

The Youth Data Archive

John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities

"The quickest road to renewal is the mining of that untapped resource. Among other things it would solve the problem of maintaining an organization that is responsive to both leaders and the people it serves."

– John W. Gardner

What is the Youth Data Archive (YDA)?

The Youth Data Archive is an innovative initiative that links data across schools, public agencies, and community based organizations and works with partners to ask and answer key questions about youth. Participating agencies collectively identify commonly shared questions that no single agency can answer alone. Ultimately, the YDA supports partners to understand the resulting analyses and to make data-driven policy and programmatic decisions to improve outcomes for youth.

Goals and Strategies of the YDA

The YDA was founded on principles of youth development and systems change with the goal of helping agencies work together to create better outcomes for youth. In this vein, the YDA aims to support community youth development by working with policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners to:

- Promote inter-agency collaboration and cross-agency data analyses;
- Improve community-wide service delivery to youth through increased coordination, decreased duplication, and identification of gaps in services;
- Use findings to improve services, develop policies, and align funding; and
- Create high-quality research and contribute to the larger field.

Broadening our Understanding of Community Youth Development

One of the most powerful benefits of the YDA is the ability to look at youths' pathways across time and across environments. This approach enables agencies to learn which youth are accessing which services—and in which combinations—and to determine the most positive outcomes for them. In addition to examining traditional academic outcomes of youth (such as test scores), the YDA can also facilitate the use of outcomes such as school discipline and attendance and involvement with juvenile justice, and positive indicators of youth development such as motivation and self-efficacy. By linking student data across agencies and over time, we can ask, for example: As parents move from welfare to work, what are the impacts on children's school performance? Does participation in multiple youth development programs affect this impact?

Future Directions

The JGC is currently in the process of building partnerships with various organizations and institutions locally, regionally and nationally to further develop the YDA's ability to support youth and the institutions and communities that serve them. The YDA is well underway in San Mateo County, CA and is in development in San Francisco, Santa Clara, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties as well. For more information please contact Kara Dukakis, YDA Associate Director, at (650) 721.2971 or kdukakis@stanford.edu.