

## **The Youth Empowerment Program**

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The program is based on the theoretical framework that high risk youth share inadequate life experiences and lack the skills for positive decision-making. The theory derives from a body of research in social and cognitive psychology, which suggest that attitudes and behaviors can be modified, over time, through counseling motivation, work experience and empowerment. Experience with Camden City youth, over several years, reinforces the logic. Thus, the program, through counseling, referral assessment, internship/work experience, leadership development and student empowerment, generates positive attitude and behaviors which are prime motivators for school, retention abstinence or protective sexual behavior, and formation of long term goals thereby improving quality of life and generating positive life-style in the community. One hundred junior and senior high school students are enrolled in this program.