

Youth Development:

An Action Planning Guide for Community-Based Initiatives

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The mission of the KU Work Group is to promote community health and development through collaborative research, teaching, and service.

This planning guide was supported, in part, by a contract from the State of Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Office of Prevention, to the Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development, Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies, at the University of Kansas. The mission of the Office of Prevention is to create caring and supportive environments for children to become healthy and contributing members of Kansas communities.

November 2002 Edition

*"Never doubt that a small
group of thoughtful, committed
citizens
can change the world; indeed,
it is the only thing that ever has."
--Margaret Mead*

Preface

Scope of the problem

Our common vision is communities where all youth thrive. Yet, youth everywhere face issues threatening their development and well being, including poverty, inadequate education, abuse, delinquency, violence, inadequate access to services, adolescent pregnancy, and substance abuse. These issues are intricately linked, and may lead to more adverse outcomes, including school failure and dropout, unemployment, child neglect and abandonment, or sexually transmitted diseases (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1994). A current study reported that 76 percent of high school boys and 53 percent of high school girls engage in sexual intercourse before they graduate (National Community AIDS Partnership). This high incidence of adolescent sexual activity increases the chance of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. Individuals ages 15 to 19 contract sexually transmitted diseases more than any other population (Carrera, 1995). Youth violence has also taken a toll on society. In most urban cities in the United States, youth violence is the number one cause of death for adolescents (Barkin, Ryan, & Gelberg, 1999). The human price we pay for these problems is insurmountable, but these problems are also a fiscal burden to our society. Drug control spending has more than tripled in the last ten years, with an increase from \$4.7 billion in 1988 to \$17.8 billion in 1999 (Join Together, 1999). The development of healthy youth is a goal that communities must embrace. The purpose of this guide is to be a support to the leaders in those communities.

What research tells us

There are a variety of influences that affect youth health and development. These influences can be divided into categories of the individual child and the broader community, and then further divided into knowledge and skill, history, biology, and the environment. Some variables influencing youth include the knowledge of the consequences of certain behavior and their attitudes toward the problem behavior, communication skills, commitment to school success, perception of life options, presence of caring adults, support from family, sexual activity, diet/nutrition, cognitive ability, and early and persistent antisocial behavior. Environmental influences include poverty and deprivation, opportunities for belonging, engagement in alternative activities, availability of dangerous products, peer models, and mobility/stability of living (Hawkins, Catalano et al, 1992).

Parents and caregivers also have a variety of influences that affect the development of youth. These include communication skills, coping and problem-solving skills, discipline techniques, attitudes toward or engagement in problem behaviors, substance abuse, positive engagement, marital stability, and abuse or neglect of the child (Hawkins, Catalano et al, 1992). Environmental variables include the parents' employment, financial support, barriers/support for child supervision, poverty and deprivation, and presence/lack of job training and employment.

The final influence on the development of healthy youth is the neighborhood or broader community. Environmental influences include adult models, media portrayals of violence and caring, attachment and organization of community, laws and norms favorable toward drug use, firearms, and crime, visual message of community, resources and opportunities in school,

availability of resources for protection or dangerous products, and availability of alternative activities (Hawkins, Catalano et al, 1992). The preceding list of variables is not exhaustive and there are many other personal or environmental factors that may affect the development of youth.

The engagement in certain risky behaviors may lead to the participation in other risky behaviors. The use of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana is correlated with other health problems including adolescent suicide, homicide, school dropout, motor vehicle crashes, delinquency, early sexual activity, sexually transmitted diseases, and problem pregnancy (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Because the influences on youth development are intertwined, research has shown that a multifaceted approach is most effective to address the multiple problems in their lives (Reiff, 1998). There are also abilities that will help youth thrive. These include social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. However, these abilities need to be coupled with an environment that encourages the development of healthy youth. The environment should include a caring and supportive relationship with an adult, high family and community expectations for the youth's behavior, and opportunities to participate in meaningful activities (Baxley, 1993). Alternative activities create opportunities for children to engage themselves in non-risky behaviors. Boys and Girls Clubs have been shown to be effective in getting youth involved in health and constructive activities and also boosting moral. They also encourage residents to organize and improve their communities (Schinke, 1991). Youth mentoring is another pathway to the development of healthy youth. Youth who participate in mentoring programs are given a positive, safe environment and a caring adult who listens.

A study conducted for substance abuse prevention found that most effective interventions are early and multifaceted. The following components should also be included in the intervention: social and public health advocacy, preventive medicine, evaluation, education, treatment, and referral (Reiff, 1998). Primary care physicians have been shown to play a big role in reducing substance abuse through prevention messages, screening for drug use, brief interventions, and timely referrals (Ungemack, Hartwell, & Babor, 1997). Youth have also reported that the following variables are important for not using tobacco, alcohol, or other substances: information, self-concept, recreational and alternative activities, school policy, and adults as models (Grimes & Swisher, 1989). Parent illegal drug use and poor parental monitoring (authoritarian parenting, perceived support, and communication) also contribute to adolescent substance use. Finally, perception of substance use influences youth. If students perceive that more than half of all adults or their peers smoke cigarettes, then they are more likely to smoke or to initiate smoking over a two-year period (Allison et al, 1998).

There are many problems that may threaten healthy youth development in our communities. Fortunately, there are also many protective factors that can counter these issues facing youth today and ways that we can help to foster these protective factors among youth in our communities. This guide provides practical guidance on how you can grab the near edge of some problem facing youth in your community and make an impact along with others who care.

The purpose of this Action Planning Guide is to enhance your community's efforts to plan for healthy youth development across physical, emotional, social, and psychological arenas.

- Chapter I provides background information on key issues and concepts in planning.
- Chapter II offers an overview of the planning process, with particular emphasis on clarifying the vision, mission, objectives, and strategies.

- Chapter III provides help in considering which sectors of the community should be involved in the initiative.
- Chapter IV, the heart of this guide, assists in identifying particular changes that will be sought in each relevant sector of the community. These changes are categorized according to a standard set of outcomes (results or goals) that are being used throughout the United States. To recognize these changes, indicators (benchmarks) will help measure the outcomes. See the Table X below.
- Chapter V outlines a process for building consensus on community changes to be sought.
- Chapter VI offers guidance in listing action steps to finalize the action plan.
- Chapter VII outlines a strategy for documenting progress on goal attainment and promoting renewal of the initiative.

Best wishes for your own community's successful planning for the promotion of youth well being.

Some Common Outcomes and Selected Indicators Related to Healthy Youth Development

Outcomes			
Children Live in Stable & Supportive Families	Children Succeed in School	Youth Choose Healthy Behaviors	Youth Successfully Transition to Adulthood
Children in families receiving food stamps	% of primary grade teachers with early childhood licensure or endorsement	% of youth aged 16-19 who are not in school or working	% 18-24 year olds with a H.S. diploma
Temporary assistance for needy families	Average teacher/child ration in Grades K-3 classrooms	School enrollment	% 18-24 year olds with a GED
Family history of alcohol and/or drug problems	% of children with a parent or guardian volunteering in school	Truancy	# of deaths per 100,000 ages 15-19
Children living in foster care	Violent acts perpetrated by students against students	Adolescents in the juvenile justice system	Employment rate (19-24 year olds)
Percent of children in households that report there is sometimes or often not enough to eat	Violent acts perpetrated by students against teachers	% of youth who are volunteering in the community	% of 12-24 year-olds who have adequate health insurance coverage
Families living below the poverty line	% of parents attending parent-teacher conferences in elementary school	School attendance/performance	% of 1st pregnancies occurring in women over age 18
Proportion of children in single parent versus two parent families	Ratio of support staff to students in school	Adolescent suicide/rate of suicide deaths per 100,000 youth ages 15-19 years	Data on transitioning to adulthood among children with special health care needs
Children living in poverty	% of fourth grade students passing the Math section of Assessment Tests	Rate of births per 1,000 women ages 15-17 years [^]	Prisoners in state and local correctional facilities
Children living away from parents	% of students with special education IEPs	Rate of reported cases of chlamydia per 1,000 women ages 15-19 years	Access to medical services
Homeless youth	Education level of teachers	% of adolescents who abstain from sexual intercourse	% of children aged 12-18 in the juvenile justice system
Student movement in/out of school	ACT and SAT scores	% of students participating in youth programs within the community	Post-secondary vocational training or schooling
Teen pregnancy rate (per 1,000 girls age 15-19)	High School graduation rate	% of students participating in youth programs within school	Adult arrests for personal crimes
Parent(s) in prison	Proportion of schools with a nurse: student ratio less than or equal to 1:750	Rate of deaths per 100,000 from unintentional injuries due to motor vehicle crashes among youth ages 15-24 years	Adult arrests for property crimes

Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Youth Development

Knowledge and Skill

Child/Youth	Parent/Caregiver	Neighbors/Broader Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of consequences • Communication skills • Coping and problem-solving skills • Commitment to school success • Perception of life options • Respect for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills • Coping and problem-solving skills • Discipline techniques • Attitudes toward and tolerance of problem behaviors • Respect for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes toward and tolerance of problem behaviors • Level of concern /caring • Respect for others

History

Child/Youth	Parent/Caregiver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of caring adults such as parents and neighbors • Success or failure in school • Social/antisocial behavior • Emotional and physical support from family or lack of it • Abstinence/ Sexual activity • Drug use/ non-use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement such as talking and playing • Use of drugs or alcohol • Violence/peace in household • Family attachment • Marital stability/Single parenthood • Physical or emotional abuse or neglect of child • Teen pregnancy • Experience as children with discipline

Biology/Genetics

Child	Parent/Caregiver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender (males are at higher chance for aggression) • Diet • Mental health • Cognitive ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Cognitive ability

Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Youth Development

Environmental Factors

Child/Youth	Parent/Caregiver	Neighbors/Broader Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer models of the behavior • Opportunities for belonging • Mobility/stability of living situation • Support for transitions • Engagement in alternative activities • Availability of dangerous products such as drugs or firearms • Availability of resources for protection, such as contraceptives • Discrimination • Job training and employment opportunities • Socio-economic status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent models of caring or aggression • Employment (adequate income, social class) • Mobility/stability of living situation • Level of peace/violence • Barriers/support for child supervision • Financial support for children • Availability of dangerous products such as drugs or firearms • Job training and employment opportunities • Discrimination • Socio-economic status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult models of caring or aggression • Media portrayals of violence and caring • Attachment and organization of community • Laws and norms toward drug use, firearms, and crime • Level of peace/violence • Appearance of community • Societal attitudes about race and gender • Resources and opportunities in school • Availability of dangerous products such as drugs or firearms • Availability of resources for protection, such as contraceptives • Job training and employment opportunities • Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty • Availability of alternative activities • Punishments for offenders

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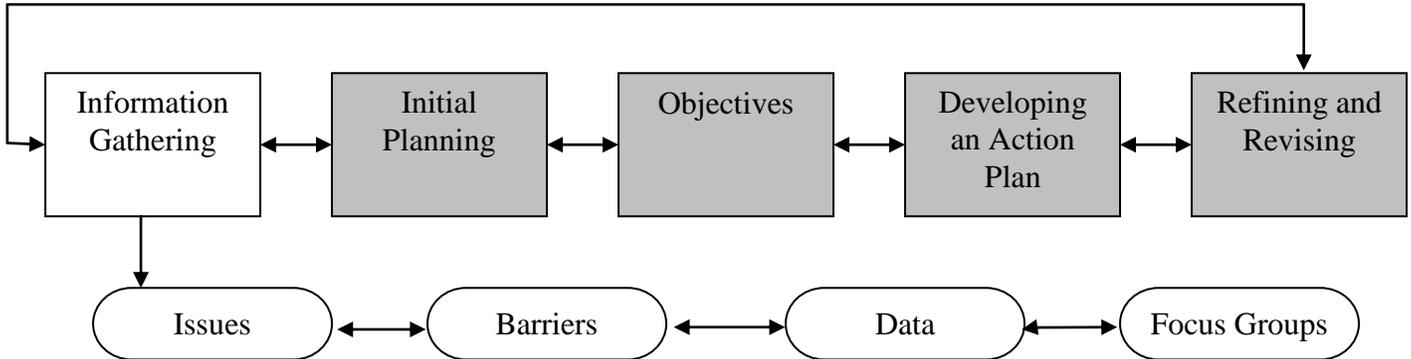
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Acknowledgements

This action-planning guide would not have been possible without many contributors who dedicated time, experience, and knowledge. Our hope is that their contributions will enable this guide to be a useful tool in the work of building healthier communities for youth, and we would like to recognize these individuals and their dedication to improving our communities. A special thank you to Rich Puddy, Carrie Curie, Audrey Hickert, Rachel Oliverius, Laura Johnson, Dr. Jerry Schultz, Rod Bremby, M.P.A., Dr. Alex Westerfelt, Jan Anderson-Talley, Joyce Cussimano, Barbara Bradley, Lori Alvarado, and Valorie Carson.

CHAPTER I

Information Gathering



With clarity of purpose, it is possible to address the issues that face the youth of our communities. This guide uses a process of action planning to build consensus on what can and should be done. The primary aim is to help specify the concrete ways in which the community can take action to promote healthy youth development.

