

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Being a resource for students and their families to help them connect to appropriate systems of support

New research tells us that the adolescent years are a highly important developmental period for brain growth and “the second most critical period of development.” However, there are factors at both the individual and community levels that impact the development process. This includes risk factors that increase the likelihood that one will take part in unhealthy behaviors, as well as protective factors that spur healthy behaviors and development. Young people need a continuous system of support from birth through adolescence into young adulthood, creating the conditions that help them thrive and build the skills and attributes that will have a positive influence on their lives as they face thousands of decisions each day. Afterschool and summer learning programs are a part of this continuous system of support, providing services during a critical time of development for young people that will help children grow their strengths, cope with the complications of life, and lead healthful lives to become healthy adults.

Todos Juntos

Clackamas County, OR

1,800

Average number of students served during the school year

60%

Students from low-income families

Main funding sources:

- ▶ Clackamas County Children, Family and Community Connections
- ▶ Clackamas County Public Health
- ▶ Oregon Community Foundation
- ▶ Ford Foundation
- ▶ Spirit Mountain Foundation
- ▶ Collins Foundation
- ▶ Umpqua Bank

Overview

At *Todos Juntos*, children and families in rural Clackamas County have access to a range of supports and services through their early childhood programs, middle and high school afterschool and summer learning programs, and family resource coordination. *Todos Juntos* partners with a number of organizations in the area, including schools, local nonprofits, faith-based organizations, county agencies, and law enforcement, in order to offer an integrated and comprehensive system of community-based supports to their families. The program also ensures that services are accessible and culturally sensitive to the community’s population, employing bilingual and bicultural staff members.

A typical day for students

Todos Juntos’ afterschool programs operate five days a week, typically from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. How to keep young people engaged is one lens *Todos Juntos* uses when designing programming, and therefore programming differs slightly at each of their sites. All sites offer homework help and sports, as well as Boys Council and Girls Circle, where students have the opportunity to work in small groups and discuss topics such as what a healthy relationship is, how to build

a positive self-image, and how to manage the challenges they face in their daily lives. Additional programs offered at various sites include one-on-one mentorship to navigate high school and graduate on time, drug prevention classes, LEGO robotics, career exploration, and leadership classes.

Outcomes

During the 2018-19 school year, 66 percent of 9th grade students in the program were on track to graduate on time, compared to 50 percent the previous year and, based on Todos Juntos' county report, 60 percent of students saw improvements in their GPA. Based on student and parent surveys, 95 percent of students report that participation in Todos Juntos' programming has increased their connection and enthusiasm in school and community events, with an additional 85 percent having an increased awareness of the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol. Additionally, parents participating in Todos Juntos' Spanish-/English-speaking parenting education classes report an increase in the quality of parent-child/youth interactions as measured by Parenting Skills Ladder (PSL) responses. In 2018/2019, 100 percent of parents attending at least 75 percent of the classes reported an increase.

Program characteristics

Working to meet the needs of the children and families in Clackamas County, Todos Juntos has built strong relationships with individuals, organizations, institutions, and agencies to provide a coordinated and comprehensive system of care in the community. Embedded within nine schools—and employing staff members who are bilingual, bicultural, and from the community—Todos Juntos creates a welcoming environment to encourage students and their families to engage in the program and with staff. Services that Todos Juntos connects their students and families with include, but are not limited to, case coordination of high-risk students, resource and referral of students into best practices programming, academic enrichment activities, robotics, gender-specific mentoring groups, diversity clubs, service to careers, and healthy behavior classes. Families are also referred to mental health services, health programs, housing assistance, legal resources, food banks, and parent education. Staff also help their immigrant families navigate the school system, county agencies, and social services.

Collaborating with outside partners is another key characteristic of the program to help provide services to their students and families. For instance, Todos Juntos staff meet regularly with school-day counselors and administrators to talk about the individual needs of their students, inviting county agencies to local site-based steering committee meetings—such as the Clackamas County Juvenile Department, the Behavioral Health Division, and the Public Health Division. In meetings, groups discuss current offerings in Todos Juntos, detect gaps in services, and identify additional supports the program can utilize to connect youth and families.



Challenges

The importance of the adolescent years: Science shows that, from birth through young adulthood, our brains are continuously developing: brain pathways grow stronger, information is processed more rapidly, and we build more complex connections that enable more complex thinking. A child's adolescent years hold enormous potential to grow and develop the skills—from building relationships to learning self-control—that they will need in adulthood. It is also a time when adolescents are in a more vulnerable state and their surrounding environments and supports—particularly non-familial supports—play a significant role in their development.

The effect of our surroundings: Research has found that our surroundings at the community, family, and individual levels can have a positive or a harmful effect on our development. Poverty, community violence, conflict within the family, and parent or family members that struggle with alcohol or drug misuse are just a few of the risk factors that exist at the community and family levels.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): Close to half of children in the U.S. from zero through age 17 have experienced at least one ACE, an experience, such as being a victim of violence or having a parent or guardian who has passed away, that could have a negative and lasting effect on one's health and well-being.

Individual risk factors: Depression, cigarette use, and substance use and misuse are also risk factors young people grapple with today. In 2017, 32 percent of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless for persistent periods of time, 17 percent seriously considered attempting suicide, 14 percent reported misusing opioids, and e-cigarette use increased by 78 percent among high schoolers and 48 percent among middle schoolers from 2017 to 2018.

Read [Afterschool: Fostering Protective Factors that Can Last a Lifetime](#) to learn more.

Risk Factors and Protective Factors

Risk factors and protective factors are present at the individual, family, and community levels. Below are examples of risk and protective factors for adolescents at the various levels.



Individual



Family



Community



Risk Factors

- ▶ Low self-esteem
- ▶ Inability to communicate
- ▶ Substance use and misuse

- ▶ Family conflict
- ▶ Parent substance use
- ▶ Unemployment
- ▶ Lack of adult supervision

- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Exposure to a community or school related traumatic event or violence
- ▶ Favorable community or peer group attitude toward alcohol and drug use



Protective Factors

- ▶ High self-esteem
- ▶ Positive self-image
- ▶ Positive peer relationships
- ▶ Engagement in school

- ▶ Supportive relationships
- ▶ Clear expectations for behavior
- ▶ Stability and consistency

- ▶ Positive adult mentor
- ▶ Engagement in school or community activities
- ▶ Healthy peer groups

Adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Risk and Protective Factors for Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Across the Life Cycle."

Program history

In 2000, Todos Juntos first began as a Latin Club serving gang-involved middle schoolers in one Clackamas County school. Due to student enthusiasm around soccer, the program expanded programming to include playing soccer. When looking for another school to play against, staff in the program developed a relationship with a neighboring middle school, and launched a second site. As the program expanded its reach, it also began expanded programming to meet the needs of the families living in the rural Clackamas County communities of Molalla, Canby, Sandy, and Estacada. Today, Todos Juntos runs its programming out of nine schools, reaching more than 1,800 kindergarten through 12th-graders and families.

Recommendations

for being a resource for students and their families to help them connect to appropriate systems of support:

- ▶ Break down the silos that may exist in your community, step out of your comfort zone, and take the time and care to reach out to find new partners. To best serve your community, take steps to truly be a part of the community.
- ▶ Respect the relationships that you form with others. Be sure to cherish and nurture the relationships that you establish in order to maintain strong partnerships with your collaborators.



Afterschool Alliance

afterschoolalliance.org