

## Background and History

For too many young people in the St. Louis area, the road to adulthood is fraught with risks ranging from poverty and crime, to poor health care, inadequate education, drug abuse and a host of other problems. In fact, more than 140,000 area children, or 1 in 4, live in locales where risks are severe.

The St. Louis region is at a disadvantage for dealing with these problems effectively because of its high degree of fragmentation in government, civic leadership and social services. It is essential to begin working on these problems on a regional and strategic basis.

Vision for Children at Risk was formed by citizens concerned about the well-being of at-risk children, especially those in low-income neighborhoods. Since 1991, Vision for Children at Risk has published six issues of its assessment report on child health and welfare, the Children of Metropolitan St. Louis report. Each of these reports has led to the development of goals and strategies related to children's needs, and in 1998 the St. Louis Metropolitan Children's Agenda was created as the structure for coordinated strategic action. Previously affiliated with the former Project Respond, Vision for Children at Risk was established as a 501(c)(3) agency in 1999.