The **purpose of this chapter** is to review key background issues and concepts of the planning process. At the end of the chapter, we provide planning pages that your group can use to better listen to the community, document the problem, become aware of local resources and

- The Problem or Issue*
- **What are the problems facing youth in your community?**
 - **What are the consequences of these problems?**
 - **Who is affected?**
 - **How are they affected?**
 - **Are these issues of widespread concern?**

Listening to the Community

Perhaps the most important preliminary step in action planning is to become familiar with the issues and context of the community. Group leaders begin by talking with youth, parents, teachers, key leaders in the community, and others affected by problems related to healthy youth development.

In addition to talking one-on-one, group leaders can use public forums or focus groups, in which people can express their views about the issues and what can be done about them. Such public meetings should be convened with people from different neighborhoods, socioeconomic groups, and ethnic and cultural groups. This will expand available perspectives on issues and what can be done to address them.

Conducting Listening Sessions

One method of becoming familiar with the issues consists of structured opportunities to listen to

a variety of members of the community. These listening sessions go by different names including focus groups or "social reconnaissance." They are straightforward and effective tools for gaining local knowledge about the issues and context. We recommend using these public forums to learn about the community's perspectives on local issues and options.

Listening sessions record information on four aspects:

- the problem or goal
- barriers and resistance to addressing the concern
- resources for change
- recommended alternatives and solutions

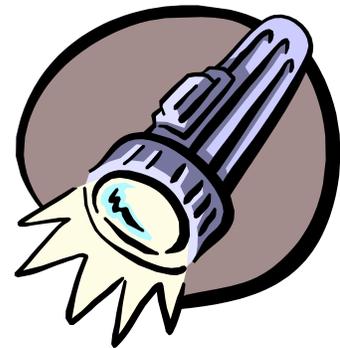
Discussion leaders set a limited time for brainstorming each aspect, using newsprint to record the discussions. Brief reports on the findings can be used to publicize the issue in the media and enhance the credibility of the initiative.

Community Tool Box Online Resources:

- Chapter 3: Assessing Community Needs and Resources http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1003.htm
- Chapter 13: Orienting Ideas in Leadership http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1013.htm
- Chapter 4: Getting Issues on the Public Agenda http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1004.htm
- Chapter 17: Analyzing County Problems and Solutions http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1017.htm

Documenting the Problem

In addition to hearing the community's perspective on problems related to healthy youth development, it is important to document the issues using existing information sources. Such information can be used to help document the level of the problem and to consider whether further action is necessary. Later, this data can be used to determine how effective your group was in addressing the problem or goal. (Note: Increased community awareness may beget changes in reporting, changes in enforcement patterns, and other activities that make it difficult to conclude that there was an effect or that observed effects were due to the initiative.)



Some Helpful Data Sources

- The *state or county health department* can help you determine health indicators.
- The *state social services department* should be able to tell you the number of recipients of Medicaid and food stamp program participants.
- *Hospital admission and exit records* exist and can give you information on teen fertility, causes of death, etc.
- *Census data:* Demographic information is available for your community and the United States. This information can be found on the Bureau of Census web site: <http://www.census.gov/>. Many states have similar information on their own web sites as well.

- *Police records* can tell you crime rates and the incidence of problems such as domestic violence or motor vehicle accidents.
- *Chamber of Commerce data* discusses job growth, the unemployment rate, etc.
- *Nonprofit service agencies*, such as the United Way (<http://www.unitedway.org/>) or Planned Parenthood, generally have records on a variety of different issues.
- *School districts* can tell you graduation rates, test scores, and truancy rates. For comparative school district rates, check with your state department of education.
- *The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's* reportable disease files provide national information on the rates of many diseases. <http://www.cdc.gov/>.
- Your *reference librarian* in a nearby public library can be very helpful.
- *Statistical Abstract of the United States* is a good general source in print for national information. It is done annually, and is available in most local libraries.
- *Specialized local, statewide, or national organizations* may help. For example, if you were interested in Alzheimer's disease, or tree planting, or lead poisoning, you would want to track down and consult with an organization specializing in that field. (Gale's [Encyclopedia of Associations](#) is a good national source).
- Many other *web pages* contain useful, up-to-date information. Try using key words, such as “youth health” or “youth development” with the search engine of your Internet browser.

Identify Risk and Protective Factors

Those who affect youth development outcomes the most include:

- Youth
- Parents, Guardians, and Teachers
- Neighbors and the Broader Community
- Service Providers in health and human services

A number of factors may contribute substantially to risk for adverse outcomes. These conditions, if addressed, can help protect against problems affecting youth development. Although our knowledge is incomplete, research and experience suggest some factors that may contribute to healthy youth development.

Personal factors may include:

- Knowledge, skills, and history, such as temperament, exposure to caring adults, and support from family
- Biological/genetic influences such as the type and degree of existing health or physical or mental disability

Aspects of the social and physical environment may also affect youth well being.

Environmental factors may include:

- Availability and continuity of services
- Financial barriers and resources
- Quality of educational opportunities

➤ Poverty and living conditions

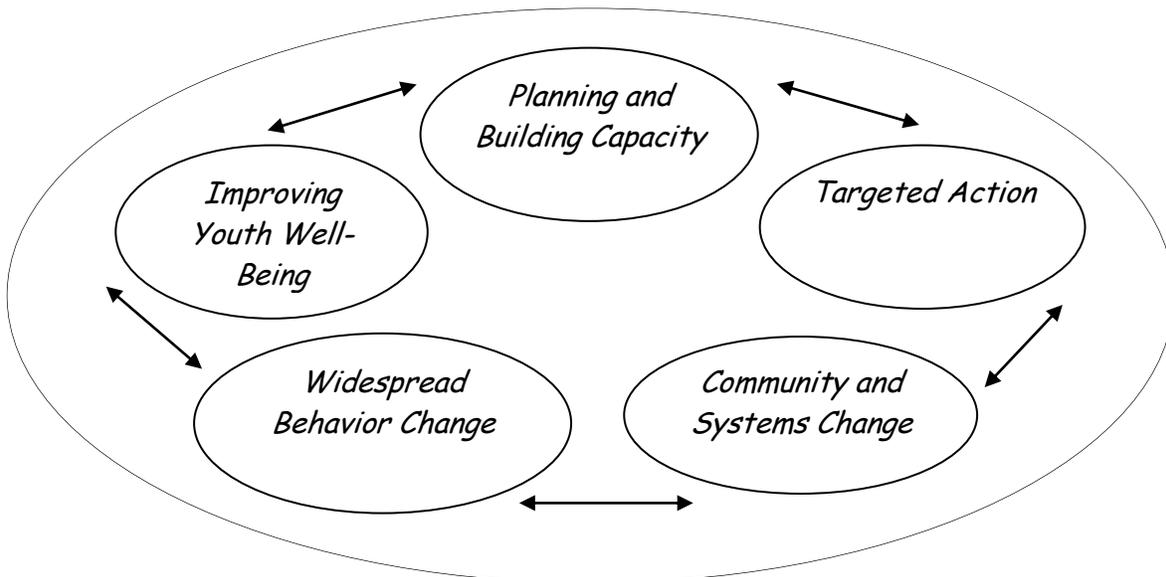
We can use this analysis of factors (see Table 2) and our knowledge of our local communities to identify promising strategies and tactics for improving youth health and well being.

Develop a Framework for Action

A framework (sometimes known as a “model” or “theory”) helps guide the process of community action and change. How is our community to navigate the course from initial understanding and planning down the long road to improved youth health? A clear framework helps communicate the pathway for improvement, focusing local efforts on changing conditions for healthy youth development.

An illustrative “Framework for Promoting Healthy Youth Development” follows. Five interrelated phases include:

- *Planning and building capacity* (e.g., listening to the community, documenting the problem, building leadership)
- *Targeted action* (e.g., community organizing, contacting key officials, advocacy, social marketing)
- *Community and systems change* (e.g., bringing about new or modified programs, policies, and practices relevant to the mission in all appropriate sectors of the community or broader system)
- *Widespread behavior change in relevant behaviors* (e.g., youth choose healthy behaviors)
- *Improving youth outcomes* (e.g., increasing the number of youth who successfully transition to adulthood)



Each community should develop its own framework for action to create a picture of how change can occur. The community’s framework should reflect its unique goals, needs, assets, and situation.

Barriers and Resistance

- **What key individuals or groups might oppose your efforts?**
- **Can they be involved in your initiative?**
- **What other barriers might limit the effectiveness of the initiative?**
- **How can the barriers and resistance be overcome?**

Becoming Aware of Local Resources and Efforts

It is important to be aware of existing programs and resources. You can find this out by talking with service providers and clients. Some questions to keep in mind:

- What programs, task forces, or coalitions with similar purposes already exist in the community?
- How many people are involved?
- Who are they serving?
- Could the services and programs be more effective? How?
- Were there *past* initiatives with a similar mission? Why and how did their efforts end?

Investigating these questions is critical to ensure that the initiative doesn't reinvent the wheel, and to maximize potential through partnering with others.

Involving Key Officials and Grassroots Leaders

Key officials of each sector can be recruited, such as influential ministers, the police chief, and the superintendent. Leaders of grassroots community and neighborhood organizations should be also recruited. See the Community Tool Box Chapter 7, Section 6 for more information (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/section_1083.htm).

Those who are involved should mirror the diversity of the local community. Are youth involved? Parents and guardians? People of different socioeconomic backgrounds? If the community is diverse, are African Americans, Hispanics, or other people of color involved?

Creating a Supportive Context for Planning and Action

Leadership is the process by which leaders and constituents work together to bring about valued change by setting priorities and taking action. In successful groups, people take responsibility for the initiative. Leaders should have a clear vision, and the ability to attract others to that vision. Leaders also have the capacity for listening and relating to others in the group. For information and how-to tools on fostering leadership development, visit Chapter 13 of the Community Tool Box at http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1013.htm.

The planning group must have a manageable **size** and **structure**. Most groups operate best with a maximum of 15 people. If many people are interested in working on the issues, the group can be

structured into smaller groups, such as task forces organized by community sectors, which can report back to a coordinating council or the coalition as a whole. A planning retreat can also be used as a time to focus specifically on the goals and means of the initiative. This can be accomplished in a half or full-day session.

The **organization** of the planning group is also important. In larger groups or communities, action planning might initially be done in subcommittees or task groups that are organized around each sector of the community to be involved. For example, separate task forces might be set up for businesses, schools, or non-profit agencies. In smaller groups or communities, the entire group might work on the action planning.

The planning groups should be **diverse** and **integrated**, including officials from various sectors. They also include people concerned about what is going on in the sector, such as youth and parents, who are affected by and interested in bringing about change.

Overall Tips on the Planning Process

- *Be Inclusive*

Seek out key players with diverse viewpoints on the problem or issue, and facilitate good communication. Call on silent members during pauses in the discussion. Convey the value of each person's opinion on the issues. Occasionally, it may be necessary to discourage an overly enthusiastic member from dominating meetings. You may do so by thanking them for their comments and indicating the importance of hearing from other members of the group.

- *Manage Conflict*

If the group is effective in attracting diverse views, conflict among members may result. Group facilitators can recognize differences, perhaps noting the diverse experiences that give rise to divergent views. To resolve conflicts, leaders may attempt to elevate the discussion to a higher level on which there may be a basis for agreement. By reminding the group that we are all about the same shared vision of healthy communities for our youth, leaders can help members find common ground.

- *Use Brainstorming Rules*

Group facilitators must avoid making judgments about ideas and suggestions. Brainstorming rules apply. All ideas should be heard and noted without criticism.

- *Be Efficient*

Planning meetings must be efficient, starting and ending on time. It may be helpful to have an agenda or to build a consensus at the beginning of the meeting about what will be accomplished and in what time frame.

- *Communicate Products of Planning*

Planning will result in a useful product. Try to structure every planning session so that it results in a product, such as a list of issues or ideas. Show off the product at the end of planning meetings, distributing copies of the products of planning to all members.

- *Provide Support and Encouragement*

Finally, it is important to provide support and encouragement throughout the process of planning. Good planning takes time; it usually requires months to produce a detailed plan of action. Acknowledge the contributions of all participants, especially key leaders. Let the group know when it is doing a good job. Positive feedback feels good, particularly to those who are used to being criticized for their work.

Summary

This chapter provides a background on the key issues and concepts of planning. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the action planning process, with particular emphasis on reviewing the group's vision, mission, objectives, and strategies for promoting healthy youth development.

Planning Page:

Involving Key Officials and Grassroots Leaders

Use these planning pages to conduct listening sessions in the community. This will help refine your group's understanding of the problem or goal, barriers and resistance to addressing the concern, resources for change, and recommended alternatives and solutions.

Your group might use interviews with community leaders to help with these questions. Informants might be drawn from officials in health and human services and the business and government sectors, as well as leaders in neighborhoods, schools, and faith communities.

THE PROBLEM OR ISSUE

- What are the issues related to youth development in your community?
- What are the consequences of these issues?
- Who is affected?
- How are they affected?
- Are these issues of widespread concern?

BARRIERS AND RESISTANCE

- What key individuals or groups might oppose your efforts?
- Can they be involved effectively?
- What other barriers might limit the effectiveness of the initiative?
- How can the barriers and resistance be overcome?

