Mapping Ages 6 – 18 Report
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Why is this Important?

With the onset of puberty typically at the age of 11 and 12, the teen years are a period of rapidly increasing intellectual and hormonal development. While all ages of development in children are important, the preteen and teen years is the time when a child's mind is maturing and laying the foundation for adult life. Research has shown that teens tend to engage in riskier behavior until they reach their 20s. And according to research, the most dangerous age is 14.

Eighteen percent of Alachua County's population is under the age of 18, of which, nearly 70% are ages 6 to 18.

Process

Our mapping session was held virtually utilizing tools and techniques to engage all participants. Our participants work closely with youth in a variety of ways: schools, afterschool providers, juvenile justice, mental health, etc., so it was crucial that we heard from everyone during our time together. To organize the work, we divided the age groups into two categories: middle and high school children ages 12 – 18 and elementary school children ages 6 – 11. We decided to start the day focused on the older age group.

Participants were asked to share what they believe were the critical issues facing children ages 12 – 18 in the four specified priority areas of the Children's Trust: Health, Education, Safety, and Caregiver Support. After each brainstorming session, participants were asked to expand upon their responses then prioritize the top three critical issues. After each of the four priority areas were completed, participants were asked to complete two sentences:
1) *In eight years, we will know we have succeeded because…*
2) *In order to succeed we need to…*

After completing the older group, participants repeated the process focused on elementary aged children, however in the essence of time, the priority areas were condensed into two: Health & Safety and Education/Caregiving Support. Results were compiled and tallied to determine key findings.

Additionally, participants were asked to share current resources working within each of the four priority areas to capture any additional gaps. All supplemental materials has been provided.

There was an overwhelming consensus on the issues, desired outcomes, and solutions from all participants.

Mental Health
Mental health services, accessibility to and awareness of, was a top priority for both age groups as a critical issue, desired outcome, gap and solution. Repeatedly, the need for more widely available mental health services covering a broad spectrum of issues starting with self-image and coping mechanisms to trauma services. Suggestions included:
- Providers, such as afterschool programs, mentors, tutors, working with youth should receive Mental Health First Aid training
- Coordinated collaboration between providers and teachers to expert resources
- More diverse counselors
- Services should be wrap-around and include family as well
- Focus on implications of social media/peer pressure
- Coping skills and mechanisms should be provided at younger ages

Education
All participants agreed that outcomes should include increased graduation rates, decreased dropout rates, improved academic performance. However, what was notably missing was a "seamless pathway" for academic and vocation exploration and training. Exposing middle school-aged children to possible career paths and providing employment opportunities for teens would better prepare them for adult life.

Other issues prohibiting the education success for children include:
- Lack of resources for caregivers who may not be equipped to help with schoolwork
- Concern about the increasing educational gap due to remote learning
- Lack of emotional and academic preparedness for elementary aged children entering middle school

Safety
The increase in gun violence, gang activity, and juvenile arrest was the most pressing issue our older group is facing. The lack of safe places and providers focused on truancy and crime prevention was repeated as a concern. This category had the lowest entries for local resources. Improved communications between schools and afterschool programs could help address truancy issues.

Caregiver Support
The need for family/caregiving support resonated across all priority issues. More neighborhood-centered programs providing access for caregivers and children to resources such as education (tutoring programs), mental health services, safety, basic needs, transportation, were suggested repeatedly. Caregivers of all aged children need to know support is available for them and how to access those resources.

Final Thoughts
More than ten years ago, we conducted a similar session with more than 40 providers. The most pressing issues we faced at that time was the lack of senior resources and the increase in teen pregnancy. Since that session, our community has built robust programs for seniors, and teen pregnancy has been replaced with concerns of our youth's mental health. What still lingers from our session a decade ago is the need for transportation and coordinated collaboration among providers – especially providers working with our youth. No child should be left behind or slip through the cracks.

Respectfully submitted,

		Current Critical Issues - Prioritized	GAPS	Desired Outcomes	Solutions
Middle & High School Ages 12 - 18	Health: Mental & Physical	• Access to Mental Health Services • Substance Abuse • Depression	• Accessibility • Coordination • Awareness of resources	• Increase in acceptance of mental health services • Decrease in substance abuse reports • Decrease in teen suicide rates	• Awareness of resources • Transportation • Reduce stigma • Diverse counselors
	Education	Educational equity	Coordination of resources/communication between schools and afterschool resources	• Increase in graduation rates • Improved school performances • Decrease in school dropout rates	Increase in mentoring and tutoring services
		Lack of Parental Support	Disproportional resources available to parents	Increase in parental participation with teachers/providers	Educational resources for caregivers i.e. tutoring, afterschool homework help Mentoring
		Truancy/Lack of Engagement	Lack of communication between school and afterschool providers	Decrease in truancy reports	Increase in communication between school and afterschool providers
		Workforce Support/Placement	Lack of Teen Work Programs/Career Exploration Transportation Lack of awareness for current resources	• Increased rates of employed teens • Increased rates of career exploration & decisions	Seamless pathway for career and academic tracks starting in middle school and continuing through high school
	Safety	Gun Violence	Lack of funding & providers Lowest report of resources	• Decrease in juvenile arrests • Decrease in youth gun violence reports	• Safe places • Programs focused on reducing gang participation
		Peer Pressure/Social Media	Lack of monitoring cyberbullying incidents	Increase reports of improved self image	

		Current Critical Issues - Prioritized	GAPS	Desired Outcomes	Solutions
		Lack of Supervised Programs/Safe Places	Lack of awareness for current resources	Increase in participation in afterschool programs	
	Family/Caregiver Support	Financial Concerns	Lack of accessible neighborhood-centered resources	Awareness of resources available for caregivers and children	Community-based resources for caregivers and children
		Lack of Parent at Home			
		Lack of Resources			
		Generational Barriers			
		Current Critical Issues - Prioritized	**GAPS**	**Desired Outcomes**	**Solutions**
Elementary Ages 6 - 11	**Health & Safety**	Lack of quality out of school time	Transportation

Lack of coordinated training for providers | Better out of school time

Minimize wait list for out of school programs

Accessibility to out of school programs | Local standards for out of school programs

Coordinated transportation |
		Lack of Social & Emotional Skills			
		Trauma	Awareness of current local resources	Trauma services provided at the earliest possible time	
	Education & Family/Caregiver Support	Lack of Family Support & Resources	Community-based resources for caregivers and children	Increased rates of parental participation with teachers & schools	Community-based resources for caregivers and children
		Basic Needs Not Being Met	Community-based resources for caregivers and children		
		Lack of Excitement for Education		Lower rates of children being retained

Resilient youth, prepared both socially & academically, for the rigors of middle school | |