

Youth/Young Adult Community Needs Assessment

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Background

The Core Four Partnership is a collaboration established in February 2020 between the City of San Marcos, Hays County, San Marcos CISD, and Texas State University. The partnership is led by Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas through the establishment of Youth Services. The purpose of the partnership is to continue the work of the 2013 Youth Master Plan. In Fall of 2021, Youth Services joined the Texas Youth Action Network Collaborative (TYAN) where education and training were provided to learn about Positive Youth Development Philosophy and how to incorporate PYD throughout the partnership. In doing so, the partnership was selected in June 2023 as the Regional Pod Leader and secured funding for one year through Texas Youth Action Network (TYAN). The partnership was tasked with creating a coalition working group to gather information about the needs of local youth and young adults and to use that information to assist local agencies and organizations to better serve Hays County youth, young adults, and their families. Specifically, the Core Four Partnership was tasked with the following:

1. Establish a working group consisting of 5 Youth Adult Partnerships
2. Complete a Community Needs Assessment
3. Create goals and activities that would meet the goals set by the coalition working group

The project began in June 2023 and concluded in May 2024. Three phases were established to help meet the benchmarks set by Texas Youth Action Network.



The Youth Coalition Working Group (YCWP) consisted of the following groups: Students Opportunities for Applied Research (SOAR), Student Support Services Association, Greater San Marcos Youth Council, Star Teens at the San Marcos Public Library, San Marcos Housing Authority Teen Program, and the Core Four Partnership Youth Task Force. This group worked collectively to meet the goals set by Texas Youth Action Network. Members were required to



complete the TYAN Collaborative and complete the Youth Development Training Series offered through TYAN.

As part of the Core Four YCWG, the SOAR Program at Texas State University was instrumental in the work of the community needs assessment. SOAR (Student Opportunities for Applied Research) is a program developed by the Sociology Department and the Center for Diversity and Gender Studies at Texas State. Four undergraduate students in the Sociology Department are selected to work closely with Sociology faculty to conduct a community-based research project. Over the 2023-2024 academic year, the SOAR Scholars helped the Core Four Partnership conduct a youth/young adult community needs assessment. Specifically, the SOAR scholars helped the partners create surveys, conduct focus groups, analyze data, and prepare reports and presentations. This report provides the Core Four Partnership with a summary of this research.



Methodology

The Core Four youth/young adult needs assessment is a mixed-method study, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The goals of the needs assessment, established by the Core Four, are to assess mental health, belonging, and career readiness of local youth and young adults. It was also designed to assess the use of existing services and gaps or opportunities for new services and programs. In the fall of 2023, the Core Four partners worked with Texas State and the SOAR program to conduct four focus groups to gather this information. The focus groups were conducted with representatives from four target populations; local agencies/organizations serving youth/young adults, parents of youth/young adults, youth aged 11-24, and Texas State students between the ages of 18-24. Before distributing the survey, a focus group was held to provide feedback on its design. Survey links were distributed in late fall of 2023 by several of the Core Four agencies and other local partners. The response rate was excellent, resulting in survey data being collected for a sample of 619 youth/young adults (Y/YA) and Texas State students (TXST), and 135 parents and/or stakeholders. This project was deemed exempt from institutional review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (#8507). The data represented in the charts is reflective of the participants' responses. Participants were not required to answer all questions and were free to respond to those they felt comfortable with.

Table 1. Demographics of Sample

Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the survey respondents, separated into subgroups. The analyses that follow provide results for these distinct groups.

<i>Demographics of Sample</i>	<i>TXST Students (n=205)</i>		<i>Youth/Young Adults (11-24) (n=414)</i>		<i>Parents (n=99)</i>		<i>Stakeholders (n=36)</i>	
<i>TXST Students and Youth/Young Adult Education</i>								
Enrolled in College or Trade School	205	100%	7	1%				
Enrolled in High School			214	52%				
Enrolled in Middle School			172	42%				
Not Enrolled			21	5%				
<i>Parent and Stakeholder Education</i>								
Some High School and Less Than High School					9	9%	0	0
High School Graduate/GED					21	21%	0	0
Some College					24	24%	1	3%
Vocational Program or Associate Degree					12	12%	0	0
Bachelor's Degree					20	20%	13	36%
Graduate Degree					13	13%	22	61%



