ADOLESCENCE IS A DYNAMIC PERIOD of life bridging childhood and adulthood. It begins with the onset of puberty around age 10 and ends at age 25.

TODAY’S ADOLESCENTS ARE MORE CULTURALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE THAN EVER BEFORE

In 2020, the adolescent population will be majority-minority—meaning that more than half will belong to a category other than non-Hispanic White alone.

ADOLESCENCE ENCOMPASSES EARLY ADOLESCENCE (from the onset of puberty to age twelve), middle adolescence (ages 13–15), late adolescence (ages 16–18), and young adulthood (ages 19–25). These stages are defined by biological changes, like the onset of puberty, and social transitions, like moving from middle school to high school.

THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN is uniquely fit to meet the needs of this stage of life, allowing young people to explore new environments and build new relationships with the world and people around them.

ADOLESCENTS FORM and reform their identities—figuring out who you are, what you value, and what you aspire to—as they grow and gain new experiences.

THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN has exceptional capacity for resilience, making adolescence a period of opportunity for intervention and healing from past adversity.

CHANGES IN BRAIN STRUCTURE and function result in adolescents’ heightened sensitivity to rewards, willingness to take risks, and awareness of social status—tendencies that are necessary for branching out and learning more about the world and themselves.

DURING ADOLESCENCE, young people learn to make decisions and take responsibility for shaping their lives, but they still need guidance and support from adult caregivers. Supportive and nurturing relationships with caregivers are just as important for adolescents as they are for young children.

MANY YOUTH FACE INEQUALITIES IN OPPORTUNITY because of disparities in community resources and bias that may exist in social systems, but these disparities are not immutable.

The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth
Available for download or to read online at www.nap.edu