

El Dorado Hills Youth a community profile

Researched and written by the
Vision Coalition of El Dorado Hills

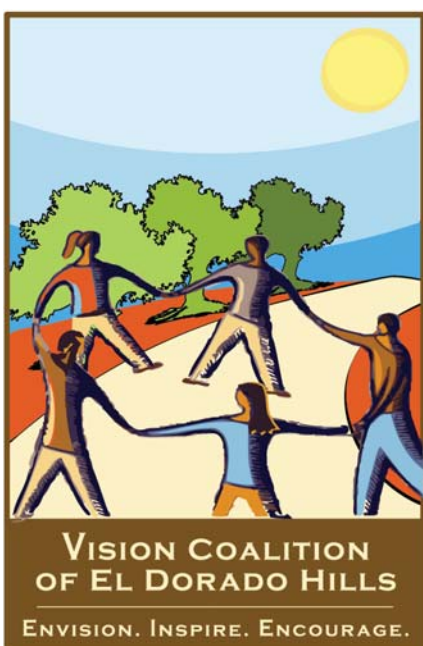
a Community Action coalition of
Sierra Health Foundation's REACH youth program



Introduction

In June 2006, the Vision Coalition of El Dorado Hills was one of seven community coalitions chosen to receive a REACH Community Action grant from Sierra Health Foundation. The purpose of this grant is to assess the community's strengths, challenges, resources and readiness to improve conditions for local youth, and then develop an action plan to make long-term changes for El Dorado Hills.

In August 2006, we began the work of finding out what it's like to be a young person in El Dorado Hills. Coalition members conducted a community assessment, with community meetings, focus groups, surveys and data collection. After looking at all of the information collected, we identified the issues young people face, as well as what youth need to grow and thrive in El Dorado Hills. This community profile is the result of our findings.



Working for youth

We formed the Vision Coalition of El Dorado Hills in 2004, and we now have more than 100 individuals, agencies and organizations representing 12 sectors of the community.

Our vision is for all youth of El Dorado Hills to:

- have a successful, safe and healthy transition from adolescence to adulthood
- be fully prepared with attitude, skills, knowledge and experience to achieve their highest potential
- have ample opportunities for participation and decision making
- be safe and free from drugs, alcohol and tobacco

Our mission is to:

- expand opportunities for youth participation and decision making
- increase youth involvement in school and community activities
- coordinate the availability of community resources and services that support youth
- promote activities to keep youth safe, healthy and free from drugs, alcohol and tobacco

Our goals are to:

- increase youth development opportunities and supports
- increase and strengthen collaboration among representatives of the Vision Coalition of El Dorado Hills, and to coordinate services to better serve youth and their families
- prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth

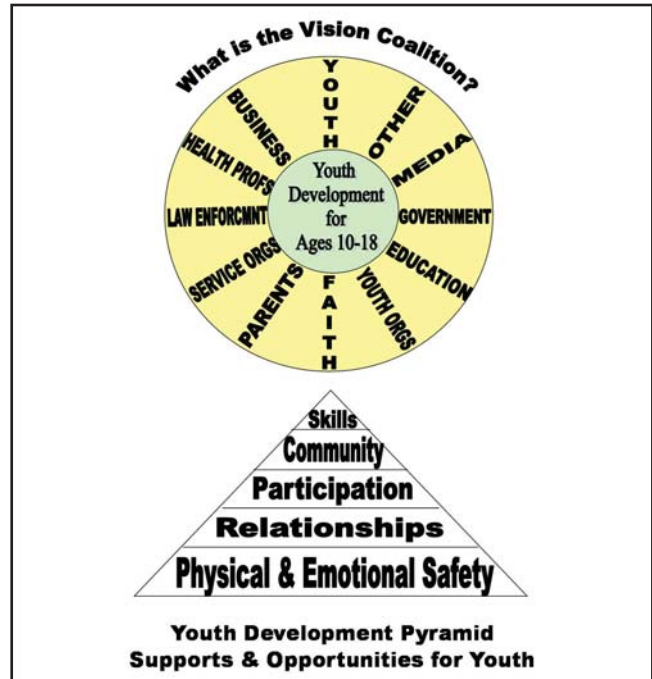
Photo: Members of the El Dorado Hills Teen Advisory Committee

The coalition's role in the El Dorado Hills community

Our coalition has adopted a youth development approach to working with young people. Youth development is a process by which all young people seek ways to meet their basic physical and social needs, and to build the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in adolescence and adulthood.

Youth development intentionally helps youth meet developmental needs, build their capacity and provide relationships and connections needed for their success. Community focus groups overwhelmingly supported our coalition efforts to use a youth development approach.

The diagram at right illustrates the 12 sectors of our coalition as a wheel with youth development as the hub. The pyramid details the five essential supports and opportunities.



