

# POINTERS FOR PARENTS

## Checking Up On The Health And Happiness Of The Nation's Children

(NAPSA)—Parents generally want to do the right things for their kids, but don't always know how, according to a recent survey. It also found Americans see a direct relationship between the amount of meaningful time adults spend with children and such major issues facing youth today as discipline problems, violence, and substance abuse.

The survey is called the Annual Meaningful Time Check-Up on U.S. Children & Families. It's released every year in conjunction with National KidsDay. Those who care for the nation's children work hard to do their best, found this yearly "snapshot" study, created by Boys & Girls Clubs of America and KidsPeace, the National Center for Kids Overcoming Crisis, but they don't always have the time they need to ensure their children's health and happiness.

Americans assign high values on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the most important, to engaging in physical activity with children (9.0), talking to kids about their problems (9.7), eating nutritious meals (9.3) and getting involved in their children's education (9.7).

While many parents spend three or more hours per week working toward many of these goals, for millions, the realities fall short of their good intentions.

For example:

- With more children being afflicted by obesity and diabetes, more than half (54 percent) of America's parents say they either have no time, little time or wish they had more time to spend in physical activity with their children. A lack of safe playgrounds is a factor for many parents.

- One-quarter of America's par-



### **A new study urges America's parents to take an annual parenting check-up.**

ents have not talked to their children about exposure to drugs, tobacco and alcohol in the last year. Parents in six million households have never talked to their kids about what to do in the event of a fire in the home or if their children get lost. While a majority of parents (56 percent) reported their children are worried about war and terrorism, two out of three have no family emergency plan.

- More than a quarter (27 percent) of the nation's parents say their children have some, limited or no access to quality healthcare.

- A majority of parents (51 percent) say their kids don't eat enough nutritious food. Although they know how important it is for families to eat together, nearly four in 10 eat a home-cooked meal with their kids less than once a day.

- A significant number of adults—nearly a quarter (22 percent)—reported frequent worrisome behavior changes and sadness in their children during the

past year. Parents in 11 million households would like more time to talk to their children about important issues such as school problems or depression.

- Nearly six in 10 demonstrate a gratifying commitment to their children's education, but 50 percent say they don't have enough time or wish they had more time.

On a scale of one to 10 with 10 being extremely healthy and happy, adult caretakers of children rate the overall health and happiness of U.S. children as a 6.2.

As a result of the study, experts and celebrities—such as National KidsDay spokesperson Leeza Gibbons; entertainer and kid safety icon Retro Bill; and "Malcolm in the Middle" star Bryan Cranston—urge Americans to take the "check-up" annually at [www.kidsday.net](http://www.kidsday.net).

Roxanne Spillett, president of Boys & Girls Clubs of America, says: "As with seat belts and vaccinations, we know people will respond to public awareness campaigns. We now call upon the nation's adult caretakers of children to add a new routine to the roster of indispensable safety and health activities."

Adds KidsPeace president and CEO C.T. O'Donnell II: "If you're an adult taking care of children, or if you are concerned about the future of our youth, read the results, take the check-up online and review the useful materials there produced by America's leading experts. There are no right or wrong answers, but you may discover some new tools in your quest to do the best in caring for your children."

For more information on the Check-Up and National KidsDay, visit [www.kidsday.net](http://www.kidsday.net).