

ADVANCING EDUCATION  
INCOME AND HEALTH

**CHANGING OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR AMERICA:**  
UNITED WAY'S ROLE IN IMPROVING  
EDUCATION, INCOME AND HEALTH

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

[UnitedWay.org](http://UnitedWay.org)



# GOOD START. RIGHT DIRECTION. MORE TO DO.

That's where America is in improving education, financial stability and health in our communities.

Today, our country has the highest high school graduation rate since 1976, with significant gains by students of color. We're also making headway in reducing childhood obesity, and in finding new ways to develop a world-class workforce.

But our country has a long way to go to improve opportunities for all Americans to have a good life. It's a challenge – for our country, and for our United Way network as we step up our leadership to fuel community change.

## GOALS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

United Way put a stake in the ground back in 2008. We issued a challenge to America by setting benchmarks for long-term success, with ambitious 10-year goals to:

- » Cut by half the number of young people who drop out of high school.
- » Cut by half the number of low-wage families who are financially unstable.
- » Increase by one-third the number of youth and adults who are healthy and avoid risky behaviors.

We focused on education, income and health because those are building blocks of a good quality of life – and the pathway to opportunity.

A good education is essential to getting a good job with health benefits. An income that can cover today's needs and save for tomorrow solidifies a family's foundation. Good health helps children succeed at school and adults at work. Remove any one building block, and the other two topple. Build them all up, and we have a strong foundation for collective success.

How is our country doing right now? The last page is a snapshot of progress against the 2018 benchmarks. The takeaway: good start, right direction, more to do.

Education and children's health issues are headed in the right direction, although children of color are still lagging behind their peers. There's more work to be done to help adults live healthier lives. In the wake of the recession, it's even more challenging for working families to move from an economic tightrope to a secure financial path.

Another critical lens is United Way's role in advancing America's progress. How are we doing in leading change, locally and nationally? How are we doing in creating opportunities for all Americans?

We're making a good start. More than half of our network has targeted a community priority for action, and many are putting a stake in the ground with partners.

We're headed in the right direction. Since 2008, the percentage of United Ways creating community impact strategies – and seeing results – has increased by half.

But we have a great deal more to do.

## CHANGING HOW WE WORK

Big goals require big changes. Not just in what we say, but in what we do and how we do it.

Instead of just raising money for good causes, we have to galvanize people around community change.

That means working with partners to:

- » Frame community-wide conversations that tap into collective concerns and aspirations.
- » Elevate critical issues.
- » Create solutions in which everyone can take part.
- » Enlist more people to join the cause.
- » Invite people and organizations to take meaningful action, like volunteering as reading tutors to first graders, speaking out for children's health insurance, or helping fund safe playgrounds in struggling neighborhoods.

## GRADUATING OUR FUTURE IN WINSTON-SALEM, NC

A 13 percent increase in graduation rates at the toughest high school, with a community-wide increase of 10 percent. Almost 70 percent more students passing end-of-course tests. Triple-digit increases in math and reading scores at the feeder middle school. Impressive results, especially in only four years. But in Winston-Salem, N.C., United Way of Forsyth County's education initiative has done more: it has galvanized the community.

"When we set a graduation goal of 90 percent for 2018, it was United Way's goal," says Cindy Gordineer, United Way of Forsyth County's president and CEO. "Today, it's the community's goal. It's everyone's goal."

Graduation is now a central focus for a majority of the public, private and nonprofit organizations in Winston-Salem now. United Way has helped launch a cradle-to-career education strategy – elevating the issue, building partnerships that align and coordinate efforts, and engaging people from all walks of life in the cause. "As a community, we're being more intentional about moving in the same direction," Gordineer says. "We're focused on creating alignment, getting agreement on common outcomes, and aligning resources for maximum effect."

Results have been sustained, and the strategy has now been replicated in two more underperforming high schools and their feeder middle schools. United Way is playing a central role in coordinating a comprehensive, cradle-to-career strategy and bringing even more stakeholders to the table, a reflection of how its leadership is transforming the way Winston-Salem responds to its education challenge.

United Way's value proposition is simple. We bring together people with passion, expertise and resources – from across the community – to get things done.

It's important to keep that "value add" front and center. We're adding value when we galvanize our communities around a common cause, a common vision, and a common path forward. We're adding value when we harness collective energy to fuel collective change.

