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Expectations

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Helping Youth Succeed

Utah State University Extension

FL/Youth/NL-03

EXPECTATIONS

"The more a child has clear, consistent boundaries and high expectations, the more likely it is that he or she will grow up healthy." *Peter L. Benson, Ph.D.,* What Kids Need to Succeed

In order to succeed, youth must know what is expected of them. They must be given rules - at home, at school, and in the community - and they must be aware of the consequences for breaking those rules. In addition, youth must have a clear picture of the positive hopes that parents, teachers and other adults have for them. This newsletter discusses ways that parents, schools, and communities can send clear messages to youth about rules and expectations as they work together to ***help youth succeed.***

Family Rules

Youth need to know clearly what is expected of them at home. Families should have a set of rules, or boundaries, and youth must know the consequences associated with those rules. Youth can become more responsible when they know what's expected of them.

☑ ***PARENTS:*** Monitor your youth's whereabouts -- it's important to know where they are, who they are with and when they will be home. Discuss your family's rules on a regular basis and make adjustments as needed. As your children grow, involve them in making the rules as well as determining consequences.

☑ ***SCHOOLS:*** Use parent-teacher meetings as a time to encourage parents to set clear rules and consequences. Offer feedback on what is generally appropriate for each age group. When possible, use class time to discuss family rules and consequences, and ask youth to share examples from their own homes: it's good for youth to hear that theirs isn't the *only* family that has rules!

☑ ***CONGREGATIONS:*** Tie specific family rules, like curfews, to spiritual lessons and religious principles. Support family rules and consequences. Provide youth with opportunities to discuss their feelings about family rules they agree or disagree with -- be supportive of parents, and talk to youth about ways they can approach their parents with input on family rules.

☑ ***COMMUNITY LEADERS/ NEIGHBORS:*** Support parents by monitoring youth in your neighborhood. Know the risks and strengths in your immediate neighborhood so you can better support the safety of youth.

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School Boundaries

School must be a place where youth can feel safe, and can take full advantage of instructional activities. In order to achieve this, schools must have clearly stated rules and policies and must be consistent in enforcing consequences when rules are broken.

☑ ***PARENTS:*** Don't wait for your youth to be in trouble to talk about their behavior at school -- praise them for being on time, for completing homework and for consistent attendance. If your youth *does* misbehave at school, be careful to listen to their "side of the story." Help them understand why certain school rules exist, and how to improve their behavior.

☑ ***SCHOOLS:*** Post school rules in classrooms or in a place where students will see them on a regular basis. Be consistent when enforcing the consequences after rules have been broken -- students must understand that the rules apply equally to everyone.

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Neighborhood Expectations

Neighbors can kindly let youth know that there are rules and expectations in their own neighborhood. Youth should be aware that neighbors and other adult friends would become involved if they knew that the youth was participating in dangerous or illegal activities.

☑ ***PARENTS:*** Take responsibility for creating the kind of neighborhood that you want your family to live in. Form relationships with other parents and work as a team to address problems in the community.

☑ ***SCHOOLS:*** Encourage school staff to be aware of students living in their own neighborhoods and to get to know these youth on an individual basis.

☑ ***COMMUNITY LEADERS/ NEIGHBORS:*** Support neighborhood watch or other neighborhood-based programs which will bring community members together for a good cause. Assess your community's strengths and weaknesses in terms of youth risk and protection, and work with parents and youth organizations to improve the well-being of youth.

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Adult Role Models

Youth should have many opportunities to interact with adults on a daily basis. The positive behaviors and traits of parents, teachers, and other adults serve as great models for youth.

☑ ***PARENTS:*** Do not try to fulfill all your youth's needs. Realize that, especially during the teenage years, youth will look to teachers, coaches, and other significant adults for acceptance and reassurance. Encourage your youth to be involved in wholesome activities where good role models can be found. Remember that your own good example will have a positive effect in the life of your youth for years to come!

☑ ***SCHOOLS:*** Acknowledge the fact that teachers, custodians, and other school personnel naturally serve as role models for students on a daily basis. Take advantage of this opportunity and encourage staff to take a personal interest in students. Give recognition for efforts made by teachers and staff to reach out to students. Remind them that they *can* and *do* make a difference in

☑ ***CONGREGATIONS:*** Assure youth leaders of the positive influence they can have on the youth of their congregation, offering encouragement and thanks on a regular basis. Teach youth that they can be role models for younger children as well.

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Positive Peer Influence

Peers can have a profound influence on youth -- both in a positive and negative way. Youth who are surrounded by friends who make good choices, and engage in appropriate behavior, will be more likely to make good decisions themselves.

☑ ***PARENTS:*** Get to know your children's friends on a first (and last) name basis, and get to know their parents as well. Encourage your youth to invite their friends into your home, and make it a pleasant place for them to be. Encourage positive peer influence, but avoid criticizing your youth's friendships. This leads to defensiveness and distance in your relationship with your youth. Instead, compliment them on the positive friendships they do have and work on being a better influence on your youth's friends who are less than ideal.

☑ ***CONGREGATIONS:*** Provide activities where youth can strengthen friendships with other youth attending church. Encourage discussions where youth can share both positive and negative ways they have been affected by peers.

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High Expectations

In addition to having rules regarding unacceptable behavior, youth need to hear clear messages about the rewards of doing what is expected. When parents and teachers expect the best from young people, it is more likely that they will rise to meet those expectations.

☑ ***PARENTS:*** Don't hesitate to let your youth know that you expect them to work hard! Tell them of your confidence in them, and offer frequent praise and encouragement. Show faith in your youth's ideas and decisions!

☑ ***SCHOOLS:*** Let your students know that they are capable, and recognize their efforts on difficult assignments. Teach students about people who overcame major setbacks and obstacles to accomplish great things.

☑ ***CONGREGATIONS:*** Give youth responsibilities and offer just enough support to help them succeed. Provide parents a forum to discuss appropriate expectations for their youth, and teach them how to challenge their youth without setting unrealistic goals.

☑ ***COMMUNITY LEADERS/ NEIGHBORS:*** Encourage the media to report on the many positive activities and accomplishments of youth, rather than dwelling on negative events. Recognize local youth who excel in academics, athletics, leadership, service or other areas.

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✂✂CLIP AND SAVE ✂✂

Parents' To-Do List

1. Expect the best from my kids!
2. Work together as a family on a difficult project.
3. Praise my youth for their hard work on a school assignment.
4. Ask my children who their heroes are, and why.
5. Write down our family rules and post them on the fridge.
6. Make time for fun!

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Additional information about implementing the Developmental Assets can be obtained from:
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- Utah State University Extension, Department of Family & Human Development, College of Family Life, Logan, UT 84322-2905 or 435-797-1543
- Utah State Office of Education, Center for Families in Education, 250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111 or 801-538-7723

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