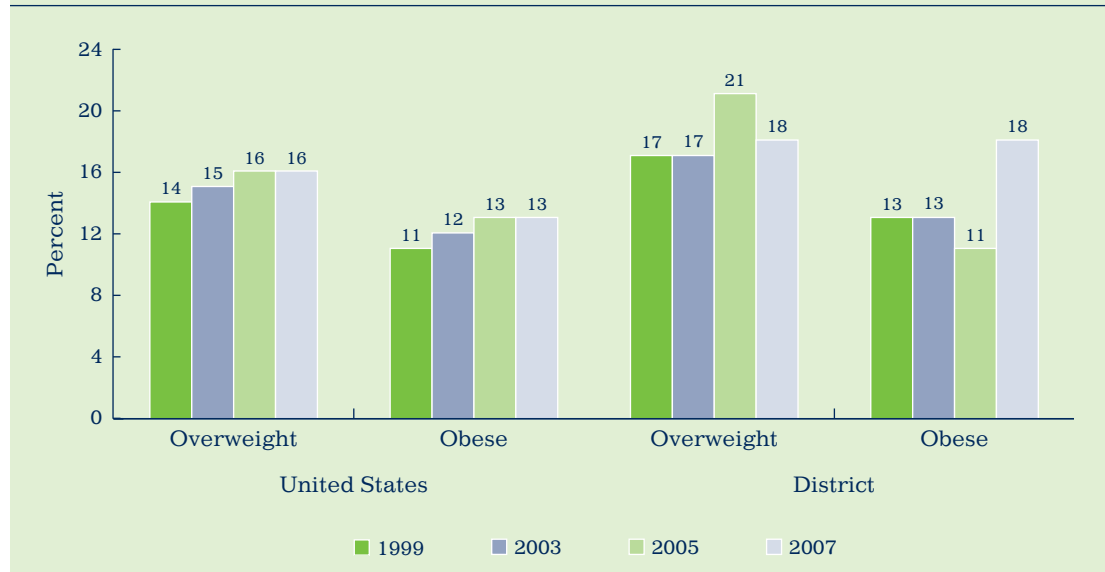
Physical activity or exercise helps maintain a healthy weight and manage childhood diabetes. According to the 2007 YRBSS, 30 percent of 9th–12th graders in the District fulfilled the recommended amount of physical activity, lower than the national rate of 35 percent. The recommended amount of physical activity was 60 minutes or more a day five or more days a week and could be any kind of physical activity that increased teenagers' heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time.

While the self-reported physical activity rates were lower than the national average, the District's rates almost doubled from 18 percent in 2005 to 30 percent in 2007, whereas the national rate decreased slightly.

In 2005 and 2007, black youth were substantially more likely than Hispanic youth to get the recommended amount of physical activity. In 2007, the rate for black youth was 31 percent, whereas the rate for Hispanic youth was 21 percent. (The share of white youth was not available owing to the small sample size.)

Excessive television watching can contribute to a sedentary lifestyle and can negatively affect children's health as well as replace other important extracurricular activities and homework. The 2007 YRBSS reported that 53 percent of 9th–12th graders in the District reported watching three or more hours of television on an average school day. Only one-third (35 percent) of all youth in the nation watched the same amount of television on an average school day in 2007.

**FIGURE 16.** Share of Overweight and Obese 9th–12th-Grade DC Public School Students, 1999–2007



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

Note: Overweight is between 85th and 94th percentile for body mass index, and obese is 95th percentile or more, by age and gender.

Television-watching rates for District youth have fluctuated over time but have been generally decreasing, similar to national trends. In 1999, the District's rate was 64 percent; it fell to 53 percent in 2007. The national rate was 43 percent in 1999 and dropped to 35 percent by 2007.

Black 9th–12th graders in the District were more likely to watch at least three hours of television a school day than Hispanic youth. In 2007, 56 percent of black youth watched at least three hours of television a school day, compared with only 38 percent of Hispanic youth. (The share of white youth watching television was not available because of the small sample size.)

Video game playing is another form of entertainment for youth that can contribute to a sedentary lifestyle. Approximately

one-quarter of District 9th–12th graders played video games for three or more hours per average school day in 2007. Unlike television viewing, the share between the District and all youth nationally did not differ.

## Mental Health

The mental health of the District's youth is as important as their physical health. In 2007, 27 percent of District 9th–12th graders reported suffering from depression. Depression was defined in the YRBSS as “feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities during the 12 months before the survey.” This District rate was slightly lower than the national rate of 29 percent in 2007, although it was not statistically different.

District high school depression rates have fluctuated every year the survey was taken. In 1999, 27 percent of District high schoolers reporting feeling depressed, compared with 31 percent in 2001 and 22 percent in 2003. National rates have remained essentially unchanged during the period.

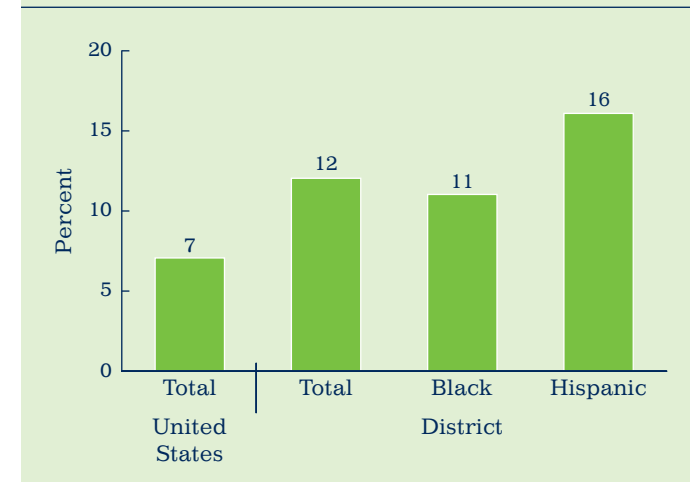
Hispanic youth in the District were more likely to be depressed than black teenagers in three of the four annual YRBSS surveys. In 2007, 26 percent of black youth were depressed, compared with 29 percent of Hispanic youth; but the difference was extreme in 1999, when 26 percent of black teenagers reported being depressed compared with 37 percent of Hispanic teenagers. (White youth were not reported for this dataset because the sample size was too small.)

While District youth report feeling depressed at similar levels to the national average, the District's suicide attempt rate is alarmingly high compared with the national average. In 2007, 12 percent of 9th–12th graders in the District reported attempting suicide compared with the national rate of 7 percent (figure 17). The District rates of attempted suicide are higher than expected, especially given the District's share of high school students who seriously considered suicide and who planned a suicide were no different from the national average.

District of Columbia rates of attempted suicide rose from 7 percent to 12 percent between 1999 and 2003 and remained stable afterward. Conversely, national rates were stable between 1999 and 2003 and then decreased from 8 to 7 percent between 2005 and 2007.

Hispanic 9th–12th graders in the District were more likely to attempt suicide than black youth. In 2007, 16 percent of Hispanic youth attempted suicide, compared with 11 percent of black youth. This pattern has remained fairly stable since 1999 with a few exceptions. Nationally, Hispanic youth were also more likely to report attempting suicide than their black and white non-Hispanic peers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also reported that Native American and Alaskan Native youth have similarly high rates of suicide, although very few of these youth live in the District.

**FIGURE 17.** Share of 9th–12th-Grade Students Who Have Attempted Suicide in the United States and the District, 2007



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.



While the rates of reported attempted suicide are high in the District for 9th–12th graders, the actual number of suicides of teenagers (age 12 to 17) is relatively low. According to the D.C. Department of Health, State Center for Health Statistics Administration, no teenagers age 12 to 17 committed suicide between 1999 and 2002 nor in 2005 (the most recent data available), as shown in figure 18. However, there were two suicides in 2003 and one suicide in 2004.

More young adults age 18 to 24 committed suicide between 1999 and 2005 than teenagers, but the annual numbers have been decreasing. In 2000, seven young adults committed suicide; in 2005, there were two suicides.

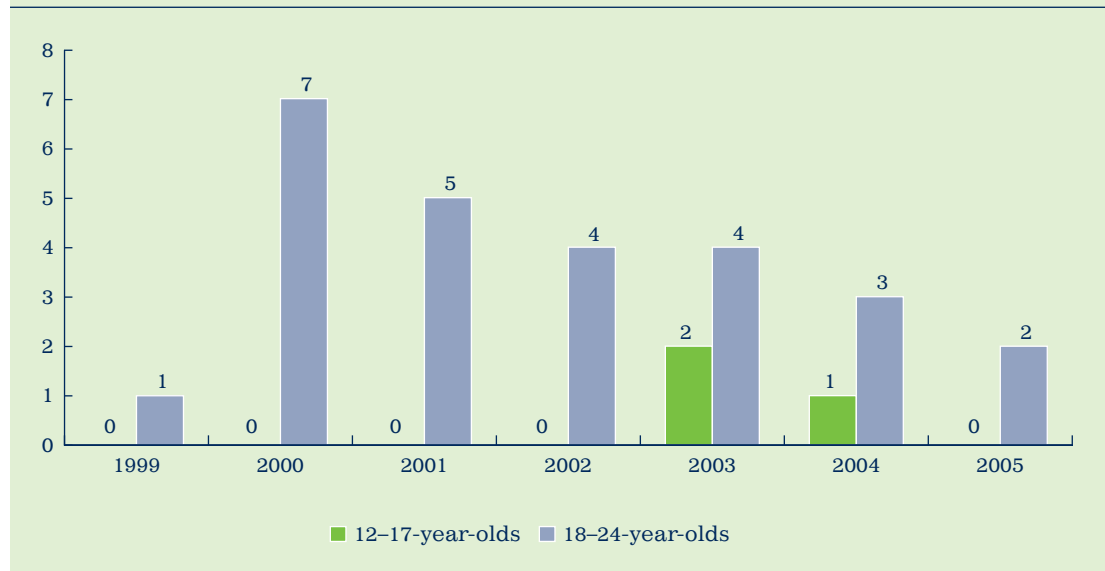
### Cigarettes, Alcohol, and Illicit Drugs

Short-term and long-term health risks are significant when children and youth smoke, drink alcohol, and use drugs. For instance, children who regularly smoke are at higher risk for respiratory disease, heart and circulation problems, and reduced immunity to other diseases while they are young. In addition, children who smoke are at a greater risk for lung cancer and heart and circulatory diseases later in adulthood. Children who drink alcohol run the risk of drinking and driving, which can result in fatal crashes, and alcohol and drug use is linked to early sexual activity and involvement in the criminal justice system.

The good news regarding these indicators is that District youth rank lower in participating in these habits than youth nationally, especially black District youth. For instance, the share of District 9th–12th graders in 2007 that smoked cigarettes at least once in the month before the survey was only 11 percent, compared with 20 percent nationally (figure 19). District youth smoking rates have fluctuated over time but have been generally decreasing, similar to national trends.

Black youth were less likely to smoke than Hispanic youth. (White youth were not available for analysis in YRBSS because

**FIGURE 18.** Number of Teenage and Young Adult Suicides in the District, 1999–2005



Source: D.C. Department of Health, State Center for Health Statistics Administration.

of the small sample size.) In 2007, 9 percent of black high schoolers smoked at least once a day, compared with 15 percent of Hispanic youth.

The same pattern holds true for high schoolers drinking alcohol. In 2007, 33 percent of all District 9th–12th graders had at least one drink of alcohol during the month before the YRBSS survey, compared with 45 percent of all high schoolers nationally. Only 12 percent of 9th–12th graders in the District reported binge drinking (or having five or more alcoholic drinks in a row) during the month before the survey, compared with 26 percent of high schoolers nationally. District youth binge drinking rates have been generally decreasing, similar to national trends.

Black youth are less likely to binge drink than Hispanic youth. In 2007, 10 percent of black youth reported binge drinking, compared with 17 percent of Hispanic youth. Black youth have



## Homeless Teenagers and Young Adults Coping with Stress and Depression

The teenagers staying in a temporary shelter at Sasha Bruce Youthwork described significant worry and stress in their lives. One teenage girl said she has no worries when she stays at the Sasha Bruce shelter but “when I’m not here, I’ll worry about getting kicked out or locked out of mother’s house.” Three other teenagers described their lives as very hard and stressful and another simply said, “I wish I could start over.”

The young adults from Covenant House Washington described the enormous obstacles they faced as teenagers and how hard it was physically and emotionally to cope. One woman described her life growing up as, “Terrible, I hate[d] it, I could [have] die[d] [then].” Another described her life before coming to Covenant House Washington as being in “dangerous situations where anything could happen.” Another said that as a teenager she was just “angry at the world.” Two mentioned being depressed as teenagers and another said she had had trouble coping with the pressure. One specifically said she took medication to cope with her depression as a teenager.

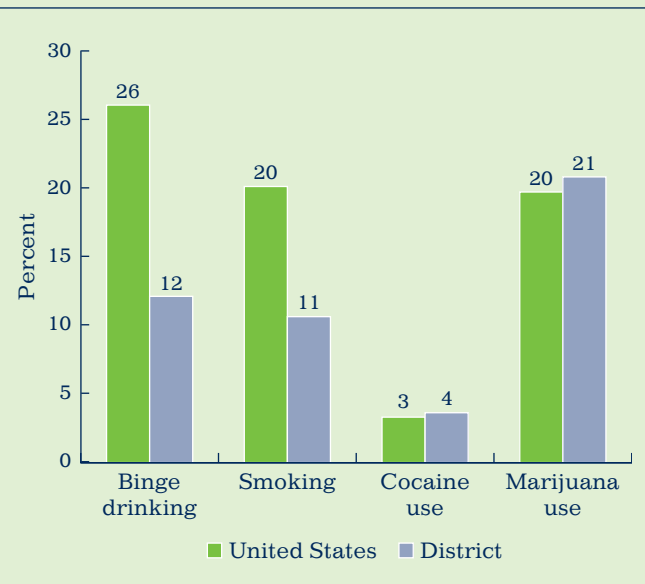
Fortunately, all five young adults participating in the Covenant House Washington programs—which provide housing, food, and GED training—felt significantly more optimistic about their lives even after only a few months and described their current situations positively. Three described their current lives as “blessed” and another said, “I’m determined to get what I want, so I’m not going to let anybody stop me.” Another formerly homeless young woman said coming to Covenant House, “I finally had somewhere to go, a lot of relief, a lot of stress gone. I mean it’s not the best situation, being homeless, even though it’s through the Covenant House. You’re still homeless. You’re just homeless with a little comfort, trying to figure out where you’re going to be.” Others described their lives as “good” and that they “loved it.”

