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The Benefits of and Barriers to Out-of-School Programs for Youth

Research suggests that participation in out-of-school time programs and activities can lessen the likelihood that youth will engage in negative behaviors, such as using drugs and alcohol, dropping out of school, and practicing unhealthy eating habits. Despite these benefits, millions of youth still do not participate in these programs. Three new Child Trends briefs explore the various reasons for non-participation.

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1. Program Participation Can Lower Risk of Youth Disconnection From School or Work

Youth who participate in a job training, job search, or school-to-work program during their high school years are less likely to experience subsequent disconnection than youth who do not participate in this type of program, according to a new Child Trends brief. The brief, [*Youth Who Are "Disconnected" and Those Who Then Reconnect: Assessing the Influence of Family, Programs, Peers, and Communities*](#), analyzes factors that put youth at risk for disconnection as well as factors related to youth reconnecting after a period of disconnection.

2. Child, Family, and Neighborhood Factors Influence Youth Non-Participation in Programs

A new Child Trends brief finds that youth who have not participated in out-of-school time programs are significantly more likely than are their participating peers to live in an unsupportive neighborhood; to spend more than two hours a day watching TV or playing video games; and to have parents who are in poor health, who don't exercise, and who have less than a high school education. The brief, [*Non-Participation of Children and Adolescents in Out-of-School Time Programs: Child, Family, and Neighborhood Factors*](#), identifies individual and background factors that influence non-participation.

3. Youth Perspective on Why Teens Don't Participate in Programs

Youth who are not involved with out-of-school time programs identify varied barriers to participation, ranging from programs that are located in unsafe or unfamiliar neighborhoods to program participation being perceived in a negative light by parents and/or peers. A new brief, [*Why Teens are Not Involved in Out-of-School Time Programs: The Youth Perspective*](#), presents findings from a recent Child Trends youth roundtable discussion. Youth participants also suggested program improvement strategies, such as teaching practical skills, using technology for recruitment, offering a variety of activities, and hiring skilled staff members who treat youth with respect.