



UNITED WAY OF METROPOLITAN ATLANTA APAS PILOT

The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta partnered with the Georgia Department of Human Resources, the Governor's Office for Children and Families, and a local family foundation to fund a pilot project involving 15 sites in the metropolitan Atlanta area. The pilot, which started in July of 2008, was developed to provide a methodology to create common youth outcomes across funding sources and to demonstrate program value based on specific outcomes at the agency level.

The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta and the other funding groups elected to implement the Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS). APAS was created by The National Institute of Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and developed with funding from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The system includes two measurement tools: the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO) and the Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT). The tools are designed to help afterschool programs improve program quality and focus on appropriate and realistic outcomes for youth.

A broad spectrum of non-profit organizations, including school-based, parks and recreation, faith-based, smaller individual programs, and Boys and Girls Clubs, was selected by the funding groups for the pilot. A mix of middle and elementary school students and the consensus that data will be shared across the funding sources are key components of the pilot. Twelve of the sites implemented KidTrax® as their web-enabled technology component for entering, managing, and analyzing the data.

"Currently, there are no common youth outcomes among funding sources or shared quality standards across agencies," says Laureen Lamb, Director of Youth Impact for the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. "Once the pilot is complete, we will be able to analyze the data, establish common youth outcomes, and, hopefully, influence them."

The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta pilot project follows on the heels of an AT&T-funded pilot project that NIOST began in Atlanta in 2007. Jenny Thompson, Director of Program Services for Girls Incorporated of Greater Atlanta (Girls Inc.) was involved in the initial pilot and notes: "APAS has truly made a positive difference in how we design and evaluate our programming, how we hire and train our staff, and the ease with which we collect and evaluate needed data and outcome measurements. I could not design a better system than APAS for our organization. For the amount of time you spend in conducting your surveys and inputting data, you will reap great and beneficial rewards in effective evaluation and accurate documentation of outcome measurements."

During the past several years, Girls Inc. had been utilizing a different data collection program and had not been particularly pleased with it. "With our involvement in the APAS project, we became trained on and began using KidTrax," Thompson notes. "All of the Girls Inc. staff are very pleased with our change. KidTrax is a fantastic program and the technical support we received was excellent. We will continue to use KidTrax in the future."

Thompson also notes that her agency completed a data collection integrity review with the Metropolitan Atlanta United Way last year and received high marks. "Our results were achieved, in large part, because APAS and KidTrax helped us organize and validate our data so efficiently."