Many of these women also said that they are proud to have gotten to Covenant House Washington and are glad to be finishing their high school education. As one participant put it, “It isn’t easy going up to someone and asking for help. So I had to put my pride to the side and come to these people and say ‘I don’t have anywhere to go.’”

consistently reported a lower rate of binge drinking than Hispanic youth since 1993.

While District 9th–12th graders were less likely to use cigarettes and alcohol than all youth nationally, the same share of District and national 9th–12th graders reported using marijuana and cocaine. In 2007, 21 percent of 9th–12th graders in the District and 20 percent of high schoolers nationally reported

**FIGURE 19.** Share of 9th–12th Graders Using Cigarettes, Drugs, and Alcohol in United States and the District, 2007



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

Note: Binge drinking is drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least one day in the prior 30 days. Smoking, cocaine use, and marijuana use is within the last month.

marijuana use within the past month (the difference in national and District rates was not statistically significant). Unlike earlier trends, black youth were more likely to use marijuana than Hispanic youth. In 2007, 21 percent of black youth reported marijuana use, compared with 15 percent of Hispanic youth. This difference has not been consistent over time. Black and Hispanic youth both reported 30 percent during the citywide peak in 1997, and black youth reported lower rates of marijuana use than Hispanic youth during the citywide drop in 2005 at 14 and 17 percent, respectively.

Cocaine use was relatively small and did not differ between District high schoolers and high schoolers nationally. In 2007, 4 percent of 9th–12th graders in the District reported cocaine use (which includes all forms of cocaine such as crack and free-base). The national rate was 3 percent, which was not statistically different from the District's rate.

Black youth were less likely to use cocaine than Hispanic youth in 2007, but this difference has been inconsistent across time. In 2007, 2 percent of black youth reported cocaine use, compared with 6 percent of Hispanic youth. However, both groups' rates have fluctuated over time with no clear upward or downward trend.

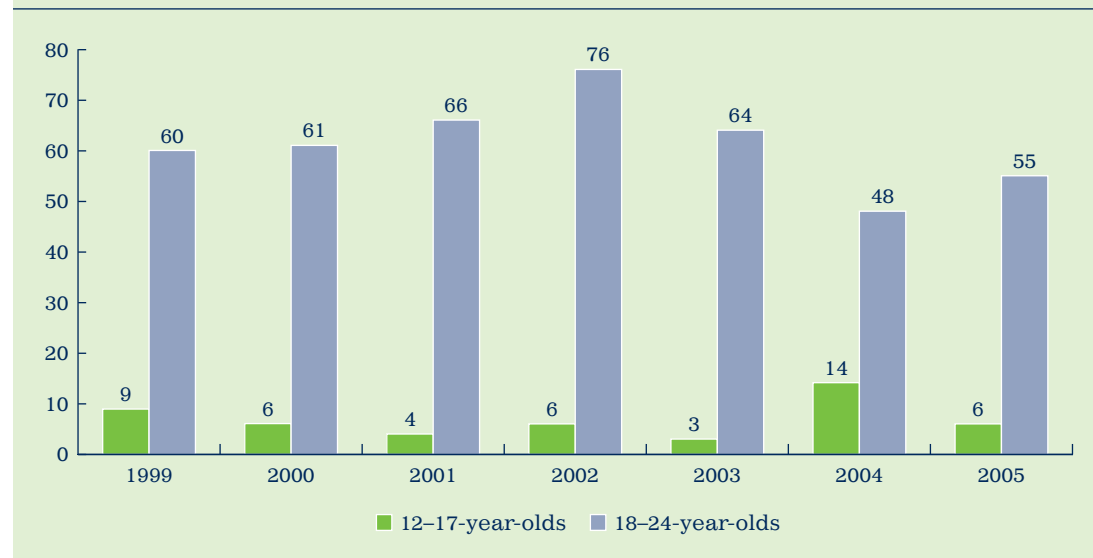
An extreme measure of teenage and young adult health is the number of homicides affecting these age groups. These statistics include the number of teenagers and young adults who were killed and where they lived (not where the homicide

occurred). The intent of the homicide is not included in the data.

According to the D.C. Department of Health, State Center for Health Statistics Administration, the number of teenage homicide victims rose and fell between 1999 and 2005, the most recent year available, with no discernable trend (figure 20). The greatest number of homicides during this period occurred in 2004, when 14 12- to 17-year-old homicides occurred. The number of teenage homicide victims decreased to 6 in 2005.

Many more young adult homicides occurred between 1999 and 2005. The number of homicides to this age group rose from 60 in 1999 to 76 in 2002 but then decreased to 48 homicides in 2004. Unfortunately, the number rose again in 2005 to 55 homicides.

**FIGURE 20. Number of Teenage and Young Adult Homicides in the District, 1999–2005**



Source: D.C. Department of Health, State Center for Health Statistics Administration.

### Nonprofits Trying to Reduce Conflicts between District Youth

Peaceoholics, a District nonprofit organization, is dedicated to transforming youth into crime-free, drug-free productive members of their communities. Peaceoholics offers various programs ranging from alternatives to detention centers; peer education for conflict resolution; and vocational training, life skills, and financial management workshops.

LifeSTARTS Youth and Family Services offers in-school and after-school mentoring, and other family-strengthening programs to youth and their families in Wards 7 and 8 as well as Prince George's County, Maryland. LifeSTARTS employs youth advisors who act as tutors, classroom aides, hall monitors, and character-development guides in participating schools during the school day. Youth advisors typically target 30 to 50 students per school for one-on-one mentoring focusing on students with attendance or behavioral issues. After school and during the summer, youth advisors provide tutoring, character-development, recreational, community service, earn-and-learn, and sports programming. LifeSTARTS also offers public education campaigns about healthy relationships, marriage, and health.

The majority of teenage and young adult homicide victims lived east of the Anacostia River (map 6). Of the six teenage homicide victims in 2005, two lived in Ward 7; two lived in Ward 8, one lived in Ward 2, and one lived in Ward 4.

In comparison, 31 percent of the young adults who were

murdered lived in Ward 8 (17 young adults), 18 percent lived in Ward 7 (10 young adults), and 16 percent lived in Ward 5 (9 young adults). None of the teenage or young adult homicide victims lived in Ward 3.

Recent research released from Northeastern University shows that the number of young black homicides has been steadily increasing between 2000 and 2007 nationwide, and this trend is reflected in most major cities (Fox and Swatt 2008). While our D.C. Department of Health data do not reflect this same trend, perhaps the more recent 2006–08 data may. Importantly, the new research shows that on school days, the risk of homicide for youth age 6 to 17 increases during after-school hours (3:00 pm to 6:00 pm) while on nonschool days (such as weekends), homicides are more likely to occur in the late evening hours.

## Sexual Activity

Another aspect of youth's health is sexual activity. Sexual activity at any age can bring unintended con-

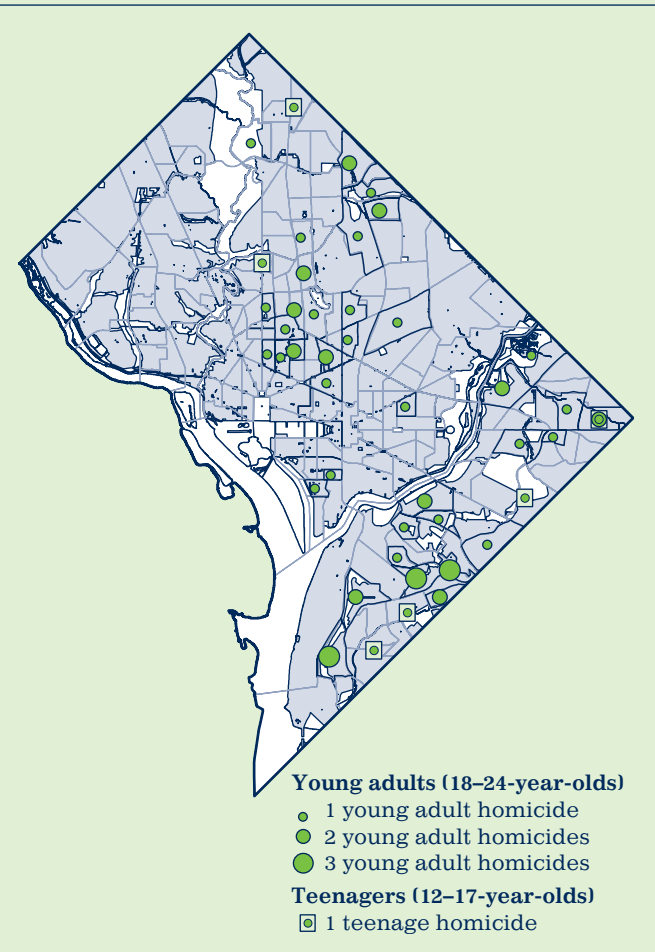
## Unsafe Neighborhoods in the District

Many focus group participants described their neighborhoods as unsafe and violent. One youth described the frequent fighting on 14th Street in his Columbia Heights neighborhood: "I can look at it from my window, you can like see the action . . . you got to get your popcorn." Another girl reported about her neighborhood, "You got to be careful because you be hearing gunshots and stuff like that. There's a show almost every night." And another friend reported that she hears gunshots in broad daylight as well as at night. Other youth from LAYC said two people were murdered near their school: one was shot at from a car and another was knifed.

Two Asian youth described the drive-by shootings and gang youth violence in their apartment complex where mostly Chinese immigrants live. These two high schoolers said they had several childhood friends who were either dead or in prison, but they have never had problems personally because they knew everyone and they did not cause trouble.

Several teenagers said because their neighborhoods are unsafe they do not go out at night and do not walk in certain areas of their neighborhood. A couple of them said their neighborhoods were "the ghetto." One focus group participant wanted to tell Mayor Fenty that they need safer streets because youth want to "walk through the streets and not be afraid of being jumped."

**MAP 6. Where Teenage and Young Adult Homicide Victims Lived by Census Tract, 2005**



Source: D.C. Department of Health, State Center for Health Statistics Administration.

sequences such as sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection, and unwanted pregnancies. For teenagers, research has shown that sexual activity is often accompanied by alcohol and drug use, which can lead to unprotected sex.

High school students in the District were more likely to be sexually active and to have been with multiple partners than teenagers nationally. In 2007, 58 percent of 9th–12th graders in the District had ever had sexual intercourse, compared with just 48 percent nationally, and 22 percent of District high schoolers had had sexual intercourse with four or more partners, compared with 15 percent nationally. In fact, 41 percent of District high schoolers had had sex with at least one partner during the month before the YRBSS survey, compared with just 35 percent nationally.

The good news is that District youth were more likely than youth nationwide to use condoms during sexual intercourse and were less likely to use drugs or alcohol. For instance, 71 percent of District high schoolers in 2007 used a condom during sex compared with 62 percent nationally, and 17 percent used drugs or alcohol during their last sexual intercourse compared with 23 percent of youth nationally.

The share of District higher schoolers who were sexually active was much higher in the 1990s and has steadily decreased since. Almost two-thirds (61 percent) of 9th–12th graders were sexually active in the District in 1993. This decrease can be attributed mainly to a decrease in sexual activity for black high schoolers, as the share of sexually active Hispanic youth has stayed relatively constant. In comparison, the share of 9th–12th graders who were sexually active nationally has stayed relatively steady: 38 percent in 1993 to 35 percent in 2007.

Teenage romantic relationships should be free from violence. According to the 2007 YRBSS, 17 percent of District 9th–12th graders were physically hurt (hit, slapped, or something else intentional) by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the 12 months before the survey was taken, 7 percentage points higher than the national rate from the same year. Male 9th–12th graders reported slightly more dating violence than females in the District: 18 percent versus 16 percent. The share of dating violence for African Americans was also slightly higher than Hispanics teenagers, 17 percent versus 15 percent.

## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in the District

There are no reliable data on the number or share of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth living in the District. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, based on the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, 7 percent of all men in the United States age 18 to 19 and 8 percent of all men in the United States age 20 to 24 identified as either homosexual, bisexual, or something other than heterosexual. Similarly, 14 percent of all women in the nation age 18 to 19 and 9 percent of women age 20 to 24 identified as either homosexual, bisexual, or something other than heterosexual (Mosher et al. 2005).

Four black gay young adults and one black transgender young adult participated in our LGBTQ focus group. All the participants were affiliated with the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL) located in the District. The participants reported that harassment owing to their sexual orientation was a constant threat in their lives, especially when they were in high school. Most participants said they reciprocated by being violent in return: it was the only way to gain respect and to fend off harassers. One participant in particular had been constantly harassed, with people picking fights and verbally harassing him, resulting in him dropping out of high school.

The gay young adult who dropped out of Ballou Senior High said, of students at his former school, “They’ll try a lot of gay people but, they’ll try you physically, but the gay people will give back. Like, I used to get pencils and stuff thrown at me but I used to go off. This was in class, in the hallways, and stuff. I used to go off real bad [ . . . ] to earn my respect.” He also described the harassment happening to him around his apartment. Teenagers threw trash and bottles of urine at him.

Another transgender young adult described the constant fights and verbal harassment by her peers for being transgender. She said that high school was horrible. “I was supposed to be in school for work and it became this whole thing about what was between my legs, why was it between my legs, and why was my body the way that it was. So it was this whole thing. . . . I had less confusion than it seemed the people around me did. So it was really uncomfortable trying to do the high school thing. . . . It seemed more like the school was confused than I was. And I just became their scapegoat for why they were going through what they were going through.”

The participants were also in agreement that certain wards in the District are more accepting of LGBTQ youth such as Ward 3, and others are not, such as Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8. As one participant said, “The lower-class income areas are not as open-minded as the people in higher-income areas.” Gay-friendly neighborhoods in the District included Dupont Circle and Adams Morgan, and participants also reported that suburban neighborhoods in Maryland were also gay friendly.

