A **4**

Community Programs That Support Children and Youth

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Selected Findings

For every type of program except opportunities for community service/volunteering, the school district is more likely than the local government to have program responsibility, and in all cases the park district is least likely to have program responsibility.

Overall, 42% of local governments reported that parenting skills classes in their communities target at-risk youth; regionally, such targeting for these programs is more prevalent in the West (45%) and South (47%) than in the North-Central (40%) and Northeast (27%).

Overall, only one-third of respondents show any agreement with the statement that the local government has access to funds to develop new programs to address emerging issues.

Regardless of race, social, or economic status, youth are bombarded on a daily basis with images of violence on television, in the newspapers, in schools, and sometimes at home. Compounding this problem, some youth also have to deal with cultural, economic, racial, and social issues that make it difficult for them to experience success during their formative years. Sometimes language and cultural barriers isolate children from their classmates. In some families, both parents work outside the home, and youth often have no supervision after school. Homelessness, even among working families, takes a terrible toll on children. Students who do poorly in school are more likely to drop out of school than those who achieve satisfactory grades. Youth employment prospects have suffered severely in recent years, and poverty is a key predictor in whether a young person will engage in self-destructive behavior.

All these factors contribute to a young person's sense of isolation, despondency, and anger. When young people feel they have nothing to do and nowhere to go, they are vulnerable to gang involvement, truancy, and alcohol and drug abuse. Because problems that arise are most visible and most treatable within the community, our communities are obligated to prepare young people for the challenges that lie ahead and to ensure that they have the environment in which to succeed. Thus, programs to address the needs of youth must reach beyond the immediate need of a place to "hang out." They must offer opportunities to develop skills, build relationships, increase success in school, and participate fully in community life.

In order to ascertain the most important youth issues among local governments and to identify innovative programs that have successfully addressed these issues, the National Recreation Foundation asked ICMA to conduct a survey on community programs that are specifically designed for children and youth. The phrase "youth-at-risk" was intentionally not defined in the survey because there is variation in the definition among local governments and nonprofit organizations.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The *Local Government Programs That Support Children and Youth 2005* survey was mailed to all city-type local governments with a population 2,500 and above and to all counties with an appointed administrator or elected executive. Local governments that did not respond to the first survey received a follow-up reminder. Response to the survey (12%) was disappointing (see Table 4/1); the length and complexity of the survey instrument may have been a factor.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Race, ethnicity, and the accompanying cultural differences sometimes contribute to the difficulties that children and youth encounter. Although, on average, the highest percentage of children in the responding local governments overall are Cau-

Table 4/1   **SURVEY RESPONSE**

Classification	No. of cities[1] and counties surveyed (A)	Respondents No.	Respondents % of (A)
Total	7,972	926	12
Over 1,000,000	33	8	24
500,000–1,000,000 . . .	66	9	14
250,000–499,999	111	25	23
100,000–249,999	337	75	22
50,000–99,999	560	107	19
25,000–49,999	934	155	17
10,000–24,999	1,996	231	12
5,000–9,999	1,926	159	8
2,500–4,999	1,998	156	8
Under 2,500	11	1	9
Geographic region			
Northeast	2,015	177	9
North-Central	2,270	238	11
South.	2,475	265	11
West	1,212	246	20

[1]For a definition of terms, please see "Inside the Year Book," xi.

casian (77%), some interesting variations emerge among population groups (not shown). Local governments with a population of 500,000 and over actually show the lowest percentage of Caucasian children (48%) but show the highest percentage of Asian children: 7% for communities in the population group over 1,000,000 and 9% for those with a population of 500,000–1,000,000. The larger local governments also tend to have the highest percentages of African-American and Hispanic youth. The percentage of Asian children decreases steadily among the smaller population groups, down to 1% of local governments with a population of 2,500–4,999.

When families speak a language other than English, it can be difficult for them to communicate with teachers. The city of Los Angeles reports 224 different languages and dialects (not shown). Local governments over 1,000,000 in population show an average of 84 languages and dialects; those with a population of 500,000–1,000,000 show 33. The average number of languages and dialects continues on a steady decline to 3 in the smallest localities surveyed (2,500–4,999). On a regional basis, the West shows the highest number at 15, compared with 9 in the North-Central region and 8 in both the Northeast and South.