We're adding the greatest value when we're **driving collective impact**. That's when we bring diverse partners together to focus the community's attention on the end game, enlisting everyone in the solution. Sometimes we call that playing a "backbone" role, but it's really just the leadership required to create change.

When people come together in new ways to tackle old problems, they make a difference. Look at Winston-Salem, NC, where United Way of Forsyth County is mobilizing the community around high school graduation, seeing double-digit increases in graduation rates.



## PLAYING BIG

United Way can lead this kind of change in *every* community.

We have to aim high – and play big.

Significant community change may be incremental, but the commitment required is huge. It requires commitment across the nation, not just in a few communities.

United Way has the biggest impact when we work across communities to tackle common challenges nationally. Take the 55,000 women leaders of the National Women’s Leadership Council who’ve taken on the issue of early grade reading, or the 158,000 people who’ve pledged to become volunteer readers, tutors or mentors (including 30 NFL players, who are recruiting another 30,000 volunteers).

We can’t change things by playing small. And we can’t do it by ourselves.

We’ve got to work more creatively with more partners – employers, faith leaders, educators, economic developers, health professionals, parents, community organizations, young people and more.

One sweet spot is our partnership with employers. United Way is uniquely positioned to help employers create economic value – for the entire community – that also adds social value. It’s called *shared value*, and it goes to the core of strong communities. Its central premise is that a company’s competitiveness and the health of the communities around it are interdependent. That’s what’s happening in Hartford, CT, where the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut is the cornerstone of an innovative financial stability collaboration. It’s building a stronger workforce for regional employers and boosting training and job opportunities for 1,200 workers.

## BOOSTING WORKERS’ SKILLS AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN HARTFORD, CT

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut leads the Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford, which convenes employers, educators, government, service providers, and philanthropic organizations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce system. In this way, United Way invests in the development of an educated, self-sufficient workforce with the skills that employers need to successfully compete in today’s economy.

The Collaborative works with 48 employers in three key industries that offer advancement opportunities for low-wage employees: manufacturing, energy and utilities, and health care.

Through employer-driven partnerships, high-quality service delivery and policy change, the Collaborative helps low-wage workers build their careers. So far, 191 job seekers and 1,053 workers have gotten educational and training services.

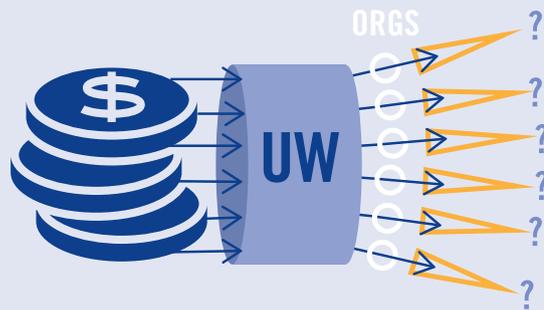
This effort has also garnered national kudos, winning the 2013 Exemplary Collaborative Award by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions for “accomplishments in developing industry partnerships and leading systems change in Connecticut.”



# HOW WE WORK: UNITED WAY'S EVOLUTION

Over United Way's 126-year history, we've always focused on solving community problems. But what's changed is how we do it. Here's how we've evolved:

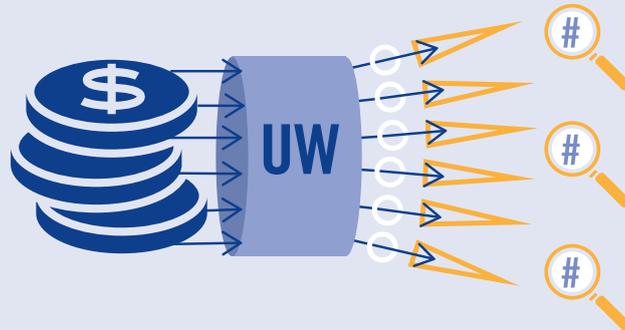
## FUNDING PROGRAMS



### DIVIDED IMPACT

We built United Way's brand on our ability to raise money for good causes. "Sowing a thousand seeds" supported good activities. But it rarely changed lives.