RESOURCES FOR CHANGE

- What resources and capacities are needed to address the mission?
- What local individuals or groups could contribute?
- What financial resources and materials are needed?
- Where might the money and materials be obtained?

Resources Needed

People/Organizations:

Financial:

Materials:

Potential/Existing Sources

SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

- What are some alternatives for addressing the problem or goal in light of the anticipated barriers and resources?
- These ideas may provide an initial indication of what solutions might be acceptable to the community. (The group will refine these ideas in its action plan that is described in later chapters of this guide.)

Planning Page: Information Gathering *Documenting the Problem (or Level of Goal)*

Please review the ideas in this chapter. Use this planning page to focus your group's efforts to document community problems or level of goal related to healthy youth development.

Your group might collaborate with officials of local youth development centers, school districts, and health departments to obtain existing data that could be used to document the problem.

DATA ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY YOUTH

Various systems have data from behavioral surveys (i.e., adolescent pregnancy, rates of alcohol, drug and tobacco use, juvenile arrests, rates of youth volunteering and engagement in school programs.)

Ask questions of importance to your community. Here are some examples:

- What percentage of youth engages in risky sexual behavior?
- What percentage of youth has used alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs in the past 30 days?
- How do the levels and trends compare with those of similar communities?

Planning Page: Information Gathering
*Identifying Factors that May Affect Youth Well-Being
and Developing a Framework for Action*

Use this planning page to refine your understanding of factors that may affect the mission of promoting youth well being. Outline the framework for action (or “model” or “theory” of change) that your community initiative will use to address its mission.

Your group might use past planning products, interviews with community leaders and outside experts, and models provided by others (see, for example, Table for Influential Factors and the illustrative “Framework for Youth Well-Being”).

FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- What *personal factors* affect healthy youth development? These may include knowledge, skills, and history, such as a history of exposure to caring adults, and biological/genetic influences such as cognitive abilities.
- What *environmental factors* affect healthy youth development? These may include hazards related to healthy births, poverty, infant injuries, and access to dental health care.
- How can we use this analysis – and our experience and knowledge of our local communities – to identify promising strategies and tactics for promoting healthy youth development?

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

- Is the community initiative already using a framework for action (or model or theory of practice) to guide its efforts?
- If appropriate, how can it be adapted?
- What is the logical path from initial understanding and planning to improvements in outcomes at the community level?
- How can this framework for action help guide the group’s efforts?

Planning Page: Information Gathering *Becoming Aware of Local Resources and Efforts*

Please review the ideas in this chapter. Use this planning page to refine your group's understanding of *existing* programs and resources as well as *current* and *past* efforts of groups with a similar mission.

Your group might use interviews with community leaders to help with these questions. Informants might be drawn from key officials in health and human services, and the business and government sectors, as well as parents and grassroots leaders in communities particularly affected by the concern.

EXISTING PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

- What are the existing programs and resources for promoting youth well being?
- How many youth and families are they serving?
- Do these services and programs meet community needs?
- Can these services be made more effective?

CURRENT AND PAST INITIATIVES

- Are there coalitions *currently* involved in promoting youth well being?
- If so, who are they?
- How many people are actively involved?
- Are these groups as effective as they could be?
- Were there *past* initiatives with a similar mission?
- Why and how did their efforts end?

Planning Page: Information Gathering Involving Key Officials and Grassroots Leaders

Please review the ideas in this chapter. Use this planning page to refine your group's understanding of which key officials and grassroots groups should be involved in the initiative.

Your group might use interviews with community leaders to help with these questions. Informants might be drawn from key officials in health and human services and the business and government sectors, as well as parents and leaders in communities particularly affected by the concern.

KEY OFFICIALS

- Who can make things happen on this issue?
- What individuals are in a position to create (or block) change?
- What contact people from the initiative would be most successful in getting these key officials to become involved in the initiative?
- Consider involving those who may initially be for (and against) the initiative.

Key Officials to be Involved

Contact People from the Initiative

KEY GRASSROOTS LEADERS

- What neighborhoods and ethnic and cultural communities are particularly affected by this concern?
- What individuals and groups make things happen in these neighborhoods and cultural communities?
- What contact people from the initiative would be most successful in involving members of these neighborhoods and cultural communities?

Key Grassroots Leaders

Contact People from the Initiative

Planning Pages: Information Gathering *Creating a Supportive Context for Planning*

Use these planning pages to consider how your group will position itself for success. Note the leadership of the planning group and its preferred size and structure, organization, and plans for integration of key leaders and people affected by the concern.

LEADERSHIP

- Has a person or small group accepted responsibility for the initiative's success?
- Consider how the leaders can enhance their vision of a safe, stable, and healthy community where all youth thrive.
- How can the leaders attract others to the vision?
- How can the leaders enhance their skills to relate to others within the group?
- How can the group select for and support those with the courage, perseverance, and other attributes necessary to help transform the community?

GROUP SIZE AND STRUCTURE

- What is a manageable size for the planning group?
- If more people wish to be involved, what structure will be used to include them?
- Perhaps the planning group might be composed of a smaller executive or steering committee that would report to the group.

GROUP ORGANIZATION

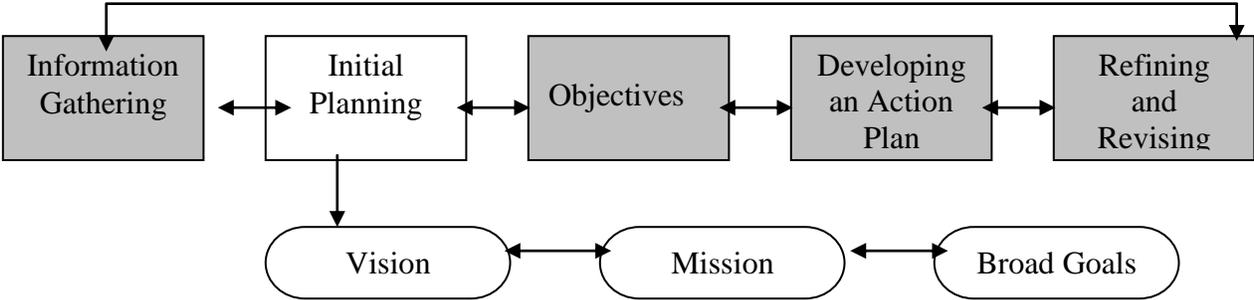
- How will the planning group be organized?
- In larger groups or communities, planning might initially be done in subcommittees or task groups organized around community sectors, such as schools or religious organizations.
- In smaller groups or communities, the entire group might do this.

GROUP DIVERSITY AND INTEGRATION

- How will diversity and integration of differing perspectives be assured?
- How will influential people be involved?
- How will other people affected by the concern be involved?
- How can the continuing participation of those with resources and authority be maintained while preserving the involvement of other community members without official titles?

CHAPTER II

Strategic Planning



When groups develop a plan for action, they decide what they hope to accomplish and how they are going to get there. These decisions may be reached in strategic planning, the process by which a group defines its vision, mission, objectives, strategies, and action plans.

Strategic planning is a process of determining how to get from “here” (where we are now) to “there” (where things ought to be). It will be a dynamic process throughout the life of the initiative. **VMOSA** is a strategic planning approach to help an initiative focus its efforts.

An Overview of Strategic Planning

VMOSA is a practical planning process that can be used by any community initiative. It provides a blueprint for moving from vision to action to outcome. It stands for:

- Vision
- Mission
- Objectives
- Strategies
- Action Plan

Refer to the Community Tool Box Chapter 8, Section 2
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/section_1086.htm.

A **vision** states the *ideal conditions* desired for the community. A group concerned about youth well-being might use the following brief phrases to capture its vision: "Adults caring for youth," "Supportive families and communities," or "Healthy youth." The vision should convey the community's dream for the future. A vision should be: a) shared by members of the community, b) uplifting to those involved in the effort, and c) easy to communicate (it should fit on a T-shirt).

The **mission** describes *what* the group is going to do and *why*. The mission might refer to implementing a community-based prevention program to reduce the incidence of a negative condition, such as gang violence, or increasing the level of a positive condition, such as structured alternative activities. A group's mission may be mandated by its funding source, or it may be created by its leadership. The mission may look something like this:

“To build a healthier community in which all youth thrive.”

“To work together to improve outcomes for all youth in our community.”

Broad goals refer to *specific measurable results* of the initiative. They include: a) key behavioral outcomes, such as change in the number of school-aged youth reporting involvement in violent acts, b) related community-level outcomes, such as the incidence of homicides and assaultive violence, and c) key aspects of the process, such as adopting a comprehensive plan for the youth violence coalition. Broad goals set specified levels of change and dates by when change will occur.

Example objectives:

- a. By the year 2006, decrease by 20% the number of youth living in poverty.
- b. By the year 2006, decrease by 30% the incidence of youth self-reported use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs or alcohol.

For more information on creating objectives, see the Community Tool Box Chapter 8, Section 3 http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/section_1087.htm

Strategies refer to *how* the initiative will be conducted. A group may use a variety of strategies to meet its objectives and fulfill its mission.

Some example strategies:

- Use the media to promote public awareness of the benefits of positive adult interaction with youth.
- Build a successful community coalition that involves all relevant sectors of the community in promoting youth development.
- Enhance grassroots involvement in youth initiatives.
- Promote coordination and integration of existing services and resources for promoting healthy youth.
- Advocate for changes in programs and policies related to creating healthy environments for youth.

Refer to the Community Tool Box Chapter 8, Section 4 for more information:
http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/EN/section_1088.htm

Action plans describe how strategies will be implemented to attain the objectives. They refer to: a) *community and systems changes to be sought* in all relevant sectors of the community and b) *action steps*. Action steps indicate what actions will be taken (what), the responsible agents (by whom), the timeline (by when), resources and support needed and available, potential barriers or resistance, and with whom communications should occur. Example community and systems changes and action steps for identified changes are provided in later chapters.

For further information on developing Action plans, see the Community Tool Box Chapter 8, Section 5: http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/section_1089.htm

Identifying Targets and Agents of Change

When the group has determined where it is going and how it is going to get there, it will focus on key actors whose behaviors need to be changed and people who are in a position to make the changes. Clarifying whose behavior must change to address the problem will help in later planning for action.

Potential **targets of change** include all adolescents, especially those youth aged 15-24, who are at high risk. They also include those whose actions (or inactions) contribute to the problem, such as peers, adults, parents, caregivers, service providers, teachers, merchants, and elected and appointed officials.

Potential **agents of change** include all those in a position to contribute to the solution, such as peers, parents and caregivers, and the business community. They also include those who have a responsibility to contribute to the solution, including peers, parents, caregivers, service providers, teachers, business people and merchants, religious leaders, and elected and appointed officials.

For further information on identifying targets and agents of change, please refer to Chapter 18, Section 3 of the Community Tool Box (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/section_1145.htm).

Summary

This chapter outlines key ideas in strategic planning. The planning pages that follow provide an opportunity to apply these ideas to your own community initiative.

Planning Pages:
*Refining Your Group's Vision, Mission, Broad Goals, and
Strategies*

Use these planning pages to refine your group's vision, mission, objectives, and strategies. Please note that if you are applying for grant funds, the funding agent may largely or fully predetermine the mission, objectives, and/or strategies.

VISION

The vision describes the ideal condition desired for the community. It conveys the community's dream for the future. It must be a shared vision; uplifting and easy to communicate. An example vision statement is: "A community where all youth thrive."

Please state the vision of your group.

MISSION

The mission statement describes the special task or purpose of the group. It describes *what* the group intends to do and *why*. It must be concise, outcome-oriented, and inclusive. An example mission statement is: "To promote the well-being of youth through collaborative action."

Please state the mission of your group.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives state the goals toward which project activities are directed. Objectives describe how much will be accomplished in *specific measurable results* and state the time frame for accomplishments. Objectives must be challenging, important, potentially measurable, and feasible to accomplish. Please list the objectives of your group, inserting the appropriate dates and target percentages:

- By the year ____, the number of youth living in poverty will decrease by __ percent.
- By the year ____, the incidence of homicides among 15-24 year olds will be reduced by __ percent.
- By the year ____, the number of youth without health care insurance will be reduced by __ percent.
- By the year ____, _____.

STRATEGIES

Strategies describe *how* the objectives are going to be met. Broad strategies for enhancing youth development include: increasing personal experience and competence, decreasing environmental stressors and barriers, and enhancing environmental support and resources.

Specific strategies related to changing individual behavior include: a) providing information and enhancing skills, b) altering incentives and disincentives, c) modifying access, barriers, and opportunities, d) enhancing services and supports, and e) modifying policies and practices.

Specific strategies related to organizational and community development include: a) community assessment and monitoring, b) public awareness and media campaigns, c) integrating and coordinating local agencies and resources, d) coalition building, e) modifying access to products and services, f) developing resources to enhance family and peer support, g) advocacy and nonviolent protest, h) enforcement of existing policies and laws, and i) changing policies and laws.

Please list the strategies to be used by your group.

Planning Pages:
Refining Your Group's Choice of Targets and Agents of Change

Please review the ideas in this chapter. Use this planning page to refine your group's choice of targets and agents of change.

TARGETS OF CHANGE

Targets of change are those who by their actions or inaction contribute to the problem. Possible targets of change include: youth, adults, parents and caregivers, policy-makers, peers, law enforcement officials, service providers, teachers, merchants who sell weapons, and community leaders.

