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## Everyone has A Stake in the Positive Development of Youth The Case for a Community Compact for Youth

By Christopher Collins

As a city and as a community, we like to say that we make young people a priority, particularly when we talk about education. Words, however, are easy. Putting young people at the center of the discussion and making their success a true priority takes innovation and a willingness to re-think our assumptions.

Making sure kids have better opportunities and healthier futures isn't only the job of teachers, or youth workers, or parents. It is everyone's responsibility, and no matter what you do for a living, whether you have kids in your life or not, you play an important role. Marion County Commission on Youth (MCCOY) has created a series of Community Compacts for Youth – informal agreements that let you demonstrate ways you support the young people in your life and in our community. Now, beyond simply saying young people's healthy development is important, you can show it.

For Indianapolis, a Community Compact for Youth means that we're a city that takes young people and their futures seriously. That we do more than just proclaim our support. And that by doing so, it means that we listen to what young people say they need, and figure out ways that our work can contribute.

Compacts are important because they hold us accountable. As a person in business, for example, deciding to learn about what makes a high-quality youth development workforce may seem like a small step. But you may then decide that there is no better way to support better opportunities for youth than by offering internships and career mentoring. Supporting initiatives, adopting policies, advocating for higher quality programs for kids – these are the ways that the Compacts mean action. And they demonstrate concrete commitments to improving the odds for young people's success.

Whether you know it or not, the momentum you create by signing a Compact has the potential to make real change. Your Compact contributes to the public dialogue that policymakers rely on to make good decisions around youth issues. It also challenges leaders to be as accountable as you are. Coordinated decision-making, youth program quality and competent youth workers – these are ways your Compact makes such a huge difference.

Some research estimates that only 4 in 10 young people entering their twenties are doing well – that they're healthy, connected to their communities and ready for college, work and life. Today, it is simply not enough to say you support a better future for youth. By a number of measures, too many young people don't see one. Move beyond talk, and sign a Community Compact for Youth. Finally, an opportunity to put your words into action, and action into improving the odds of success for all young people.

Visit MCCOY's website to learn more and download your Community Compact for Youth: [www.mccooyouth.org](http://www.mccooyouth.org).

*Christopher Collins is a Community Initiatives Coordinator at MCCOY, the youth services intermediary for central Indiana. MCCOY's mission is to champion the positive development of youth through leadership on key issues and support of the youth worker community. MCCOY's vision is that every young person in central Indiana has opportunities to thrive, learn, engage and contribute. The Community Compact for Youth is an extension of MCCOY's ongoing Ready by 21 Quality Counts efforts to create a shared vision for the well-being of youth, improve the reach and quality of youth programs and generate support for the professional development of highly competent youth workers.*

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