



Ensure Healthy Development for all Youth

The Issue

Behavioral health problems in childhood and adolescence take a heavy toll over a lifetime, with significant impacts on rates of economic independence, morbidity, and mortality. A large body of scientific evidence over 30 years shows that behavioral health problems can be prevented.

Societal Goal

Within a decade, we can reduce the incidence and prevalence of behavioral health problems in the population of young people from birth to age 24 by 20% from current levels and reduce racial and socioeconomic disparities in behavioral health problems by 20 percent through the widespread implementation of tested and effective preventive interventions.

A Decade of Work

Over the next ten years, researchers, practitioners and policymakers can engage in a variety of activities that will advance this Grand Challenge and ignite social work achievements. Ensure Healthy Youth Development for All Youth is guided by scientific advances and strategies described in *Unleashing the Power of Prevention* a discussion paper published by the National Academy of Medicine. Its goals are to:

- Develop and increase public awareness of the advances and cost savings of effective preventive interventions that promote healthy behaviors for all.
- Ensure that 10% of all public funds spent on young people support effective prevention programs and policies.
- Implement community-assessment and capacity-building tools that guide communities to systematically assess and prioritize risk and protective factors, and select and implement evidence-based preventive interventions that target prioritized factors.
- Establish and implement criteria for preventive interventions that are effective, sustainable, equity-enhancing, and cost-beneficial.
- Increase infrastructure to support the high-quality implementation of preventive interventions.
- Monitor and increase access of children, youth, and young adults to effective preventive interventions.
- Create workforce development strategies to prepare practitioners in health and human service professions for new roles in behavioral health promotion and preventive interventions.

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Resources

- DeVlyder, J. E. (2015). Prevention of schizophrenia and severe mental illness (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative Working Paper No. 6). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.
- Hawkins, J. D., Jenson, J. M., Catalano, R. F., Fraser, M. W., Botvin, G. J., Shapiro, V., ...the Coalition for Behavioral Health. (2015). Unleashing the power of prevention (Grand Challenge for Social Work Initiative Working Paper No. 10). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.
- Hawkins, J.D., Jenson, J.M., et al. (2015). *Unleashing the Power of Prevention*. Discussion Paper, Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, Washington, DC. <http://nam.edu/perspectives-2015-unleashing-the-power-of-prevention/>
- Hawkins, J. D., Jenson, J. M., DeVlyder, J., Catalano, R. F., Botvin, G. J., Fraser, M., ... Bumbarger, B. (2016, September). [*Policy recommendations for meeting the Grand Challenge to Ensure Healthy Development for All Youth*](#) (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative Policy Brief No. 1). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare.
- Jenson, J.M., & Hawkins, J.D. (in press). Ensuring healthy development for all youth: Unleashing the power of prevention. In R. Fong, J. Lubben, & R.P. Barth (Eds.), *Grand challenges for social work and society: Social progress engineered by science*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Websites – <http://www.GrandChallengesforSocialWork.org/12-challenges/ensure-healthy-development-for-all-youth/> and <http://nam.edu/perspectives-2015-unleashing-the-power-of-prevention/>

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Get involved!

Sign up for the Grand Challenges newsletter & updates: www.GrandChallengesforSocialWork.org

To learn more about opportunities to become involved in this Grand Challenge contact Jeff Jenson at the University of Denver (Jeffrey.Jenson@du.edu).