In addition, 9 percent of District high schoolers were forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to. This compares with 8 percent nationally, which is not statistically different. Female 9th–12th graders were more likely to report this than male high schoolers both nationally and in the District: 11 percent of females in the District reported forced sex, compared with 6 percent of males. African American teenagers were also slightly more likely to report this than their Hispanic counterparts: 9 percent versus 7 percent.

## Teen Birth Rates

Research shows that teenagers who have children are more likely to not finish high school, be poor, and have a greater share of premature and low birth weight babies, which has negative health and education effects for the infants. In 2006, 12 percent of all births were to teenage mothers, an increase from 11 percent in 2005 and the first increase in a decade.

The increase in District teenage births mirrors the national trend. According to the Centers for Health Statistics, the national birth rate among 15–19-year-olds (41.9 births for every 1,000 females) rose 3 percent between 2005 and 2006, the first increase in 15 years.

In 2006, 17 percent of all District births were to African American teenage mothers and 15 percent of all births were to Hispanic teenage mothers. Less than 1 percent of all births were to

white teenage mothers in 2006. More than one-quarter (26 percent) of all teenage births were to mothers living in Ward 8, and 22 percent were to teenage mothers living in Ward 7.

## Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Another unintended consequence of sexual activity for teenagers and young adults is sexually transmitted diseases. According to the CDC, almost half of all people nationally diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases are youth age 15 to 24. The D.C. Department of Health tracks the diagnoses of three common sexually transmitted diseases: chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. A total of 3,093 cases were diagnosed in 2007 to youth under the age of 20 (figure 21). The total number more than doubled between 2006 and 2007 (a 65 percent increase or 1,224 more cases). The largest contributor to this increase was an 80 percent jump in chlamydia cases, but gonorrhea cases also increased by 31 percent. Syphilis cases among youth remained at a similar level to diagnoses in 2005 and 2006.

Chlamydia diagnoses increased across all eight wards, but the greatest increases were in Wards 5, 7, and 8. In these three wards, the number of chlamydia cases was already above 100 cases in 2006, and the number of new cases doubled between 2006 and 2007. Gonorrhea rose across all wards as well. Youth diagnoses of syphilis decreased in Wards 6 and 7 but increased in Ward 8.

The same trends for the three sexually transmitted diseases occurred for young adults age 20 to 24. A total of 2,725 cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were reported among young adults age 20 to 24 in the District in 2007 (figure 22). Between 1999 and 2006, the total number of cases dropped substantially—by 12 percent—driven by falling numbers of diagnosed cases for all three diseases. In contrast to this decline, the total number of diagnosed cases in 2007 represented a dramatic increase—72 percent between 2006 and 2007.

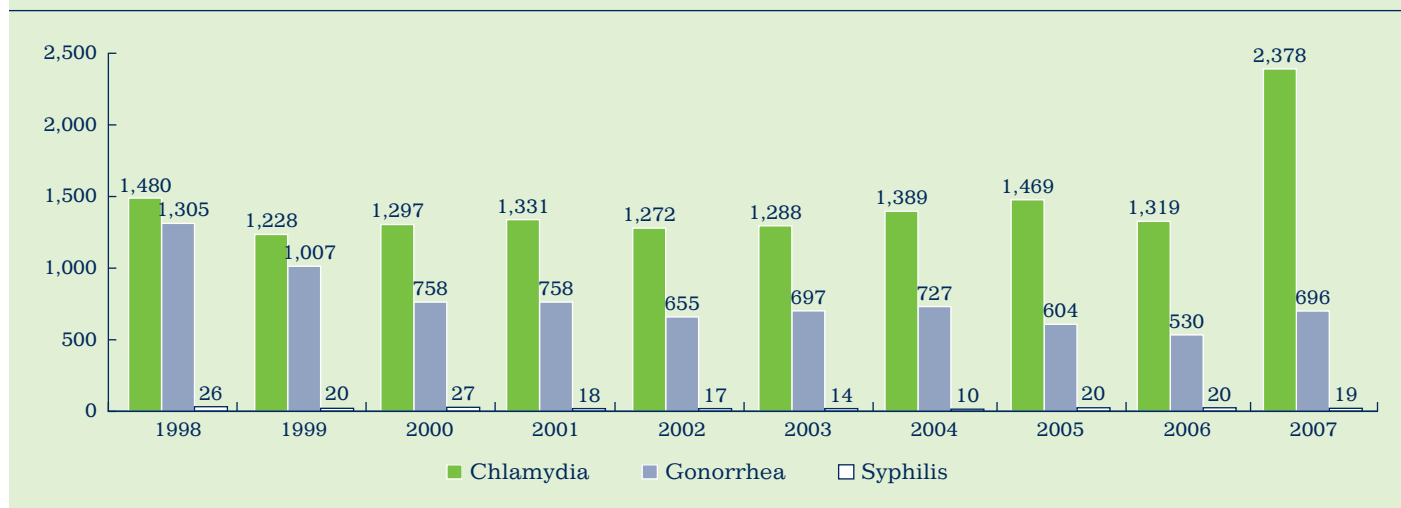
The large increase in chlamydia diagnoses fueled the total number increase for young adults. Between 2006 and 2007,

### DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Founded in 1999, DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy's initial mission was to cut the city's teen pregnancy rate in half by 2005. According to data from the District of Columbia Department of Health, the 2005 rate of 64.4 pregnancies per 1,000 girls 15 to 19 years old represents a 58 percent reduction of the teenage birth rate from when DC Campaign began its work. DC Campaign has since raised the bar with a new mission of cutting the rate in half again by 2015, to improve the health and well-being of adolescents.

With research-based practices and programs at its core, DC Campaign educates and engages adults regarding important issues in the lives of teens, speaks up for teens and helps teens speak for themselves, and mobilizes support around the young people in the city. For more information, see the DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy's full profile in the appendix.



**FIGURE 21.** New Cases of Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and Syphilis Diagnosed in People under Age 20 in the District, 1998–2007

Source: D.C. Bureau of STD Control, Surveillance Unit.

chlamydia diagnoses rose 89 percent. The number of gonorrhea cases increased 40 percent between 2006 and 2007. While the scale is smaller, the number of syphilis cases for young adults increased 68 percent between 2006 and 2007.

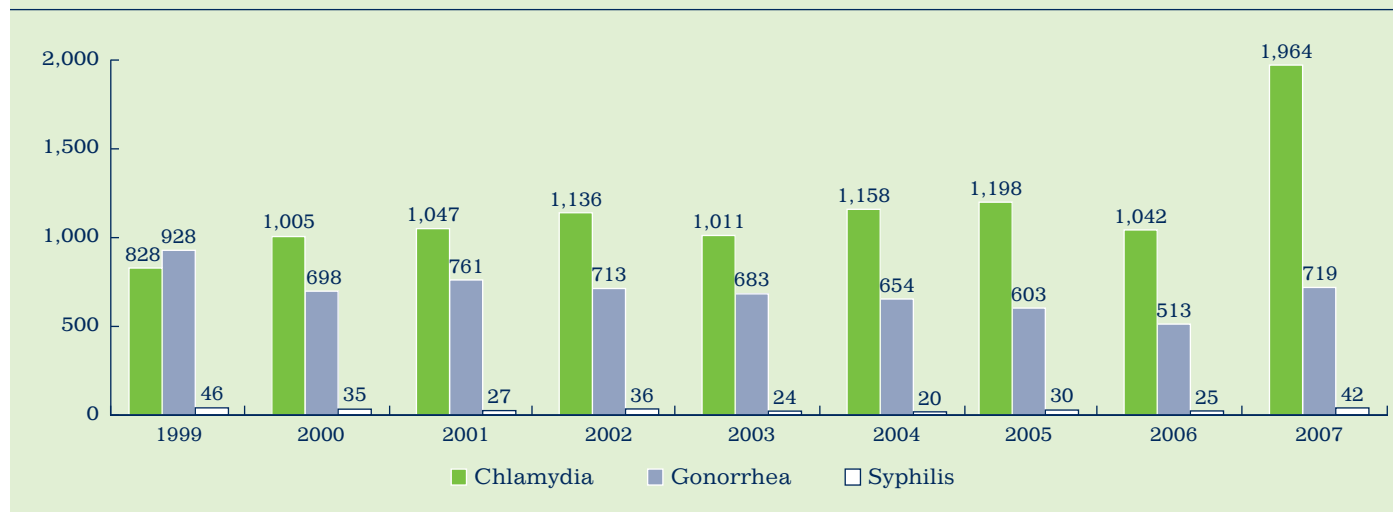
The increases in new cases of chlamydia and gonorrhea may be the result of new testing practices and procedures implemented in February 2007 by the D.C. Department of Health. A more sensitive test is now employed, and the introduction of urine-based chlamydia and gonorrhea testing reduced several barriers to adolescent and young adult screening. Testing can now occur in nontraditional settings such as at health fairs and schools.

## HIV and AIDS

Some of the most lethal sexually transmitted diseases are HIV and AIDS. According to the CDC, teenagers, especially racial

and ethnic minorities, are at high risk for HIV infection even though they account for only a small percentage of reported AIDS cases. According to the CDC, 55 percent of all HIV infections for people age 13 to 24 nationally are among African Americans.

According to the D.C. Department of Health, HIV/AIDS Administration, the District of Columbia has one of the highest rates of AIDS in the nation. Almost 1,000 13–24-year-olds between 1984 and 2005 were diagnosed with AIDS, and the number almost tripled between 2000 and 2005 alone. With a little over 100,000 youth in the District age 13–24, roughly one in every 100 young people age 13–24 in the District is HIV infected or has full-blown AIDS. The D.C. Department of Health refers to the rates of infection in the District as an epidemic, especially for African American youth. According to available surveillance data for 2001–05, the estimated rate of HIV incidence among teens and young adults has almost doubled in five years. In addition, the

**FIGURE 22.** New Cases of Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and Syphilis Diagnosed in People Age 20–24 in the District, 1999–2007

Source: D.C. Bureau of STD Control, Surveillance Unit.

## Definition of HIV and AIDS

Human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, is the virus that causes AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV differs from most other viruses because it attacks the immune system, specifically a white blood cell critical to fighting disease. The CDC defines AIDS as the final stage of HIV infection. Having AIDS means that the virus has weakened the immune system to the point at which the body has trouble fighting infection. When someone has one or more specific infections, certain cancers, or a very low number of certain white blood cells, that person is diagnosed with AIDS. It can take years for a person infected with HIV, even without treatment, to reach this stage.

rates of HIV infection for young black men in the District who had sex with other men increased 900 percent between 2000 and 2005.

Nationally the number of new HIV infections has increased over time for teenagers and young adults. HIV infection progresses more slowly into AIDS among young people than among all persons diagnosed with HIV, so we can expect a delayed increase in AIDS cases. For instance, 81 percent of 15- to 24-year-olds nationally did not contract AIDS within 12 months of HIV infection, compared with 61 percent of all people diagnosed with HIV.

New cases of HIV for youth age 13 to 19 fluctuated in the District between 2001 and 2007 (figure 23). During this period, there were 141 new HIV cases. In 2007, there were 19 new HIV diagnoses, a decrease of 3 diagnoses from 2006 but an increase of 7 from 2005. HIV diagnoses peaked for this age group in 2004 with 31 new cases.

Over 88 AIDS cases were diagnosed for youth age 13 to 19 between 1996 and 2007 (figure 24). According to D.C. Administration for HIV Policy and Programs, 9 new AIDS cases were diagnosed among youth age 13 to 19 in 2006. The number of new AIDS diagnoses for District youth vacillated between

less than 5 cases to 13 cases between 2000 and 2007 with no apparent trend.

New cases of HIV for young adults are much higher than for the younger age groups (figure 23). Between 2001 and 2007, there were 443 new HIV diagnoses for this age group. The number of new diagnoses gradually increased during this period. Between 2001 and 2007, there was a 45 percent increase in new HIV diagnoses. In 2006 and 2007, the number of HIV diagnoses was at its peak of 82 and 81 new cases, respectively.

Over 350 AIDS cases were diagnosed for young adults age 20 to 24 between 1996 and 2007 (figure 24). According to the CDC, since 2004, half the new AIDS infections diagnosed every year nationwide have been found in people under the age of 25. In the District, according to the D.C. Administration for HIV Policy and Programs, 21 new AIDS cases were diagnosed for young adults in 2007, a 30 percent decrease from 2006. This decrease continues a downward trend since 2003 that contrasts with the upward trend in AIDS diagnoses that occurred between 1999 and 2003.

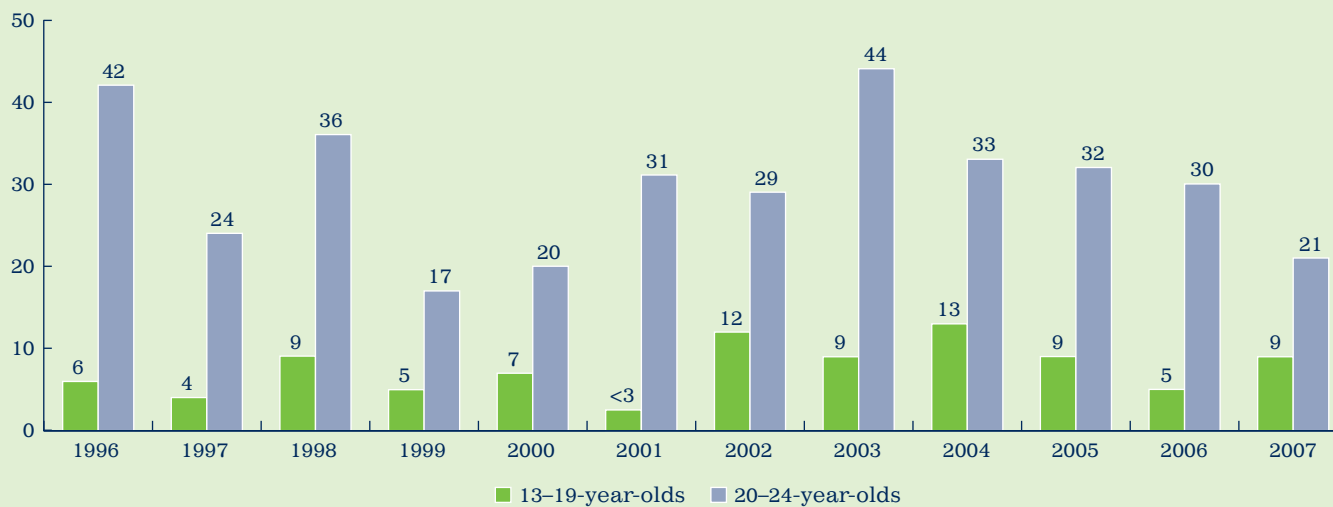


**FIGURE 23. New HIV Cases Diagnosed among Teenagers and Young Adults in the District, 2001–07**



Source: D.C. Department of Health, Administration for HIV Policy and Programs, Bureau of Surveillance and Epidemiology; HARS database.