Please list the targets of change for your group.

AGENTS OF CHANGE

Agents of change are those who are in the best position to contribute to the solution, such as peers or parents and caregivers. They may also include those who have a responsibility to contribute to the solution, such as teachers or religious leaders. Possible agents of change include: youth, parents and caregivers, policy-makers, law enforcement officials, service providers, teachers, business people, religious leaders, and community leaders.

Please list the agents of change for your group.

Action Planning Workshop: An Example Outline Using Two Half-Day Working Sessions

An effective action planning session allows a diverse group of participants to:

1. Clarify common purpose—Through listening, gathering and reviewing data, and building a shared vision and mission.
2. Generate and critique options—Through consideration of risk and protective factors, broad and specific strategies, and the community's framework for action, it identifies particular changes in communities and systems (i.e., new or modified programs, policies, and practices) to be sought to achieve the mission.
3. Obtain consensus about community and systems changes to be sought—Through ballot voting about the importance and feasibility of proposed changes, or by having participants use “dots” to register preferences for changes to be sought.
4. Decide how to proceed as a group—Through open discussion, the group identifies action steps (i.e., who will do what by when) to bring about the identified changes.

Background work before the session/workshop:

- *Listening sessions with a variety of people including those most affected*
- *Documenting the issues or problems, including data on the challenges of developing neighborhoods*

Session One (1/2 Day)

- 8:30 Continental Breakfast
- 9:00 Welcome and Introductions
- 9:20 Overview of the Action Planning Process
- 9:30 VMOSA ... What is VMOSA (Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies, Action Plans)?
- 9:45 Vision: Promoting Neighborhood Development: Creating your own community's vision
- 10:15 Mission: What are we trying to accomplish and why? Stating your mission.
- 10:45 Objectives: How much of what will we accomplish by when? Creating your objectives.
- 11:15 Strategies: How will we get there: Identifying a set of broad and specific strategies.
- 12:15 Questions/ Wrap Up: Group Summarizes Accomplishments of Session/Day One
- 12:30 Adjourn

Product of Session/Day One: A new (or renewed) statement of the group's Vision, Mission, Objectives, and Strategies. (These may require review or approval by a broader group.)

Homework Before Session/Day Two: Review the “Inventory of Potential Community and Systems Changes for Promoting Neighborhood Development.” Bring recommended changes to be sought: a) by specific strategy (i.e., providing information and enhancing skills; modifying access, barriers, and opportunities; enhancing services and support; changing consequences; and modifying policies) and b) by community sector (e.g., Community Organizations, Faith Communities, Government).

Session Two (1/2 Day)

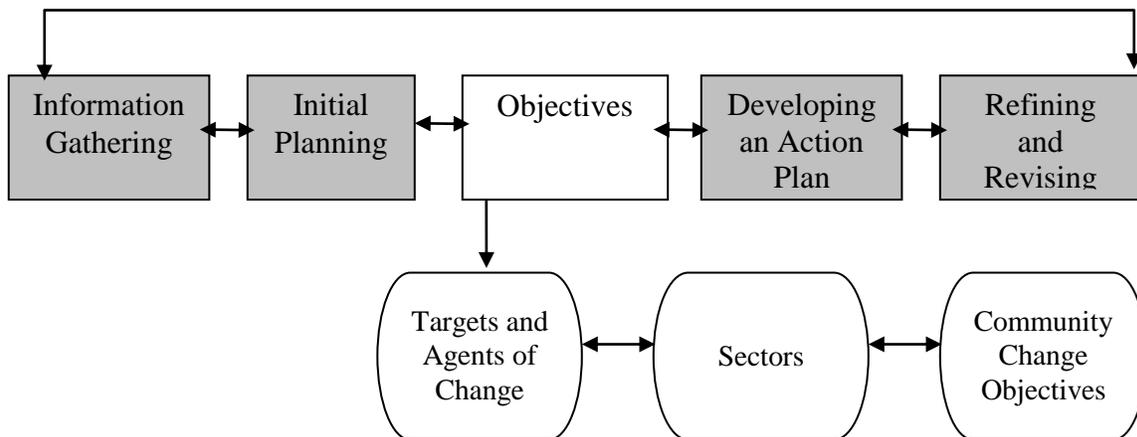
- 9:00 Review of Session/Day One and Overview of Session/Day Two
- 9:15 Identifying Targets and Agents of Changes: Who should benefit? Who can contribute?
- 9:30 Identifying Community and Systems Changes: By Strategy (work in small groups of 6-8 organized by strategy)
- 10:15 Small Group Reports
- 10:45 Identifying Community and Systems Changes: By Sector (work in small groups of 6-8 organized by sector)
- 11:15 Small Group Reports
- 11:45 Building consensus on community and systems changes to be sought (e.g., using dots, voting)
- 12:15 Next Steps:
- Building Consensus/Seeking Approval from the larger group (if appropriate)
 - Identifying Action Steps for each change to be sought (who will do what by when)
 - Plan for Documenting Progress and Promoting Celebration and Renewal
- 12:45 Questions/ Wrap Up: Group Summarizes Accomplishments of Session/Day Two
- 1:00 Adjourn

Product of Session/Day Two: A set of community and systems changes (i.e., new or modified programs, policies and practices to be sought in each relevant sector of the community (e.g., Community Organizations, Faith Communities, Government).

*"A vision without a task is a dream.
A task without a dream is drudgery.
But a vision with a task can change the
world."*

CHAPTER III

Working Together for Healthy Youth: Involving Key Sectors of the Community



The **purpose of this chapter** is to show the importance of various community sectors' involvement in the initiative.

Community sectors are those parts of the community that will help the group fulfill its mission, such as schools or faith communities. Some sectors will be selected because they provide a good way to reach youth who are at risk. Other sectors will be included because they offer a way to involve community members who have a stake in promoting youth health and development.

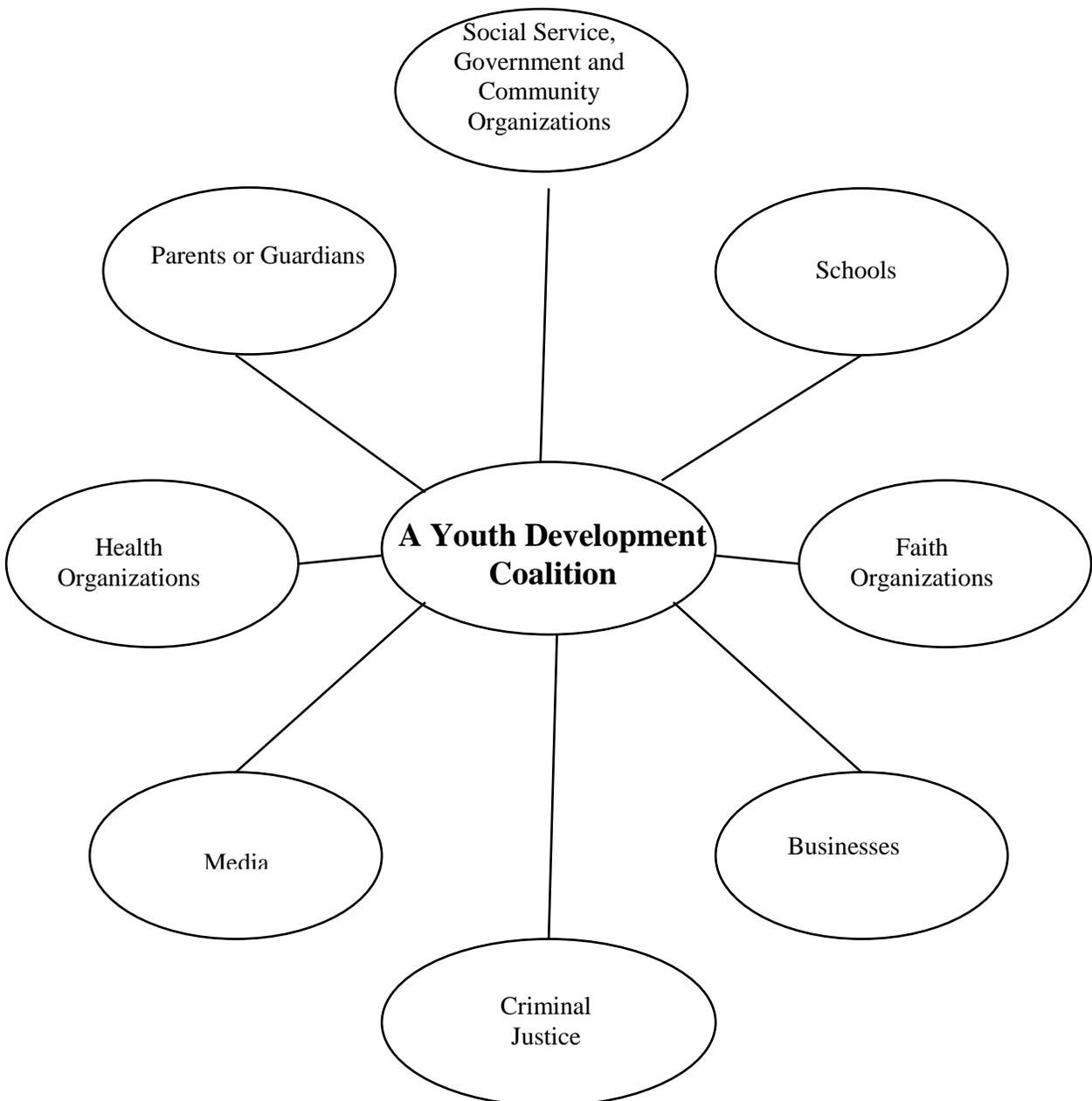
1. Review the targets and agents of change identified in the previous chapter. These are the people whom your group hopes to influence and involve in its efforts.
2. Review the diagram on the next page of the community sectors involved in an example coalition for healthy youth development. Consider which of these sectors of the community might be most useful in promoting youth health. Modify the chosen sectors and delete or add new ones to fit your community's special needs, resources, barriers, and experiences.
3. Use the planning page at the end of this chapter to identify the sectors with which your group will collaborate. Each sector should help reach your group's targets of change and/or involve your selected agents of change. Your organization's own particular sectors will reflect the overall vision, mission, objectives, and strategies, as well as local resources and opportunities.

Key Community Sectors:

Here is a diagram of community sectors that might become involved in a coalition for the promotion of youth health. These are the community sectors or groups through which the coalition intends to fulfill its mission.

Which community sectors should be used to address your group's mission? Which of these offers prospects for changing youth behavior and involving community members?

An Example Coalition for the Promotion of Youth Development

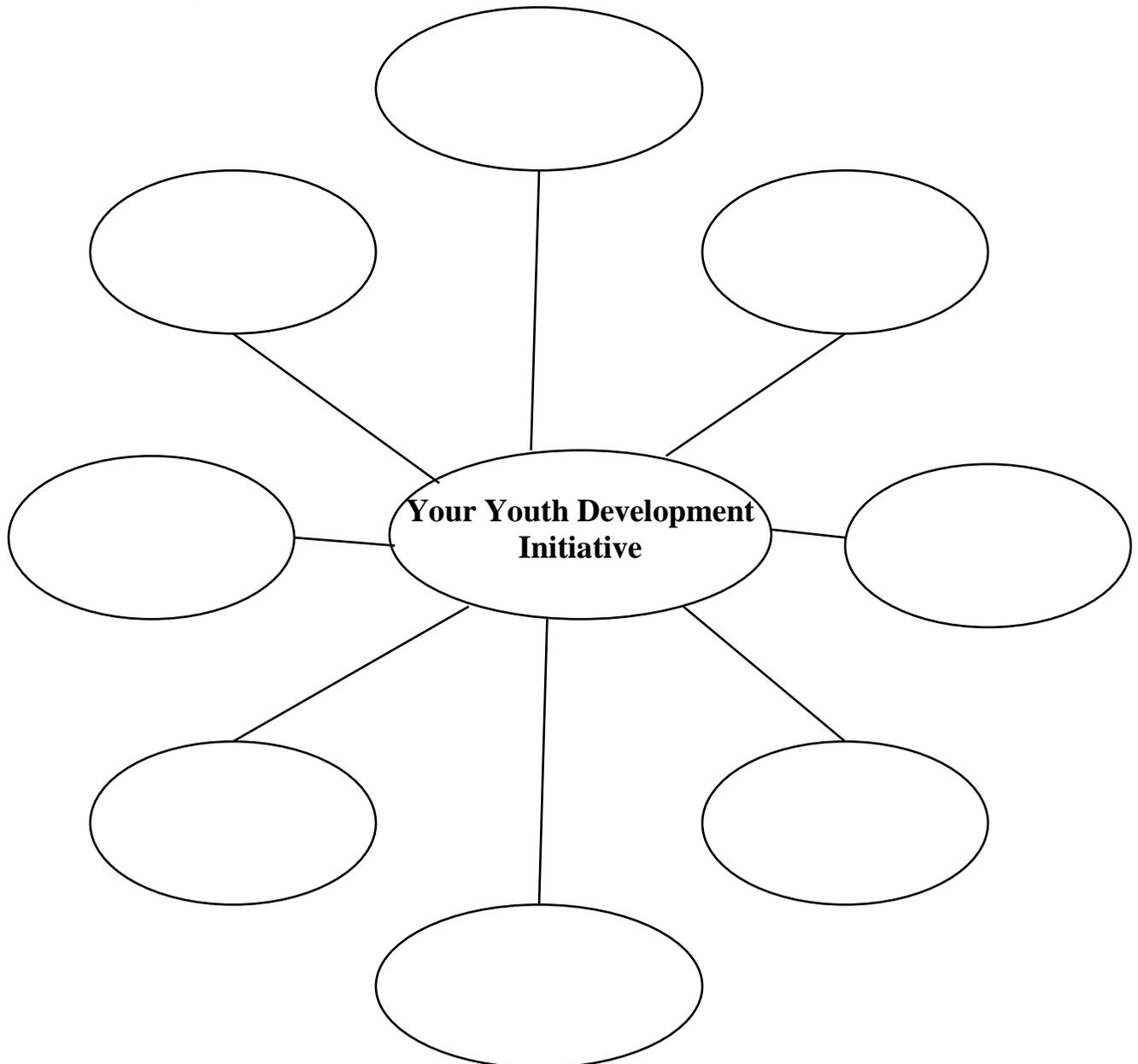


Planning Pages:

Choosing Community Sectors to Involve in Your Group

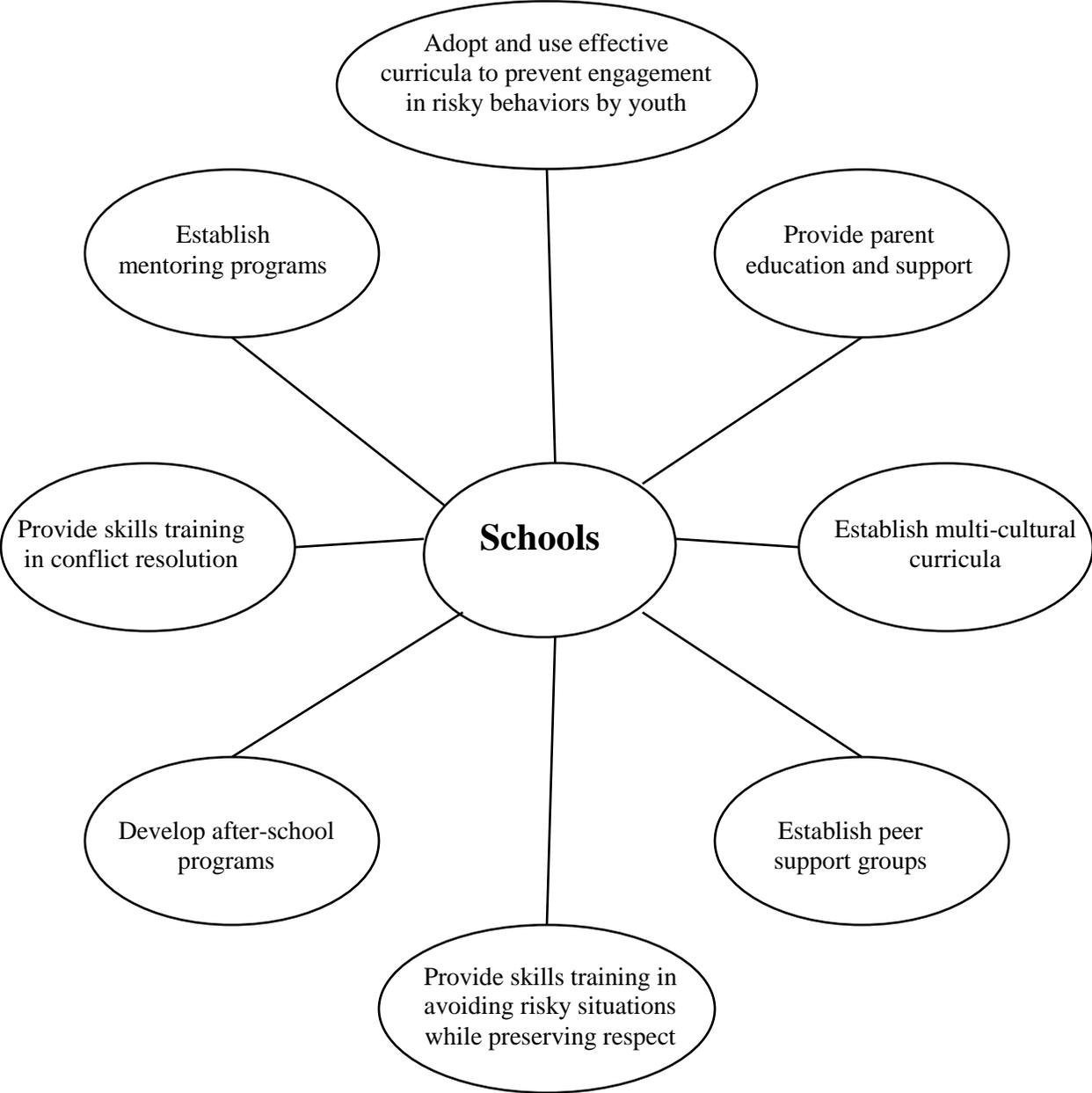
Review the diagram for the youth development coalition on the previous page. Use this page to list proposed sectors of the community in which *your* group can and will have influence.

Review the targets and agents of change identified in the previous chapter. Consider what community sectors will best enable the group to reach the targets of change and to involve potential agents of change. Consider the following questions: Does the sector provide a way to reach large numbers of youth or youth at risk? Does it provide access to community members who have an interest or responsibility in promoting youth development? Is it feasible to involve the sector in the group's efforts? What other sectors should be involved?



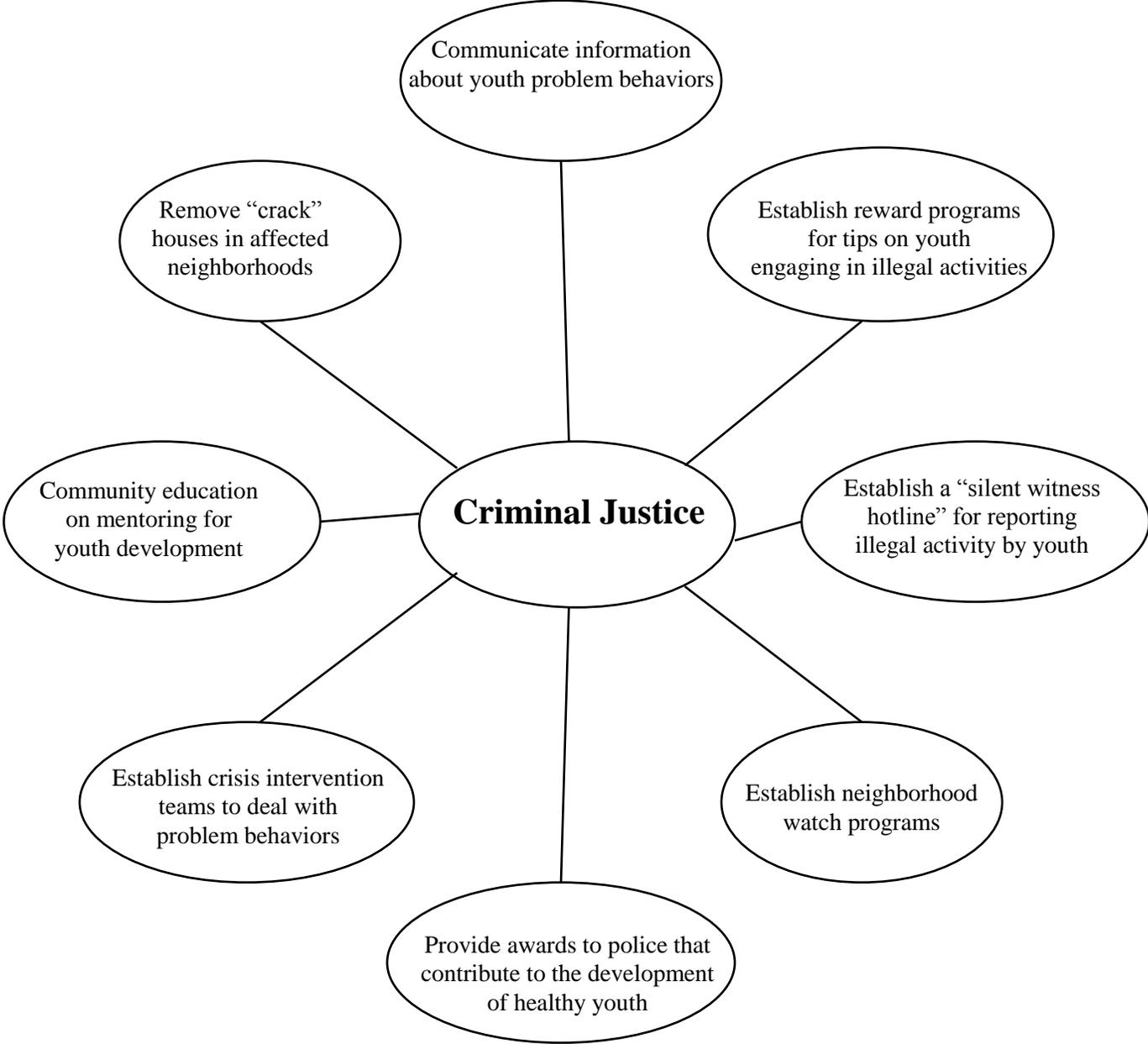
Example Changes in the Schools

There are a number of potential changes in elementary, middle, and high schools that could contribute to the mission of promoting youth health and development. Here is an example of the product of planning – a list of changes that might be sought in your community's schools.



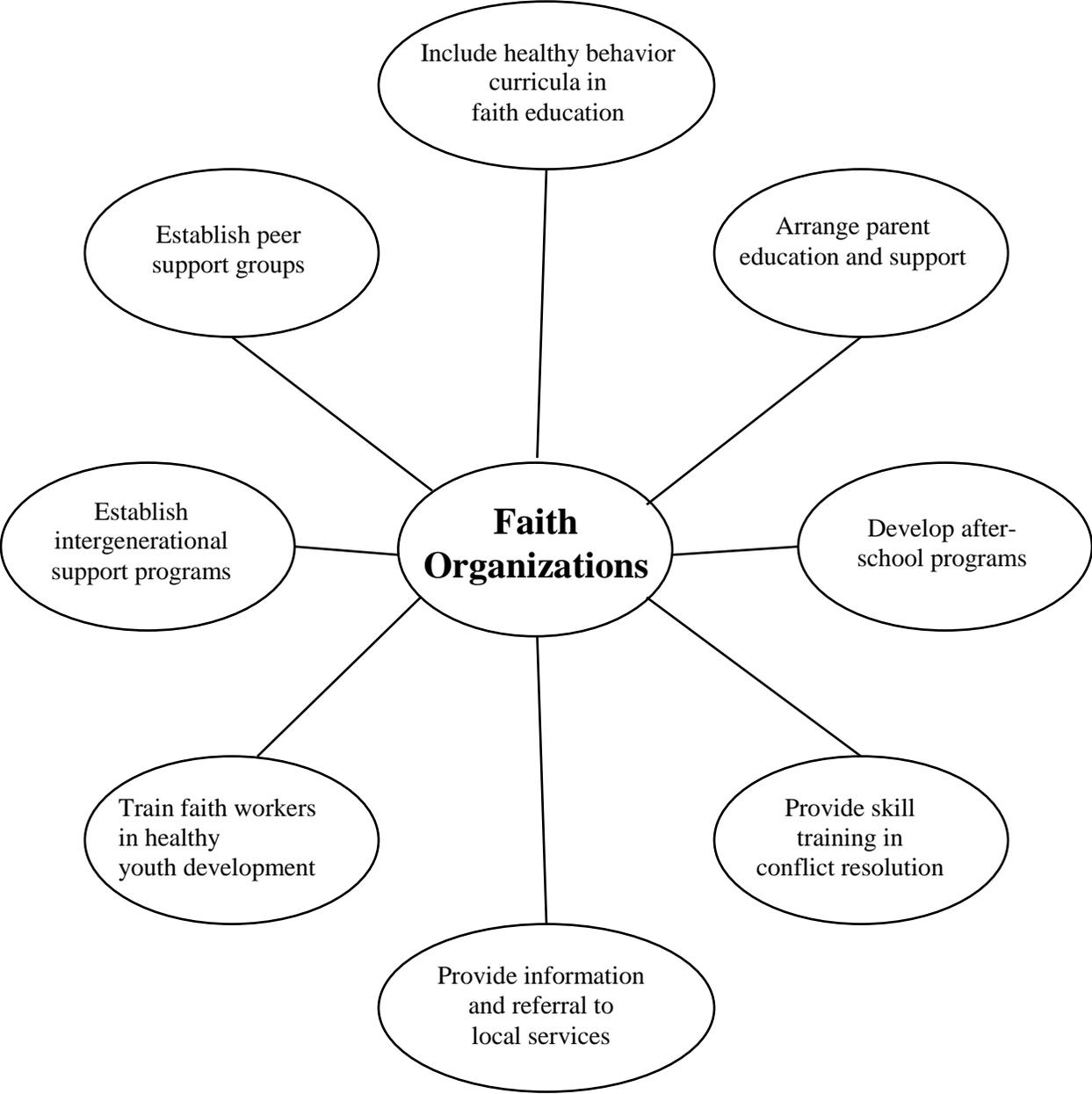
Example Changes in Criminal Justice

There are a number of potential changes in the criminal justice system that might contribute to the mission of promoting youth development. Here is an example of the product of planning – a list of changes that might be sought in criminal justice.