We know that our work is important to our community, because 91 percent of community members participating in our community assessment survey agreed with our vision and our core principles and values, which are:

- youth should feel physically and emotionally safe
- youth should have strong positive relationships with adults and peers
- youth should participate in meaningful activities that build self-confidence
- youth should be able to make decisions about their community
- youth should be actively involved in organizing activities and events
- youth should have a place within the community to learn challenging skills

The key assets of the coalition that we plan to use to achieve our goals are:

- influential and knowledgeable leaders who are youth development advocates in each sector
- dedication and work of the staff and service providers of our many organizations, agencies and groups who provide direct services to youth and their families
- efforts of our youth who are valuable resources as Teen Advisory Committee members, County Youth Commissioners, Youth Media Group members, peer mentors and peer helpers
- support of our schools
- support of our parents
- support by the leaders and staff of our teen center

Youth in our community

The El Dorado Hills community has a population of approximately 30,000 people in rural and suburban areas on the western side of El Dorado County. The schools served by our coalition are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| ▪ Oak Ridge High School | 1,829 students |
| ▪ Marina Village Middle School | 650 students |
| ▪ Rolling Hills Middle School | 798 students |
| ▪ Camarado Middle School | 825 students |
| ▪ Pleasant Grove Middle School | 800 students |

Schools are an important strength of the community.

Schools in El Dorado Hills have high Academic Performance Indicator (API) scores, based on state standardized tests. A high number of students go on to college after graduation from high school.

Ethnicities of the area served by our coalition are:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| ▪ White | 90.1% |
| ▪ Hispanic or Latino | 5.0% |
| ▪ Asian | 4.1% |
| ▪ African-American | 0.8% |

The makeup of the coalition represents the cultural demographics of the community.

What we've learned about El Dorado Hills youth

Of the youth and adult respondents who completed our Community Assessment survey:

91 percent strongly supported the idea of youth development. In addition, in focus group meetings it was reinforced that **there are many community and education representatives who are advocates of youth development.** Many have received extensive training in youth development research and strategies that make a difference with youth.

70 percent felt that churches and local clubs had rewarding programs for youth.

59 percent supported youth being actively involved in their own community, but 62 percent also felt that youth's opinions are not valued.

59 percent felt bullying was a problem in the community and 81 percent felt drugs were a problem.

74 percent felt there is not enough public transportation for youth.

91 percent felt that El Dorado Hills needs more safe places for youth.

60 percent felt that parents were actively involved in the lives of their youth, but a significant percentage (49 percent) also felt there was not a mentor available.

Respondents did not know if there were services available for the following:

- problem resolution (23 percent)
- low-income support (37 percent)
- youth employment (28 percent)
- drug and alcohol prevention (27 percent)
- peer support (30 percent)
- crisis support (40 percent)

68 percent felt there are not enough creative activities for youth after school or on weekends.

67 percent felt there are not enough low-cost or free after-school programs for youth.

65 percent identified needs of the community as prevention or development related.

Of survey respondents, 91 percent felt that El Dorado Hills needs more safe places for youth in the community.

Participants were asked to write in what they thought were the top needs for youth in the community. The top six needs were:

1. Youth center
2. Community service programs
3. Drug and alcohol prevention programs
4. Leadership development
5. Family communication and listening skills education
6. Crisis hotline counseling

Complete results are available at www.edhvisioncoalition.org

Our Youth Assessment asked youth what specific activities they wanted or were currently participating in. The results were as follows:

Activities with strongest youth interest:

1. Go carts
2. Rock climbing
3. Eating out
4. Jet skiing
5. White water rafting
6. Watching movies
7. Kayaking
8. Television
9. Amusement parks
10. Talking/visiting with friends

The Youth Assessment also asked for specific concerns about what youth were experiencing. The results identify several areas of concern:

Stress: 58 percent listed stress as a major problem for youth.

Boredom: 56 percent listed boredom as a major problem. This can be combined with the fact that a majority listed the following as major problems:

- not enough safe, supportive or fun places for youth (35 percent)
- not enough public transportation (41 percent)
- not enough jobs or internships (32 percent)
- nowhere to hang out (38 percent)

Bullying: 63 percent said this is a major problem.

Drug use: 68 percent listed drug use as somewhat or a major problem.

Alcohol: 51 percent listed alcohol use as somewhat or a major problem.

Voice: 51 percent felt that youth opinions are not valued in El Dorado Hills.

Complete results are available at www.edhvisioncoalition.org

Supports and opportunities for El Dorado Hills youth

Youth development experts have identified five core supports and opportunities that youth need to achieve their fullest potential. As part of our research, we found that El Dorado Hills provides a range of these supports and opportunities.