**FIGURE 24. New AIDS Cases Diagnosed among Teenagers and Young Adults in the District, 1996–2007**



Source: D.C. Department of Health, Administration for HIV Policy and Programs, Bureau of Surveillance and Epidemiology; HARS database.

Note: Numbers are not shown for years with fewer than three new cases.

## Sex Education and Family Planning Clinics

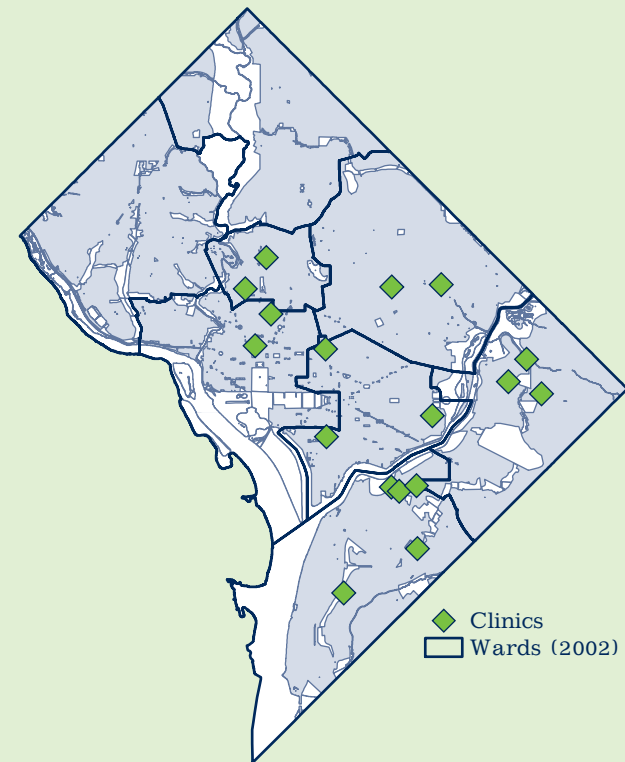
One factor that may contribute to decreased sexual activity, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections is sex education. According to the CDC's 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, 86 percent of females and 83 percent of males age 15 to 19 nationally received formal instruction on "how to say no to sex," and 70 percent of females and 66 percent of males age 15 to 18 received formal instruction on methods of birth control. Recent research from Child Trends has shown that any form of sex education results in higher levels of condom use for males (Ikramullah and Manlove 2008).

The share of District high school students that has been taught specifically about AIDS and HIV infection is available through YRBSS (although information on more general sex education is not available). In 2007, 86 percent of District 9th–12th graders were taught about HIV infection and AIDS at school. This District rate was slightly lower than the national rate for the same year (90 percent). District youth rates of receiving HIV/AIDS education have fluctuated slightly over time with no specific trend upward or downward. These rates of in-school HIV/AIDS education are similar to those observed nationwide over time.

Family planning clinics provide critical services to men and women in the District. Clinics such as Unity Health Care, which has 11 locations in the city and accepts D.C. Health Care Alliance participants, provide HIV/AIDS testing and obstetrics and gynecology services. Other clinics such as the two Planned Parenthood clinics pro-

vide HIV testing, gynecological exams, and access to birth control. Planned Parenthood is the only service provider that provides abortion services. We were unable to find data that show the number of District youth who have access to these family planning clinics; however, map 7 shows the location of 18 clinics that offer HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted disease testing.

**MAP 7. Clinics Offering STD and HIV Testing for Teenagers and Young Adults, 2008**



Source: Internet Sexuality Information Services/InSpot DC, <http://www.isis-inc.org/>.

Note: Two affiliated clinics are in the same location.

### Metro TeenAIDS

Metro TeenAIDS (MTA), founded in 1988, is a community health organization dedicated to supporting young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Through education, support, and advocacy, MTA provides HIV testing and counseling to prevent the spread of HIV. MTA promotes responsible decisionmaking through its in-school and after-school programs, and improves the quality of life for young people who are HIV positive, at risk of HIV infection, or in families with HIV/AIDS. MTA is the only organization in the Washington, D.C., area focused solely on the HIV-related needs of youth. For more information, see MTA's full profile in the appendix.

## Basics of Sex Education in DCPS

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education is responsible for setting the education standards for DCPS, including the sexuality, reproduction, and health portion of the health education standards. The health standards are grouped within six “strands” or categories: health promotion and disease prevention, access and evaluation of health information, self-management skills, analyzing influences, interpersonal communication, and decisionmaking and goal setting. High school students are required to be proficient in the basic standards and may elect to take additional, advanced health courses. The following excerpt from DCPS’s Health Learning Standards (July 2, 2007) lists the basic standards about sexuality, reproduction, and relationships for 9th- and 10th-grade students.

### **Strand 1: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention** *Sexuality, reproduction, and health*

Grade 9:

- 9.1.5. Analyze trends in teen pregnancy rates, teen births, contraceptive practices, and the availability of abortion.

- 9.1.6. Explain the importance of examination of both genders for HIV and sexually infectious diseases before conception, and the risks and precautions of birth delivery when HIV and sexually transmitted infections are present.

Grade 10:

- 10.1.4. Recognize that women should begin to receive regular gynecological exams, including pap smears, breast examinations, and/or sexually transmitted infection testing.
- 10.1.5. Recognize that men should begin to receive regular sexual health exams from a general practitioner or urologist that include testicular exams and/or sexually transmitted infection testing.
- 10.1.6. Know that older men and women need to be regularly tested for such health issues as prostate cancer or breast cancer.

### *Disease prevention and treatment*

Grade 10:

- 10.1.7. Analyze how research and medical advances have influenced the prevention and control of many diseases (e.g., cancer, HIV/AIDS).

### **Strand 3: Self-Management Skills**

#### *Safety skills*

Grade 10:

- 10.3.1. Identify the signs of abuse (emotional and physical abuse) and the available resources for help and support in schools, the local community, law enforcement, and faith-based groups.
- 10.3.2. Demonstrate ways to avoid, reduce, and report dating violence and sexual assault.
- 10.3.3. Identify the health consequences of domestic violence, child abuse, rape, and other forms of violence and discuss strategies to deal with and prevent them.

### **Strand 5: Interpersonal Communication**

#### *Effective and respectful communication*

Grade 10:

- 10.5.1. Explain the importance of responsibility and character traits such as love, respect, generosity, kindness, and forgiveness in committed relationships.
- 10.5.2. Demonstrate kind and respectful ways to end relationships.

## D.C. Primary Care Association—Adolescent Wellness Initiative

The D.C. Primary Care Association—Adolescent Wellness Initiative (AWI) is an example of a community-based organization that attempts to tackle multiple issues pertaining to teenage and young adult health. AWI works with District youth between the ages of 14 and 21 to encourage healthy behaviors and provide meaningful activities with an open and realistic approach to wellness education. All AWI activities have a dual focus, working to develop in each young person a sense of personal responsibility and pride in taking care of his or her health, and to develop his or her ability to observe, think critically, and create solutions to improve the health of the community at large. For more information, see AWI’s full profile in the appendix.



# Teenagers and Young Adults Are Engaged in Meaningful Activities

In this final section of the report, we attempt to highlight the positive activities that teenagers participate in out of school time. Unfortunately, little out-of-school-time data are available about District teenagers, nor are there much available data about meaningful activities for District young adults.

More than half of all black public school students reported attending religious services once a week, compared with half of all Hispanic high schoolers and one-third of all white high schoolers. Half of the District's 9th–12th graders played on sports teams, which was lower than the overall national rate of 56 percent. Male District public school students were more likely to play sports than female District public school students.

Some of the most meaningful activities for young adults are employment. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of all the young adults living in the District are either enrolled in college or have already graduated from college. Of the remaining young adults who are not enrolled in college, two-thirds who have some college experience are employed, compared with just over half of young adults with only high school diplomas and one-fifth of young adults with less than high school degrees.

Another goal for young adults is that they are civically involved in their community. According to D.C. voter registration data, approximately 32,000 young adults are registered to vote in the District, and 19 percent of

## FINDINGS

- More than half of District teenagers attended religious services, which was very similar to the national average. By race and ethnicity, black teenagers were more likely to attend religious services once a week (55 percent), followed by Hispanic (50 percent) and white teenagers (35 percent). Half of the District's 9th–12th graders played on sports teams, which was slightly lower than the overall national rate of 56 percent.
- Two-thirds of the young adults who had graduated from high school and had some college experience were employed, compared with just over half of young adults with only high school diplomas and one-fifth of young adults with less than high school degrees.
- Approximately 32,000 young adults were registered to vote in the District, and 19 percent of them voted in the last presidential primary election (February 2008). This was a significant increase over the 6 percent of registered youth adults who voted in the 2004 general election.
- The number of juvenile arrests dropped 44 percent between 2006 and 2007.
- The majority of juvenile cases that were petitioned to the D.C. Superior Court in 2007 were acts against persons (43 percent) and acts against property (34 percent).

registered young adults voted in the last presidential primary elections (February 2008).

The antithesis of meaningful activities is getting arrested or tried in criminal cases. The number of juvenile arrests dropped 44 percent between 2006 and 2007. Most juvenile cases that were petitioned to the D.C. Superior Court in 2007 were acts against persons (43 percent) and acts against property (34 percent).

## Extracurricular Activities

Teenagers reap many benefits when they are involved in extracurricular activities, or activities held after school or on the weekends (i.e., out-of-school-time programs). Teens playing on sports teams get exercise and learn valuable life skills such as teamwork and time management. Other after-school activities such as band, chess, or drama provide a creative outlet for teenagers and teach valuable life skills. Most extracurricular activities help build self-confidence, new social networks, and

friends, and they show colleges and job prospects that the teenager is responsible and active. Finally, extracurricular activities keep teenagers busy with constructive activities instead of getting involved in risky behaviors.

Half of the District's 9th–12th graders played on a sports team (either through school or community groups) in 2007. This rate was slightly lower than the national rate of 56 percent. However, 60 percent of male District public school students reported playing sports, compared with 41 percent of female District public school students. More than half of District teenagers (12- to 17-year-olds) attended religious services at least once a week in 2003, which was very similar to the national average (figure 25). Black teenagers were more likely to attend religious services once a week (55 percent), followed by Hispanic (50 percent), and white teenagers (35 percent).

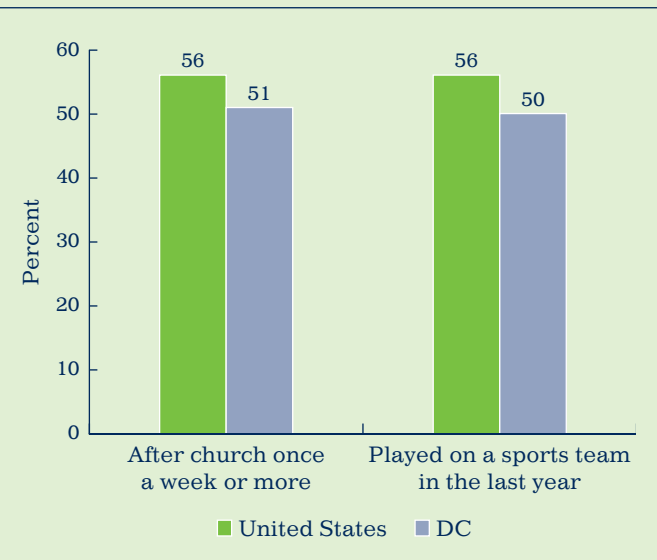
### Role of Community-Based Nonprofits in Youth Activities

Teenagers and young adults described some of their after-school activities during the focus groups. Teenagers from AALEAD were particularly active with volunteering at the library or tutoring at school, as well as joining the recycling club, basketball team, Asian club, or chess team. A young adult from Ward 8 who was currently homeless said she sang in the choir in high school. Other teenagers from the focus groups talked about the volunteering activities they did, especially since volunteering is a DCPS high school graduation requirement.

The most significant activity that many youth from our focus groups participated in was community-based youth organizations, such as AALEAD or LAYC. For instance, youth from LAYC take college preparation classes and mentoring classes every day after school as well as on Saturdays.

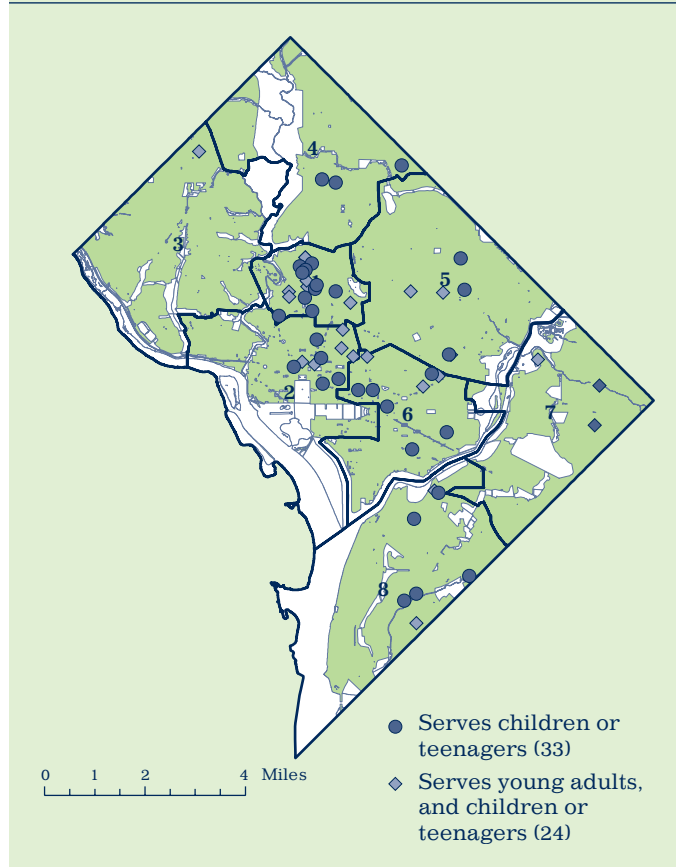
Few teenagers and young adults from the two homeless focus groups reported participating in extracurricular activities while in high school. Those participants were in more dire circumstances; they spent their out-of-school time making sure they had a safe place to sleep for the night.