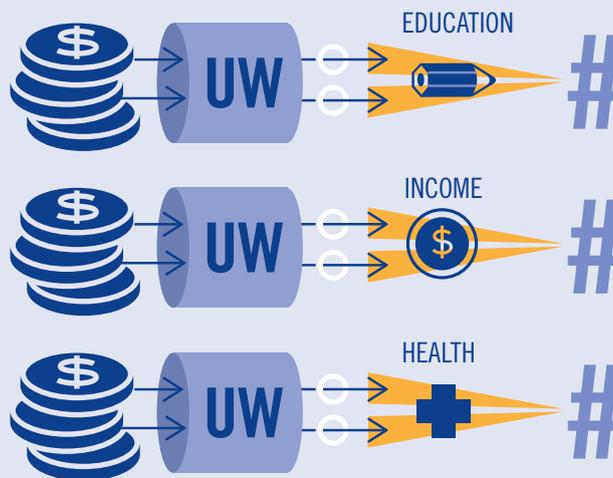
## MEASURING OUTCOMES



### MEASURABLE IMPACT

To ensure dollars made a difference, United Way led the way in focusing on outcomes, not just activities.

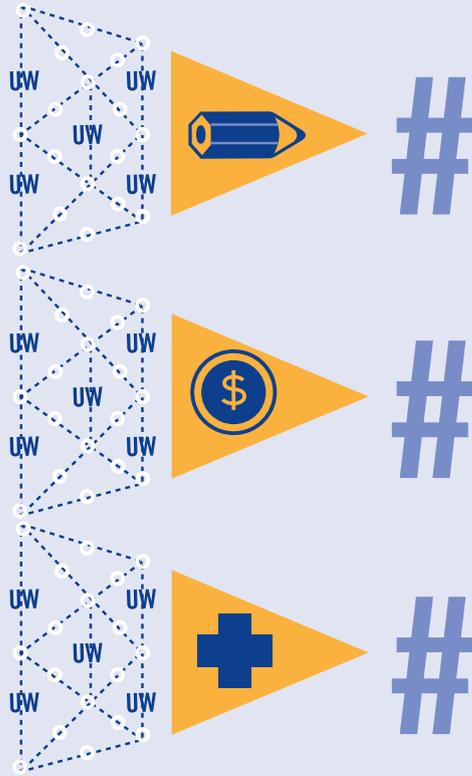
## TARGETING EDUCATION, INCOME & HEALTH



### MORE FOCUSED IMPACT

As we targeted the three key building blocks of opportunity, many United Ways organized programs accordingly. And began to look hard at those issues locally.