Physical and emotional safety

In general, El Dorado Hills is a safe community. However, our community survey indicates that parents and youth want more safe places to congregate. We recently supported the grand opening of the El Dorado Hills Community Services District Teen Center. This facility is centrally located and easily accessible for many youth.

Relationships

According to our survey, a majority said parents do support youth. However, a majority also felt that more mentoring by other adults should be made available. Some of our schools already have peer mentor programs, such as Marina Middle School's WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) program to reach out to incoming 6th-graders. We would like to increase this type of program to include all of our middle schools.

Youth participation

While many younger youth are involved in soccer and other sports programs, a majority of our teens felt that many youth suffer from boredom and do not participate in safe, healthy, fun activities. Since adults had a similar response, we are creating a community map of all youth services that we will publicize in a directory for the community. Also, since many youth need transportation to these locations, we are working with local agencies to meet transportation needs.

Community involvement

While adults and youth reported that youth groups and clubs provide rewarding and meaningful opportunities for involvement, they also reported that youth are not involved in community service. That is why we are trying to find ways to include youth as resources in the community, such as the Youth Media Group, Peer Mentors, Teen Advisors and the Youth Commission, where they can make a difference in their community. We are also partnering with the Oak Ridge High School Key Club to support their volunteer service efforts.

Skill building

Overwhelmingly, adults and youth believe that youth should have a place to learn challenging skills. Our survey also indicated that youth did not feel there were enough job or internship opportunities in El Dorado Hills. This is why we are working with schools and businesses in our area to provide training opportunities in music, art, drama, business, media, etc. We will be collaborating with community service volunteers to teach talents and skills through the EDH Community Services District Community Service Program. We have also started to collaborate with our local news media and KVIE Channel 6 in developing internship and mentoring opportunities.



El Dorado Hills youth enjoy the community's new skate park, which opened in January 2007.

Youth involvement in the coalition

Youth play an important role in every part of our coalition's processes. Following are examples:

- Youth attend and play an active role in youth development workshops.
- The Teen Advisory Committee meets weekly.
- Youth developed the youth survey.
- Youth helped develop the community survey.
- Youth conducted surveys and entered data into SurveyMonkey.com.
- Youth have brainstormed and listed ways to conduct community mapping, developed questions to ask and decided how to provide results to youth.

We are accessing youth from high schools and middle schools with the assistance of school staff and parents, as well as youth from the teen center with assistance from teen center staff. We also are recruiting youth from the affordable-housing areas with assistance from the director of the El Dorado County Food Bank and Spanish-speaking parents.

All youth actively prepared agreements of how they would contribute to the assessment process, and they were actively engaged to contribute their ideas and assist in carrying out the assessment.

"My favorite part of the assessment was the Community Mapping. I liked running around and collecting information."

Kenny Croyle, 16, EDH Teen Advisory Committee

"I really like the ice-breakers at the beginning of each meeting. They are fun and they help everyone to get to know each other better."

McKenzie Jones, 12, EDH Teen Advisory Committee

"I love the fact that I am included in my community."

Sam Stone, 13, EDH Teen Advisory Committee

"I am happy to be a part of this group. I like having the power to change things here."

John Walberg, 16, EDH Teen Advisory Committee

"The TAC Team is a great way for teens to get involved in the community and help other teens."

Simone Sowell, 12, EDH Teen Advisory Committee

"The Youth Development workshops were GREAT! They had cool activities and I learned a lot and met lots of new people."

Sterling Boyns, 13, EDH Teen Advisory Committee

El Dorado Hills youth groups

Our three main youth groups include the Teen Advisory Committee (TAC), County Youth Commission (YC) and the Youth Media (YM) Group.

These groups are beginning to overlap and assist one another with projects. For example, the TAC formally requested assistance from the YC on their community mapping project in the form of a GIS map of El Dorado Hills. The YC had already completed a similar project in Placerville and happily agreed to help.

The YM has videotaped several events and meetings for both groups and actively helped to promote youth development activities

in the community. They created their own production company, For Youth Information, Inc. (FYI, Inc.), and their 30-minute "dramedies" air on Cable Channel 2. Recently, KVIE agreed to show one of their public service announcements, "Dominoes," on Channel 6. The YM's momentum is building.

The Youth Commission, having been together longer, leads the way in organization and relationship building. They have been a great resource for the other groups, in terms of finding out who to talk to and how to get things done. Their youth group has been very effective in promoting policy change that affects youth and inspirational in advancing the youth "voice."

How we did it

Our first goal was to find out what our community believes are strengths and assets, as well as weaknesses and deficits in El Dorado Hills, with the knowledge that building assets is key to providing the necessary supports and opportunities for youth to successfully transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Youth and adults met with consultants and community members to gather input on the best ways to collect data. In general, they suggested we develop a community survey for all sectors geared toward adults, and a youth survey aimed at our target age group of 10 to 18. Additionally, we decided to conduct focus group meetings with 12 sectors of the community, including youth, to review and prioritize our key findings, as well as a community-mapping project to identify local youth services and resources.

