

Emerging Adults In Vermont...

Two Broke Girls Are In Good Company



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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Transition & aftercare for DCF-involved youth

Who does YDP serve?

- More than 450 youth statewide, ages 15-22
- Young adults who are, or were formerly, in the care of DCF-FS

What is YDP?

- YDP is a voluntary program that provides extended care services for DCF-involved youth

Contact Us!

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Find us online:

www.vtyouthdevelopmentprogram.org

Overview of Services:

- Identification of goals
- Case management and referral to community supports
- Connection to long-term supportive relationships
- Life skills instruction
- Post-secondary education and job training support
- Opportunities for advocacy, leadership, and enrichment activities
- Financial supports available for youth engaged in services and a plan for success

Relationships - Education - Employment - Housing - Transportation - Budgeting - Health - Risk Reduction - Leadership Development

VCRHYP: THE COALITION

VCRHYP creates a safety net for runaway, homeless, and other youth in distress through a network of programs that reach across the state, ensuring that young people from Brattleboro to Newport have a place to go when they have nowhere else to turn.



1. Addison County Parent Child Center, Middlebury
2. Counseling Services of Addison County, Middlebury
3. Clara Martin Center, Randolph
4. Lamoille Family Center, Morrisville
5. Northeast Kingdom Community Action, Newport
6. Northeast Kingdom Youth Services
7. Northwest Counseling & Support Services, St. Albans
8. Spectrum Youth and Family Services, Burlington
9. United Counseling Service of Bennington County, Bennington
10. Vermont Achievement Center, Rutland
11. Rutland Parent Child Center, Rutland
12. Washington County Youth Service Bureau Boys & Girls Club, Montpelier
13. Windsor County Youth Services, Ludlow
14. Youth Services, Inc., Brattleboro

Who are “Emerging Adults”?



- Late teens to early 20's
- Straddle between youth and adulthood: Although they are rarely treated as a distinct population, they are unique developmentally, emotionally, socially, and economically.
- Recent brain research suggests the ages between 17 and 24 is a period of robust brain development. This presents an opportunity with emerging adults - **a developmental sweet spot** – just like the first 5 years of life are a critical period of childhood development.
- Decisions and experiences that occur during this period have long-lasting implications on an individual's economic security, health, and well-being.
- Emerging Adults are key contributors to our workforce and economy, and we need them to be successful for the financial health of our state.
- Marginalized young adults are much less likely than others to transition to adulthood successfully.

Kate Gridley - **the *Passing Through* project** - profiles of 17 Vermont Emerging Adults

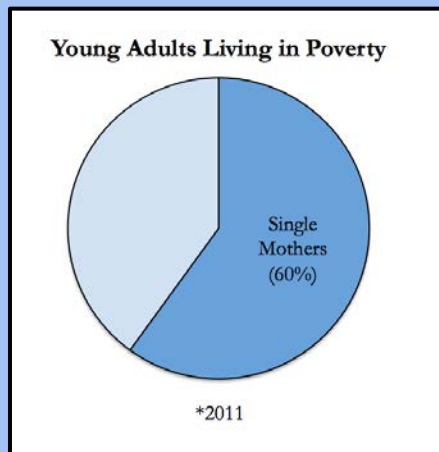
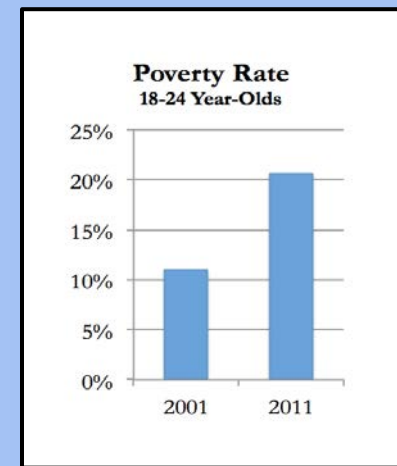
<http://www.kategridley.com/home-2/cast-of-characters/>



What Does Youth Poverty Look Like?

Relevant Data...

