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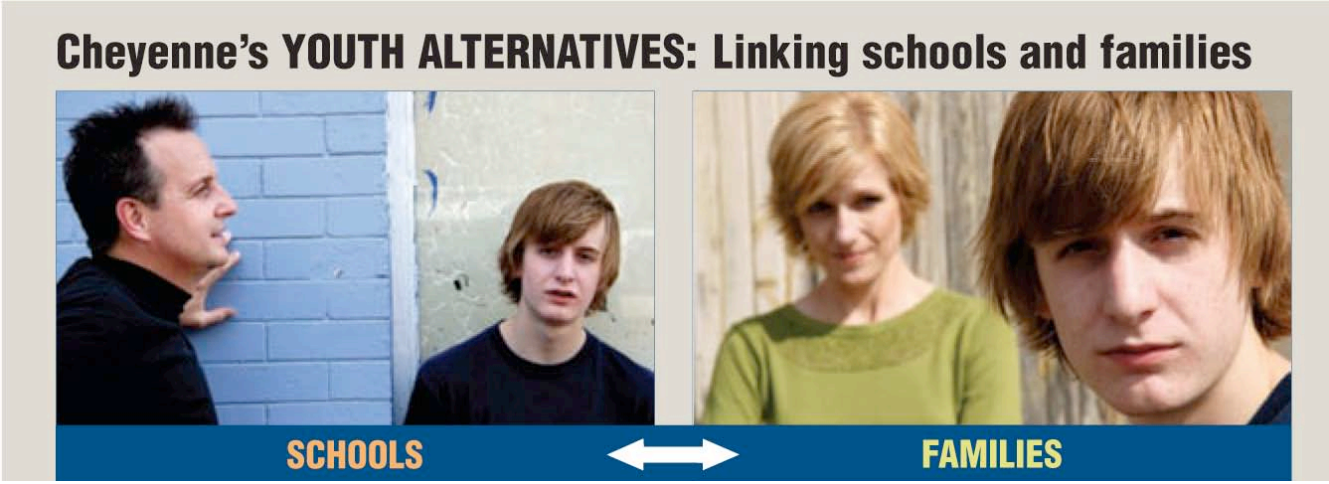
Capacity Building through Stronger School-Community Alliances

The Laramie Schools – Youth Alternatives Partnership for Student Progress



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Wyoming Department of Health

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The Laramie Schools – Youth Alternatives Partnership for Student Progress

How Office of Youth Alternatives has forged a unique alliance with Laramie County School District 1

to boost student emotional wellbeing

and academic success

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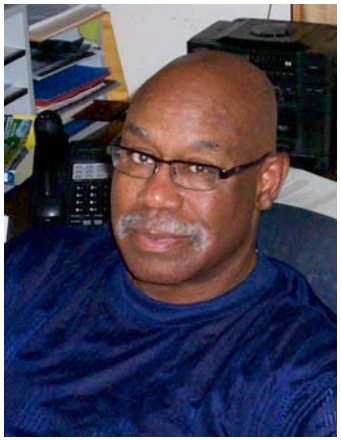
TODAY'S PRESENTERS:

DICK BERRY
Executive Director
Youth Alternatives



RONN JEFFREY
Municipal Court Judge
City of Cheyenne

TED ADAMS
Supt. of Schools
Laramie County #1

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The Laramie Schools – Youth Alternatives Partnership for Student Progress

about Office of Youth Alternatives

Family-centered program that serves troubled youths ages 5-18 and their families

Founded in 1971 with **$10,600 federal grant**, staff of 1 and 10 volunteers

Now a department **within the City** of Cheyenne

Funded by a **combination of city, state and school** district monies

Staff of 15: family counselors, probation officers, group facilitators, coordinators for education/substance abuse/court mentor/outreach, grants manager
Also a strong corps of volunteers who share time, homes and nurturing

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about Office of Youth Alternatives

Services fall broadly into 3 areas:

1. COURT DIVERSION AND COUNSELING
2. YOUTH AND FAMILY COUNSELING
3. PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

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"… these are not your kids, they're not my kids—they're our kids."

