



CREATING LASTING COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL: The Forum for Youth Investment's Partnership with United Way of America

United Way of America is truly a ubiquitous community resource with local United Ways serving over 90 percent of the country. They are dedicated to leading the United Way movement to create long lasting community change by addressing the underlying causes of the most significant issues. Common focus areas for local United Ways include helping children and youth achieve their potential, promoting financial stability and independence, and improving people's health. Annually, more than one-quarter of the \$4 billion local United Ways raise and reinvest in their communities is devoted to supporting children and youth. Some local United Ways have implemented targeted initiatives focused on high school completion. Many have local initiatives or programs that clearly contribute to student success such as after-school activities, mentoring, youth risk prevention, and civic engagement. Most have early childhood initiatives as part of United Ways' 18-year national commitment to supporting community solutions in this area.

United Way of America is the national organization dedicated to leading the United Way movement. United Way of America is partnering with the Forum for Youth Investment to expand on its Community Impact model by working to ensure that children enter school ready to succeed and that success follows them so they are ready for college, work and life.

Both United Way of America and the Forum for Youth Investment have deep commitments and demonstrated capacity to be catalysts and conveners at the national, state and local levels. Through the Forum's Ready by 21 Challenge, United Way of America is offering its members a framework, metrics, strategies and supports that help local United Ways' advance the common good by focusing on strategies that change conditions in education, financial stability and health. Technical assistance that the Forum is providing to a number of states and localities affords United Way of America an opportunity to engage a select group of local United Ways now. This partnership leverages the Forum's research and development and connects local United Ways to important tools, strategies and supports they can use immediately.

UWA and the Forum for Youth Investment are also committed to working with the Ready by 21 Partners to develop a comprehensive planning and implementation process utilizing the Ready by 21 framework in select America's Promise Dropout Prevention Summit sites. This effort will be integrated into Ready by 21 sites where there is an existing initiative or where a standing coalition is already interested or positioned to take on the role.

Working Together in Communities

The JC Penney Afterschool Fund has awarded the Forum for Youth Investment and UWA funding to pilot community-wide outcome visioning around youth development in two communities; convene national stakeholders and experts to identify outcomes and strategies to develop the vision for a national youth development effort and to pursue additional funding to realize the vision. These two communities will work with the Forum and UWA between August 2008 and February 2009 to define and execute a data-driven planning process that brings key stakeholders together to take aim, take stock and target action on this issue as well as identify the steps needed to track and sustain progress.

HOW DOES READY BY 21 CONNECT WITH ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD?

Advancing the Common Good requires state and community leaders, including United Ways, to act and think differently to change the odds for children and youth. Changing the way we do business - adopting a big picture approach - requires setting bigger goals, being better partners, using bolder strategies. United Way of America is working with the Forum for Youth Investment on an exciting effort to help our field move the needle on national education goals. Over the next 5 years, United Way will partner with the Forum on its *Ready by 21: Helping Children and Youth Achieve Their Potential* initiative, an integrated approach to learning and development from birth to young adulthood.

The Forum will provide frameworks, coaching and tools for United Way leaders and their partners to meet United Way's national education goals. Starting with 2 pilot United Ways, we anticipate that within 5 years, some 200 United Ways across the system will have community systems, processes and partners in place to start ensuring that children:

- enter school ready to succeed;
- reading at grade level by the end of third grade;
- make a successful transition to middle school;
- graduate from high school on time; and
- are ready for success in college, work and life.

The United Way of America Education Team is working with the Forum to pilot use of the Ready by 21 framework and tools. The team will integrate the work of the National Professional Council's (NPC) Mobilization Task Force on High School Graduation and the NPC Strategies & Metrics Pilot Project learnings. This planning stage is underwritten by grants from the JC Penney Afterschool Fund and Philip Morris USA, an Altria company. In another 5 years, we anticipate that the entire system will be taking part and that we'll see the needle start to move.

