

FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN – SEATTLE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Friends of the Children serves children and youth with multiple risk factors by providing paid mentors from 1st grade through high school completion. 89% of current program youth have risk factors in 4 or more areas, 1 in 3 has risks in 8 areas, and 2 in 3 have at least one priority risk indicator.¹ The program focuses on five important developmental outcome areas: school success, social and emotional development, making good choices, improved health care, and positive skills for the future. *Friends – Seattle* served 97 youth during the 2013-14 program year and spent, on average, 11 hours per month on each child.² In addition to direct contacts, *Friends – Seattle* connects youth to positive community activities and helps them access needed medical and social services.



Long-Term Outcomes

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3
Graduate from high School	Avoid teen parenting	Avoid involvement in the juvenile justice system
<i>Friends – Seattle Success Rate</i>	<i>Friends – Seattle Success Rate</i>	<i>Friends – Seattle Success Rate</i>
In 2013-14, 100% of eligible youth completed high school while more than 20% of youth have a parent that did not complete high school	98% of adolescents reported never having a child while 35% of youth were born to a teen mother	98% of adolescents have avoided ever being convicted of a crime while over 40% of youth have had a parent incarcerated

School Achievements

- **Avoid suspensions and expulsions:** No youth were expelled in 2013-14 and only 8% were suspended.
- **Meet grade level standards in reading and math:** The majority of youth met or exceeded standards in reading (98%) and math (85%).
- **Attend school regularly:** 76% of youth missed fewer than 10 days of school in 2013-14.

¹ Exposure to violence, exposure to addiction, or loss of a parent

² Average calculated using mentor self reported direct and indirect time spent, which has historically been conservatively recorded. This average includes youth who were not engaged in services for the entirety of the program year.

Successes

The *Friends* – Seattle program is exceeding expectations for all three long-term outcomes. All eligible youth graduated high school or received their GED and younger youth were promoted to the next grade. The vast majority of youth have also avoided teen parenting and juvenile justice involvement.

Despite being higher risk, *Friends* – Seattle youth were comparable to Seattle Metropolitan area (King County) youth in many areas, including depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts; involvement in physical fighting or sexual intercourse; and cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use.

Many program youth (58%) participate in at least one auxiliary service. Most youth are in good health (90%) and are accessing medical care (80%). All program adolescents reported exercising at least 2 times in the past week, which was greater than Seattle Metropolitan area youth overall. Over 4 out of 5 program adolescents were reported by *Friends* as having realistic plans for the future.

Challenges

Program youth face daily challenges and some have difficulty getting their needs met. In the academic arena, there are clear gaps between the services that youth need and the ones they have received, according to *Friends*. For example, 1 in 3 youth who indicated a need for tutoring did not receive it and over half of youth who had attendance or behavioral problems were not receiving needed services.

Some youth continue to engage in unhealthy behaviors, such as physical fighting or

unprotected sex, or are facing difficulties such as depression or lack of access to healthy foods.

There are some areas where youth could use additional support, such as auxiliary services geared to boys.

In the past year, *Friends* – Seattle has been working on some of these areas, for example, providing increased supervision support, and professional development for *Friends* and increasing academic support and resources for youth. NPC encourages *Friends* – Seattle leadership to continue working on program enhancements in these areas.

The program also learned through this evaluation the challenges associated with collecting data consistently and thoroughly. The main report provides suggestions for how to augment evaluation data in the future.

Key Recommendations

Friends – Seattle is commended for making a positive difference in the lives of youth facing a high risk of poor outcomes in the Seattle area. In addition to the work already in progress, evaluation data suggest the program could build on the following areas:

- Advocate for children, to address their academic needs
- Pay attention to signs of mental health concerns
- Encourage involvement in auxiliary and extracurricular activities
- Continue to reinforce and support health
- Conduct staff training regarding data collection and develop strategies for increasing response rates of surveys from youth, parents/guardians, and teachers

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