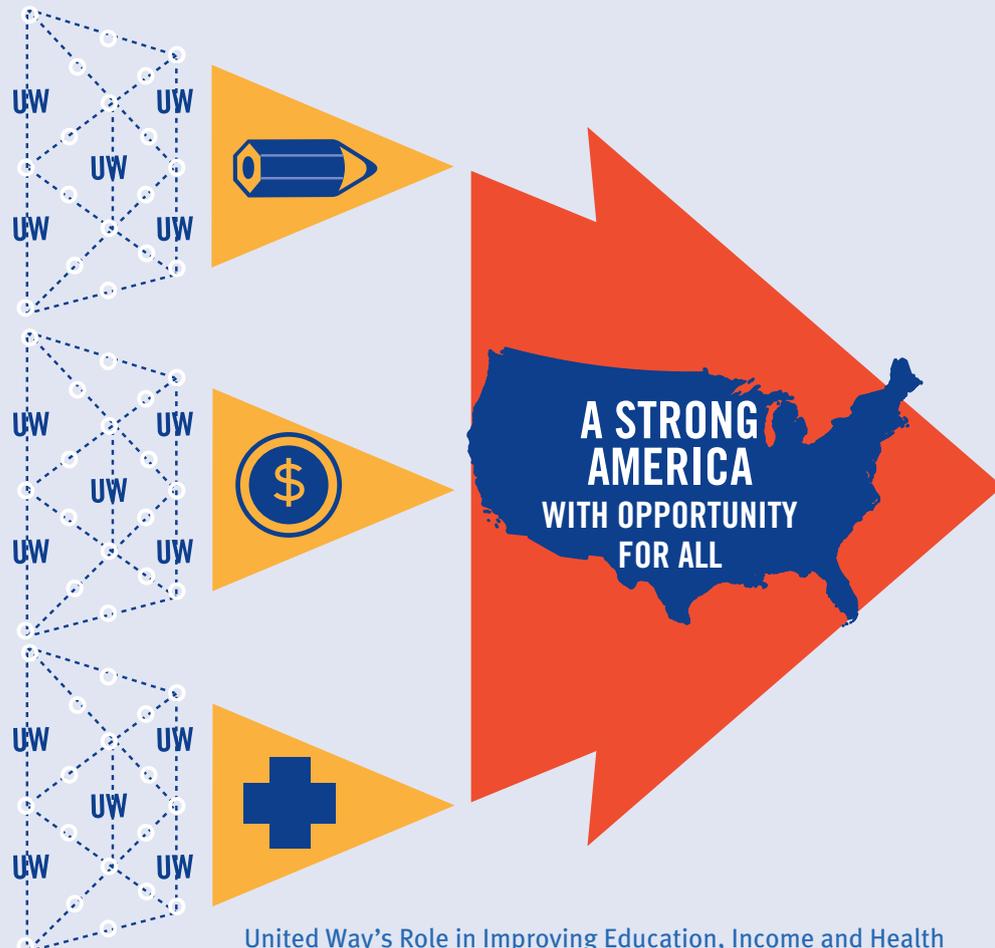
## COLLABORATING WITH MORE PARTNERS



Analysis of underlying causes made clear these challenges were too big to tackle alone. We started working more strategically with more partners, across a broader cross-section of the community. And we brought more people together to focus more deeply on a single issue.

## DRIVING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

At our best, United Ways leverage our assets (including relationships, workplace campaigns, affinity groups and communications strategies) to galvanize our community around a common cause, a common vision, and a common path forward.



# UNITED WAY AND COLLECTIVE IMPACT: A CALL TO ACTION

By Mark Kramer, FSG

The challenges facing American communities today seem almost overwhelming – one million youth dropping out of high school every year, nearly 2 million working families in precarious financial circumstances, and two-thirds of our population facing health risks.

These problems are too big for any single organization to solve; too big even for the nonprofit sector to solve without engaging private enterprise and government as partners. There is no single “silver bullet” that will solve problems of this severity. Instead, a strong cross-sector infrastructure is needed to support collaboration, guide evidence-based decision-making, track community-level outcomes, scan existing resources and identify priority strategies.

We must adopt a new way of working by bringing nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public together around a common agenda to create collective impact. Our research has shown that a collective impact approach can produce large-scale social change in ways that other forms of collaboration and individual efforts have not.

*Collective impact* is a disciplined effort to bring together dozens or even hundreds of organizations of all types to establish a common vision and pursue evidence-based actions in mutually reinforcing ways. Successful collective impact initiatives share five key conditions, distinguishing them from other types of collaboration:

- » **Common Agenda:** All participants have a shared vision of change, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed-upon actions.

- » **Shared Measurement:** Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.
- » **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
- » **Continuous Communication:** Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives and create common motivation.
- » **Backbone Support:** Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.

**United Ways are powerfully positioned to lead this new way of solving our society’s daunting problems.**

United Ways can train the spotlight on critical issues, engage with private and public sector leaders, and coordinate agendas with partners to leverage collective efforts. When United Way leverages its role as a funder to build relationships between organizations rather than fund them individually, it is also redefining its own role within a larger context for impact.

In many communities, FSG has found the traditional role of United Way as “neutral convener” is transforming to become the galvanizing force behind collective impact. United Ways have the capacity to fulfill all six essential functions of backbone organizations: (1) providing strategic coherence, (2) data management, (3) communication, (4) community outreach, (5) mobilizing funding, and (6) facilitation. In particular, facilitation in collective impact requires supporting ongoing

interaction between players, managing meetings and logistics, and acting as neutral arbiter between players, as necessary.

United Ways who are focused on mobilizing communities to make lasting change are already thinking beyond funding allocations and short-term solutions. These mobilizing United Ways communicate regularly and openly with collaborators, build knowledge and alignment within their communities and foster collective impact initiatives.

**When United Ways create and sustain collective impact they redefine their role in the community – truly becoming the backbone of community change efforts. It is not merely an opportunity for United Ways to take on this role – it is a necessity if we are to meet the urgent challenges our society faces today.**

Collective impact will bring renewed vitality to United Ways, enabling them to strengthen their communities in ways we have never before seen. This vision, I believe, can – and must – become the United Way of the future.

---

Mark Kramer is co-founder and Managing Director of FSG ([www.fsg.org](http://www.fsg.org)) and a Senior Fellow at Harvard University. He is the author of influential publications on creating shared value for corporations, catalytic philanthropy, strategic evaluation, impact investing, and adaptive leadership.