—RONN JEFFREY
Cheyenne Municipal Court

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Office of Youth Alternatives

SERVICES PROVIDED:

>> SCHOOL SERVICES

Family Counseling
Mentoring Services
Groups: anger management, divorce, parent, social skills, tutoring, pre-7th grade
Crisis Team Support
Community Service
School Presentations
On-Call Availability 24/7 for 12 months

>> FAMILY SERVICES

Family Counseling
Family Crisis Intervention

>> COURT SERVICES

Probation
Work Alternatives Program
Juvenile Alcohol & Drug Intervention Program
Juvenile Accountability & Enrichment Program

>> GROUP SERVICES

After School Program
Anger Management
Divorce
Parent Connection
Tutoring

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"Human connection is the key, and somehow getting kids hooked up to give help and hope is really critical."

—DICK BERRY
Youth Alternatives

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The Laramie Schools – Youth Alternatives Partnership for Student Progress

Laramie County School District

SCHOOLS ⟷ FAMILIES

Office of Youth Alternatives

Established 26 years ago

School district funds a family counselor position at the Youth Alternatives office

2 YA staff members are located on site at Johnson Junior High School

YA service delivery is under an annual contract with the school district

YA Services are delivered to students and families at no charge to them

Services focus on "family issues" No mental-health diagnoses made

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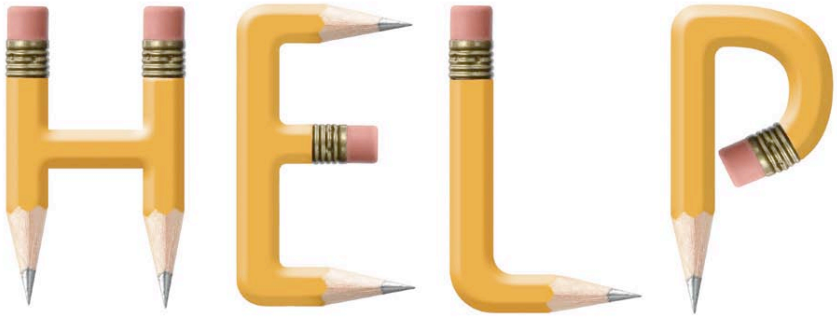
The Laramie Schools – Youth Alternatives Partnership for Student Progress

"If the schools need help, they call and we go. We don't bill the district for every 38 minutes of staff time. Instead, it's a real partnership. That spirit of cooperation and 'we're all in this together' attitude really makes this partnership a success."

—DICK BERRY
Youth Alternatives



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Laramie County School District

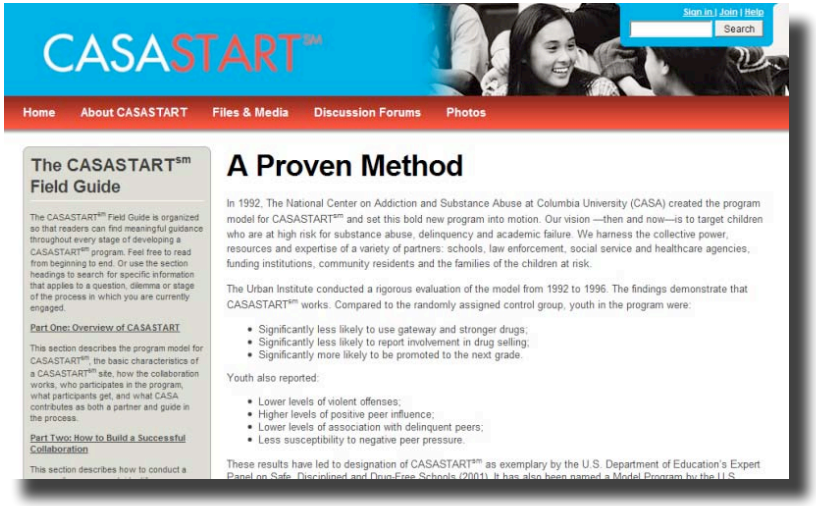
SCHOOLS ⟷ FAMILIES

Office of Youth Alternatives

This partnership is built on the CASASTART℠ model:

Developed by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

"STRIVING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE REWARDING TOMORROWS"



CASASTART℠

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The CASASTART℠ Field Guide

The CASASTART℠ Field Guide is organized so that readers can find meaningful guidance throughout every stage of developing a CASASTART℠ program. Feel free to read from beginning to end. Or use the section headings to search for specific information that applies to a question, dilemma or stage of the process in which you are currently engaged.