Health Insurance								
Yes, Family and I	136	66%	242	58%	67	67%		
Yes, Family, but Not I	21	10%	14	3%	21	21%		
Yes, I do, but Not Family	14	7%	17	4%	6	6%		
No, Family and Not I	20	10%	28	%	6	6%		
Race/Ethnicity								
Hispanic	112	58%	187	60%	54	54%	21	58%
White	94	49%	104	33%	51	43%	17	47%
Black	17	9%	31	10%	6	5%	3	8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	4	2%	14	4%	3	2%	3	8%
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	7	4%	17	5%	2	2%	1	3%
Other	1	0.5%	19	6%	3	2%	0	0%
Gender								
Cisgender Female	120	72%	133	57%	63	69%	27	79%
Cisgender Male	41	25%	76	32%	12	13%	5	15%
Gender Non-Conforming	6	3.6%	25	11%	4	4%	0	0%
Immigrant								
No	187	97%	272	88%	96	96%	34	94%
Yes	6	3%	19	6%	4	4%	2	6%
Don't Know			20	6%				
Parent Is an Immigrant								
No	141	75%	212	68%				
Yes	47	25%	69	22%				
Don't Know			30	7%				



Key Findings

In the findings outlined below, we highlight the most notable findings in the priority areas identified by the Youth Coalition Working Group. The results of all survey questions for each subgroup are contained in Appendix A (along with the survey questions).

Mental Health

The respondents (Youth/Young Adults and Texas State Students) were asked how often their mental health was not good during the last 30 days. Poor mental health was defined as a mental state where the respondent may be experiencing stress, anxiety, and/or depression. Across all respondent groups, the most common response to the question was “Sometimes.” Figures 1 & 2 show the distribution of the responses for youth/young adults (Y/YA) and Texas State (TXST) students.

Among the youth/young adult sample, 30.2% report having poor mental health most of the time or always. This percentage is even higher for Texas State students (35.1%).