**FIGURE 25.** Share of High Schoolers Engaged in Extracurricular Activities



Sources: 2003 National Survey of Children's Health and 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey.

**MAP 8. Community-Based Organizations  
Providing Out-of-School-Time  
Programs Funded by DC CYITC**



Source: D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (DC CYITC), fiscal year 2009.

## D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation

The D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (DC CYITC) is a public-private partnership chartered by the District to help nonprofit organizations improve services and opportunities for every child in the city. Since its inception in 1999, DC CYITC has provided local grants, technical assistance, youth worker training, capacity building, convening, and policy support, while it has engaged in national learning opportunities, policy forums, and innovation. DC CYITC grantee partners provide neighborhood-level out-of-school-time programs and services for children and youth between the ages of 5 and 24 that address youth development and include academic enrichment. See map 8 for the location of 33 community-based organizations that serve children and youth (age 5 to 17) and 24 community-based organizations that serve young adults (age 18 to 24). Some of these organizations serving young adults also serve younger children (age 5 to 18).

## Sitar Arts Center

Sitar Arts Center provides multidisciplinary arts education to the children and youth of Washington, D.C., in a nurturing, creative community where young people discover their inherent talents and gifts. The Sitar Arts Center offers after-school, weekend, and summer classes to more than 500 students a year, 80 percent of whom come from low-income households, with the goal of fostering personal and artistic growth through the visual arts, music, drama, dance, digital arts, and creative writing. For more information, see Sitar Arts Center's full profile in the appendix.

## DC SCORES

DC SCORES operates a five-day-a-week school-based program for urban youth between the ages of 8 and 14. The students learn important life skills through a unique program in which they split time between playing on the soccer field, learning in the classroom, and making improvements in the community. This innovative approach not only addresses important areas of growth but also keeps young people engaged. The organization's other innovative approaches include a low student-teacher ratio and a staff of D.C. public school teachers who already know the students. For more information, see DC SCORES' full profile in the appendix.



## Department of Employment Services' Summer Youth Employment Program

While the program successfully attracted record numbers of youth, it suffered setbacks because of problems with payments and tracking systems. This was the first year that DOES deployed the payroll debit card program instead of using traditional paper checks to pay participants. Originally, DOES hoped that the debit card system would be an improvement, providing increased convenience to participants who could access their wages through any ATM, especially if they did not already have a checking account. However, serious pay problems emerged weeks into the program, as hundreds of participants were reportedly unpaid, underpaid, or receiving late payments while many others who did not appear for work were still paid. According to an internal investigation, many payroll problems were the result of data management and the new automated payment system, as well as the District's inability to handle such a large increase in participants.

## Employment and Employment Programs

Employment programs are another important activity that teenagers can participate in to gain job experience, build skills, and help decide what career paths to choose. In 2008, 20,339 youth participated in the District Department of Employment Services' (DOES) Summer Youth Employment Program. To participate, youth needed to be District residents between the

## The Urban Alliance Foundation, Inc.

The Urban Alliance Foundation is a unique youth development nonprofit that provides low-income youth paid, professional internships. Youth affiliated with Urban Alliance live primarily east of the Anacostia River in areas with the highest concentrations of poverty in the city; half the children in some of these neighborhoods qualify as poor.

Since its inception in 1996, Urban Alliance's High School Internship Program has grown from 6 young people at Anacostia Senior High School to more than 200 students annually at 16 public D.C. high schools in collaboration with over 90 top-notch businesses such as the World Bank Group, Fannie Mae, Bank of America, XM Radio, the Carlyle Group, and Morgan Stanley. For more information, see UA's full profile in the appendix.

ages of 14 and 21 and have proof of their date of birth, citizenship/permanent residency, and Social Security number. Students in grades 7 through 12 were required to have a copy of their report card, and college students were required to have a resume and a copy of their college transcript.

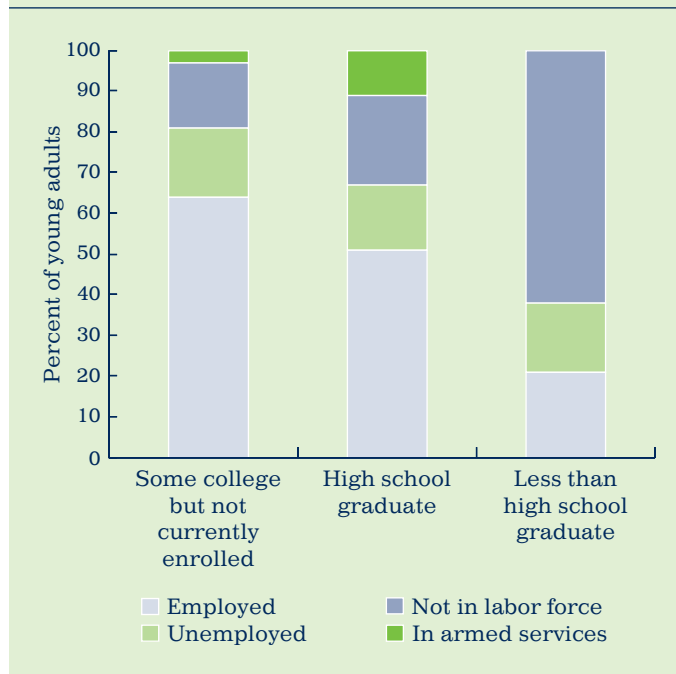
While DOES was plagued with administrative and programmatic problems in 2008, most notably being significantly late or remiss in paying its participants (see sidebar), the greatest number of youth participated in the program since 1993. The number of District of Columbia youth participating in the Passport-to-Work Summer Youth Program has been steadily growing since 2003, when only 5,494 youth participated. The 60 percent increase in participants between 2007 and 2008 can be attributed to Mayor Fenty's commitment to providing a job to any eligible resident as well as the elimination of the registration deadline.

Continuing school for more education or entering the workforce is expected for productive and contributing young adults. Of the young adults who had graduated from high school and had some college experience but were not currently enrolled, 64 percent were employed in 2005–06, 17 percent were unemployed, 16 percent were not in the labor force at all, and 3 percent were in the armed services (figure 26). Of those young adults with only high school diplomas, 51 percent were employed, 22 percent were not in the labor force, 16 percent were unemployed, and 11 percent were in the armed services.

The employed share of young adults who had not graduated from high school was much smaller than the share of young adults with high school diplomas or some college. Only 21 percent of these young adults were employed in 2005–06, 17 percent were unemployed, and 62 percent were not in the labor force at all.

Almost all the young adults living in PUMA 101 with either high school diplomas or some college experience were employed (94 percent). PUMA 102 had the highest share of young adults with high school diplomas or some college in the armed services at 20 percent. PUMA 103 and PUMA 104 had the largest share of unemployed youth with high school diplomas or some college

**FIGURE 26.** Employment Status for 18–24-Year-Olds in the District by Educational Attainment, 2005–06



Source: 2005–06 American Community Survey micro-level data provided by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

education, at 22 and 20 percent, respectively. Young adults with high school degrees or some years of college living in PUMA 104 had the lowest shares of employment and highest share of young adults not being in the labor force at all: only 47 percent were employed, and 27 percent were not in the labor force.

PUMA 102 had the highest share of employed young adults without high school educations at 48 percent. The next highest share was PUMAs 101 and 105 at 24 percent each. The PUMA with the highest unemployment was PUMA 105 at 26 percent, followed by PUMA 104 at 23 percent.

## Martha's Table

Founded in 1980, Martha's Table's mission is to serve the needs of the community by providing food, family support services, learning, and enrichment opportunities to children, youth, and families throughout the Washington, D.C., area. The Martha's Table Teen Program (MTTP), one of four youth/adolescent programs within Martha's Table, is dedicated to the academic, social, and personal development of teenagers throughout the District of Columbia. MTTP is open year round and offers a multitude of activities, workshops, community service, and skill-development opportunities for its participants including entrepreneurship, graphics, jewelry making, clothing design, creative writing, and debate. In addition to the daily workshops and activities, MTTP is a host site for the Department of Employment Services' Summer Youth Employment Program. For more information, see Martha's Table's full profile in the appendix.

## Civic and Community Engagement

Part of the goal for youth to engage in meaningful activities is that young adults should get involved in their community's policies and laws and become active engaged citizens. Voting in local and federal elections is one obvious measure of whether youth are civically involved. The 26th amendment to the United States Constitution standardized the voting age to 18 in 1971, in reaction to the Vietnam War where men in many states could be drafted at age 18 but could not vote until they were 21. However, since the minimum voting age was lowered to 18, youth participation in voting has been relatively low. According to the Institute of Politics' Youth Survey on Politics and Public Survey at Harvard University, young adult voter turnout was at a national all-time low in 2000. The good news is that the most recent primaries and November 2008 presidential election saw a record turnout of youth voters.

## DC Youth Advisory Council

Former Mayor Anthony Williams established the DC Youth Advisory Council (DCYAC) in 2002. The purpose of DCYAC is to give youth a voice in policies and programs in the city, and its goal is to make the District a better place for youth. The DCYAC consists of 32 council members between the ages of 13 and 22 selected from various sectors of the District: three members each from all eight wards and eight at-large representatives who have experience with the juvenile justice system and foster care. The DCYAC meets twice a month and publishes a yearly report of its activities, recommendations, and accomplishments.

General responsibilities of DCYAC include

- commenting on legislation and policies that affect youth,
- presenting methods to resolve youth-related conflicts between youth and between youth and adults,
- proposing recommendations to improve the lives of youth,
- monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of youth programs and policies,
- partnering with neighborhood and youth organizations on shared issues, and
- preparing youth for leadership through appropriate training.

Some of DCYAC's accomplishments include

- testifying at the Mayor's hearing on the 2004–05 education budget,
- facilitating a youth crime workshop at the Mayor's Crime Summit,
- participating in three youth-led projects through Youth Ventures,
- participating in a public safety, education, and housing forum and presenting recommendations to District agency heads, and
- attending national youth summits.

According to the District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics, 32,229 young adults (age 18 to 24) were registered to vote in the 2008 presidential primary elections. These young adults made up 8 percent of all registered voters in the District. The majority of these young adults were registered as Democrat (69 percent), 24 percent were not registered with any party (i.e., independents), 6 percent were registered as Republican, and the remaining 1 percent were registered with the Statehood Green party or another political party.

Of the 24,985 young adults that were able to vote in the 2008 federal primaries (excluding all independent voters who cannot vote in other political party's primaries), 19 percent of the eligible young adults voted (18 percent voted in person and 1 percent voted absentee). This compares with only 6 percent of the eligible young adults that voted in the 2004 presidential election. It will be interesting to see if the share of young adults that voted in the history-making 2008 federal presidential election between Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain was even greater than the primary.

## Juveniles Arrested and Petitioned in D.C. Superior Court

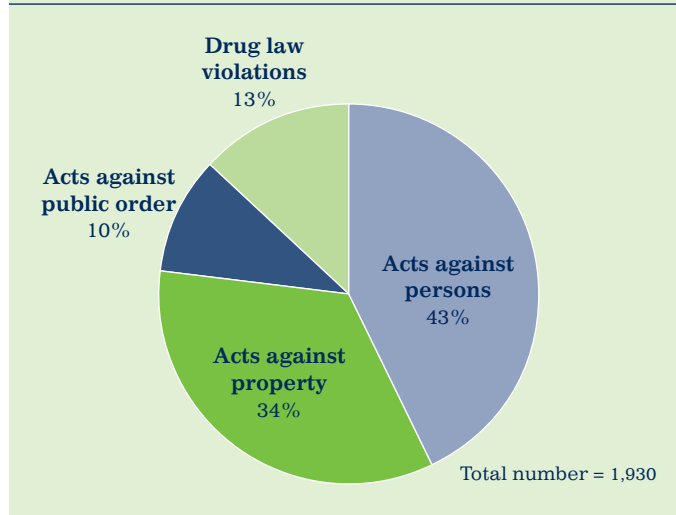
Unfortunately, not all the activities that District youth are involved in are meaningful or positive. This section reports the number of youth who have been arrested by the Metropolitan Police Department and who have been involved in the juvenile court system.

The District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) tracks the number of juveniles (children under the age of 18) arrested in the District. This number includes juveniles living in the District and elsewhere, and it includes multiple arrests of the same juvenile.

The MPD made approximately 27,000 juvenile arrests in the District in 2007, and virtually all the arrests were of black males. The number of juvenile arrests dropped by 44 percent between 2006 and 2007.

The number of juvenile cases referred to D.C. Superior Court in 2007 was 3,123, an increase of 5 percent from 2006 (2,978 cases). (The number of referred cases includes incidents that occurred earlier than 2007.) The number of cases in 2007 constitutes the greatest number filed against juveniles in the District since 1998, although the 2007 number is much lower than the number filed annually in the early 1990s.

**FIGURE 27.** Juvenile Formal Petitions to the D.C. Family Court by Type, 2007



Source: D.C. Family Court Annual Report, 2008.