- Between 2001 - 2011 the rate of youth in poverty nearly doubled
(Poverty threshold for a single person: \$11,702 - For an individual with a child: ~ \$15,000)
- With the exception of children under 5, young adults are the most likely to live in deep poverty
(Deep poverty = living on incomes \leq half the poverty level)



Young Families (2011):

- ~**60%** of young adults in poverty were single mothers
- **66%** of young single moms aged 18-24 with children under age 6 were in poverty
- **79.8%** of single moms aged 18-24 with two young children were in poverty
- Young intact families with children are also at high risk for poverty. Among all families with children in 2011, **44.8%** of those headed by an 18-24-year-old were in poverty

What Does Youth Poverty Look Like?

More Relevant Data...

Education:

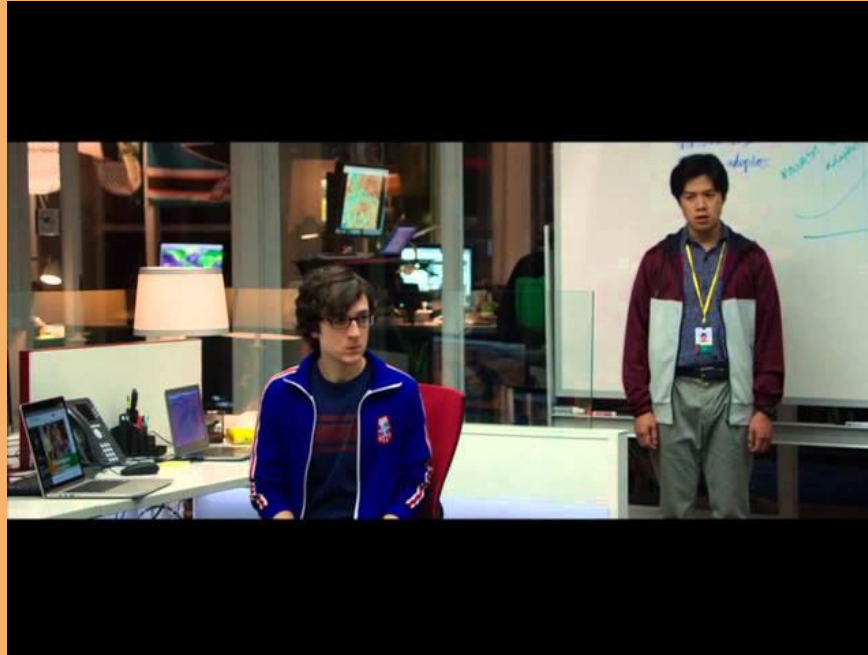
- Higher levels of education are associated with lower poverty rates among youth ages 18-24.
- **31%** of young adults without a high school diploma were living in poverty, compared to **24%** of those who had completed high school, and **14%** of those who had earned a bachelor's degree or higher.
- The cost of college has grown substantially and employment is getting more difficult to find. Nearly **1 in 5** young adults between ages 18 and 24 are neither in school nor working.
(*2012 study by Belfield and Levin)

Housing:

- Nearly **60%** of youth ages 18-24 do not live with their families.
- These youth experience frequent episodes of homelessness; often couch-surfing, life-boating, triple or quadrupling up in sketchy rentals, and staying in dangerous or unhealthy living situations.

Housing struggles...





This generation is not spoiled - it's struggling...

Risk Factors associated with poverty & their impact on areas of life

- ★ Education and Vocational Training
- ★ Employment
- ★ Family
- ★ Housing/Homelessness
- ★ Health
- ★ Risk-Taking

Impact on Education and Vocational Training

- Youth in poverty are more likely to drop out or be kicked out of school.
- Education instability results in loss of education attainment and lower academic performance.
- Education and vocational training are often put aside in the self-defeating scramble for another buck by carrying two part-time, minimum wage jobs.
- The growing cost of higher education deters enrollment in college and creates a long-term debt burden for youth that do attend.

Impact on Employment

Family experiences and norms don't provide the necessary career development role models.



Impact on Family

- Intergenerational poverty cycle is hard to break.
- No transfer of assets through families.
- Identity theft is common, often by caregivers.
- Youth may stay home from school/work to care for parents, siblings, or other relatives.
- Limited, if any resources for emergencies.
- Early pregnancy, parenting, and child care challenges.



“You grab a bit of connection wherever you can to survive.

**You have no idea how strong the pull to feel worthwhile is.
It's more basic than food.**

You go to these people who make you feel lovely for an hour that one time, and that's all you get. You're probably not compatible with them for anything long-term, but right this minute they can make you feel powerful and valuable.”