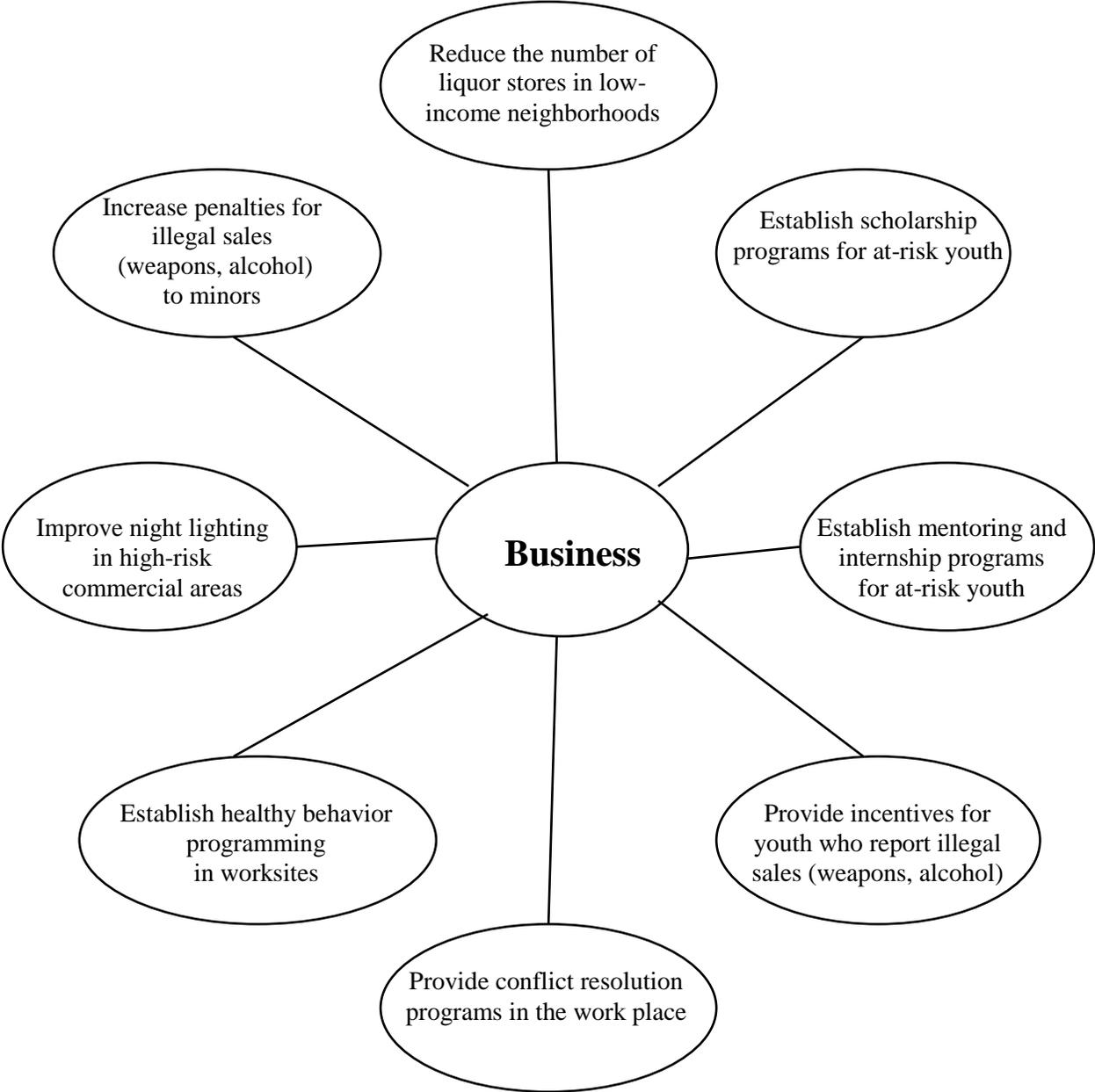
Example Changes in Faith Organizations

There are a number of potential changes in faith organizations that might contribute to the mission of promoting youth development. Here is an example of the product of planning – a list of changes that might be sought in churches, synagogues, and other faith organizations.



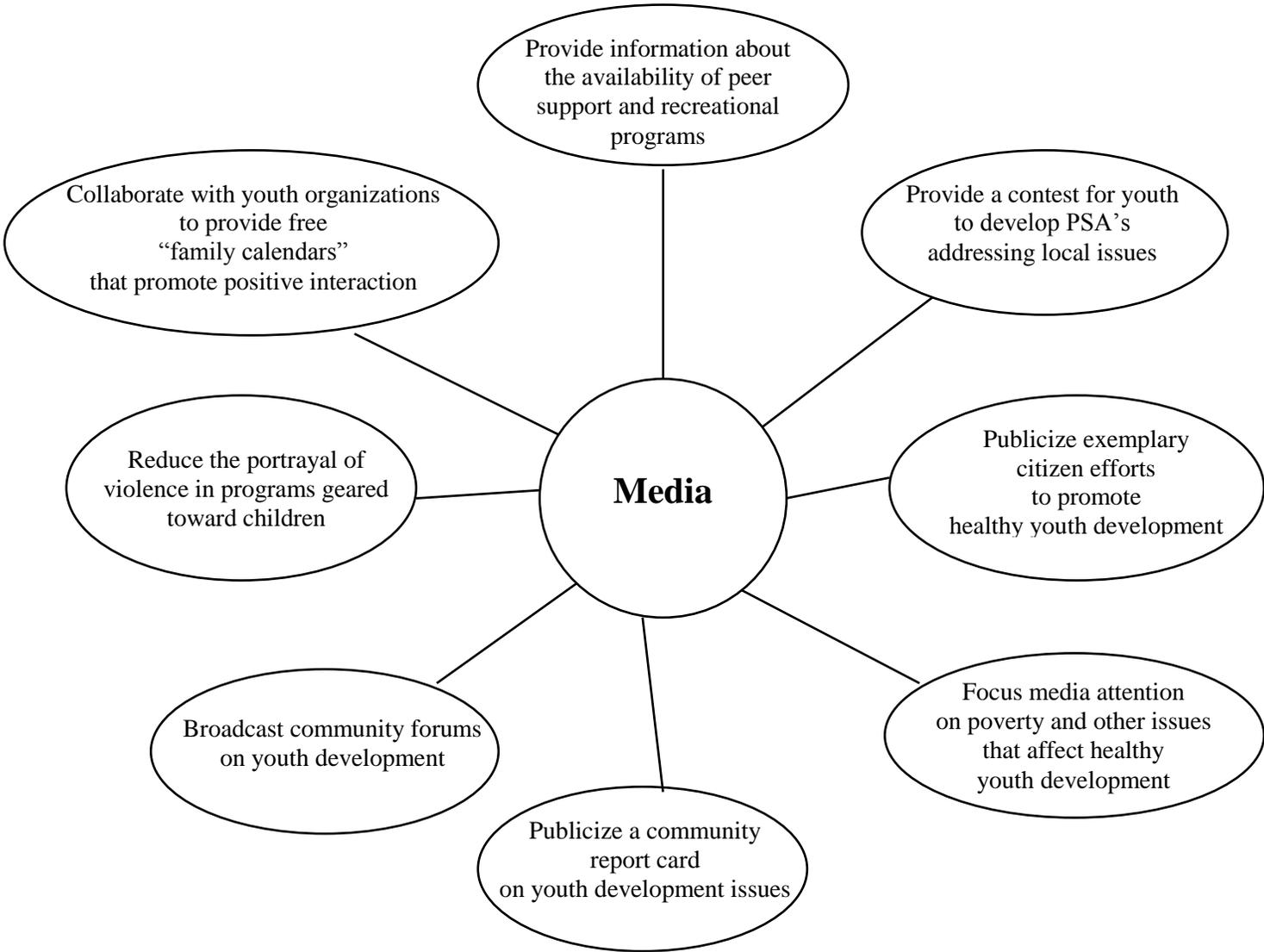
Example Changes in the Business Community

There are a number of potential changes in the business community that will contribute to the mission of promoting youth development. Here is an example of the product of planning – a list of changes that might be sought in the local business community.



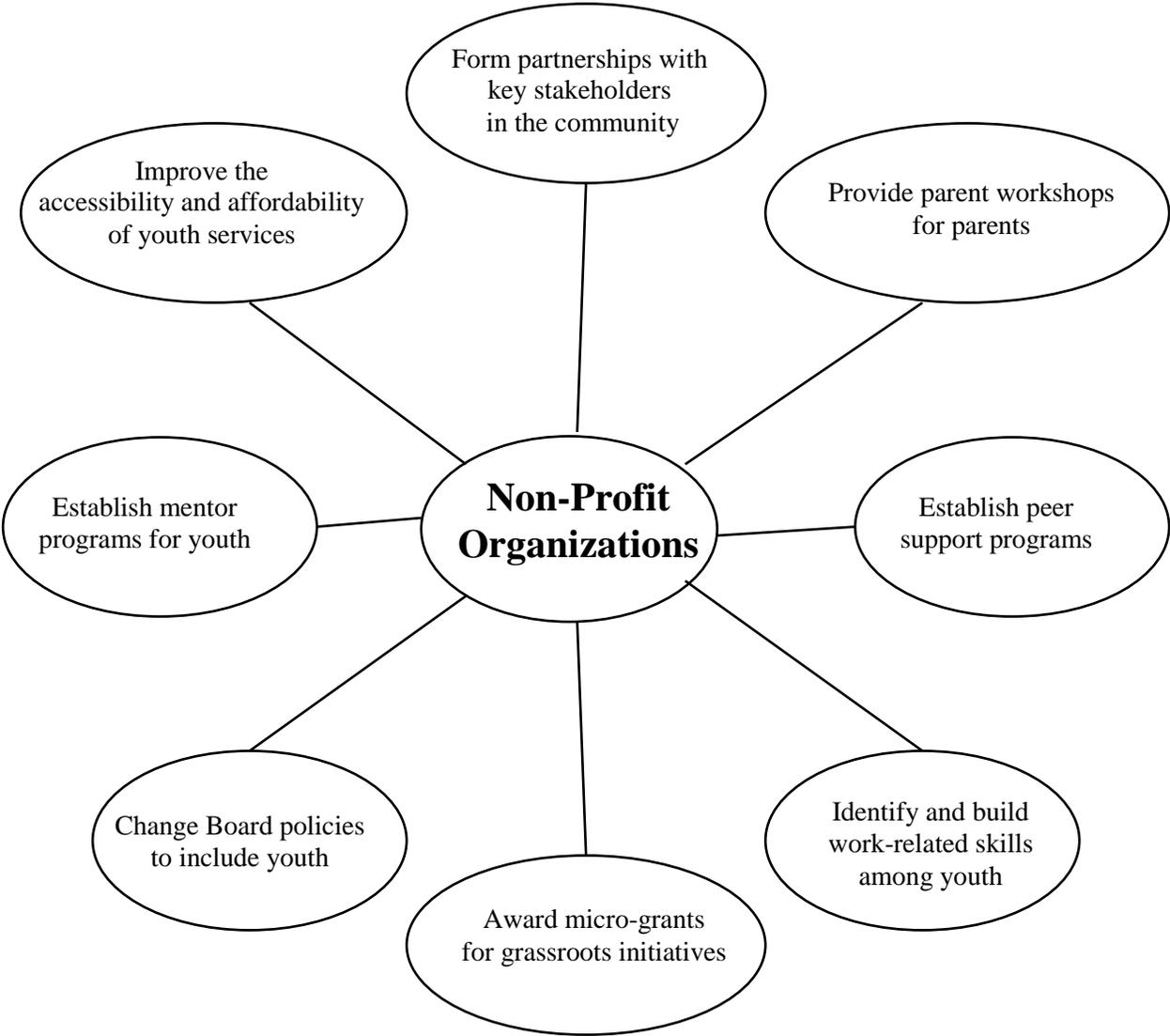
Example Changes in the Media

There are a number of potential changes in newspapers, radio, and television that might contribute to the mission of promoting youth development. Here is an example of the product of planning – a list of changes that might be sought in the media.



