



Country Boys

A film by
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Fact Sheet: Disconnected Youth

An estimated 2.8 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 24 face major barriers to employment, and are therefore at risk of long-term disconnection from the communities in which they live. This figure includes high school dropouts who are jobless, high school graduates who are unemployed and have stopped looking for work, and youth whose employment prospects are bleak because they are incarcerated, homeless, or exiting foster care.

This group of young people faces many challenges:

Education: Between 20 and 25 percent of today's 14-year-olds will drop out of high school; approximately half of them will return to school and earn their diploma or obtain a GED by the time they reach age 25. The median income of a high school dropout is \$18,000, compared to \$25,000 for a high school graduate.

Employment: In 2003, a total of 5.7 million youth between the ages of 16 and 24 (including the 2.8 million disconnected youth described above) were both out of school and out of work. The proportion of all teens (ages 16-19) who held jobs in 2003 was at its lowest level since the end of World War II; only two-thirds of young adults (ages 20-24) were employed during the year.

Foster Care: About 20,000 youth ages 16 and older make the transition from foster care to legal emancipation each year. Four years after leaving foster care, 46 percent of young people lack a high school diploma, 25 percent have experienced homelessness, 42 percent have become parents, and fewer than one in five is completely self-supporting.

Justice System: Nearly 100,000 young people are incarcerated in the juvenile or adult corrections facilities, and many others in the community are on probation or parole. Sixteen percent of all high school dropouts between the ages of 18 and 24 (and 30 percent of all black dropouts in this age group) are incarcerated or on parole.

Teen Parenting: An estimated 18 percent of today's 15-year-old girls will give birth before age 20. In 2002, there were 431,988 births to teens in the United States, a decline of nearly 20 percent since 1990. Approximately one in every three teen mothers is a dropout.

Mental Health: Between 50 and 75 percent of incarcerated youth are estimated to have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

Information provided by Country Boys National Partner: National League of Cities. To view NLC's Action Kit for Municipal Leaders for Reengaging Disconnected Youth go to <http://www.nlc.org/content/Files/IYEF-Action%20Kit-DY%20Youth.pdf>