Not all cases that are referred to D.C. Superior Court go to trial. In 2007, 1,930 cases were formally petitioned into the D.C. Family Court. Among them, 43 percent (833 cases) represented acts against persons, 34 percent (665 cases) represented acts against property, 10 percent (185 cases) represented acts against public order, and 13 percent (246 cases) represented drug law violations (figure 27).

Decreasing juvenile crime has been a priority for the District. Recently, the District has implemented policies that seek to reduce the number of youth in secure confinement through offering alternative discipline solutions, such as home monitoring. Currently, District law mandates that Oak Hill Youth Center, the secure detention facility for juveniles, close by March 2009 to make way for better detention options. In 2007, 75 youth were detained at the Oak Hill Center. In 2006, there were 102 youth.

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services implemented the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) in July 2005. JDAI, sponsored in various areas of the nation by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, works to reduce the reliance on juvenile incarceration with the goal of increasing overall public safety. JDAI includes three main components: interagency data gathering and sharing, case processing, and analyzing existing youth services and supports.



# Conclusion

The challenges facing teenagers and young adults in the District are formidable: high poverty rates, many single parent-headed households, growing numbers of 19- to 21-year-olds in foster care, poor school performance, growing obesity rates, high suicide attempt rates, many young adults with only high school educations or less, and low employment rates for young adults with high school degrees or less education, to name a few.

Fortunately, the District has dozens of local community-based organizations dedicated to addressing the needs of teenagers and young adults. City departments often rely on local nonprofits to provide essential services such as before- and aftercare services, academic strengthening and mentoring, parental and family supports, and health services. In addition, many nonprofits have formal relationships with DCPS to provide after-school services to extend the school day and ensure productive and safe places for DCPS students after school hours. However, the financial fate of nonprofits in the District is uncertain. With the national economic downturn, nonprofit funding for operating budgets or specific projects is becoming scarce.

In addition, the District has struggled to provide sustainable funding for the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (DC CYITC). Between fiscal years 2007 and 2009, non-earmarked city funding for DC CYITC went from \$13.1 million to \$9.6 million. DC CYITC uses this funding

to provide grants to many local community-based organizations that provide youth development services, primarily during non-school hours. In addition, DC CYITC often faces severe funding shortages for its summer programming; this funding declined from \$3.5 million to \$2.5 million between fiscal years 2007 and 2009. Summer programs funded by DC CYITC have been shown to help young people retain what they learned during the school year, and summer programming helps ensure that young people are safe when school is not in session.

The role of nonprofits in addressing the dire situation facing many of the District's teenagers and young adults cannot be undervalued; yet, nonprofits alone cannot do the job. Strong, strategic partnerships between District government and non-profit organizations would enable the two sectors to combine resources, community know-how, best practices, and city support to develop a vision and plan of action to ensure that all youth in the District have the opportunity to successfully transition into healthy adulthood. The city's focus on school reform will address only some of these issues—namely, improving school performance, increasing graduation rates, and preparing public school children for college. School reform will not immediately address other critical issues such as high levels of poverty, children growing up with only one parent, and poor physical and mental health care. The city's response to these issues must be as targeted and focused as it is around school reform.

In order to accomplish this goal, the city needs to reorganize and refocus its efforts on disconnected teenagers and youth, as well as partner with community-based organizations. We recommend the following four actions:

### **1. Reinstate and Fund the Mayor's Reconnecting Disconnected Youth (RDY) Committee**

The RDY will establish a comprehensive, citywide agenda to specifically meet the needs of youth age 16–24 who are

unemployed, high school dropouts, transitioning from foster care, involved in the juvenile justice system, or otherwise disconnected from social and community supports. In its *100 Days Plan*, the Fenty administration committed to establishing a mayoral-level advisory board to explore the issue of disconnected youth in the District, bring forth solutions, and work with the city to implement solutions. The advisory board consisted of government officials, several local funders, one community-based organization representative, and youth.

In March 2007, the office of the Deputy Mayor for Education in partnership with the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates and the DC Children's Trust Fund held a citywide forum that brought together more than 250 youth, providers, advocates, government officials and staff, and neighborhood residents to officially launch the disconnected youth effort and gather community recommendations. Mayor Fenty participated as the keynote speaker. During a private, follow-up meeting in May 2007, youth and youth workers presented to Mayor Fenty and his chief of staff the community recommendations developed at the forum. During the May meeting, Mayor Fenty committed to the recommendations, which focused on affordable housing for youth, improvements to the youth employment system, and creating more productive activities for youth during the nonschool hours.

After the forum, the committee made several attempts to bring official recommendations to the mayor for implementation. However, no official actions or initiatives were developed or moved forward, and the RDY committee was eventually shifted to the Department of Employment Services from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education. Since being transferred to DOES, the advisory board has remained inactive. While a DOES staff person is responsible for the committee, funding was never requested for the work in the fiscal year 2009 budget. RDY therefore exists as an unfunded mandate.



## 2. Reorganize the Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission (ICSIC) to Include Community Stakeholders, Using Maryland's Joint Committee for Children, Youth, and Families as a Model

As noted in the introduction to this databook, the ICSIC, established within the public school reform legislation, is charged with guiding collaborative efforts across systems toward realizing the District's six citywide goals for children and youth. The ICSIC is definitely a step in the right direction. However, no mechanism within ICSIC officially and consistently works with those on the ground (from community-based organizations) or in the community to inform the city's strategy and thereby build true citywide collaboration. As a result, there is a disconnect between the city's strategy for children and youth and community-based efforts.

Building a mechanism for community participation would bring more experts to the table and ensure nonduplication of effort. Maryland's Joint Committee for Children, Youth, and Families, which is similar to the District's ICSIC, includes a Children's Cabinet, which houses a community-based advisory council that gathers input and direction from experts in the community. The District should consider this model to open up the ICSIC to include more community partners.

## 3. Establish a Cabinet-Level Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, and Families

There is no high-level executive within the current administration responsible for developing and implementing programs to ensure that at-risk children and youth receive the supports and

services they need on the front end to prevent them from becoming "disconnected" (i.e., dropping out of school, not entering the labor force, becoming part of the justice system). While we have high-level officials working to establish priorities and programming for the city's economic development endeavors through the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and public school reform efforts through the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, no high-level office or agency is responsible for ensuring that prevention services are developed for those youth who are on the right track and need supports to stay there, youth who want to be on the right track but cannot find their way, or those youth who are on the edge and need to be quickly steered back to a positive place before they enter the juvenile justice or child welfare systems.

Many of the ICSIC's collaborative strategies to support at-risk youth such as *Second Step*, *Primary Project*, and *DC START* are largely school-based models that serve only youth within the D.C. public school system. Since D.C.'s high school dropout rate is thought to be approximately 50 percent, a dual community-based strategy must be in place to reach those youth who are not going to school, are on the verge of dropping out, or have dropped out. Thus, there is a need for an executive-level office separate from the Deputy Mayor for Education that can take the lead and be held accountable for coordinating an effective citywide plan to build a safety net for youth.

Before the Fenty administration, the District had a Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families, and Elders (DMCYFE). Not only was the office held accountable for ensuring the coordination and proactive development of relevant programs across agencies, but it also served as a vehicle for responding to the changing socioeconomic needs of the District's youth and families. For example, in response to increasing youth violence in the District, including an alarming increase in girl gang activity, the DMCYFE was able to convene the City Council, DC CYITC, private funders, youth-serving organizations, agency

directors, advocates, the Metropolitan Police Department, and others to come together and develop what is now known as the effective youth development strategy (EYD). A youth violence prevention strategy, EYD included a new funding stream that provided resources to support violence prevention initiatives such as the *Girls Achieving a Meaningful Experience* and *Boys of Color* programs. EYD still exists today and continues to serve District youth through these two initiatives and additional programs.

#### 4. Develop Strategic Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations Tackling Out-of-School Time, Youth Homelessness, and Youth Employment

The role of nonprofits in addressing the dire situation facing many of the District's teenagers and young adults cannot be undervalued; yet, nonprofits alone cannot do the job. Strong, strategic partnerships between District government and nonprofit organizations would enable the two sectors to combine resources, community know-how, best practices, and city support to develop a vision and plan of action to ensure that all youth in the District have the opportunity to successfully transition into healthy adulthood. Toward this end, we recommend that the city partner with the nonprofit community in three strategic areas to combat key struggles facing our teenagers and young adults. Each recommendation noted above can act as a vehicle for this type of increased and deep partnership between District government and community-based organizations, as their success and forward movement hinge on diverse collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders. We make specific recommendations under each topic.

##### Out-of-School Time Recommendations

- Partner with community-based organizations to increase the public's awareness of the presence and impact of out-

of-school-time programs, especially community-based programs not offered in DCPS facilities.

- Develop alternative local funding streams for out-of-school-time programs and access to federal funding opportunities, and ensure that the future economic stimulus plans include an emphasis on youth development/programming.
- Continue to strengthen the DCPS DC ONE Afterschool Initiative to provide low- or no-cost before- and after-school services for all DCPS students. For the 2008–09 school year DCPS created a new Out-of-School Time office that coordinates all before- and after-school providers working in DCPS schools. The goal of the new office was to ensure that providers offered high-quality services and were held accountable. The new office invited providers interested in participating in DC ONE (either those from DC Aftercare for All or other groups) to submit an application, and the office vetted all applications. The Out-of-School Time office assigned a coordinator to every DCPS school building to ensure high standards are being met.

##### Homeless Youth Recommendations

- Develop a formal, shared data collection system to track youth homelessness citywide.
- Ensure that youth are included as a subpopulation in the District's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.
- Create a secure, consistent funding stream of at least \$1.7 million to support the needs of homeless youth in the District. In fiscal year 2008, the city granted funding for homeless youth. Through a tri-agency collaborative, Sasha Bruce Youthwork, the Latin American Youth Center, and Covenant House Washington received \$1.7 million in District funding to create new bed spaces for youth. The collaborative decided to redirect \$700,000 to the Children and Families Service Agency to support the underfunded rapid housing program.

- Ensure that there are housing programs to assist the growing number of teenagers and young adults in foster care once they age out and become independent, as they are at high risk of becoming homeless.

### Youth Employment Recommendation

- Partner with community-based organizations to ensure the Workforce Investment Council and Youth Investment Council are independently strong organizations that work

closely together to ensure a better coordinated system of workforce development for youth in the city.

In this report, we have presented data, described programs and nonprofit organizations, and shared the experiences of teenagers and young adults. We hope city agencies and nonprofits use this information to develop a better support system for all teenagers and young adults in the District. We also hope that this information serves as a baseline against which we can measure progress toward achieving these goals.



# Appendix. Organization Profiles

## Profile 1: Asian American LEAD (AALEAD)

Asian American Leadership, Empowerment, and Development's (AALEAD) mission is to promote the well-being of Asian American youth and families through education, leadership development, and community building. Founded in 1998, AALEAD is the District of Columbia's first youth development organization to focus mainly on assisting the area's low-income Asian American population. In 2006, the organization expanded its program into Montgomery County, Maryland. In a period of 10 years, AALEAD has grown from a small organization staffed by only one full-time staff member to an organization with 16 full- and part-time staff members and a \$1.3 million budget. AALEAD operates year-round academic enrichment, mentoring, and family support programs that have helped hundreds of low-income Asian American children and their families stabilize their lives, succeed academically, and gain a voice in the community. The organization has particular expertise working with recent immigrant and low-income Asian communities, mostly from China, Vietnam, and other war-torn Southeast Asian countries. Staff and volunteers consist of multicultural, multilingual, and multiracial individuals who are passionate and committed to improving the lives of youth.

All of AALEAD's programs have proved successful in addressing issues faced by low-income Asian Americans. AALEAD provides two academic programs: the After School Academic Enrichment Program (ASAE), and the

Academic, Leadership, and Resiliency Secondary School Program (SSP). ASAE and SSP provide daily academic enrichment, homework assistance, arts classes, college preparation assistance, academic counseling, leadership training, community service activities, and recreational activities during the school year and in the summer. ASAE and SSP both offer a tutoring component that uses a back-to-basics curriculum and one-on-one instruction to help participants achieve grade-level competency in reading, writing, and math.

While education is the cornerstone of AALEAD's mission and work, AALEAD understands that academic programs are most effective when combined with supporting programs targeted at reducing risk factors. Thus, AALEAD also offers two supporting programs—the Mentoring Program and the Family Strengthening Program—to provide wrap-around services to each child. The Mentoring Program develops high-quality mentoring relationships that address key risk factors, provide role models for youth, and increase the likelihood that each child becomes a successful, self-reliant adult. The Family Strengthening Program supports the educational development of children by improving families' ability to support their children.

This multipronged approach of academic enrichment, family support, mentoring, and leadership training helps ensure that children receive the attention they need to succeed.

For more information about AALEAD, visit <http://www.aalead.org/> or call (202) 884-0322.

## Profile 2: Beacon House

Beacon House was founded in 1991 by a retired District of Columbia youth counselor who returned to one of the worst neighborhoods he had worked in, the Edgewood Terrace community in Ward 5, to start a youth center that would provide alternatives to the violence and drugs that pervaded the streets. Today, Beacon House serves more than 400 low-income, at-risk children and youth age 5–18 a year, with various academic, mentoring, and enrichment programs. Roughly 85 percent of the participating children are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program, and the vast majority come from single-parent households with annual incomes of approximately \$20,000. Beacon House's mission is to guide and nurture children and youth through the successful completion of high school, armed with the academic and social skills necessary to lead lives of financial security and personal dignity.

Beacon House's primary emphasis is on academic support. It operates a daily after-school study hall, during which 150 to 200 children get help with their day's homework assignments. In addition, Beacon House annually enrolls roughly 70 children and youth in an intensive tutoring program to bring their math and reading skills back up to grade level.

Beacon House also strives to give its children and youth a well-rounded childhood experience. Beacon House has one of the largest and most successful athletic programs among youth centers in the city. Under the athletic director's supervision, approximately 260 children age 5–16 participate on one of seven football teams, divided by age and weight. Each team is coached by a team of fathers and supported by involved mothers. Beacon House also offers children and youth the opportunity to participate in basketball, baseball, soccer, and cheerleading teams.