Sometimes cultural differences, such as gender roles and expectations and views on dating and marriage, can be difficult for a family to resolve. Children may find themselves trying to balance the values and expectations of different societies.

Economic status is considered to be a factor in the success that children and youth attain as adults. Poverty can limit access to programs and opportunities that would benefit children and youth as they grow toward adulthood. The survey results show that the percentage of children and youth in families below the poverty level is higher among larger local governments; then it decreases slightly among mid-size localities and increases again among smaller local governments (not shown). Twenty-eight responding local governments reported that 50% or more of their children and

youth are in families below poverty level. The South and West regions show higher percentages of families in poverty (18% and 17%, respectively) than the Northeast and North-Central regions (11% and 10%, respectively).

When asked to identify the top three concerns related to children and youth in their communities, the 561 local governments that provided information cited drugs and alcohol, education, and gangs to a greater extent than anything else (not shown). Many respondents also identified a lack of after-school activities, a lack of child care, and health issues (e.g., obesity) as concerns. Other issues include poverty and child abuse. And transportation for children to and from activities is an issue as well: great programs may be available, but if children are unable to attend because of location, they are not being served.

The next section of this report looks at the types of programs offered in local government communities throughout the country. The survey question asked about programs offered "in your community" rather than "by the local government" because, as the data show, often a program is offered *in* a community but not specifically *by* the local government. The final section looks at program characteristics and provides perhaps some of the richest and most informative content collected in the survey.

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The survey presented respondents with 13 types of programs. The following sections describe the overall responses to each question by program area (see Table 4/2). After determining whether the program is available in the community (see Table 4/3), the survey requested information on program responsibility, program duration, target group, and age groups of participants. For every type of program except opportunities for community service/volunteering, the school district is more likely than the local government to have program responsibility, and in all cases the park district is least likely to have it. Many local governments sent in program descriptions, some of which have been incorporated as examples. Because the coverage of programs is extensive, tables showing responses by population group are not included.

Sports

Not surprisingly, sports programs were reported by the highest number of local governments. Neither population size nor geographic region seems to affect whether these programs are offered.

- Two-thirds or more of respondents reported that school districts (69%) and local governments (66%) have responsibility for the programs; 30% reported that park districts have responsibility.
- Among communities offering sports programs, 91% make them available all year; 25% offer them during the summer only; approximately 42% offer them after-school, and one-third offer them on weekends. Less than 10%, however, offer late-night programs.

The majority of respondents reported that their communities' sports programs are open to all children and youth. Only 143 (17%) reported that the programs specifically target at-risk youth. Of those, local governments with a population of 100,000 and above reported that 40% or more of their sports programs are targeting at-risk youth. Among smaller local governments, the percentage is smaller.

Arts and Music

All responding local governments with a population of 250,000 and above reported that their communities offer arts and music programs, as did at least 90% of those with a population of 5,000–249,999 and about 77% of those with a population of 2,500–4,999. According to 78% of survey respondents, school districts have primary responsibility for arts and music programs, compared with 51% reporting that the local government has program responsibility.

- Eighty percent of the communities offer the programs year-round, 41% offer them after school, and 20% offer them on weekends. Larger communities offer after-school and weekend programs at a higher rate than smaller local governments do.
- As with sports, 98% reported no target group, whereas 13% reported at-risk youth as a target audience.
- Close to 60% reported that children under 5 years old participate in the programs.

In Newark, Delaware (pop. 29,000), for example, "Young Rembrandts" summer drawing classes are offered for children of all ages. One class for children ages 3½–5 introduces them to drawing technique and helps develop their fine motor skills; each week the children bring home a mounted picture. A drawing camp for parents and children 4–6 enables parents to work with their children on art projects at home using skills they learn together. There are also theme drawing camps, such as "under the sea," "superhero cartoon," and "space" drawing camps, to attract children with different interests.

Education Enhancement Programs

Education enhancement programs, such as computer labs, are offered in 85% of the local governments reporting. Again, the larger local governments show a higher incidence of program offerings than do the smaller local governments. In fact, all local governments with a population of 250,000 or higher reported that education enhancement programs are available in their communities.

