



Coming of Age in Canada

*Adolescents who make a healthy transition
to adulthood are ...*

Prepared for Work

Research indicates that the most important factor in obtaining a good job is staying in school. Work experience and learning generic work-related skills, such as problem-solving and how to work in teams, may also help students choose a career and find a job.

Prepared for Intimacy and Family Life

Young people who have positive self-esteem, a stable sense of identity, good decision-making skills, independence and a sense of emotional commitment are most successful in intimate relationships. As young people mature, they develop the ability to see things from another person's point of view.

Prepared to Participate in Community Life

Young people who are involved in leadership and community service activities are more likely to learn the civic and social skills they need to be fully contributing members of the community as adults.

Prepared to Manage their Personal Health and Well-being

Young people moving into adulthood must know how to look after themselves and how to deal with stress in ways that do not involve alcohol or drug misuse. During this transition, young people learn how to deal with the multiple roles of income earner, parent, partner and home manager.

HELPING YOU HELPS ME

Research suggests that older adolescents who have opportunities to help others make major developmental gains themselves. Community service and volunteer work give youth the opportunity to develop meaningful roles, to apply what they have learned in school in real-life situations, to learn job skills such as cooperation and decision-making, to develop self-respect and to earn the respect of the community. Community and school programs can help teens learn to work with younger children and vulnerable adults, and to serve as peer mentors or counsellors. Teens who participate in these programs have enhanced social skills and self-understanding, as well as an increased sense of making a contribution in other people's lives.



In addition to gender and culture, the following factors have a major influence on the transition period from adolescence to adulthood:

- **educational achievement**
- **opportunities to work and learn work-related skills**
- **the development of an integrated, stable sense of identity**
- **positive relationships and support from significant others**
- **opportunities to learn civic skills**
- **capacity for self-care**
- **healthy learning, living and working environments**

What Influences the Developmental Period from Adolescence to Adulthood?

Educational Achievement

Parents and other significant adults who value education and stay involved in a child's schooling have a major influence on a young person's decision to stay in school. Supportive schools that have high but achievable standards and provide early interventions with learning and/or social problems help young people succeed in school. Involved workplaces and communities, and the removal of financial and social barriers to higher education are especially important for students from low-income families, isolated regions and diverse cultures.

Opportunities to Work and Learn Work-Related Skills

Cooperative education, apprenticeship programs and school curriculums that teach work-related skills such as teamwork and problem-solving can help young people make a smoother transition from school to work. While many adolescents benefit from a part-time job, it is important that they maintain a healthy balance of time spent on work, educational and social activities.

The Development of an Integrated, Stable Sense of Identity

Adolescence is characterized by a (sometimes troubled) search for identity. As young people reach adulthood, a more stable sense of self emerges. Gender, culture and sexual preference are important influences on identity formation. Environments that break down stereotypes and foster equity, tolerance and diversity support the development of positive self-identities in young people.

Positive Relationships and Support from Significant Others

Positive relationships with peers, family members and other adults prepare young people for intimacy and family life. As young people grow older, significant others outside the home can play an increasingly important role in mentoring, role modelling and providing support.

Opportunities to Learn Civic Skills

Strong, healthy communities foster close ties among youth, parents and schools, governments, community organizations, and workplaces. Volunteer work and leadership experiences give young people a meaningful place in the community and help them develop skills and self-worth.

Capacity for Self-Care

Young people need to learn how to make healthy lifestyle choices related to eating, exercise, sexuality, health care and the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. As young people go through adolescence, peers and significant adults outside the family increasingly influence their lifestyle choices and coping strategies.

Healthy Learning, Living and Working Environments

Safe living and learning environments and places for teens to socialize promote positive social engagement and healthy choices. Crowded housing, neighbourhoods where there is a lot of drug dealing, isolated living conditions with little to do, and threatening school environments contribute to increased violence, youth misuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, and increased feelings of alienation and depression.

How Can We Help Young People Make a Successful Transition to Adulthood?

When families, youth, schools, communities, businesses, and governments work together, young people have the best chance of making a successful transition to adulthood.

What Can Families Do?

- Value education. Encourage young people to stay in, or return to school.
- Support positive self-esteem. Encourage teens to recognize their uniqueness and set short-term, achievable goals. Set and maintain clearly-defined limits that are agreed to ahead of time around issues such as honesty, respect for others, school work and household commitments. Model and support respectful, equal relationships between men and women.
- Respect young people's views and growing need for autonomy. Talk about values and feelings. Give young people responsibilities and meaningful roles.

