

# **Using Evidence-Informed Practices to Advance Youth Self-Sufficiency and Well-Being**

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# Acknowledgments

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- **Denver Office of Economic Development**
- **Denver Public Schools**
- **Mathematica colleagues**

# Plan for This Session

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- **Provide background on:**
  - Issues facing at-risk youth
  - Insight from research conducted to date
- **Discuss a framework for providing evidence-informed interventions for at-risk youth**
- **Introduce [a tool](#) for determining how evidence-informed your program is**

# Youth: Key Challenges to Self-Sufficiency

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- The path can be extremely challenging.
- Youth and young adults may:
  - Lack resources
  - Lack stable family support
  - Be exposed to violence and other trauma
- This can lead to higher risk of:
  - Dropping out of school
  - Getting involved in the justice system
  - Becoming teen parents
  - Further limitations on prospects for labor market success

# Programs That Have Been Rigorously Studied

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- 1. Programs targeted to high school dropouts and youth at risk of dropping out**
- 2. Employment programs for low-income/low-skilled youth**
- 3. Programs targeted to youth involved with the juvenile or adult justice system, or at risk of being involved**

# Research on Dropout Programs

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- **Some dropout prevention programs show promise:**
  - Dual enrollment/early college programs
  - Career academies
  - Becoming a Man
- **Some nonschool programs increase high school/GED completion among dropouts:**
  - **JOBSTART:** about 200 hours of basic skills education + 500 hours of vocational training
  - **New Chance:** offered young moms basic skills education, vocational training, parenting classes, and other services

# Research on Employment Interventions

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- Not much has been found to improve long-term outcomes; gains often occur in the short term and then fade (e.g., summer employment).
- Bright spots are Job Corps, National Guard Youth ChalleNGe, and YearUp.
- Successful programs involve a major time commitment from participating youth:
  - Job Corps and National Guard Youth ChalleNGe have a residential component.
  - Year Up is a full-time, year-long program.
- Successful programs tend to be expensive.

# Research on Preventing Justice System Involvement

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- **Examples:**
  - Mentoring programs
  - Drug courts
  - Teen courts
  - Alternatives to probation, like intensive support and case management
  - Re-entry programs
- **Drug courts show some promise for reducing recidivism, but the other interventions don't.**
- **Few show effects on education or employment.**



# Bottom Line

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*There is substantial room for improvement in the way we think about serving youth.*

- Do more with fewer resources.
- Integrate components of effective interventions into existing programs or services.
- Build more effective programs in the first place.

# Evidence-Informed Interventions: Keys to Success

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## 1. Increase resilience:

- Ability to withstand adverse circumstances
- “Pick ourselves back up when we get knocked down”

## 2. Increase human capital:

- Knowledge, skills, and abilities

*Interventions with the greatest chance of success include both components.*

# Evidence-Informed Interventions to Increase Resilience

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Build up protective factors and reduce risk factors to improve social and emotional well-being.



Connect to  
caring adults



Address mental,  
emotional,  
and behavioral  
issues



Strengthen  
family



Develop  
life skills

# Evidence-Informed Interventions to Develop Human Capital

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Promote educational achievement, provide career exploration activities, and connect youth to training and employment.



Promote  
Educational  
Attainment

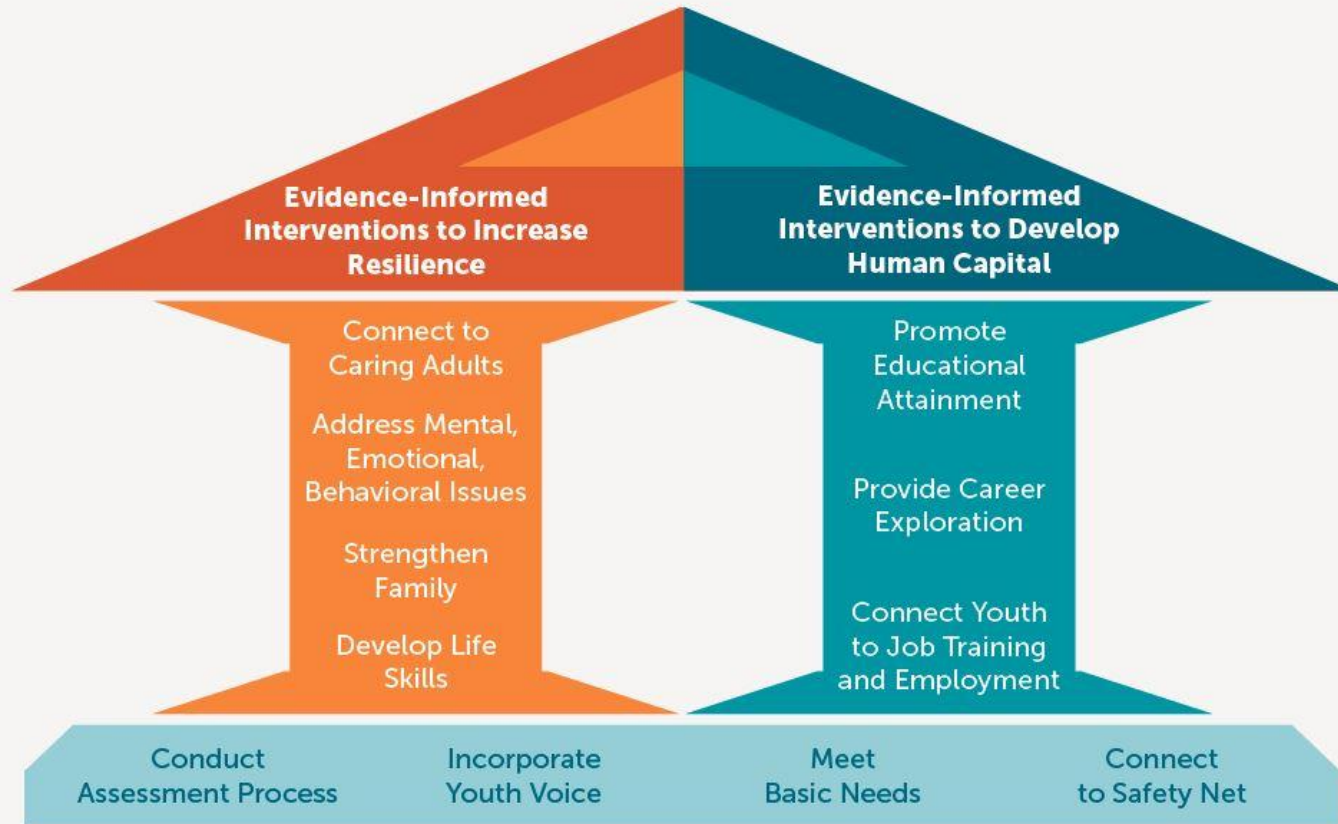


Provide Career  
Exploration



Connect Youth  
to Job Training  
and Employment

# Also Need a Solid Foundation!



# How Do I Know if My Program Is Evidence-Informed?

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- We drafted a [self-assessment](#) for programs to use.
- Staff can complete the assessment, discuss the results, and prioritize areas for improvement.

# Information and Feedback

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