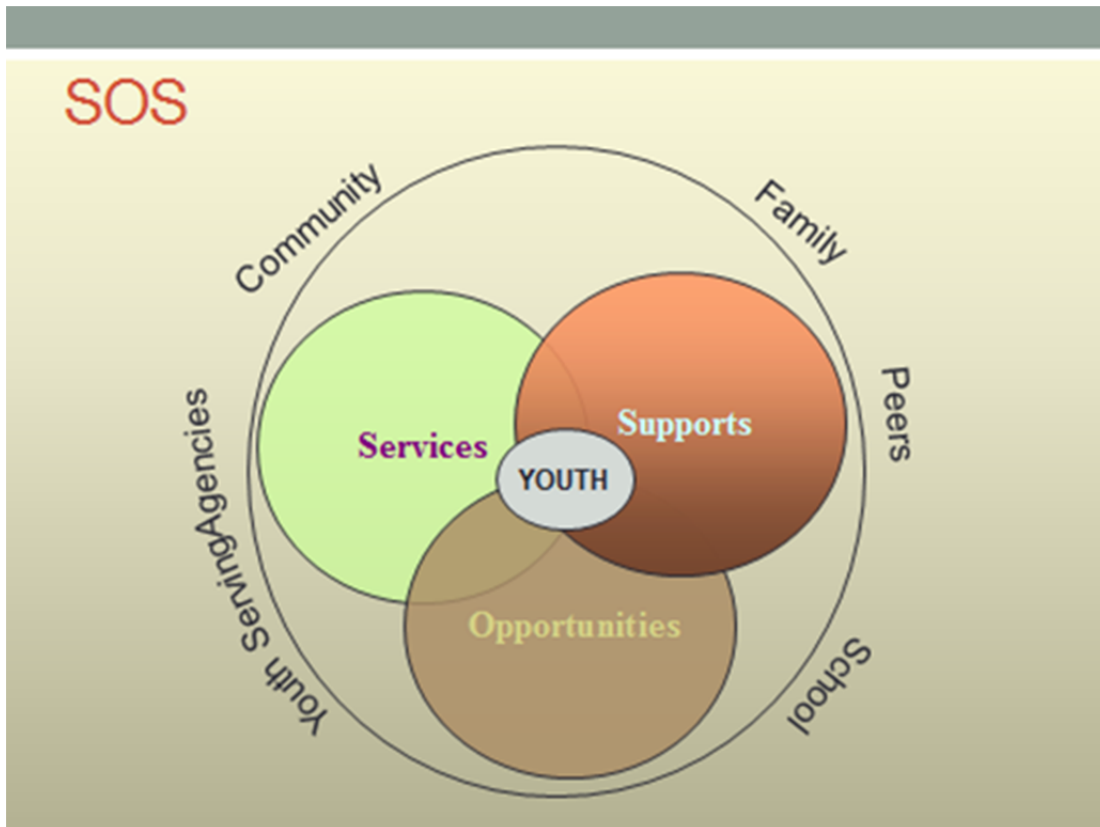


# Services, Opportunities, Supports – The SOS Framework

---

Karen Pittman created the SOS framework to articulate principles and practices that help communities foster optimal youth development.



**SERVICES** are those things done **TO or FOR** young people to enhance health, safety, performance, and other basic needs. These services are often the traditional primary, secondary, and, to some degree, tertiary prevention services provided by public health, school districts, and other social/recreational agencies. They are critical but when they stand alone they are inadequate for fostering well-being. Services meet needs such as:

- Adequate housing
- Safety from physical and psychological harm
- Specialized services, when necessary
- Food and nutrition
- Access to health care
- Instruction in reading, writing, and computing

Young people are **recipients** of services.

**OPPORTUNITIES** are done **BY** young people. Opportunities provide youth with the chances to explore, express, earn, belong, and influence.

Two main types of Opportunities are:

- Opportunities for informal instruction and active learning
- Opportunities for new meaningful, decision making roles and responsibilities

Young people are **actors** rather than recipients.

**SUPPORTS** are those things done **WITH** young people. Supports focus on interpersonal relationships and accessible resources (people and information) that allow a young person to take full advantage of existing services and opportunities.

There are three types of Support:

- Emotional (activities and conditions that facilitate a sense of safety, nurturing, and friendship)
- Motivational (positive expectations, guidance, and developmentally appropriate boundaries)
- Strategic (actions and conditions that facilitate access to needed resources and information)

Young people are **partners** in Supports.

Positive Youth Development is founded on the idea that when schools, youth-serving organizations, businesses, and other community groups intentionally provide services, opportunities, and/or supports to youth, individual young people will accrue enough SOS in the interactions of their daily life to support healthy development.

## Reference

Pittman, K. J., Irby, M., Tolman, J., Yohalem, N., Ferber, T. (2003). *Preventing problems, promoting development, encouraging engagement: Competing priorities or inseparable goals?* Washington, DC: Forum for Youth Investment. <http://forumfyi.org/content/preventing-problems-pr>