- Local governments in the West region show a higher percentage of communities offering these programs (91%) than those in the other regions; however, even in the Northeast, which reported the lowest percentage, more than three-quarters of communities offer education enhancement programs.
- Not surprisingly, 84% of local governments reported that school districts most often have responsibility for education enhancement programs.
- While 93% of local governments reported that their communities' education enhancement programs are open to all, 26% reported that the programs target at-risk youth.

The highest percentage of local governments (75%) reported that education enhancement programs are offered throughout the year, and 43% reported the existence of after-school programs. For example, Sacramento, California's START program is an after-school literacy and enrichment program that operates each weekday from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM. A public-private collaboration that targets low-income students, the START program offers homework assistance and recreation to 8,000 children from kindergarten through sixth grade in 44 Sacramento-area schools.

It may be that some programs are offered only during the school year, but because the survey did not use the school year as a time period, that is purely speculative.

Help with Homework/Tutoring

The patterns of responses by population group for programs offering help with homework/tutoring are typical of those described in the three previous program areas, and there is not a great deal of regional variation. Again, the highest percentage reporting a homework assistance program is in the West region (92%) and the lowest is in the Northeast (79%). And as with the education enhancement programs, homework assistance is typically the responsibility of the school district (81%).

Table 4/2 PROGRAMS OFFERED FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Program	No. reporting (A)	Program is offered % of (A)
Sports	878	98
Arts, music	865	91
Education enhancement programs, such as computer labs	859	85
Help with homework/tutoring	852	87
Opportunities for community service/volunteering	859	91
Parenting skills	831	67
Job skills training (job readiness, placement)	845	73
Counseling (for children and youth in troubled home environments)	824	77
Social activities that promote development of social skills	818	81
Alternative programs/events (alcohol-free dances)	845	83
Youth leadership programs/youth councils	837	81
Life skills: how to use a checkbook, take public transportation	805	56
Personal development mentoring (support during times of personal crisis or social stress)	807	66

Table 4/3   COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY RESULTS

Program description	Sports	Arts, music	Education enhancement	Help with homework/ tutoring	Opportunities for community service/ volunteering	Parenting skills	Job skills training	Counseling	Social activities that promote social skills	Alternative program/ events	Youth leadership/ youth council	Life skills	Personal development mentoring
							Percentages reporting						
Program is offered . . .	98	91	85	87	91	67	73	77	81	83	81	56	66
Geographic region													
Northeast.	98	91	78	79	86	53	64	71	75	80	72	45	67
North-Central.	97	91	86	87	92	68	72	77	82	87	82	57	66
South	98	89	85	88	90	67	74	76	80	79	78	60	62
West	99	95	91	92	95	76	79	81	86	87	90	59	69
Responsibility													
Local government . .	66	51	37	35	77	36	35	37	65	50	53	27	35
School district	69	78	84	81	60	56	67	68	69	71	67	77	67
Park district	30	18	9	7	25	4	6	1	24	18	9	3	4
Other	51	38	29	36	39	52	40	52	36	34	32	30	47
Duration													
All year	91	80	75	47	88	69	73	92	84	55	78	75	85
Summer only	25	23	12	9	17	4	19	4	16	7	9	9	7
After school	42	41	43	72	29	17	20	18	31	27	30	20	21
Weekend	33	20	12	8	21	6	10	8	21	26	8	5	9
Late night	8	4	3	2	4	6	4	5	6	10	3	2	5
Occasional	9	13	8	5	16	28	16	8	16	33	11	21	14
Target group													
None	99	98	93	86	94	67	80	68	94	96	95	78	78
At-risk youth	17	13	26	40	22	42	38	56	32	22	20	38	49
Other	3	3	3	4	5	18	8	4	3	3	4	8	3
Age group													
Under 5 years	63	59	29	19	14	31	1	46	9	9	3	3	26
5–9 years	98	93	82	88	38	35	4	88	24	24	19	11	63
10–14 years	99	99	98	98	86	61	43	98	89	89	80	63	94
15–19 years	88	87	88	79	97	93	98	98	93	93	97	98	97

Note: Bases for each item within each program differ and are not shown here. For the overall numbers of local governments reporting that individual types of programs are offered in their communities, see Table 4/2. For the overall numbers of local governments reporting that the programs are targeted to at-risk youth, see Table 4/4.