In addition to academic and athletic programs, older youth participate in individual and group mentoring programs, including a comprehensive sex education curriculum tailored to this high-risk population. High school students are also guided through college and professional school applications and go on an annual tour of postsecondary schools in a major urban center. Beacon House also assists youth who need or want to go directly into the workforce after high school. Fifty teenagers gain employment experience as junior counselors at Beacon House's annual low-cost summer camp for 150 5- to 13-year-olds. And, as a USDA-approved site, Beacon House feeds nutritious meals to every child and youth who walks through its doors.

For more information about Beacon House, visit <http://www.beaconhousedc.org> or call (202) 529-7376.

## Profile 3: Covenant House Washington (CHW)

Covenant House Washington (CHW) was established in May 1995 to address widespread problems of homelessness and poverty among teenagers and young adults. As part of the international Covenant House organization—the largest privately funded child care agency—CHW is guided by the principles of immediacy, sanctuary, values, communication, structure, and choice. The organization meets the basic needs of youth on the streets—shelter, food, and clothing—and extends its support to every aspect of life: physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual.

### Covenant House Services

The Mobile Outreach Support Team is often CHW's first line of communication with young people who are in need of help. The team travels daily to schools, community centers, and neighborhoods

throughout the region offering encouragement and emergency assistance to youth in crisis. Described as the God Squad, members of the outreach team travel by van and are on the streets weekdays from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. letting youth know that CHW is there for them.

Helping youth move from a state of crisis to a state of calm is the primary charge of service management. Service managers assume the vital role of identifying and securing much-needed services to help youth in crisis meet their immediate and long-term goals. Acting as advocates for youth, service managers work with youth one on one to develop an individual service plan that accurately identifies the youth's needs. Together, youth and service managers establish objectives to ensure the plan is implemented in a timely manner. Progress is measured regularly.

CHW's residential services respond to the emergency and longer-term housing needs of

young people who are homeless, runaways, or otherwise marginally housed. The agency offers three programs to address the vast needs of youth:

- The Crisis Center provides short-term shelter for youth with immediate housing needs.
- Rights of Passage is a supportive, structured housing program for youth age 18–24 that allows them additional time to transition from a state of crisis and dependency to a level of stability and independence.
- Transitional Living Program is a supported independent living program that offers a comprehensive range of services and support activities that lead young people from dependency and negative lifestyle choices to independent living. The program includes parenting skills, financial management, and relationship building sessions.

For more information about Covenant House Washington, visit <http://www.covenanthousedc.org/> or call (202) 610-9600.



## Profile 4: DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DCAYA)

The DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DCAYA), founded in 2004 and staffed in 2006, is a coalition of youth-engaged organizations, youth, and concerned residents formed to ensure that all District of Columbia youth can access high-quality and affordable developmental opportunities. DCAYA envisions a community where no youth is considered at risk and where all youth are respected as valued community members. DCAYA's long-term public policy goals are to

1. ensure access for all youth to the supports and services needed for their successful transition into adulthood,
2. ensure a safe city for youth, and
3. increase youth participation in local public policymaking.

DCAYA provides a mechanism for youth-engaged organizations, young people, community members, and parents to work together for better and expanded city-supported and neighborhood-rooted youth services and supports. The organization works to establish structured opportunities for adolescents and young adults to become safe, healthy, resilient, and confident community members. DCAYA accomplishes its mission through policy advocacy, networking, and youth empowerment.

DCAYA's immediate constituency is its organization members—currently 106 nongovernmental youth-engaged organizations in the District of Columbia (see list at right). The organization members are intricately involved in all aspects of

organization decisionmaking, whether through participating in monthly issue committee meetings or full membership meetings, serving as spokespersons at advocacy and mobilization events, or serving as board members.

DCAYA's target population is District of Columbia youth. The organization is especially focused on improving outcomes for the District's youth who are poor, have low educational attainment, are high school dropouts, are pregnant, live in unsafe neighborhoods, and are involved in public custodial systems. DCAYA involves youth by empowering them to lead in policy advocacy activities through advocacy training and enlisting them as spokespersons at testimonies and awareness events.

DCAYA concentrates its advocacy and youth empowerment efforts on three core issues:

1. reducing youth homelessness,
2. increasing youth employment, and
3. creating more and better out-of-school-time opportunities for young people.

DCAYA's recent accomplishments include the following:

### **Increased Public Resources for Out-of-School**

**Time**—Secured \$5 million of the District of Columbia's FY 2008 supplemental budget for summer out-of-school-time (OST) activities.

### **Increased Public Resources for Youth Employment—**

Secured reprogramming of \$6 million of the District of Columbia's fiscal year 2008 budget toward the Summer Youth Employment Program, in partnership with the Youth Action Research Group.

### **Organized Response to Summer Youth**

**Employment Program Challenges**—Organized the community response to fiscal and operational challenges experienced by the Summer Youth Employment Program.

### **Influenced Public Resources for Youth Housing—**

Secured a commitment of \$4 million for youth housing.

### **Launched Innovative Initiative to Lift Graduation**

**Rates in D.C.**—DCAYA recently joined with Critical Exposure, a nonprofit organization that teaches young people how to use documentary photography to advocate for school reform, to launch STEP Up DC (Success Through Educational Progress). This exciting new initiative works to boost graduation rates in the District by empowering young people to share their ideas—through photography, surveys, and advocacy—on why youth drop out and what keeps them in school.

Below is the list of organizations affiliated with DCAYA:

1. Advocates for Justice & Education
2. Alcanzando Metas Foundation
3. Asian American LEAD
4. Beacon House
5. Benning Learning Communities Initiative
6. Beyond Talent
7. Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington
8. Brainfood
9. Bread for the City
10. Break the Cycle
11. BUILD
12. Center for Youth & Family Investment

13. Centronia
14. Chess Challenge in DC
15. City at Peace
16. College Bound
17. Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative
18. Community Preservation & Development Corp.
19. Connect to Protect
20. Covenant House Washington
21. Dance Institute of Washington
22. DC Action for Children
23. DC Assembly on School-Based Health Care
24. DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
25. DC Fiscal Policy Institute
26. DC Hunger Solutions
27. DC Lawyers for Youth
28. DC Primary Care Association
29. DC SCORES
30. DC Tobacco-Free Families
31. Different Avenues
32. Dream City
33. Earth Conservation Corps
34. East Capitol Center for Change
35. FAN (Fihankra Akoma Ntoaso) DC
36. Facilitating Leadership in Youth
37. FAIR Fund
38. Financial Literacy Foundation
39. For Love of Children
40. Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop
41. Friendship House Association, Inc.
42. GCH Endowment to Promote Quality Early Childhood Education
43. Heads Up
44. Healthy Families/Thriving Communities
45. Higher Achievement Program
46. Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund
47. Horton's Kid's Inc.
48. Hung Tao Choy Mei Leadership Institute
49. Inquiring Minds Consulting
50. Institute for Behavioral Change
51. Interfaith Child Advocacy Network of Metro Washington
52. Interstages, Inc.
53. Kid Power-DC, Inc.
54. Jubilee Housing
55. Juma Ventures
56. Junior Achievement
57. Latin American Youth Center
58. Life Pieces to Masterpieces, Inc.
59. LifeSTARTS
60. Marshall Heights Community Development Organization
61. Martha's Table
62. Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care
63. Men Can Stop Rape
64. Mentors, Inc.
65. Mentoring Today
66. Metro DC PFLAG
67. Metro TeenAIDS
68. Multicultural Career Intern Program
69. Multicultural Community Service DC
70. Multi-Media Training Institute
71. National Alliance to End Homelessness
72. National Center for Children and Families
73. National Organization of Concerned Black Men
74. Operation HOPE—Banking on Our Future
75. Perry School Community Services Center, Inc.
76. Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, DC
77. Polaris Project
78. Public Defender Service
79. Raising Expectations Inc.
80. Reach4Success
81. Saturday Environmental Academy
82. Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc.
83. Sitar Arts Center
84. Stand Up for Kids
85. Stigma
86. Street Law
87. The Emergence Community Arts Collective
88. The Posse Foundation
89. The Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League
90. The Shakespeare Theatre Company
91. Transgender Health Empowerment, Inc.
92. Urban Alliance Foundation
93. Vietnamese-American Community Service Center
94. Vision to Peace Project
95. Washington Tennis & Education
96. Wellness, Inc.
97. Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless & Fair Budget Coalition
98. Washington Youth Choir
99. Women Empowered Against Violence, Inc.
100. Wider Opportunities for Women
101. Young Women's Drumming Empowerment Project
102. Young Women's Project
103. Youth Education Alliance
104. Youth Leadership Support Network
105. YWCA of the National Capital Area
106. Wilderness Leadership & Learning Inc.

For more information about DCAYA, visit <http://www.dc-aya.org/index.htm> or call (202) 587-0616.

## Profile 5: DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Founded in 1999, DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy's initial mission was to cut the city's teen pregnancy rate in half by 2005. According to data from the District of Columbia Department of Health, the 2005 rate of 64.4 pregnancies per 1,000 girls 15 to 19 years old represents a 58 percent reduction of the teenage birth rate from when DC Campaign began its work. DC Campaign has since raised the bar with a new mission of cutting the rate in half again by 2015, to improve the health and well-being of adolescents.

With research-based practices and programs at its core, DC Campaign educates and engages adults regarding important issues in the lives of teens, speaks up for teens and helps teens speak for themselves, and mobilizes support around the young people in the city.

To accomplish this ambitious mission, DC Campaign's work includes many functions:

**Convener**—Creating opportunities for local providers to learn from national experts, providing information about pressing issues affecting youth development, and engaging new audiences in teen pregnancy prevention by connecting it to other timely issues;

**Coalition Builder**—Building relationships grounded in trust, bringing together formerly fragmented organizations to work in partnership and collaborate around shared goals;

**Promoter of Best Practices**—Using accurate data as the basis for good decisions and sharing high-quality and up-to-date information on best practices in teen pregnancy prevention;

**Training Resource**—Providing opportunities and cultivating skills for teens to advocate for themselves and caregivers to feel more comfortable talking with their children; and

**Catalyst for Change**—Influencing public opinion and disseminating information about important issues, shining a spotlight on the issue of teen pregnancy prevention.

Research says that teen pregnancy is less likely when *boys and girls*, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income,

- get the health care they need;
- make plans that exclude pregnancy during the teen years;
- have close, caring relationships with trustworthy adults;
- experience school success from an early age;
- feel a sense of belonging; and
- have safe places to spend time with friends developing competencies and new interests.

DC Campaign envisions a future with expanded opportunities and life choices for young people that will rejuvenate the social and economic health of the entire city.

For more information about DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, visit <http://www.dccampaign.org> or call (202) 789-4666.

## Profile 6: DC SCORES

DC SCORES operates a five-day-a-week school-based program for urban youth between the ages of 8 and 14. The students learn important life skills through a unique program in which they split time between playing on the soccer field, learning in the classroom, and making improvements in the community. This innovative approach not only addresses important areas of growth but also keeps young people engaged. The organization's other innovative approaches include a low student-teacher ratio and a staff of D.C. public school teachers who already know the students.

### Reaching into DC's Inner City

DC SCORES has programs at 19 elementary schools and four middle schools, located in seven of the eight District wards. More than 800 students are enrolled; each school has 32 children participating, evenly divided between boys and girls. During the summer, more than 100 children participate in DC SCORES full-day camps.

### Delivering Results for Youth and the Community

The after-school and summer programs pick up where schools leave off—providing physical and academic programs that make a difference in the lives of kids. DC SCORES's unique approach is having a powerful impact: in 2005, a remarkable 34 per-

cent of students improved their writing scores by at least one grade, while 31 percent improved their reading scores by at least one grade.

### More Than Ten Years of Success

DC SCORES's innovative marriage of activities was developed by a Teach for America alumnus in 1994. Based on the belief that principles of teamwork and discipline learned on the soccer field can translate into the classroom, the program has evolved in Washington, D.C., from serving 15 girls to more than 800 youth. It is the flagship site for America SCORES, a national organization now in 14 major cities.

For more information about DC SCORES, visit <http://www.dcscores.org> or call (202) 393-0655.

## Profile 7: District of Columbia Primary Care Association—Adolescent Wellness Initiative (AWI)

The District of Columbia Primary Care Association—Adolescent Wellness Initiative (AWI) is an example of a community-based organization that attempts to tackle multiple issues pertaining to teenage and young adult health. AWI works with D.C. youth between the ages of 14 and 21 to encourage healthy behaviors and provide meaningful activities with an open and realistic approach to wellness education. All AWI activities have a dual focus, working to develop in each young person a sense of personal responsibility and pride in taking

care of his or her health, and to develop his or her ability to observe, think critically, and create solutions to improve the health of the community at large. Physical fitness sessions and one-on-one mentoring help each teen reach self-identified goals by the end of each program year, while community service and independent project work allow youth to use the tools and skills gained from the program to affect the larger community.

AWI staff and volunteers engage teens for a minimum of seven hours each week with educational activities centered around three major topic areas:

- Health and wellness, which includes self-esteem and image, fitness and nutrition, HIV/AIDS and

sexual health, violence prevention and self-defense, and health care access.

- Social justice, which includes education reform, racial justice, poverty and economic justice, neighborhood development and gentrification, urban environmental issues, and law enforcement and police relationships.
- Personal development, which includes values and future goal setting, behavior change, financial literacy, anger management, conflict resolution, and college and career preparation.

For more information about AWI, visit <http://www.dcpca.org> or call (202) 638-0252.

## Profile 8: Kid Power

Kid Power is a civics-based organization that provides academic, artistic, and service-learning opportunities for youth in the District of Columbia. Kid Power empowers youth to become informed and engaged advocates for change in their own lives and in their communities.

Kid Power was incorporated in March 2002 and initiated educational activities in October 2003. Kid Power serves students at the following sites in Wards 1, 2, 6, and 7: Miner Elementary School (2003), Tubman Elementary School (2004), Ross Elementary School (2006), the Chinatown middle school program (2006), Amidon Elementary School (2007), Sousa Middle School (2007), Reed Elementary School (2008), Jefferson Middle School (2008), Kimball Elementary School (2008), and Webb-Wheatley Elementary School (2008). Kid Power also offers service-learning programs at three independent schools: Georgetown Day, Edmund Burke, and Sidwell Friends.