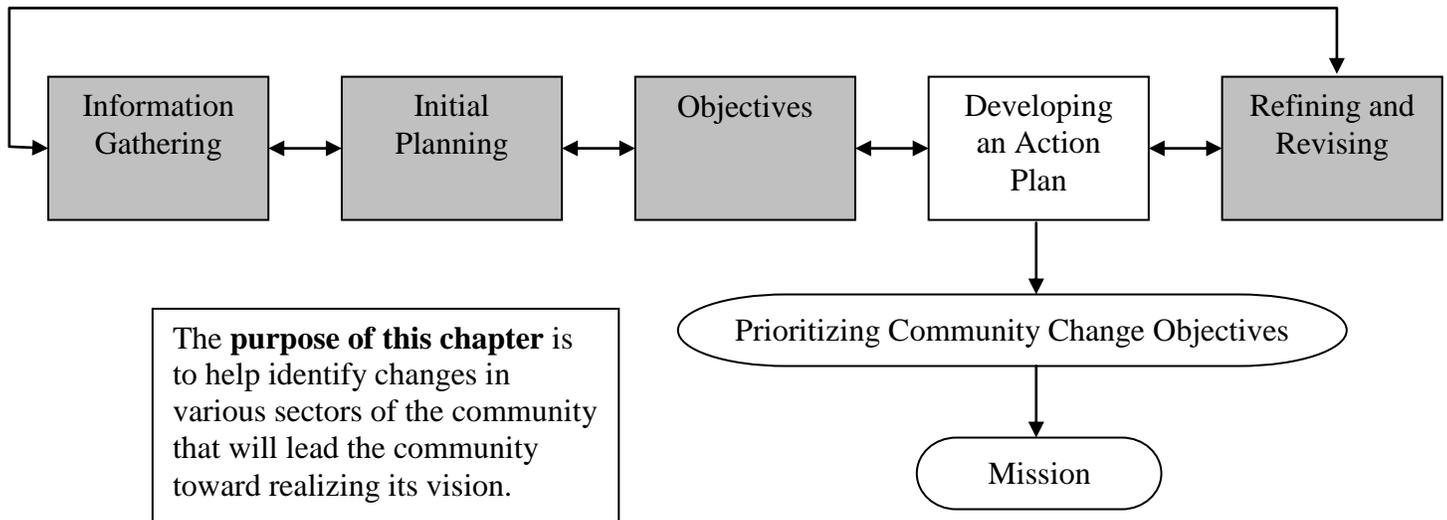
Changes in Non-Profit Organizations

There are a number of potential changes in non-profit organizations that might contribute to the mission of promoting youth development. Here is an example of a product of planning. It is a list of changes that might be sought in non-profit organizations.



CHAPTER IV

Developing an Action Plan



To realize the vision, your group should attempt to change programs, policies, and practices within various community sectors (e.g., schools, non-profit organizations, faith communities, businesses and government).

The information gathered in the previous chapters will help guide your initiative's choices for proposed community and systems changes. For example, what does the community's framework for action and understanding of barriers and resistance suggest about which particular strategies to use? In light of the choices of targets and agents of change (and the sectors through which they can be reached and engaged), which changes should be sought in particular sectors of the community?

This chapter provides an inventory of possible community changes that your group might seek. Final decisions about which changes to pursue should be made by your community. For an example of the product of action planning, refer to the sample Community and Systems Changes in Chapter 3. This provides an illustration of the types of community and systems change the initiative might seek in relevant sectors of the community.

Step 1

Review, modify, and expand the inventory of potential community and systems changes. They are stated as objectives for change and divided into five specific strategies:

1. Providing information and enhancing skills
2. Altering incentives and disincentives

3. Modifying access, barriers, and opportunities
4. Enhancing services and support
5. Modifying policies and practices

Within a specific strategy, there is a “menu” of possible changes related to the development of healthy youth. Taking into account the issues your community is addressing, carefully scan the inventory and mark the community and systems changes that seem relevant. Then brainstorm to see if you can identify others not listed in the inventory. Frame the proposed objectives as descriptions of changes in the environment that could be observed, using language in the inventory as a guide.

Step 2

List the community and systems changes on the worksheets provided.

Step 3

Using abbreviated key words, transfer (and adapt) the community/systems change objectives from the Worksheets to the appropriate Sector Cluster (e.g., Health Organizations, Criminal Justice).

Step 4

Finally, using the community’s “framework for action,” (see Chapter 2) draft a simple flowchart (one page) that shows how the planned changes in communities and systems fit together, forming pathways that lead logically to widespread behavior change and developing healthy youth.

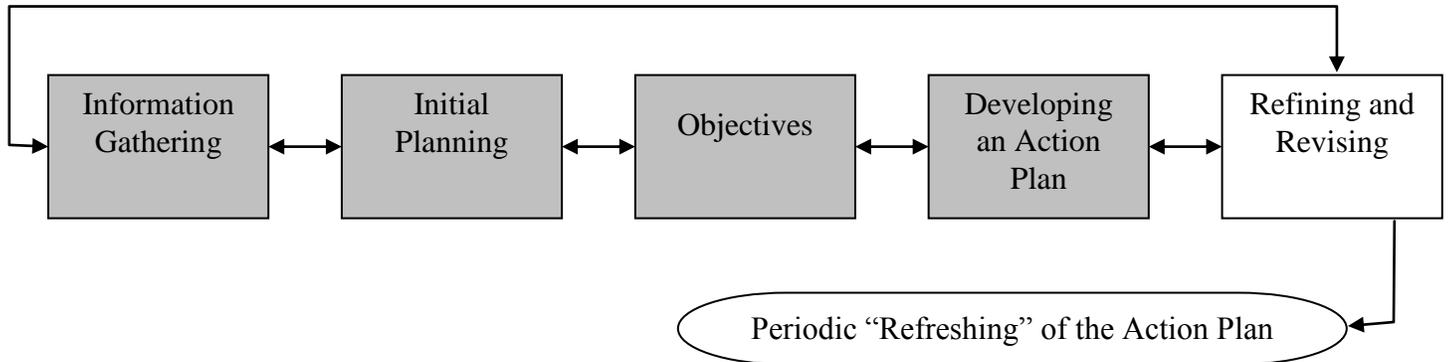
We encourage planners to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the process described in this chapter. A planning group of 20 could break into diverse work teams of 5 people, who could then review and exchange their work with one another. This exchange of ideas would serve as the basis for a planning team’s recommendations.

A key question:

What combination of changes in programs, policies, and practices are necessary to make a difference with the vision of developing healthy youth?

CHAPTER V

Refining Your Action Plan: Building Consensus on Proposed Changes



The **purpose of this chapter** is to help guide final choices of changes to be sought by your community's initiative for youth well being.

Step 1: Checking the Proposed Changes for Completeness

The group should review proposed changes for each sector, as well as collectively. To review the proposed changes in each community sector, we recommend asking two questions:

- Collectively, do these proposed changes maximize this sector's contribution to the mission of fostering healthy youth development?
- What other changes in programs, policies, or practices could or should be made in this sector?

To review the set of proposed changes and their completeness, we suggest asking:

- Would all the changes, collectively, be sufficient to increase youth health to desired levels?
- What other changes in programs, policies, or practices could or should be made in the community?

Step 2: Using a Survey (or More Informal Review) to Build Consensus

To help attract and preserve commitments, it is important to build consensus on the changes to be sought. The group may use a survey to review the proposed changes. This can also be done less formally, such as individually or in small groups. We recommend listing all the proposed changes, organized by community sector, along with questions about their importance and feasibility for addressing the mission of promoting health for all.

For each change to be sought, we recommend asking:

- Is this proposed change *important* to the mission of reducing increasing healthy development among youth?
- Is the proposed change *feasible*?

The following is an example of a useful survey for building consensus on your action plan.

<i>Proposed Changes in the Schools:</i>	<i>How important is it to...</i>					<i>How feasible is it to...</i>				
	Not at all				Very	Not at all				Very
Provide skills training in conflict resolution.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Provide adequate lighting on school grounds.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Distribute surveys to all key audiences (e.g., community members, school staff, representatives of funding sources, and experts in youth development.) Then collect the completed surveys and compute an average rating for the importance and feasibility of each proposed change. Results of this survey can be used to guide final choices of community changes to be sought. Proposed changes with high importance and high feasibility ratings should be given higher priority for action; those with lower importance or feasibility, a lower priority. It may be helpful to set a cutoff for choosing priorities. For example, perhaps only those proposed changes with an average rating of 4 or higher on importance, and 3 or higher on feasibility might be included on the final action plan.

An additional tool you may want to utilize for this is <http://www.conceptsystems.com>. This suite of software is designed to support activities for sorting and rating concepts (e.g. proposed actions) among a large number of stakeholders. Tailored reporting tools are also provided, making it possible to produce final reports of findings efficiently.

Step 3: Securing a Formal Decision from the Entire Group

Seek formal approval of the proposed changes by the members of the initiative. A one-half day action planning retreat or working session can be used to do this effectively.

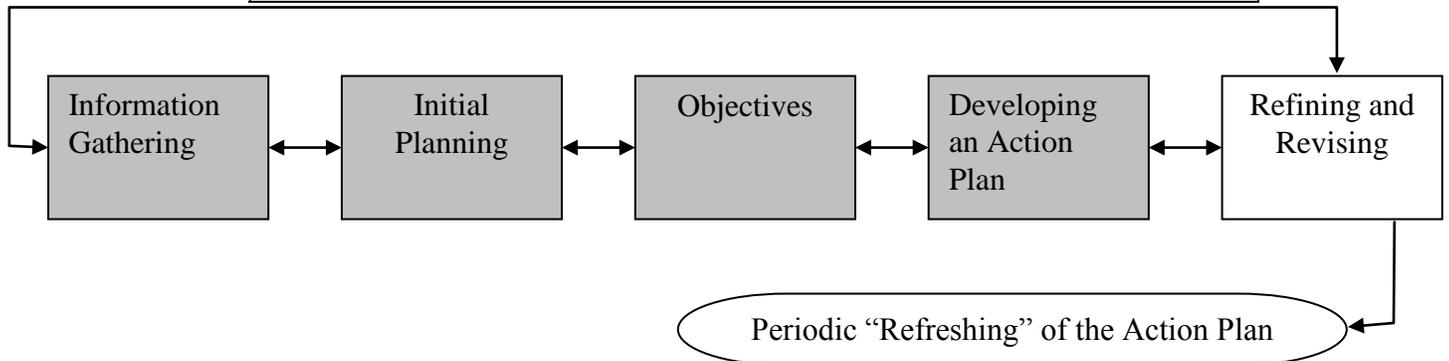
Seek consensus. Use a formal vote to resolve disputes about changes only when necessary. When the action plan is complete, arrange for all members to vote on the completed plan.

Summary

This chapter described a process for helping build consensus on the complete list of proposed changes for the community sectors to be involved in the initiative. The next chapter describes how to convert these proposed changes into a final action plan.

CHAPTER VI

Finalizing Your Action Plan: Listing Action Steps for Proposed Changes



The **purpose of this chapter** is to prepare necessary action steps to bring about community changes.

Step 1: Identify Major Action Steps for Each Change

The action steps detail what will occur, in what quantity, by whom, and by when. To prepare action steps for your action plan, define the following for each proposed change:

- what actions will be taken
- the responsible agents (by whom)
- timeline
- resources and support needed and available
- potential barriers and resistance
- with whom communication about the plan should occur

Step 2: Review of Earlier Analysis

Use the information gathered in the previous chapters to guide your initiative's action steps for bringing about identified community and systems changes.

Step 3: Finalize and Communicate the Plan

A strong, comprehensive action plan communicates that the group is unified and organized. This should include the list of changes by community sector, related action steps, and a proposed time frame.

Example Planning Page for Your Community

This example illustrates how to list action steps for a specific community change sought in the school sector.

Community Change to be sought: By 2005, the school district will provide training for youth in academic and life skills, including anger management, negotiation skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, study skills, help-recruiting skills, assertiveness, and decision-making. (CK #8)

<i>What needs to be done?</i>	<i>By whom?</i>	<i>By when?</i>	<i>What resources are needed? What resources are available?</i>	<i>What barriers or resistance may be encountered?</i>	<i>Who should be informed about these actions?</i>
Gather local data on issues affecting youth and the transition to adulthood (e.g., % 18-24 year olds with a H.S. diploma, # of deaths per 100,000 ages 15-19, % of children aged 12-18 in the juvenile justice system.)	Teachers, parents, students, other committee members	September 2003	Check the Connect Kansas website and Kansas Action for Children's report card for local data.	It may be difficult to find data that is representative of your particular school district.	School staff, parents, and local youth-serving agencies
Conduct a literature review to find the best practices in training life skills (e.g., anger management, negotiation skills, problem-solving skills) in school settings.	Teachers, parents, students, other committee members	November 2003	Information about how other schools have piloted similar initiatives, and their outcomes and lessons learned.		Teachers, parents, students
The schools committee will meet with school officials to present the local data and potential life skills training programs for implementation.	Teachers, parents, students, other committee members	December 2003	Key stakeholders whom school officials respect and trust.	People may deny that issues affect <i>all</i> youth. There may be resistance to implementing a new curriculum.	Staff, parents, students, city council, general public
The schools committee will negotiate commitment for implementation of a specific life skills training program.	Teachers, parents, students, other committee members	March 2004	Committee members such as the Superintendent, teachers and parents; additional funding may be needed.	It may be difficult to secure the funding and the teacher's time to implement this new curriculum.	Staff, parents, students, city council, general public
The school system will implement the life skills training program, and periodically report local data around issues affecting youth.	Staff, committee members	August 2004	Committee members such as the Superintendent and parents.		Staff, parents, students, city council, general public

Action Steps for Proposed Change

Use this page to outline action steps for each identified change to be sought in each community sector.