What Can Schools Do?

- Form partnerships with businesses and community agencies. Offer cooperative mentoring programs, educational activities for students and for young people who have left school. Provide opportunities for students to deal with young children.
- Involve youth in decision-making and leadership development activities. Support peer mentoring and provide training for peer leaders.
- Promote positive mental health. Make sure that every adolescent is known by at least one adult in the school. Provide cooperative school-community counselling for students who are feeling depressed, experiencing violence or exhibiting signs of eating disorders or other emotional problems.
- Create a safe, equitable environment. Take action immediately if bullying, harassment or gang formation occurs. Provide young women and young men with information on how to avoid and deal with dating violence.
- Engage young people in media awareness activities. Help young people learn to critically analyze media messages and images. Encourage media to support and cover young people's sports and activities, and to provide a space for them to publish or broadcast their views.
- Make the healthy choices the easy choices. Provide healthy food choices in cafeterias and vending machines and provide opportunities for daily physical activity. Work with the community to provide hassle-free healthy sexuality clinics and anonymous testing for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Enforce policies banning the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs on school property.

What Can Communities Do?

- Help young people prepare for full participation in community life. Welcome youth in organized community events and public places such as parks, gardens and sport facilities. Provide opportunities for young people to volunteer and learn civic skills. Encourage youth to identify the issues that affect their well-being and work together to address these issues.



THE MEDIA

The media is a powerful transmitter of culture, learning and values. Young people need to develop media awareness skills that allow them to critically analyze media messages and images, especially those that glamorize violence, unrealistic body shapes, stereotyping, discrimination, smoking, drinking, drug use and unhealthy sexual behaviour.



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<http://childdev.web.net>.

- Help young people find employment. Provide employment programs for young people who are out of school and unemployed or under-employed, including extended support for those who require it.
- Provide meaningful ways for young people to use their leisure time. Create walking and cycling paths, skateboarding parks, swimming areas and other incentives for spontaneous physical activity. Give young people meeting places of their own. Provide accessible, skill-building recreation programs for young people—both physical and creative activities. Ensure that youth from low-income families are not excluded because they cannot afford the equipment or program fees.
- Support young parents. Provide family planning services for all young people. Provide culturally sensitive, age-specific support to young pregnant women and their partners. Offer daycare in high schools, parenting programs and homevisiting to young parents who need help.
- Create a safe, equitable environment. Adopt gender equity policies that encourage mutual respect. Adopt zero tolerance for racism, harassment and discrimination based on gender, religion, sexual preference and ability. Help young people who overstep these boundaries learn alternative attitudes and behaviours.
- Encourage churches, faith communities and cultural organizations to set up mentoring programs and initiatives that foster spiritual development, led by young people.

What Can Workplaces Do?

- Support young people in the community. Offer mentoring programs in collaboration with schools and community agencies. Sponsor sports teams and science and technology fairs and contests.
- Help young people prepare for work. Provide cooperative education and apprenticeship programs that allow students to earn academic credits while obtaining work experience. Recruit, train and hire young people in meaningful full-time, part-time and summer jobs.
- Adopt family-friendly workplace policies. Flexible hours, work-at-home arrangements and job sharing allow parents to spend more time with their children. Provide information and counselling for young parents and parents of adolescents who are experiencing distress.
- Maintain strict occupational health and safety standards. Young workers are at particularly high risk for injury on the job.

What Can Governments Do?

- Reduce barriers to further education. Provide grants, bursaries and no-interest loans to young people who do not have as many opportunities for education and work. These include Aboriginal youth, visible minority students, young people with disabilities and youth from low-income families and remote rural areas. Provide literacy and English/French-as-a-second-language courses for young people who need them. Promote incentives that attract young women into nontraditional trades and professions.
- Regulate and enforce bans on the advertising and sale of tobacco and alcohol to underage youth.
- Promote meaningful employment opportunities for young people. Develop policies and incentives that will help young workers move from under-employment or part-time work to meaningful full-time employment.
- Help young families attain a stable and adequate standard of living that provides for the well-being of their children. Reduce inequities through job creation and training programs for young parents and taxation/fiscal policies that recognize the expense and value of raising children. Help young parents access parenting information and high-quality, affordable childcare if they need it.