Part One: Overview of CASASTART

This section describes the program model for CASASTART℠, the basic characteristics of a CASASTART℠ site, how the collaboration works, who participates in the program, what participants get, and what CASA contributes as both a partner and guide in the process.

Part Two: How to Build a Successful Collaboration

This section describes how to conduct a

A Proven Method

In 1992, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) created the program model for CASASTART℠ and set this bold new program into motion. Our vision —then and now—is to target children who are at high risk for substance abuse, delinquency and academic failure. We harness the collective power, resources and expertise of a variety of partners: schools, law enforcement, social service and healthcare agencies, funding institutions, community residents and the families of the children at risk.

The Urban Institute conducted a rigorous evaluation of the model from 1992 to 1996. The findings demonstrate that CASASTART℠ works. Compared to the randomly assigned control group, youth in the program were:

- Significantly less likely to use gateway and stronger drugs;
- Significantly less likely to report involvement in drug selling;
- Significantly more likely to be promoted to the next grade.

Youth also reported:

- Lower levels of violent offenses;
- Higher levels of positive peer influence;
- Lower levels of association with delinquent peers;
- Less susceptibility to negative peer pressure.

These results have led to designation of CASASTART℠ as exemplary by the U.S. Department of Education's Expert Panel on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools (2001). It has also been named a Model Program by the U.S.

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CASASTART℠ offers 8 core service areas:

1. EDUCATION SUPPORT
2. SOCIAL SUPPORT
3. FAMILY SERVICES
4. MENTORING
5. COMMUNITY POLICING
6. INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT
7. JUVENILE JUSTICE INTERVENTION
8. OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME SERVICE

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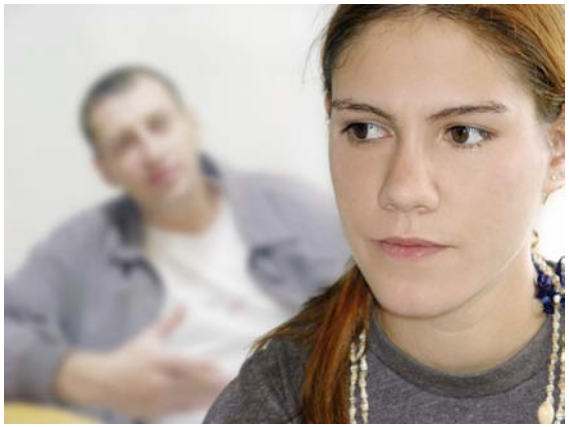
Laramie County School District

SCHOOLS ⟷ FAMILIES

Office of Youth Alternatives

2 staff members from Youth Alternatives are located on site at Johnson Junior High School

Making contact with youths before and after school



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SCHOOLS ⟷ FAMILIES

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FUNDING SOURCES:

IDA

Disabilities Block Grant

Other

"The hardest thing is to come up with the funding the first time."

—TED ADAMS
Laramie County School District #1

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"What we've found is that this partnership with Youth Alternatives works. It helps students and their families. And that helps us achieve our primary goal of education for each and every child."

—TED ADAMS
Laramie County School District #1

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PROFESSIONALS' FEEDBACK:

- 4,513 referrals made over 25 years of contract; 165 during 2007-08 academic year
- "Participant improvement within Youth Alternatives/Special Friends strengthens the argument that a real change in school performance was observed in 2008."

  - WY Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC)
- "Youth Alternatives is an excellent and valued agency with well-qualified staff, caring adults, administrators, counselors and volunteers."

  - 2006 survey of school personnel asked to evaluate Youth Alternatives services

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YOUTH FEEDBACK:

"Throughout my life I've been living great until I started to hang around the crowd. After sometime, I began to make wrong choices that wouldn't benefit me in the future. I got in trouble, and began to collect tickets from the local law enforcement .... At Youth Alternatives we began to layout my goals for the future, such as getting school worked out, and finding employment .... I began to advance with the help of my friends at Youth Alternatives ... After sometime, I was in the Art Group they had set up for a collaboration of youths to express their emotions through the work of art. We all worked together as one and made a bear representing change in one's life ... In conclusion, I've had a great and progressive time with the Youth Alternatives Program and the staff. I feel I couldn't have made it without them, and they will always have my thanks for helping me achieve and better my self-image."