## MORE TO DO

United Ways must be the cornerstone of change. Now, more than ever, United Way must step up and lead. Our communities are asking us to lead the charge.

Our job is to make every community a thriving place to live, work and play.

*Every United Way needs to see itself as a catalyst for community change – and everything you do must help you live up to that possibility.*

Every person at every United Way must be part of this change. Whatever your role, your daily work can improve your community's education, financial stability and health outcomes. We've got to engage every United Way donor, advocate and volunteer in our cause, too. They're telling us they want to join.

So how do we lead change, and bring people together to fuel that change with their time, talent and treasure? We have to be bold. We have to be innovative.

Here's what we – all of us together – have to do:

1. **We must engage partners more strategically** on education, income and health. Corporations are moving to a strategic philanthropy approach, aligning their charitable activities with a social issue or cause that supports their business objectives. Corporate and philanthropic partners, policy and media partners, community allies and agencies must be engaged to co-create and execute strategies that will create lasting impact.
2. **We must find creative ways to engage people** in our work, using every asset – workplace campaigns,

affinity groups, paid/earned/shared/owned media, volunteering, advocacy and more. Generalized support isn't enough. We've got to link people to concrete ways to advance our cause by giving, advocating and volunteering – and show them how their actions will advance solutions.

3. **We must understand our “value add” and lead with that strength.** United Way is seen as the one that can bring diverse partners together around a common cause. We must be intentional about leveraging that strength, powering change efforts and sparking innovative ways of tackling community challenges.
4. **We must act both locally *and* nationally.** United Way is a formidable network, and we can change the world if we act like one. We must work in alignment – and interdependently – across our network to impact national goals, strengthen our national partnerships and transform our leadership as the nation's largest privately funded nonprofit.
5. **We must grow a performance-based culture.** We've got to accelerate our capacity and capability to be change agents, and foster an environment of accountability. Performance and precision execution, with a reliance on data. It's that kind of culture that grows innovation and change leadership, and can position United Way as the “go to” group for any person or organization wanting to solve complex social challenges.

## BRINGING LIVE UNITED TO LIFE

LIVE UNITED isn't an advertising tag line, a bumper sticker or a T-shirt. It's a call to action.

We must accelerate a nationwide movement that builds opportunity for all, and helps United Way fulfill our potential to “do well and do good.”

United Way is only as strong as the people and organizations that we've enlisted to join our cause today, and those we're targeting tomorrow.

That's why it's critical to spark new ideas and new ways of working in our communities.

That's the way to forge stronger connections with, and within, our communities.

And that translates into greater trust, greater credibility and the kind of long-term support needed to transform our communities.

This is what it takes to change the world, and to LIVE UNITED. Are you in?

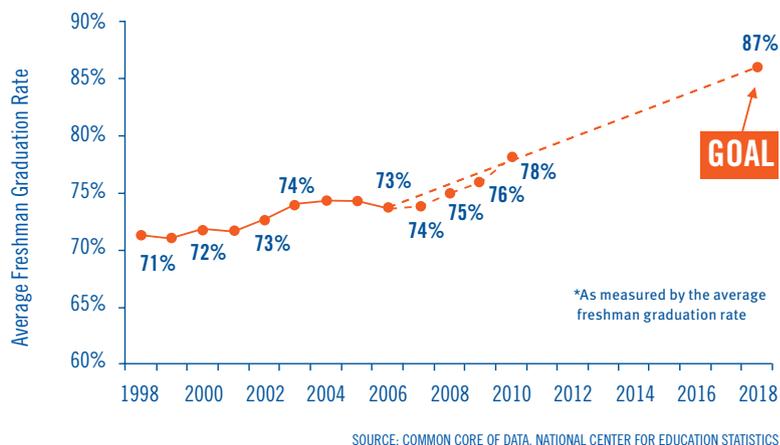
## SHARE YOUR STORY...AND GET THE SCOOP

Share your story. How are you driving community change? How are you inviting people to LIVE UNITED? Wherever you are in your journey, your work can inspire others. Send us the details at [EIHImpact@unitedway.org](mailto:EIHImpact@unitedway.org).

Do you want more information about the education, financial stability and health work United Way is leading? Sign up for issue newsletters at [EIHImpact@unitedway.org](mailto:EIHImpact@unitedway.org) for updates about learning and funding opportunities, and to find out what your colleagues are doing.