Our Community Assessment Survey focused on questions that related to our vision of youth development. We focused on all five supports and opportunities: safety, relationships, youth participation, community involvement and skill building. We selected all of them to ensure a full needs assessment that could lead to a comprehensive program based on research.

Our youth helped develop a Youth Assessment Survey that included questions about activities that interested youth. These questions were important to us since our youth development approach includes determining how youth value participation in a wide variety of activities intended to be fun, challenging, safe and drug free. The data will be used to help guide policy makers, Teen Center staff and youth-serving organizations in planning activities that capture youth interest.

In partnership with our youth, we analyzed the information to find gaps in services and youth needs. Utilizing youth and adult partnerships, we developed a plan to implement effective, research-based strategies, programs, policies and practices that will be the foundation of our El Dorado Hills Community Action Plan.

We collected demographic data, opinion data and knowledge data from adults and youth, and received almost 400 responses (110 adults and 283 youth).

We used the California Healthy Kids Survey that was conducted in all schools in the El Dorado Hills area in the fall of 2006. We also received secondary data from the UC Davis Center for Community School Partnerships. This data is available at www.reachyouthprogram.org/?q=node/135.



Teen Advisory Committee member McKenzie Jones

"The worst part of the assessment process was entering in all the surveys. The good part is that we helped discover what youth need in El Dorado Hills."

Christine Uhrik, Teen Advisory Committee

What we learned through the assessment process

The Youth Assessment confirmed that youth want more job and internship opportunities. We found that to be very true when we were not getting any response for volunteers to enter the hand-written surveys online. When we decided to supply the youth with a job opportunity and pay a stipend per survey entered, we discovered a dramatic increase in motivation and performance. They were very prompt in returning the forms to collect their pay.

When we held our Proposal Writing workshop for our youth service providers, we witnessed the magic of coalition networking. The president of the Oak Ridge High School Key Club was in attendance, as was an editor of a local newspaper. They began discussing the newspapers' need for sports writers and how the local high school journalism students might enjoy paid internship opportunities with local reporters. The Key Club president had a very positive reaction and we will be following up to see this idea carried into action.

A surprising consensus was reached while the youth and law enforcement teams discussed the problem of unsupervised parties and parties at which adults supply alcohol to youth.

Our law enforcement team highly recommended that we publicize the legal consequences to adults of allowing or contributing to underage drinking and the youth agreed. It also was enlightening that both law enforcement and youth believe this is a problem that may be improved by educating parents.

At our County Office of Education Safe School Symposium and from youth at various forum groups, we learned that most bullying or mistreatment takes place out of sight of adults or others who may be able to intervene. Youth say that reporting bullying often has negative repercussions. One of our youth informed us that she had been mistreated at school for several years before coming forward, and that the experience had a profoundly negative impact on her for years. Both youth and education groups recommended more education about the various types and subtleties of mistreatment.

We found that our coalition does not have enough communication with the business community. That's why the Vision Coalition has joined the El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce to improve communications and understanding within the local business community.

We also found that most health services organizations are located in Placerville – 18 miles east of El Dorado Hills – and are inaccessible for many people. That is why we are encouraging youth service providers to have satellite locations in El Dorado Hills to increase service availability to youth and families.

While 91 percent of those surveyed support our vision of increasing supports and opportunities for youth, the majority of our focus groups wanted to increase learning opportunities for adults around youth development. That's why we will be providing youth development training at schools and in the community. We also will be offering funding to each sector to financially support projects that increase youth development.

Finally, our survey indicated that youth feel their voices are not heard. That is why the El Dorado Hills Teen Advisory Committee and the County Youth Commission meet regularly to discuss and make recommendations focusing on youth issues and concerns. Also, we have engaged the help of the Youth Media group, as well as local media, to increase coverage of news pertinent to youth in El Dorado Hills.

Youth are resources and active partners in our community

What you can do

If you haven't already, come to the El Dorado Hills Community Services District Teen Center and Skate Park. All ages are welcome. For more information, go to www.edhcsd.org.

For more information on youth activities and opportunities, please see our online directory at www.edhvisioncoalition.org.

If you are a parent or interested adult, you can log on to the above address to join the coalition, learn about events and activities, and learn more about youth development, mentoring opportunities and our youth media group.

You also can contribute financially to our nonprofit organization. Your contribution will help sponsor services for the youth of El Dorado Hills and may be tax deductible.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY!!!

Get involved with the Vision Coalition of El Dorado Hills!

Visit us online at
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EDH Teen Advisory Committee

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