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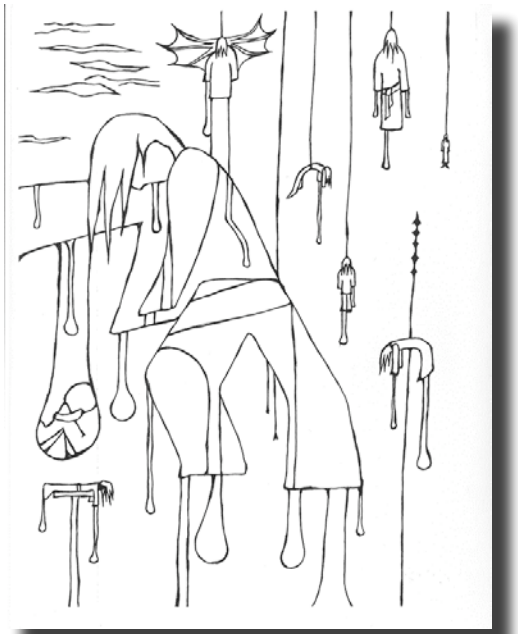

"The most dangerous thing is to know that something is wrong, but to have no access to solve these problems soundly and swiftly. Suicide is the most graphic example of this. There's nothing worse than wringing our hands afterward over the hopelessness of a situation, instead of having the kinds efficacious resources that a program like Youth Alternatives offers to school districts.

—TED ADAMS
Laramie County School District #1

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POTENTIAL BARRIERS to a successful partnership

1. MISSION OF SCHOOLS
2. FUNDING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION
3. TURF WARS
4. CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUES
5. STIGMA OF HELPSEEKING BEHAVIOR
6. PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

"You need to build your capacity in a system of any kind—serving kids as they grow and mature, teachers to get help to students, to parents and families. Youth Alternatives helps us do that."

—TED ADAMS
Laramie County School District #1

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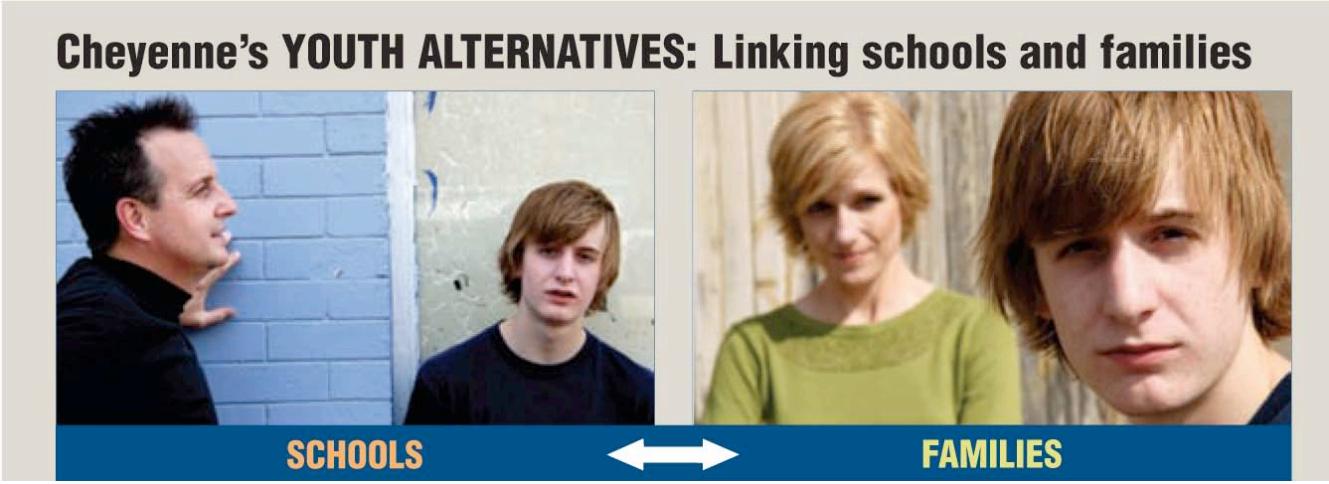

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