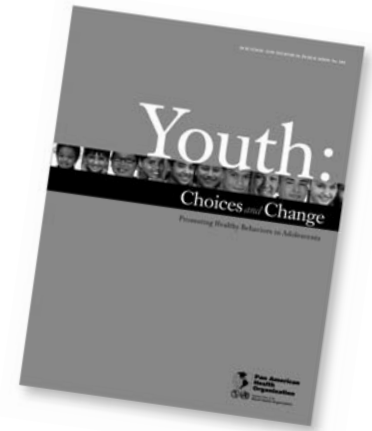


New PAHO Publication Expands Knowledge Base on Healthy Adolescent Behaviors



“Young people in the Region of the Americas represent a growing and increasingly important socioeconomic segment of the population. In Latin America and the Caribbean, young people between the ages of 10 and 24 make up 30% of the population, with adolescents aged 10–19 representing 20% of the population and 80% of them living in urban areas. Of the 155 million young people living in the Americas, the highest percentage is concentrated in the Region’s poorer countries and communities.”

—YOUTH: CHOICES AND CHANGE

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization, is pleased to present a new and unique contribution to the study of adolescent health and development. The chief focus of *Youth: Choices and Change* is how to create opportunities leading to the conscious adoption by youth of lifelong healthy lifestyles.

The book is a journey into the world of young people, beginning with preadolescence and continuing through to early adulthood. It takes readers inside the minds and bodies of adolescents and provides a practical guide for all those who live and work with this group. This group includes parents, schoolteachers, guidance counselors, school principals, community health workers, local and national legislators, law enforcement personnel, judges, those who create mass media trends and those who select media content for adolescent con-

sumption, and members of the corporate community who target their products and services to the youth market; among others.

Youth: Choices and Change offers an innovative framework for preparing youth to be full participants in social, political, and economic opportunities in the communities where they live, grow up, and begin planning their future. The book breaks new ground by utilizing a cross-cutting approach that interconnects a series of analytical factors previously considered in isolation or in fragmented fashion. These factors include those that predispose, enable, and reinforce lifestyle choices and/or shape environmental living conditions in ways that affect the health and well-being of individuals as well as populations as a whole.

The book’s authors, Cecilia Breinbauer and Matilde Maddaleno of PAHO’s Child and Adolescent Health Unit, are specialists in child and adolescent psychiatry and pediatrics, respectively, who bring a wealth of new information to the field of adolescent growth, development, and behavior change. *Youth: Choices and Change* marks the first time that the findings of the application of major behavioral change theories and models, specifically to the study of adolescents, have ever been systematically collected and reported in one source. In its analysis of these theories and models, the book also incorporates a developmental perspective, which describes the differences in behavioral and socio-emotional capabilities between preadolescents, and those in early, middle, and late adolescence. Cultural, ethnic, and gender distinctions are also highlighted, and special consideration is given to the role of poverty and resiliency—the ability of some adolescents to secure physical and

emotional well-being despite circumstances of adversity. A diversity of geographical settings characterize the studies cited: from Africa to the United States, Canada to Jamaica, Brazil to the Netherlands, El Salvador to Japan, and India to Mexico, name only a few.

“The most quintessential message of *Youth: Choices and Change*,” note its authors, “is that the cornerstone for success in instilling lifelong healthy behaviors is early intervention, beginning in the preadolescent years, instead of waiting until later, when health-compromising behaviors have already begun and may be well entrenched.” This message forms the underpinning of the Youth: Choices and Change Model, which was created by Breinbauer and Maddaleno as a practical, yet comprehensive, approach to designing health promotion interventions for adolescent behavior change. “By following the steps in this tool,” they say, “those who live and work with young people can help them master the developmental goals appropriate for their age group, strengthen their ability to make conscious decisions for health, and achieve their self-set goals for the future.”

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