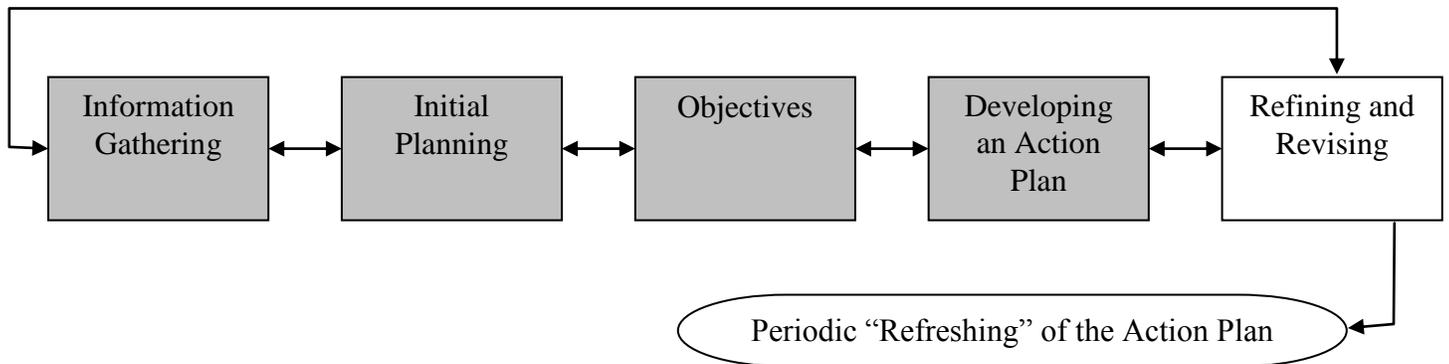
Community Sector: _____

Community or Systems Change to be sought: _____

<i>What needs to be done?</i>	<i>By whom?</i>	<i>By when?</i>	<i>What resources are needed? What resources are available?</i>	<i>What barriers or resistance may be encountered?</i>	<i>Who should be informed about these actions?</i>

CHAPTER VII

Documenting Progress and Promoting Renewal



The **purpose of this chapter** is to suggest how community initiatives might document and evaluate community and systems change, and thus promote celebration and renewal in the group.

By **community change**, we mean developing a new or modified program, policy, or practice related to the group's mission. An example of a community change would be a neighborhood hosting a block party so youth and neighbors can get to know one another. In our work over the past decade, we have found that the number of community changes in a community is the best predictor for moving more distal outcomes in the community. Hence, tracking community change is a great intermediate marker for the work of improving our communities.

Systems changes are similar to community changes, but take place on a broader level. A business might implement child-friendly practices throughout its operations nationally. Another example is a change in grant-making policy to award cash incentives to grantees that reach their objectives. Documenting community and systems change is discussed further in Chapter 38 of the Community Toolbox (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/sub_section_main_1364.htm).

We recommend recording community and systems changes weekly. Documenting community activities can help you discover the factors that affect change, and can have useful implications for your work. For example, a lull in community changes may indicate that the action plan needs to be modified. In addition, documenting community changes can serve as a reminder to celebrate accomplishments. Let's look at an example of tracking community changes.

Documenting Progress

Figure 1.

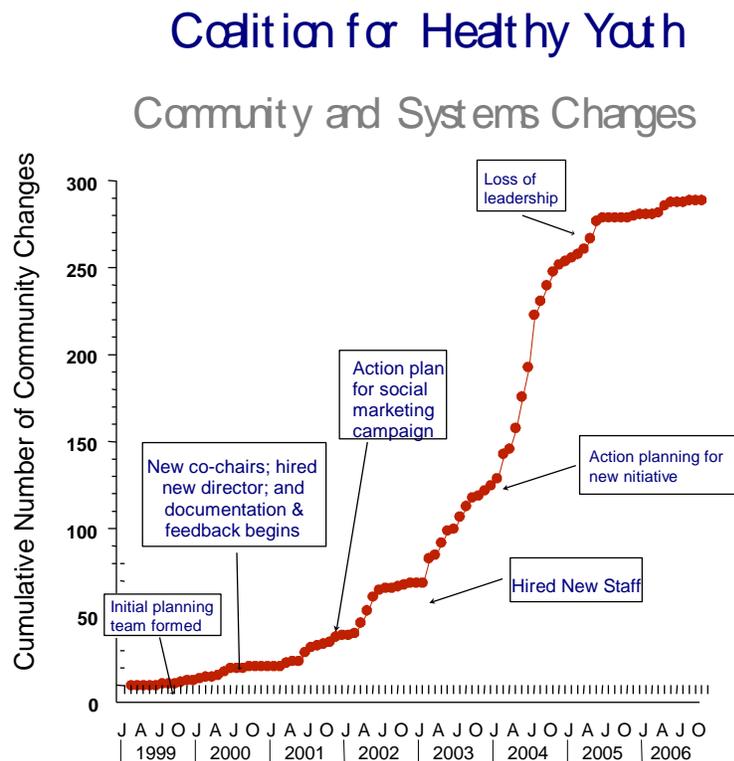


Figure one shows example data for a fictitious initiative for healthy youth. Community and systems changes are displayed in a cumulative record: the onset of each new change is added to all previous changes in programs, policies, and practices in the community. For example, let's assume that two new changes occurred in October of 1999. When added to the prior total of 10 community changes, the new cumulative total would be 12 community and systems changes.

What factors affect the rates of community and systems change facilitated by community initiatives? Over the past decade, the KU Work Group has examined the patterns of community change – and the factors that affect them – with over 30 community initiatives. Our research suggests seven factors that appear to affect rates of community and systems change:

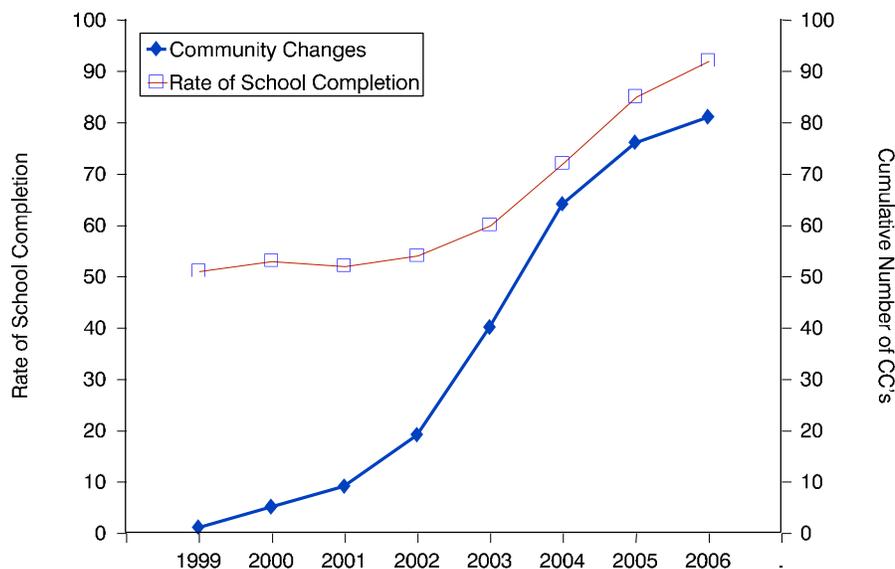
1. Working towards a *targeted mission*
2. *Stability in leadership*
3. *Action planning*
4. *Hiring community mobilizers or organizers* who can bring about change
5. *Technical assistance* with action planning and intervention
6. *Documentation and feedback* on rates of community and systems change
7. *Making the outcome matter* (i.e. bonus grants for high rates of change)

Under what conditions are community and systems changes associated with improvements in more distant community-level indicators of improvement? Figure 2 displays hypothetical data showing how these data can be used to examine a possible association between rates of

community and systems change and changes in more distant outcomes. When changes in the community-level indicator (i.e., number of youth arrests) are correlated with accumulated community and systems changes related to the mission (i.e., healthy youth development), a causal relationship is suggested. (Note: Without formal experimental designs, this relationship is suggested, not demonstrated, since other factors could have caused the observed changes in outcomes.) Nevertheless, these and other related data such as duration of changes help to examine the fundamental question: Under what conditions are community and systems changes associated with improvements in more distant community-level indicators?

Figure 2.

Possible Association of Community and Systems Changes with More Distant Outcomes



For details on the documentation system used by the KU Work Group, see the Internet-based Community Tool Box, <http://ctb.ku.edu>. Use the search engine or table of contents to go to the chapters and sections on evaluation. Or, use the helpful sections on “Evaluating Comprehensive Community Initiatives” and “Framework for Program Evaluation.”

Promoting Celebration and Renewal

All initiatives can benefit from reflection on their accomplishments. Arrange for ongoing review and discussion of group progress on the proposed changes. When new and important changes occur (e.g., a long-awaited policy change by a major employer), celebrate them! Celebrations can take the form of honoring those who are responsible for the change.

Data can also be used to promote critical reflection and adjustments. The review of progress should involve all relevant audiences for the group, including local residents, health care providers, local agents and allies, funding partners, and outside experts in health access and disparities. Invite consideration of the importance of the accumulated changes to the group’s

mission. Communicate with all relevant audiences how their feedback was used to modify the action plan – or even the broader vision, mission, objectives, and strategies – of the group.

Review the action plan at least annually. Revise the list of proposed changes to correspond to new opportunities and challenges. For example, when situations change in education or government, the group should consider how the action plan might be modified. Use the inventories found in this guide to help identify new changes to be sought that can *renew* your organization's efforts. You might use “sticky notes” on an Action Planning Bulletin Board to display how the plan is a **living, growing blueprint for change**.

Why this Matters

There is a common misconception that one must design and implement “a program” to bring about a big vision such as promoting healthy youth. This action-planning guide shows that rather than launching a single program, a more promising pathway to health improvement rather involves hundreds of individual community and systems changes.

Focusing on these “small wins” (i.e., those community and systems changes that will make a difference) instead of creating “the perfect program” has many advantages.

Focusing on small wins:

- ✓ Rewards outcomes, not actions
- ✓ Provides multiple opportunities for celebration
- ✓ Allows coalition partners to work together by asking each other to do their part while not demanding that everyone be locked into a single course of action
- ✓ Provides a sensitive measure of progress, which can be monitored periodically to support improvement and accountability

There is a particularly significant implication of the shift in orientation from a “program” perspective to one focused on accumulating community and systems changes: it increases the coalition’s flexibility and responsiveness to change over time. A community coalition or partnership that thinks of itself as running a “program” might find it difficult to redesign or reinvent itself should the environment change. By contrast, a coalition that aims to bring about a set of strategically chosen community and systems changes is more flexible. When outside forces shift or barriers are encountered, the natural response is to revisit the list of prioritized changes and generate a renewed course of action. This kind of adaptability allows coalition members to constantly align their targeted actions, utilizing existing initiatives and filling in the gaps.

Acting in accordance with current events and issues that are important to the community is the key to bringing about change. It also provides a credible response to traditional criticisms from scientists and evaluators who may see existing activities and secular trends in systems as “confounding” effects that obscure the evaluation of a coalition’s work. Rather, this community change approach recognizes and embraces the interactive nature of the community’s action plans.

We recommend framing the coalition’s work not as being a direct provider of programs or services, but as being a **catalyst for change**—helping bring about a series of community and systems changes related to the mission. This shifts the evaluation conversation from questions

about attribution (e.g., What outcomes did the coalition produce?) to questions about contribution (e.g., How did actions of the coalition move the community closer to its desired outcomes?)

Summary

This final chapter outlines a strategy for documenting the unfolding of community changes over time and providing feedback on goal attainment. It also highlights the importance of renewal and suggests that groups modify their action plans periodically to respond to new challenges and opportunities.

Epilogue

This guide has posted markers on the winding road of planning healthy youth development in our communities. Action planning includes:

- ✓ Convening a planning group in your community that consists of:
 - Key officials
 - Grassroots leaders
 - Representatives of key sectors
 - Representatives of ethnic and cultural groups
- ✓ Listening to the community
- ✓ Documenting problems that affect healthy youth development
- ✓ Identifying risk and protective factors
- ✓ Developing a framework for action
- ✓ Becoming aware of local resources and efforts
- ✓ Refining your group's vision, mission, objections, and strategies
- ✓ Refining your group's choice of targets and agents of change
- ✓ Determining what community sectors should be involved in the solution
- ✓ Developing a tentative list of changes to be sought in each sector
- ✓ Building consensus on proposed changes
- ✓ Outlining action steps for proposed changes
- ✓ Documenting progress on bringing about community and systems changes
- ✓ Renewing your group's efforts along the way

When you complete these activities, *celebrate!* You have developed a **blueprint for action**.

Myles Horton, the late founder of the Highlander Center, talked about “making the road by walking.” The work of transforming communities and systems to promote healthy youth development will be made by joining with other local people who care enough to make needed changes. As we do this important work, we realize that we walk the path of those before us. And, eventually, with those who will carry on this cause after we are gone.

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About the KU Work Group

The mission of the KU Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development is to promote community health and development through collaborative research, teaching, and service. For more information on the KU Work Group, see our web site <http://ctb.ku.edu/wg/>.

About the Community Tool Box

The Work Group created the Community Tool Box, <http://ctb.ku.edu/>, as a resource for those doing the work of building healthy communities. The Community Tool Box contains thousands of pages of practical tools for working in communities to promote health and development.