Carnegie Corporation of New York

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CARNEGIE PRESIDENT URGES INSTITUTIONS TO ACT ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

NEW YORK, April 1 — Changes in the structure and function of American families are placing many children in such jeopardy as to pose a major problem for the entire society, Carnegie Corporation of New York's president David A. Hamburg maintains in the foundation's 1995 annual report essay, published today.

His essay, *A Developmental Strategy to Prevent Lifelong Damage*, provides a concrete program of action calling for the family and other institutions closest to children to cooperate in ensuring the health and well-being of children from the prenatal period through early adolescence.

"It is a disturbing fact that about one quarter of our youth are at high risk for rotten futures from educational failure, serious injury, disease, and economic incompetence," says Hamburg. "Some of the risks, like the crashes of drunken driving, are rapidly translated into damage. Other risks are like a time bomb set in youth that explodes later, as in cancer and heart disease."

Hamburg says that despite the less-than-optimal conditions for raising children today, most families can meet the essential requirements for healthier development with the support of schools, community and religious organizations, health care institutions, and the media.

"Evidence is accumulating that a range of preventive interventions involving these frontline institutions can set a young person onto the path toward healthy, constructive adulthood."

Such a developmental strategy for children and youth would encompass:

- early and comprehensive prenatal care
- well-baby medical care
- home visits by human service professionals
- parent education to help build close parent–child relationships
- parent support networks
- enhanced elementary and middle grades education — to foster critical habits of mind, coping skills such as nonviolent problem solving, a life sciences curriculum, and good health practices.

Suggesting that the mass media could do more to contribute constructively to the lives of young people, Hamburg says media organizations can work with public and professional groups to develop health-promoting programs and to reduce the glamorization of violence and sex, drinking, smoking, and other drug use.

Hamburg notes that the problems adolescents face are occurring across all segments of the youth population. One of the more disquieting signs is the emergence in younger adolescents of very high-risk behaviors that were once associated with older groups: smoking, alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, alienation from school, even involvement with deadly weapons.

The essay calls for mobilizing public support within communities to assess the specific needs of children and young adolescents and to formulate ways of meeting these needs. Communities, for example, could integrate educational, health, and social services and promote the direct involvement of local business, media organizations, and key professions in children's healthy development.

Finally, Hamburg challenges the "powerful sectors of society" to implement these and other recommendations: "Government, businesses, universities, and scientific and professional organizations will in the end have to offer substantial, sustained help to the frontline institutions, or the casualties will keep increasing and the nation will suffer altogether."

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During the fiscal year ending September 30, 1995, Carnegie Corporation of New York made 267 grants and nine appropriations totaling $54.98 million. There are three major program areas: Education and Healthy Development of Children and Youth, Preventing Deadly Conflict, and Strengthening Human Resources in Developing Countries. A fourth area, Special Projects, comprises grants that do not fit easily into these categories. Although a grant-making foundation, the Corporation also carries out its work by means of operating programs. There are currently four: the Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, and the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government. The full annual report provides a detailed review of the year's activities.

Carnegie Corporation was created by Andrew Carnegie in 1911 to "promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding among the people of the United States." Its charter was later amended to permit the use of funds for the same purposes in certain countries that are or were members of the British overseas Commonwealth. The Corporation's basic endowment was $135 million; the market value of its assets was approximately $1.2 billion as of December 31, 1995.

Andrew Carnegie

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