• As would be expected, 72% of communities offer homework assistance after school, a percentage that is relatively consistent across population groups and geographic regions, and about 8% offer it on weekends. Slightly less than 50% of communities offer homework assistance year-round.

• Although 86% of programs are open to all, 40% target at-risk youth.

• The highest percentage of program participants is 10–14 years old.

Opportunities for Community Service/Volunteering

Overall, 91% of reporting local governments indicated that there are programs offering volunteer opportunities for young people. Only among the cities under 5,000 in population does the percentage drop noticeably. Given the nature of these programs, it is perhaps not surprising that this is the one area in which a greater percentage of respondents reported that responsibility for the program lies with the local government than with the school district (77% vs. 60%).

• Generally, volunteer opportunities are offered throughout the year.

• Although the vast majority (94%) reported that the programs are available to all youth, at-risk youth are targeted by 22% of those reporting.

In Covina, California (pop. 47,000), the Volunteen program provides an opportunity for teens to become involved in the community by assisting in various city departments. The program, which is open to all those who have completed the sixth grade and are no more than 16 years of age, offers participants valuable skills and experience to enhance their qualifications for future employment opportunities; an opportunity to complete community service hours required by some high schools for graduation; hands-on education in city government and public service; an opportunity to serve a broad cross-section of the community by working in programs designed for children, families, adults, and senior citizens; and recognition in the form of a gift card in the amount of $1.00 for every hour volunteered up to 150 hours.

Parenting Skills

Programs in parenting skills are offered in 67% of reporting local governments, which indicates that these are among the least offered programs covered by this survey. All localities with a population of 250,000 and above reported the presence of such programs, and then the percentages decrease fairly consistently as the population size decreases. Geographically, however, the variation among regions is considerable: from 76% of local governments in the West region to 53% of those in

the Northeast, which is the widest regional spread seen among all the program areas surveyed.

While a majority of respondents (56%) reported that the school district has responsibility for programs in parenting skills, 52% reported that an "other" organization is responsible. When asked to identify those other organizations, some respondents wrote in "Boys and Girls Clubs" or the "YMCA," but most simply described the responsible organization as a nonprofit.

• About 69% of those communities with parenting programs offer them year-round, 17% offer them after school, and 28% offer them on an occasional basis.

• Overall, 42% of local governments reported that the programs that are offered target at-risk youth; regionally, however, the West (45%) and South (47%) reported programs targeting at-risk youth for parenting skills classes at a higher rate than did the North-Central (40%) and Northeast (27%) (not shown).

• Ninety-three percent of localities indicate that program participants are 15–19 years old.

Job Skills Training

Job skills training programs, which are designed to provide job readiness and job placement and to help youth develop the skills needed to perform and keep a job, are offered in 73% of responding local governments. The percentages reporting

these programs are highest among jurisdictions with a population of 100,000 and above. As seen in some of the other program areas, the percentages decline with population size.

- Local governments in the West region (79%) offer job skills training programs to a greater extent than do those in the other regions, while those in the Northeast reported the lowest percentage (64%).
- Typically, the school districts have responsibility for these programs. However, several local governments reported babysitter training and certification programs that are provided through the Red Cross to give young people the skills they need to be successful babysitters.
- Seventy-three percent of responding local governments reported that job skills programs are offered throughout the year; only 20% said they are offered after school, and 19% said they are offered only in the summer.
- Although 80% of the programs are offered to all children and youth, 38% target those considered to be at risk.

Counseling for Children and Youth in Troubled Home Environments

About 77% of respondents reported the availability of counseling programs for troubled youth in their communities. Yet a full 100% of responding jurisdiction with a population of 250,000 and above have these services.

- There is not significant variation in the regional responses; however, cities and counties in the West region reported these programs at a slightly higher rate than those in the other three regions.
- Although 68% of respondents reported that the school district has responsibility for the counseling programs, 52% reported that program responsibility lies with "other" organizations. Moreover, while only 37% overall reported that the local government has responsibility, 100% of local governments with a population of 500,000 and above reported that they are the ones responsible for the programs.
- Ninety-two percent of respondents reported that the programs are available year-round.
- Overall, 68% reported that the programs are open to all, and 56% reported that at-risk youth are targeted. Such programs in larger local governments (250,000 and above) tend to target at-risk youth for counseling more often than do those in smaller localities.