Derek Thompson, *Your Brain on Poverty*

Impact on Housing/Homelessness

- Youth in poverty are more likely to experience homelessness
- Low income is compounded by a lack of affordable housing



Impact on Health

- Poverty is strongly correlated with poor health, poor nutrition, and substance use.
- Instability caused by poverty conditions impacts brain development during a critical time.
- Youth experiencing poverty are more likely to experience traumatic events.
- Medical emergencies often become long-term debts.
- More likely to experience chronic health conditions resulting from non-treatment.

Impact on Risk-Taking

- Risk behaviors are also transferred through families.
- A poverty mindset makes it difficult to make good decisions.
- A criminal history can be a permanent barrier to securing employment, education, and housing.

Stacking of Risks and Hardships...



We're talking about a lot of young people,
and this represents a serious problem for our state & nation.



Nurturing Protective Factors

What can we do to create conditions for change?

1. Big system advocacy
2. Smaller system adaptations
3. Helping youth on an individual level

“No longer depending on welfare, finding a job, breaking through the system, and living above it - is what I define as success.” - YDP participant

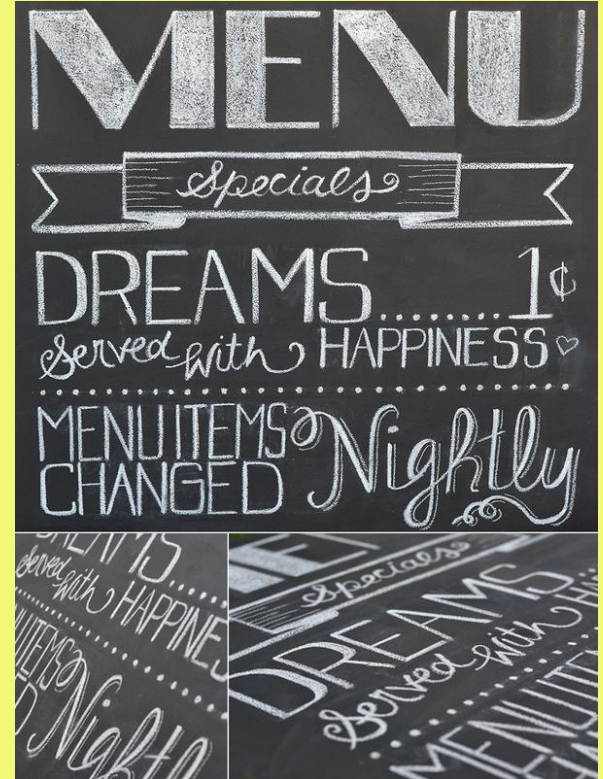
Big System Change and Policy Advocacy

- Invest in education & vocational training
- Change exclusionary discipline policies
- Build more affordable housing
- Raise the minimum wage



Smaller System Adaptations

- Recognize functional age as opposed to chronological age
- Individualized case management works
- Strengths-based interventions
- Harm reduction approaches
- Opportunities for stakeholder input
- Socioeconomic interventions
- Access to health insurance and primary care
- Progressive and direct pathways to work
- Community service



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- Individualized case management works