The goals of Kid Power are to

- advance academic achievement through a civics-based curriculum, diverse learning expe-

riences, and intensive partnerships with public and independent schools;

- advance artistic and cultural achievement through performing and visual arts instruction, opportunities for cultural exploration, and the exhibition of community art projects;
- advance achievement in service-learning through social entrepreneurship programs, a wide variety of service opportunities, and the promotion of youth leadership in all decision-making; and
- to make a lifetime commitment to its students by supporting parental involvement, providing age-appropriate programs, establishing year-round activities, encouraging positive and healthy social behaviors, and providing opportunities for advancement to institutions of higher learning.

Current programs offered by Kid Power include the following:

1. **The Citizenship Project:** Using a literacy-building and civic engagement curriculum, students and their high school mentors investigate U.S. history and the building blocks of citizenship, produce visual and performing art works, and implement youth-led community action projects.

2. **CookieTime:** Middle school students operate a small baking business in partnership with CakeLove bakery and use the profits to fund local community projects and service trips outside the District of Columbia.

3. **Extracurricular Programs:** In the *Explorers Club*, students participate in weekly workshops, such as boxing, yoga, cooking, acting, dance, chess, and visual arts. Kid Power also operates a full-service summer camp.

Kid Power's major partners include the following:

Georgetown Day School, Edmund Burke School, and the Sidwell Friends School

CakeLove Bakery

Capital Area Food Bank

DC Alliance of Youth Advocates

Fair Chance

Linking Communities for Educational Success (LINK)

Critical Exposure

Technology Playground

For more information about Kid Power, visit <http://www.kidpowerdc.org/> or call (202) 383-4543.

## Profile 9: Latin American Youth Center (LAYC)

Founded in the late 1960s to address the absence of services for the emerging Latino community, the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) is today a nationally known leading provider of high-quality youth development programs in Washington, D.C., and Maryland. Throughout its history, LAYC has assisted successive generations of low-income immigrant and minority youth, most of whom are “disconnected” from mainstream society, in making a successful transition to young adulthood. LAYC’s programs and services are designed to help youth meet three goals essential to a successful transition to young adulthood: increased academic success, employment with long-term career potential, and healthy behaviors necessary to lead a productive and happy life. In addition, LAYC seeks to promote positive change in conditions, policies, and laws affecting youth.

LAYC offers programming at its anchor site in Washington, D.C.’s Ward 1 Columbia Heights neighborhood, a satellite site in Ward 4, and in Silver Spring, Maryland; Langley Park, Maryland; and Riverdale, Maryland. In fiscal year 2008, LAYC served 3,463 youth, of which 61 percent were Latino and 31 percent were African American. LAYC operates a network of youth centers, public charter schools, and social enterprises that offer more than 50 year-round culturally sensitive programs and services in five areas:

1. **Educational Enhancement** provides academic enrichment, college preparation, and mentored recreation.
2. **Workforce Investment and Social Enterprises (WISE)** provides work and life skills training, GED preparation, and leadership development.
3. **Social Services** provides prevention education and outreach, treatment, housing, and case management.
4. **Art + Media House** encourages youth to discover the power of their art as a means of self-

expression and as a tool for exploring community issues.

5. **Advocacy/Public Policy** educates and involves youth in relevant public policies and civic activities.

LAYC uses efforts to outcomes (ETO), an Internet-based data collection system, to collect demographic, process, output, and outcome information on all its programs. Each LAYC staff person with programmatic or supervisory responsibility receives ongoing training in the use of ETO, and the organization is able to assess the success of its programs.

LAYC’s strength results from the staff’s ability to anticipate and meet the evolving needs of young people. This is made possible by a knowledgeable board of directors and an innovative senior management team, both with extensive experience administering programs for low-income youth and young adults.

For more information about LAYC, visit <http://www.layc-dc.org/> or call (202) 319-2225.

## Profile 10: Martha’s Table

Founded in 1980, Martha’s Table’s mission is to serve the needs the community by providing food, family support services, learning, and enrichment opportunities to children, youth, and families throughout the Washington, D.C., area. Each year, staff and volunteers carry out the Martha’s Table mission through year-round food distribution via a “meals on wheels” program known as McKenna’s Wagon; clothing distribution via a clothing centre known as Martha’s Outfitters; and year-round

tutorial, learning, and enrichment programs to approximately 300 multicultural children and youth age 3 months to 18 years old.

The Martha’s Table Teen Program (MTTP), one of four youth/adolescent programs within Martha’s Table, is dedicated to the academic, social, and personal development of teenagers throughout the District of Columbia. MTTP is open year round and offers a multitude of activities, workshops, community service, and skill-development opportunities for its participants including entrepre-

neurship, graphics, jewelry making, clothing design, creative writing, and debate.

In addition to the daily workshops and activities, MTTP is a host site for the Department of Employment Services’ Summer Youth Employment Program, through which young people are provided with professional/soft skills and life skills that are integral components to the healthy academic and social development of young people.

For more information, about Martha’s Table, visit <http://www.marthastable.com> or call (202) 328-6608.



## Profile 11: Metro TeenAIDS (MTA)

Metro TeenAIDS (MTA), founded in 1988, is a community health organization dedicated to supporting young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Through education, support, and advocacy, MTA provides HIV testing and counseling to prevent the spread of HIV. MTA promotes responsible decisionmaking through its in-school and after-school programs, and improves the quality of life for young people who are HIV-positive, at risk of HIV infection, or in families with HIV/AIDS. MTA is the only organization in the Washington, D.C., area focused solely on the needs of youth as they relate to HIV.

**Information and Referrals for Young People at Risk**—MTA trains and hires youth to provide outreach and education to high-risk youth in D.C. Metro TeenAIDS uses street contacts, hosts young people in its Freestyle Youth Center for after-school programs, and provides “HIV 101” presentations in school- and community-based settings. MTA conducts HIV prevention outreach and education to reduce risky behaviors among youth. Additionally, MTA’s programs distribute information and materials to youth and connect them to services provided by MTA and other community organizations.

**HIV Education in the Schools and Beyond**—MTA offers an integrated HIV/AIDS and substance abuse prevention curriculum, called Making

Proud Choices! (MPC). The goal of MPC is to build students’ skills and confidence to decline sex and/or negotiate safer sex and improve overall relationship management abilities. Students gain knowledge and skills about sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, drugs, alcohol, and risky behavior. MPC is taught in every 10th grade health class in all D.C. public and charter schools.

**Care for HIV-Positive Teens**—MTA offers free, confidential, and youth-friendly HIV counseling, testing, and referral services at its youth center and in community-based settings. MTA also connects HIV-positive youth with medical care, case management, and risk counseling. In 2007, MTA connected 15 youth and young adults to intensive HIV care services.

**Support for Children of HIV-Positive Parents**—Through its family center, MTA provides counseling, therapy, and life skills development to children (age 5–18) whose primary caregivers are living with AIDS or have died from AIDS. An estimated 25 percent of these children are themselves HIV positive. Programs include individual and group therapy, life skills development, and support groups for HIV-positive caregivers and those who care for children who have lost parents to AIDS.

**Policy Advocacy and Community Organizing**—With the help of engaged community partners, MTA cre-

ated the D.C. Healthy Youth Coalition. MTA works with policymakers, community leaders, youth, and families to ensure that youth’s needs are included in policy responses to the problems with the District’s HIV/AIDS prevention and sexual health education. MTA staff and youth employees have met with every school board and city council member, testified in public hearings, and served on panels to review programs and policies.

**Training and Evaluation**—Metro TeenAIDS is expanding its training programs with youth-serving agencies and groups across the city. In 2008, Metro TeenAIDS designed a training program for school nurses on how to maximize their effectiveness in reducing teen pregnancies and HIV/STDs. MTA also provided Making Proud Choices! training to the staff at D.C. Parks and Recreation, and it works with other youth-serving agencies to expand its technical assistance.

**Social Marketing**—Metro TeenAIDS and an advisory board of 20 District youth are implementing a community-level intervention designed to change youth’s attitudes about HIV testing; increase their access to and use of HIV testing; and enhance the capacity and expertise of HIV counseling, testing, and referral service providers serving high-risk heterosexual adolescents and young adults of color in Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8.

For more information about Metro TeenAIDS, visit <http://www.metroteenaids.org/> or call (202) 543-8246.

## Profile 12: Sasha Bruce Youthwork (SBY)

Sasha Bruce Youthwork's (SBY) mission is to improve the lives of runaway, homeless, abused, neglected, and at-risk youth and their families in the Washington area. The organization provides shelter, counseling, life skills training, and positive youth development activities to approximately 1,500 youth and 5,000 family members annually. SBY seeks to support and empower vulnerable young people and families. As well as being family-focused, SBY's approach is competency-based: its counselors are trained not to diagnose pathologies but to identify and build on the strengths of each young person and/or family.

SBY is a private, nonprofit youth and family services agency that was founded 34 years ago by its current executive director, Deborah Shore, as the Washington Streetwork Project, a counseling service for teenagers living on the streets of Washington, D.C. Since then, SBY has grown into 16 key programs, each of which was developed in response to a gap in services to at-risk youth and their families. These programs include the following:

- Emergency shelter for runaway youth at Sasha Bruce House
- Home-based counseling to families in crisis, and street outreach to homeless and runaway youth at Zocalo Outreach
- Two independent living programs providing support toward self-sufficiency for 16- to 21-year-old youth who cannot live at home

- Olaiya's Cradle, an independent living and parenting program for homeless young mothers and their babies
- Two group homes for children in the child welfare system, including one for teen mothers
- Family Strengthening Program of emergency respite and ongoing family counseling for families at risk of imminent removal of children
- Intensive third-party monitoring and case management for youth committed to the justice system
- Youth-Led, which helps high school students in Ward 8 mobilize their community for improvements determined by them
- Family Ties, assisting parents and caregivers with HIV in life planning
- HYPE, a strategic planning approach to building the capacity of communities to prevent HIV, substance abuse, and hepatitis
- REACH, a staff-secure residence and counseling as an alternative to detention
- Youthbuild, which trains high school dropouts in the building trades and toward a GED
- AIDS prevention and substance abuse prevention services
- Positive youth development activities, including a college tour and substance abuse and pregnancy prevention programs

For more information about Sasha Bruce Youthwork, visit <http://www.sashabruce.org> or call (202) 675-9340.

## Profile 13: Sitar Arts Center

Sitar Arts Center provides multidisciplinary arts education to the children and youth of Washington, D.C., in a nurturing, creative community where young people discover their inherent talents and gifts. The Sitar Arts Center offers after-school, weekend, and summer classes to more than 500 students a year, 80 percent of whom come from low-income households, with the goal of fostering personal and artistic growth through the visual arts, music, drama, dance, digital arts, and creative writing.

More than 100 talented artists volunteer their time each week to teach and inspire the Sitar Arts Center's students in a state-of-the-art facility. Together with a network of premier partnering arts organizations such as Arena Stage, Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Washington Ballet, the National Symphony Orchestra, and the Washington Performing Arts Society, the passionate volunteer faculty makes a lasting impact on students' lives.

Sitar Arts Center relies on charitable contributions to ensure that no family is ever turned away because of inability to pay and that the center is able to bring high-quality arts education to families who would otherwise not have these opportunities.

For more information about the Sitar Arts Center, visit <http://www.sitarartscenter.org> or call (202) 797-2145.

## Profile 14: The Urban Alliance Foundation, Inc.

Urban Alliance is a unique youth development nonprofit that provides low-income youth paid, professional internships. Youth affiliated with Urban Alliance live primarily east of the Anacostia River in areas with the highest concentrations of poverty in the city; half the children in some of these neighborhoods qualify as poor. The high rate of poverty in D.C. is having a devastating effect on the city's youth: high dropout rates, low college enrollment rates, and low employment. This lack of opportunity is leading to deadly consequences for youth, including rising homicide rates and the proliferation of gang violence.

Since its inception in 1996, Urban Alliance's High School Internship Program has grown from 6 young people at Anacostia Senior High School to more than 200 students annually at 16 public D.C. high schools in collaboration with over 90 top-notch businesses such as the World Bank Group, Fannie Mae, Bank of America, XM Radio, the Carlyle Group, and Morgan Stanley.

Urban Alliance interns

- work Monday through Thursday for a year (part time during the school year, full time during the summer) with adult mentors to guide their transition into the workforce;

- attend life-skills, financial literacy, and job-readiness workshops every Friday throughout the year;
- receive college and career planning assistance; and
- receive open matched savings accounts. Interns can save up to \$1,000 matched at a 3:1 ratio for a total of \$4,000 for college.

By the end of the year-long program, Urban Alliance interns will have done the following:

- Increased their exposure and proficiency in professional work skills.
- Gained long-term professional work experience.
- Graduated from high school. Thus far, all Urban Alliance participants have graduated from high school, compared with the District average of 43 percent (Double the Numbers). Urban Alliance has successfully ensured students finish high school because students must maintain good academic standing to participate in the program. Students are motivated to participate because the Urban Alliance pays above minimum wage for the internship and implements pay raises. In addition, program coordinators are proactive and help participants address scheduling and academic difficulties early on.
- Solidified a postsecondary plan to attend either college or a job training program. Ninety per-

cent of Urban Alliance participants have matriculated to college, compared with only 29 percent of their D.C. peers (Double the Numbers). Urban Alliance works closely with the faculty and administration of its partner schools to implement the program, particularly to support students' post-graduation planning efforts. Urban Alliance collaborates extensively with the D.C. College Access Program to make sure students graduate on time and have post-high school plans.

- Be capable of identifying and sustaining employment.

Launched in 2007, Urban Alliance graduates are connected to alumni services that support and guide them through their post-high school plans. Alumni services enable Urban Alliance to track alumni long term to ensure a full return on the investment made in the year-round high school program. Because of the tremendous success in D.C., Urban Alliance has replicated its model with 33 seniors in Baltimore with the same remarkable opportunity starting in the 2008–09 school year.

For more information about the Urban Alliance, visit <http://www.urbanalliancefoundation.org/> or call (202) 266-5722.

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