Social Activities That Promote the Development of Social Skills

Eighty-one percent of local governments reported programs offering social activities that promote the development of social skills. For the most part, only those localities below 10,000 population show below-average percentages reporting these programs.

- Overall, among 69% of respondents, school districts have program responsibility; among 65%, the local government has responsibility. Generally speaking, however, among communities of 10,000 and over, the local government

has responsibility for the program to a higher degree than school districts.

- A majority of local governments reported that programs promoting the development of social skills are available year-round (84%), and some reported after-school (31%) and weekend (21%) programs. In all three cases, the highest percentages reporting this program availability is in the West region. The highest percentage reporting that the programs are available only in the summer is in the Northeast.
- Ninety-four percent of respondents reported no target for the communities' social activity programs, while 32% reported that the programs target at-risk youth.
- The vast majority of program participants are 10–19 years old.

Alternative Programs/Events

Alcohol-free dances and other activities for youth offer a good use of leisure time. More often such programs and events tend to be offered in larger local governments, but even among smaller communities the percentages reporting their existence are relatively high.

- A majority of responding local governments (71%) reported that the school district has program responsibility for alternative events, while half of them indicated that program responsibility lies with the local government itself. Although responsibility seems fairly evenly divided between these two entities in the West region (69% vs. 66%), it is heavily weighted toward school districts in the North-Central region (79% vs. 39%) (not shown).
- More than half (55%) of the responding communities hold alternative events throughout the year, 27% hold after-school events, and 26% hold weekend events. The VIBE teen center in Foster City, California (pop. 29,000), for example, which was established after a survey conducted by the Youth Advisory Committee indicated that teens were interested in having such a center, typically attracts 30 teens after school from Monday through Thursday and approximately 150 on Fridays and Saturdays. The center offers homework assistance in the afternoons, games, movies, cooking, arts projects, and other activities that the teens select; special events, such as open mic nights, DJs, teen band nights, barbecues, and sports tournaments, are offered monthly.

  Local governments in the West region show the highest percentage (15%) reporting late-night events, compared with the overall average of 10% (not shown).
- As with many of the programs covered in the survey, alternative-activity programs are open to all children and youth in almost all local governments; only 22% target at-risk youth.
- The majority of these program participants are 10–19 years of age.

Youth Leadership Programs/Youth Councils

All local governments with a population 250,000 and above, and 90% of those in the West region, reported that youth leadership programs or youth councils are offered in their communities. School

districts and local governments generally have responsibility for these programs, although many respondents identified churches, YMCAs, and nonprofits as having program responsibility.

- On a regional basis, the local governments in the West reported that they have responsibility for these programs to a much greater extent than did those in the other three regions (73% vs. 38–49%) (not shown).
- A majority of respondents (78%) reported that youth leadership programs are offered year-round, and 30% reported after-school programs.
- While these programs, like so many others discussed in this article, are generally open to all youth, 20% of local governments reported that the programs target at-risk youth.
- Participants in leadership programs and youth councils are typically 10 years old or older, with 97% from 15 to 19 years of age.

Life Skills

As defined in this survey, life skills classes teach young people how to maintain a checkbook, use public transportation, and perform other functions crucial to becoming independent adults. The 56% of responding local governments reporting that life skills programs are offered in their communities is the smallest percentage of all program types surveyed. As is usually the case, these programs are more likely to be found in larger localities.

- The only regional variation is in the Northeast jurisdictions, which show the lowest percentage (45%) with this type of program. However, with 60% of local governments in the South reporting its existence, this is the only type of program that appears to be most prevalent (albeit slightly) in a region other than the West.
- School districts are identified by 77% of respondents as having program responsibility, with the percentages increasing among smaller local governments. Among the 27% reporting that the local government has program responsibility, the opposite pattern is seen. Respondents in the South and West regions show the highest percentages reporting local government responsibility, whereas those in the Northeast and North-Central regions show higher percentages of school districts with responsibility for life skills classes.
- Three-fourths of local governments reported that life skills programs are available throughout the year.
- Although 78% of local governments reported no target group for the life skills classes, 38% reported that the classes target at-risk youth. Local governments in the South region show the highest percentage (44%) targeting at-risk youth (not shown).
- About 98% of local governments reported that program participants are 15–19 years old. Somewhat perplexing are the 14 local governments that reported that children under 5 years of age participate in the life skills classes.

