

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The League of Women Voters of Alaska supports comprehensive policies and services for youth in order to maximize their participation in citizenry and democracy. Services should be coordinated among all public and private agencies concerned with homelessness, education, vocational advancement, inter-personal relationships, mental and physical health, family stability, and peer empowerment.

Identified prevention oriented goals are:

- Support of family cohesiveness
- Support for victims of abuse, neglect and sexual assault
- Support of high school graduation and vocational education for youth
- Education of youth to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections
- Education of youth concerning drug and alcohol abuse
- Support of runaway and “throw away” youth and their needs
- Education of youth concerning suicide
- Education of youth concerning criminal acts and consequences of those acts

AMPLIFICATION

The 1971 study and the last updated League of Women Voters of Alaska study of 1988 demonstrated a need for coordination among agencies that provide services to families and youth. The studies demonstrated a need for improved communication, sharing of data, confidentiality, and inter-agency respect.

Pro active prevention of the problems for youth is a top priority and should include:

- The education of youth who are parents
- The education of the parents of youth
- Family communication that fosters family decision making in traditional family settings and foster homes
- The education of youth concerning self respect
- The need for completion of education
- Education of youth concerning the consequences of alcohol and drug use abuse
- Education of youth concerning sexuality, reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS
- Attention to and guidance to youth regarding family violence, rape, sexual assault, harassment, gender roles and sexual stereotyping
- Education and support of youth concerning grief, loss and hopelessness as a result of a death of loved ones
- Establishment of a medical resource “medical home” for adolescents including runaway homeless youth
- Education of youth concerning the diverse cultural values of Alaska’s peoples

Prevention education should include a comprehensive health curriculum for all students (K-12).

Among the needs identified throughout Alaska, the League determined that:

- All youth need family life education, encouragement for their own future, information about personal responsibility, and parenting skills. These can be provided within families, schools, community organizations, and religious institutions.
- Quality child care should be available for teen parents to foster and encourage their continuing education and skill development.
- Adolescent resident treatment center for alcohol and substance abuses are needed in all major population centers in Alaska.
- Group homes and shelters should be available to meet the needs of youth who cannot live at home.
- Foster parent programs should be developed, especially in smaller communities, that will train and support foster parents.
- Adequate nursing and counseling staff should be mandatory for elementary and secondary school. Basic in-service training in adolescent physical and mental health needs is an imperative element of prevention.
- Positive and pro-active places and programs need to be available for recreation, work, study, and use of free time.
- Public and private policies need to be established so that school hours permit young people a minimum of unsupervised time. This can include job sharing for parents, flexible working schedules for parents, and quality latchkey programs.
- Passage, funding, and implementation of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in an acceptable on-going opt-out mode needs to be in place so that meaningful data can be collected for program planning.
- Funding of local and state agencies responsible for services to youth must be adequate.
- Development of programs for adolescents to explore and articulate their needs to move to adulthood and positive citizenry in our society.
- Wide availability of contraception and the accompanying responsibilities should be made available to adolescents.



Adopted 1971; Revised 1988; Revised 2011