



The Critical Years: 10-15

Our Community. Our Children. Our Commitment.

Moving from Commitment to Action - Simple Steps Everyone Can Take.

Now that you've taken the Critical Years Community Pledge and agreed to make a positive difference in the lives of 10 to 15 year olds in your community, you may be asking yourself 'how can I specifically support this next generation of Genesee County citizens?'

Keeping the basic principles of the Pledge in mind, here are some ideas/suggestions which may get you started.

The important thing is to make a commitment, join with others and take action...

As a Concerned Citizen (In Your Neighborhood)

As a Parent (In Your Home)

As an Educator (In Your School)

As a Leader/Member of the Business Community (In Your Work Place)

As a Leader/Member of the Faith Community (In Your House of Worship)

As a Concerned Citizen (In Your Neighborhood)

- Look for ways to improve and promote a safe environment for young people. Become involved in or start a neighborhood watch or other crime prevention program.
- Create a strong 'sense of community':
 - Look out for young people in your neighborhood. Learn their names and say 'hello' or 'how was your day?' when you see them walking to/from school.
 - Help out families in need.
 - Plan and participate in activities that help youth see their neighborhood in a positive way like block parties, clean ups, etc.
 - Compliment young people when they engage in positive actions and behaviors.
- Support and encourage young people to stay in school. If you see youth not in school, encourage or help them to go back
- Open your home or yard to neighborhood kids. Create a safe place for them to play, hang out and interact with each other.
- Work with local law enforcement to ensure a positive police presence in your neighborhood.
- Become a mentor.



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As a Parent (In Your Home)

- Be engaged in the lives of your children, even when they don't want you to!
 - Know who their teachers are and regularly communicate with them in a mutually supportive manner.
 - Ask your children about their school day and their activities and lessons. This shows that 'I care' and that 'school is important'.
 - Get to know your children's friends and their parents.
 - Monitor their use of technology, particularly the internet. Know your child's passwords and guide them in safe on-line behavior.
- Balance the involvement, support and guidance you give to your 10 to 15 year old with age-appropriate freedoms in response to their growing need for independence.
- Use a parenting style that balances discipline with caring behaviors. Parenting that is responsive, accepting and child-centered, yet that incorporates age-appropriate expectations and demands accountability, helps young people navigate peer pressures that often lead to negative activities like drinking, drugs, etc.
- Create a reciprocal, respectful relationship with your 10 to 15 year old that is characterized by open, two-way communications: parent to child and child to parent.
- Encourage a home environment that is characterized by kindness, caring, compassion, and understanding.

As an Educator (In Your School)

- Promote and support teacher/student relationships that are marked by emotional connection. Students want to feel they can go to teachers for help with life issues, not just academics.
- Act as a safe sounding board for youth concerns, provide advice and guidance, and model positive thoughts and actions.
- Intervene with youth who are at-risk of peer pressure.
- Organize and guide a student-run 'Welcoming Committee' program to support and develop positive peer relationships.
- Be active and involved in multidisciplinary teams that focus on youth issues.
- Form an extracurricular student group and/or serve as an advisor or mentor.
- Provide and/or participate in professional development opportunities that focus on building supportive relationships between students, their families and education staff.
- Promote a school environment that is characterized by kindness, caring, compassion, and understanding, and encourage the same as a code of conduct for treating co-workers, students and families.



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As a Leader/Member of the Business Community (In Your Work Place)

- Support after-school and youth development programs that help students connect with each other in a fun, safe and positive environment. Consider making financial or in-kind donations and/or supporting employee volunteer or mentoring time.
- Sponsor or provide safe, reliable transportation for young people to attend after-school and other youth activities.
- Sponsor youth empowerment programs, summer camps or other activities, like neighborhood clean ups, that help youth see their community in a positive way.
- Share knowledge of your business or career area with students:
 - Tell them what it's like to work in your field, and what type of training or education they'll need to be successful.
 - Implement a 'student day' at your workplace. Allow students ages 10 to 15 to come in and observe or 'shadow' workers for the day.
- Create 'family-friendly' policies regarding childcare, sick-child time off, early dismissal/late arrival, etc.
- Provide parenting skills workshops and other parent supports specifically geared to employees who have children between ages 10 and 15.
- Promote a work environment that is characterized by kindness, caring, compassion, and understanding, and encourage the same as a code of conduct for treating co-workers and their families.

As a Leader/Member of the Faith Community (In Your House of Worship)

- Support and strengthen youth groups/youth programming and activities within your congregation by volunteering, making a donation, planning an outing or other activity, or sponsoring a speaker.
- Sponsor activities that help youth see themselves and their community in a positive way.
- Provide parenting skills workshops and other parent supports for those members of your congregation with children ages 10 to 15.
- Join or help create a 'Welcoming Committee' for youth who are new to your congregation and make a special effort to engage them.