Personal Development/Mentoring

Personal development and mentoring is described on the survey as support during times of personal crisis or social stress.

- Although the percentages reporting support programs decrease with population size, it was nonetheless reported by a majority of local governments in each population group except those under 5,000.
- There isn't a great deal of regional variation among communities offering these programs; the lowest reported percentage is in the South (62%) and the highest is in the West (69%).
- A majority of respondents reported that the school district has program responsibility.

Programs Targeting At-Risk Youth

The number of programs within a single community that target at-risk youth ranges from 1 to all 13 covered in the survey. Overall, 517 surveyed local governments (56%) reported the existence of at least one program that targets at-risk youth; 151 (16%) local governments reported 7 or more (not shown). Table 4/4 shows the numbers of local governments reporting that the specific programs in their communities target at-risk youth.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS

Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with 13 statements describing how the youth programs in their communities relate to the needs of their audience (see Table 4/5). For most youth programs discussed within the survey, that audience is all children and youth; only 30% of the programs overall are reportedly targeted to youth at risk.

Target Audience, Low-Income Neighborhoods, and Transportation

The first three statements with which respondents were asked to agree or disagree about how well the youth programs relate to the needs of their audience were as follows:

- The majority of our programs are in the neighborhoods of the target audience.
- Programs are provided in low-income neighborhoods.
- Transportation is provided to the programs.

Because these statements suggest the accessibility of the programs, they cover characteristics that are potentially related and so they are discussed here together.

Overall, 60% (501) of local governments agreed either completely or somewhat with the statement that the majority of their programs are in the neighborhoods of the target audience. It is important to keep in mind, however, that for the majority of respondents, there is no specific target audience, such as at-risk youth; rather, the programs are open to all children and youth. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of larger local governments than smaller ones reported the programs in the neighborhoods of the target audience. Of the 155 local governments that either somewhat or entirely disagreed with the statement that the majority of programs are in the neighborhood of the targeted audience, most are under 250,000 in population (not shown).

Table 4/4 PROGRAMS TARGETING AT-RISK YOUTH

Program	No. reporting overall (A)	No. reporting program for at-risk youth (B)	Percentage targeting at-risk youth (B) as % of (A)
Sports	840	143	17
Arts, music	766	97	13
Education enhancement programs, such as computer labs	676	178	26
Help with homework/tutoring	693	276	40
Opportunities for community service/volunteering	738	165	22
Parenting skills	513	214	42
Job skills training (job readiness, placement)	568	214	38
Counseling (for children and youth in troubled home environments)	578	326	56
Social activities that promote development of social skills	618	197	32
Alternative programs/events (alcohol-free dances)	654	144	22
Youth leadership programs/youth councils	626	122	20
Life skills: how to use a checkbook, take public transportation	405	155	38
Personal development mentoring (support during times of personal crisis or social stress)	489	237	49

Table 4/5 CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS

Characteristic	No. reporting (A)	Agree completely % of (A)	Somewhat agree % of (A)	Neutral % of (A)	Somewhat disagree % of (A)	Do not agree % of (A)
The majority of our programs are in the neighborhoods of the target audience.	832	27	33	21	7	12
Programs are provided in low-income neighborhoods.	813	31	28	22	7	12
Transportation is provided to the programs.	818	8	22	15	17	39
Families, children, and youth are involved in the program design and/or content.	816	12	45	22	13	8
Youth are engaged as partners in program management.	810	11	34	29	14	12
The programs are staffed so that bullying and intimidation can be addressed.	822	47	34	14	3	2
The programs are age appropriate.	830	68	25	5	1	1
The programs are culturally appropriate.	820	49	34	14	2	1
Program staff have the specific skills required for a successful program, e.g., behavior management training.	819	34	41	19	5	2
Program staff and volunteers have necessary background checks completed before hire.	829	58	22	13	4	3
Security procedures are in place to protect staff, volunteers, and participants.	828	45	33	16	3	2
Programs are free to families/children/youth below poverty level.	821	28	34	20	10	8
The local government has access to funds to develop new programs to address emerging issues.	824	13	22	24	20	21