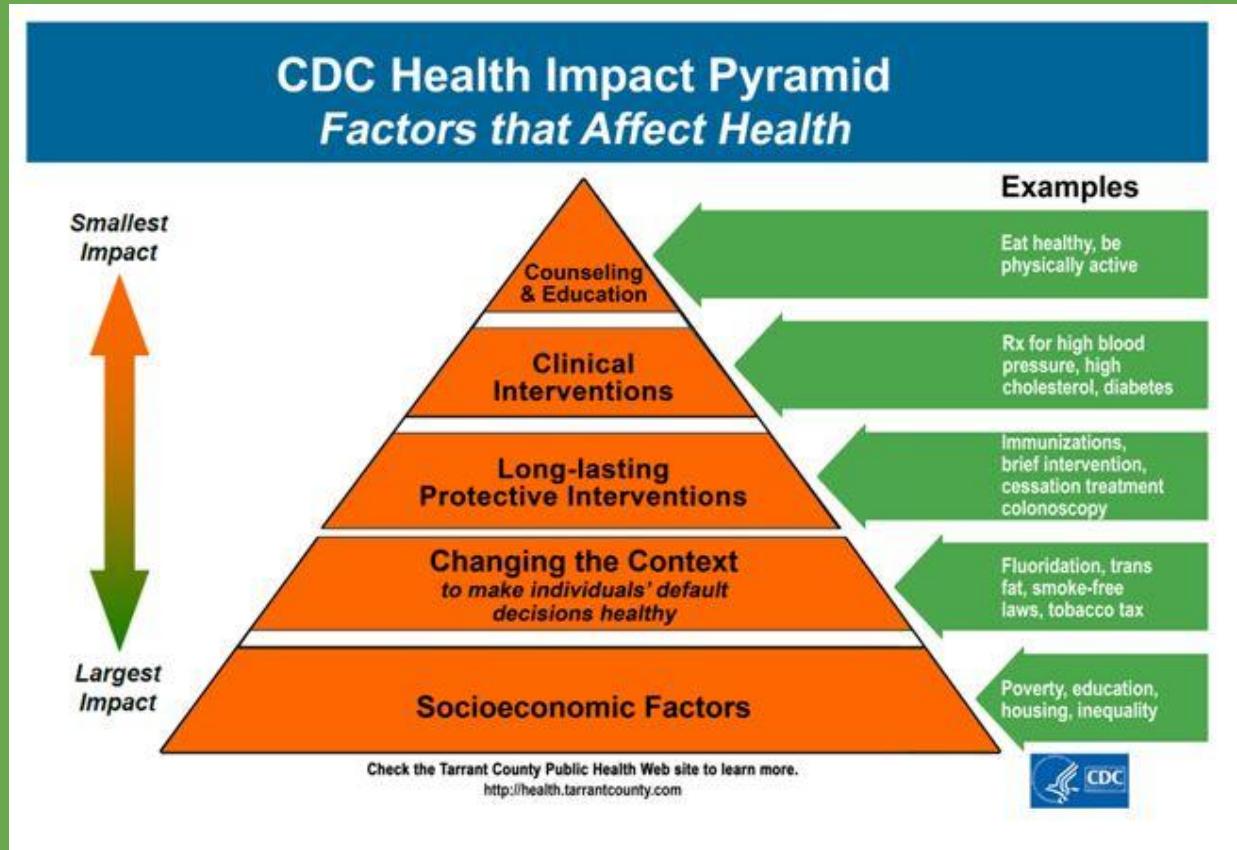


“They helped me help me.”

- Strengths-based interventions
- Harm reduction approaches
- Opportunities for stakeholder input



- Socioeconomic interventions
- Access to health insurance and primary care
- Progressive and direct pathways to work
- Community service



Emerging Adults are Poised for Transformation...

“What’s most important in life isn’t necessarily to be strong, but to feel strong.”

~ Christopher McCandless



Helping Youth on an Individual Level

Promising Ideas and Efforts to Build Protective Factors

- Promote healthy brain development
- Enrichment - help a youth to identify their passions and find their spark
- Support connection to school and work
- Help youth build life skills and linkages to resources
- Promote and support stability
- Relationships and connection to community
- Power of Positive (Future) Thinking

- Promote healthy brain development
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More Sparks!



- Support connection to school and work
- Help youth build life skills and linkages to resources
- Promote and support stability



➤ Relationships & connection to community

Youth are always watching adults, trying to learn from them and deciding...
“what kind of person do I want to be?”





One supportive adult can make a difference for a youth.
Who made a difference for you? Who are you making a difference for?

Stacking Protective Factors...

1. Youth succeed when they are surrounded by people that believe they can succeed.
2. Provide ample authentic affirmations and positive reinforcement - it works!
3. Positive thinking and an assumption of success supports great outcomes.



Conclusions and Takeaways

- Emerging adults are a unique and important population, and stereotypes are inaccurate.
- Poverty impacts youth in very real ways, increases risk factors, and the stacking of risks is particularly harmful.
- There is reason to be optimistic and efforts to help are not wasted - you can stack protective factors, too!



Gratitude:

Big thank you to Anna Berg, Mandy Barrett & the YDP youth appearing in video clips!

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VCRHYP Database, 2014

YDP Database , 2014

Q & A / Discussion



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