

IN BRIEF

Tapping the Power of Community
Building Assets to Strengthen Substance Abuse Prevention

The Question

In what ways can Search Institute’s developmental assets* framework and its grassroots approach to mobilizing community capacity strengthen substance abuse prevention efforts?

The Bottom Line

Because of the power of developmental assets in young people’s lives, asset building offers innovative strategies for building community capacity to ensure that fewer young people engage in substance abuse and other high-risk behaviors, and that more young people thrive.

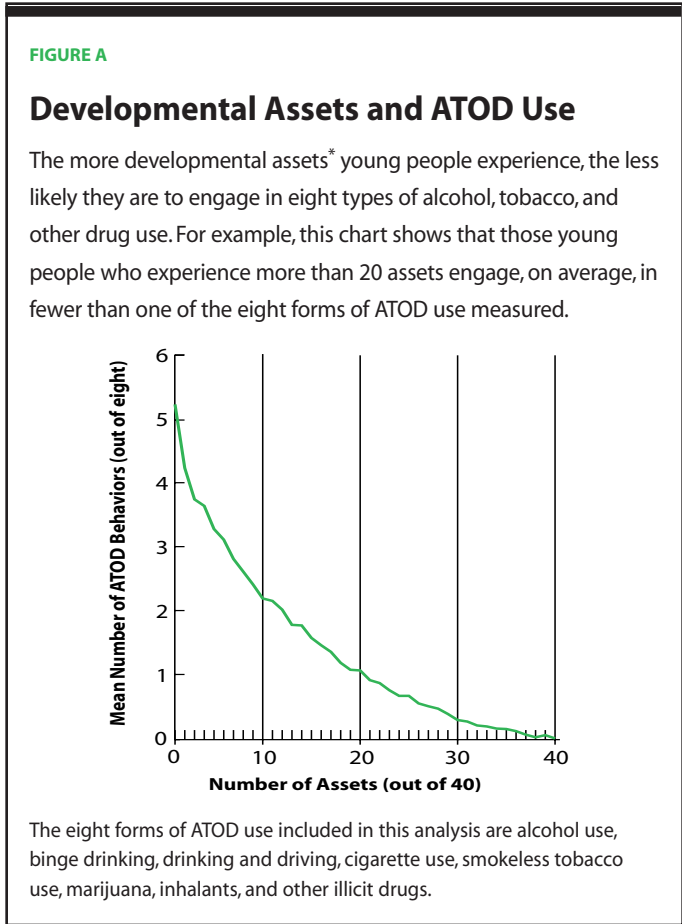
The Evidence

Cross-sectional and longitudinal research shows that developmental assets play a powerful role in preventing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) use across diverse samples of youth (Figure A).

The developmental assets framework and the mobilization strategies it suggests hold promise for building capacity through community-centered approaches. There are three dimensions to this approach:

- Cultivate community readiness and commitment.
- Create an infrastructure in the community.
- Build community capacity through five “action strategies,” each of which speaks to a domain of capacity within community: engaging adults, mobilizing young people, activating sectors, invigorating programs, and influencing civic decisions.

Building developmental assets points toward opportunities for community-centered practices that have the po-



tential to “blend and braid” science-based principles with asset-based community building.

This page is condensed from Benson, P. L., Roehlkepartain, E. C., & Sesma, A. Jr. (2004, March). Tapping the power of community: The potential of asset building to strengthen substance abuse prevention. *Search Institute Insights & Evidence* 2 (1), which is available for free downloading at www.search-institute.org/research/Insights.

* The developmental assets framework is a science-based typology of relationships, opportunities, skills, and other strengths that promote young people’s healthy development. They are organized into eight categories: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. The complete framework is found in Display 1 of the full report, and more information is available at www.search-institute.org.