Related to whether the programs are in the neighborhoods of the target audience, even if the target audience is *all* children and youth, is whether the programs are in low-income neighborhoods. Of the 501 local governments overall that agreed that the majority of their communities' programs are in the neighborhoods of the target audience, 374 (75%) also agreed that the programs are in low-income neighborhoods (not shown). It is mostly the smaller local governments that did not agree with the statement. Of the 155 (19%) who disagreed to some extent that the programs are in

the neighborhoods of the target audience, 85 also disagreed that the programs are provided in low-income neighborhoods, and 63 of those disagreed as well that transportation to the programs is provided. Finally, 113 respondents disagreed with both the statement that programs are provided in low-income neighborhoods *and* the statement that transportation is provided. This suggests not only that the programs are not provided in the low-income neighborhoods, but also that the transportation to make them accessible is not provided, either.

Family, Children, and Youth Involvement in Program Design, Content, and Management
Overall, a majority of local governments agreed that families, children, and youth are involved in program design and content; only 21% disagreed in whole or in part with this statement (Table 4/5). This is consistent among all population groups for those that agreed completely, but among those that somewhat agreed, the percentages generally decrease as population size decreases. A smaller proportion—less than a majority—of local governments reported a level of agreement with the statement that youth are engaged as *partners in program management.* Local governments in the West region showed slightly higher levels of agreement with both statements than did those in the other regions.

Program Staffing, Design, and Security
Responding local governments were asked their level of agreement with several statements that address program staffing and design:

- The programs are staffed so that bullying and intimidation can be addressed.
- Program staff have the specific skills required for a successful program, e.g., behavior management training.
- Program staff and volunteers have necessary background checks completed before hire.
- The programs are age appropriate.
- The programs are culturally appropriate.
- Security procedures are in place to protect staff, volunteers, and participants.

Higher percentages of local governments showed complete or some agreement with these statements than with all of the other statements (see Table 4/5), indicating that the staffing is excellent and that the programs are age and culture appropriate. These responses generally hold true across population size and geographic region.

More than 75% of local governments reported agreement with the statement that security procedures are in place to protect staff, volunteers, and participants. Once again, localities in the West region show a slightly higher percentage reporting agreement than those in the other regions.

Financial Aspects
The two final statements in the survey addressed financial aspects of programs (see Table 4/5). Although consistently across all population groups and geographic regions a majority of respondents agreed either completely or somewhat with the statement that programs are free to families/children/youth below poverty level, disagreement with the statement is clearly more prevalent among smaller local governments (not shown). Close to 25% of those with a population of 2,500–4,999 and 22% of those with a population of 5,000–9,999 disagreed with the statement, indicating that the programs offered in their communities are not free. And on a regional basis, 22% of local governments in the North-Central region disagreed that the programs are free to the poor, as did 20% of the local governments in the West region.

Overall, only one-third of respondents showed any agreement with the statement that the local government has access to funds to develop new programs to address emerging issues. About 41% disagreed completely or somewhat with the statement; such disagreement is especially evident among smaller local governments. Funding to develop new programs as needs arise is also a problem for the local governments in the North-Central and West regions.

SUMMARY

The survey data show that there are local governments that are targeting at-risk youth, offering extensive programs, and making sure that the children have access to them and are involved in planning and managing them. An argument can be made that *all* children and youth are "at-risk" given the social, economic, and scholastic pressures they face. By generally offering programs to all children and youth, communities are responding to this possibility. Generally, these communities tend to be in larger local governments and in the West region. Larger local governments tend to have a higher percentage of children and youth living in families below poverty level, as do those jurisdictions in the West and South regions. Similarly, the average number of dialects and languages is much higher in larger local governments than in smaller ones and is significantly higher in the West region. Whether there is a greater need in larger local governments for programs targeting children and youth on a per capita basis is hard to tell from the data. Additional research needs to be done to determine whether any relationship exists between poverty and language, on the one hand, and the at-risk population and targeted programming, on the other.