



All youth ready for
college, work & life.

Quality Counts in Oklahoma

“Ensuring that all youth are ready for college, work and life by the age of 21 not only requires increasing the quantity of investments in youth, but also the quality of the programs which serve youth. The Ready by 21™ Quality Counts initiative will help communities develop coordinated quality improvement systems, guaranteeing that when a young person walks into a youth program he or she will receive a powerful, transformative experience.”

Karen Pittman, Executive Director
Forum for Youth Investment

The **Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy** has been selected as one of 12 intermediary organizations to participate in a two-year Ready by 21 Quality Counts (RB21QC) initiative led by the Forum for Youth Investment. The **Oklahoma Afterschool Network (OKAN)** is providing the leadership for the RB21QC partnership in Oklahoma, working with the out-of-school time networks and community leaders in Norman and Tulsa. RB21QC will involve both community-based efforts in **Norman** and **Tulsa** and a state-level examination of key systems designed to support quality youth development throughout Oklahoma. In addition to meeting community-specific needs, Norman and Tulsa’s efforts will inform state-level policy and systems change approaches that will be designed to improve the quality of youth development / school-age care for Oklahoma’s children and youth.

The goal of the Ready by 21™ Quality Counts initiative is to provide training, tools and resources that will help local communities improve the quality and reach of youth programs in a coordinated, collaborative and well-planned manner. The Quality Counts effort will enable communities to work collaboratively to address the following areas:

1. **Policy and Leadership Horsepower** – expand the base of committed leadership and promoting an actionable plan
2. **Strong, Stable Program Base** – build/expand databases and partners to provide easily accessible information about program opportunities
3. **Capacity to Assess and Improve Programs** – identify appropriate tools for assessing program quality across the community
4. **Capacity to Recruit, Train, and Retain a Quality Workforce** – identify and promote “core competencies” and related workforce development issues and expand professional development and skill-building opportunities for individuals working with children and youth in out-of-school-time programs

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National organizations that are collaborating on Ready by 21™ Quality Counts include:

- The **Forum for Youth Investment** is managing the initiative (www.forumforyouthinvestment.org)
- The National Training Institute for Community Youth Work (NTI) at the **Academy for Educational Development (AED)** is training sites in the Advancing Youth Development Curriculum to improve the quality of their youth programs
- The **High/Scope Educational Research Foundation** is training sites in the Youth Program Quality Assessment tool to evaluate the effectiveness of local youth programs
- The **United Way of America** announced in late February that it will be a national partner, working with the Forum for Youth Investment to promote the Ready by 21 Framework among its member agencies
- **Corporate Voices for Working Families** is partnering to link corporate and private sector organizations with the RB21QC effort, understanding that quality out-of-school time programs are an essential support for working families



The Ready by 21 Quality Counts initiative has been designed to help small to mid-sized communities challenge the conditions of resource and policy fragmentation that present a constant threat to both the quality and sustainability of services for vulnerable children and youth. The training, technical assistance, and resource development activities for this project are being funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies. The RB21QC sites include:

Communities

Austin, TX
Columbus, IN
Georgetown Divide, CA
Grand Rapids, MI
Indianapolis, IN
Nashville, TN
St. Louis, MO

State Intermediaries

Iowa
Kentucky
New York
Oklahoma
Rhode Island

Hold The Date!

Governor's Summit on Expanded Learning Opportunities

Friday, October 24, 2008

Metro Tech, Oklahoma City

This Summit, supported by the National Governors Association and planned by the Oklahoma Afterschool Network, Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Office of Governor Brad Henry, will focus on how expanded learning opportunities (e.g., out-of-school time opportunities) can contribute to keeping kids in school and on a path to success. The entire day focused on what we can do together to help Oklahoma children and youth be *Ready by 21 – Ready for College, Work, and Life* through high quality out-of-school time learning and development opportunities.

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