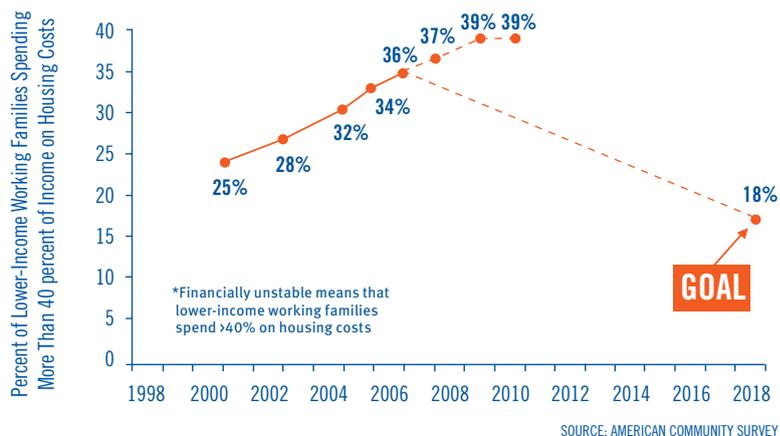
# 2018 BENCHMARK GOALS

## EDUCATION GOAL: Raise the Graduation Rate\*



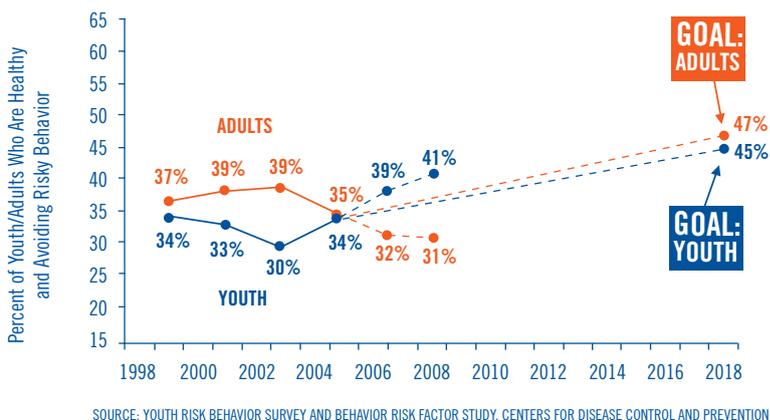
Every year, more than one million students drop out of high school. As a result, fewer young Americans are likely to earn a diploma than their parents, a distinction not shared by any other industrialized country. That's why United Way is working to ensure that children and youth are: (1) ready for school, starting with the skills they need to succeed; (2) reading on track by fourth grade; (3) transitioning successfully to and from middle school; (4) graduating high school on time and (5) working or in advanced education or training by 21.

## INCOME GOAL: Reduce the Number of Low-Wage Working Families Who Are Financially Unstable\*



Over the past 20 years, the cost of living in the United States has increased by almost 90 percent, drastically outpacing income growth. To make ends meet, families are borrowing heavily and relying on high-cost alternatives to cover their daily living expenses. That's why United Way focuses on five building blocks of financial stability: (1) family-sustaining employment; (2) income supports; (3) savings and assets; (4) manageable expenses and (5) affordable housing.

## HEALTH GOAL: Increase Youth and Adults Who Are Healthy and Avoiding Risky Behavior\*



U.S. businesses lose more than \$1 trillion a year in productivity due to chronic illness. More than 45 million people don't have health insurance. And 80 percent of those are young or middle-aged people from working families. That's why United Way is focused on key drivers of health: (1) safe home and community; (2) healthy beginnings; (3) healthy eating and physical activity; (4) supporting healthy choices and (5) access to health care.

\*Adults and youth were measured using separate survey. For youth, the measure is: grade 9–12 students who reported being healthy and avoiding risky behaviors (not involved in school violence; no tobacco or drug use; no alcohol abuse [including drunk driving]; practicing abstinence or safe sex; and not being overweight). For adults, the measure is: adults 18 and over who reported being healthy and avoiding risky behaviors (good overall health; no tobacco use; no alcohol abuse; not obese, no high blood pressure)

**United Way Worldwide**  
701 North Fairfax Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314 U.S.A.  
[UnitedWay.org](http://UnitedWay.org)

For more information go to  
[UnitedWay.org](http://UnitedWay.org)

