

FactSheet

Disconnected Youth

New York must ensure that the needs of disconnected youth—and those at risk for disconnection—are a top priority. One in twelve youth in New York State lose their way on the road to adulthood. Defined as “disconnected youth,” they are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in school and not working. They fail to get the education they need, miss that crucial connection with the working world, struggle with damaging distractions, and enter adulthood without the tools they need to succeed. They are disproportionately likely to be foster care youth, high school dropouts, teen mothers, or in contact with the juvenile justice system.

The state urgently needs to support and expand effective programs that can prevent disconnection in the first place and get those already disconnected back on track.



Key Facts

- ▶ Approximately 199,000 youth, ages 16-24, are out of school and have not worked in at least one year.
- ▶ One in six disconnected females is a single mother, more than triple the rate for non-disconnected women.
- ▶ New York City has the highest rate of disconnection: 11% of youth, compared to 5% in the downstate suburbs and 6% in the rest of the state.
- ▶ Six in ten disconnected youth are African-American or Hispanic. Still, 32% of disconnected youth are white, the largest single ethnic group.
- ▶ There are 2.8 million working-age young adults and adults without a high school diploma in New York State.

- ▶ High school dropouts earn less than \$20,000 a year and are more likely to be on public assistance. High school dropouts from the class of 2006 will cost New York more than \$24.7 billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity over their lifetimes.

We Can Do Better

- ▶ Prevent disconnection in the first place, by identifying at-risk youth and helping them stay connected to their schools and on track for success in adulthood.
- ▶ For those youth who are already disconnected, explore what programs exist to successfully reconnect youth, and determine how to implement those programs with larger populations.