Figure 1: How often Y/YA experienced poor mental health

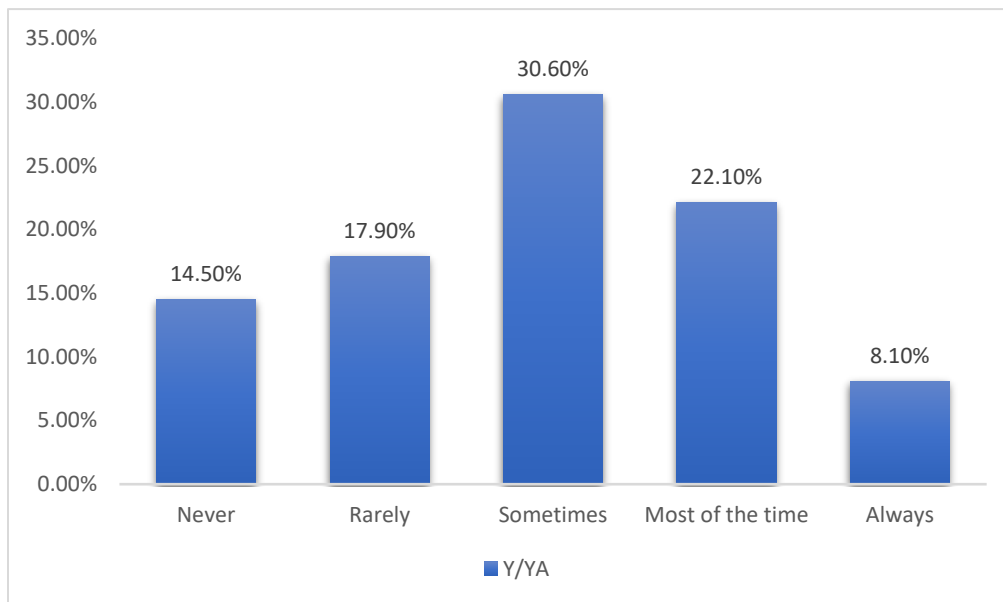




Figure 2: How often TXST students experienced poor mental health

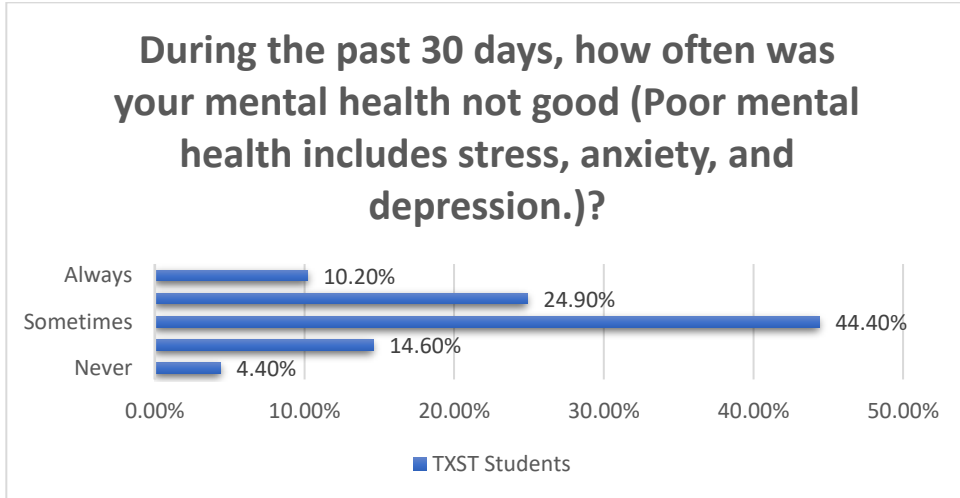
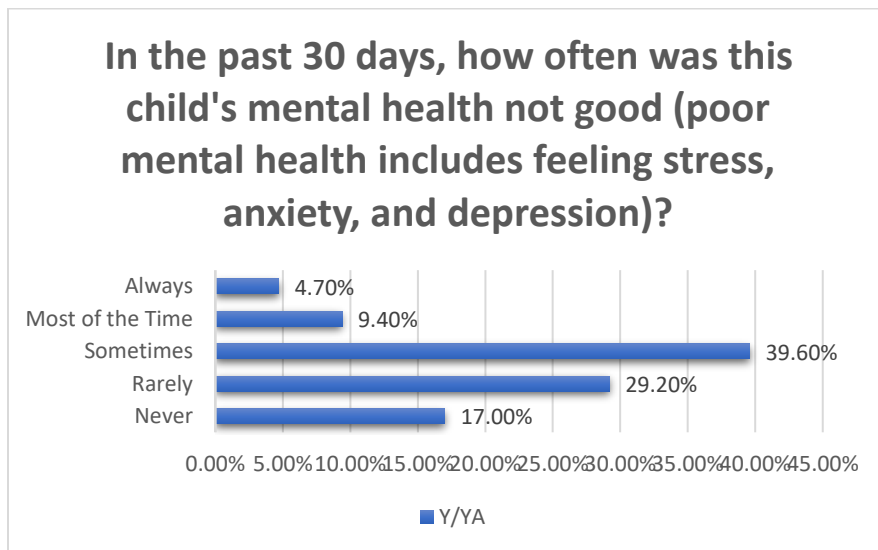


Figure 2 suggests that most of the youth/young adults in Hays County (including Texas State students) are doing relatively well with mental health, but there is a sizable portion of the population that is experiencing poor mental health.

These findings contrast with how often parents perceive youth as having poor mental health. The graph below depicts parents' perceptions of how often their youth's mental health was poor.

Figure 3: Parent perception of how often youth mental health was poor





When asked how often their child’s mental health was poor in the last 30 days, 14.1% of parents reported between “Most of the Time” or “Always.” This suggests that parents perceive their youth’s mental health as poor less often than the youth are self-reporting. This finding indicates that parents may be underestimating the extent of their youth’s mental health problems. Additionally, the youth were asked to complete the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and the General Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7). The PHQ-9 and the GAD-7 are standardized mental health screeners for depression and anxiety and are used in clinical practices. Each screener produces a numeric score and scores of ten or higher are used as the cut points for clinical levels of depression and/or anxiety (suggesting moderate to severe levels of depression and/or anxiety). The following charts show the proportion of youth who screened positive for clinical depression and/or clinical anxiety.

Figure 4: Proportion of Y/YA who screened positive for clinical depression

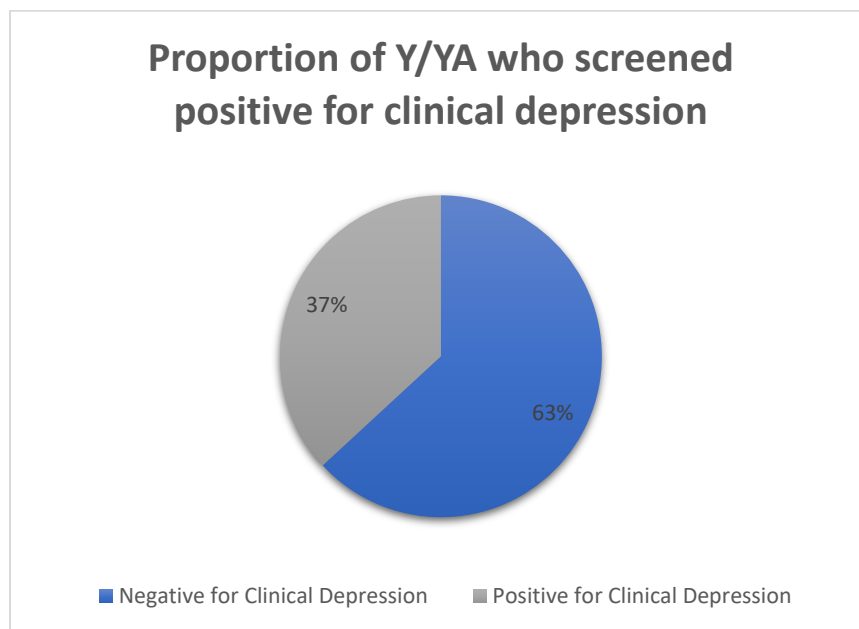




Figure 5: Proportion of Y/YA who screened positive for anxiety disorder

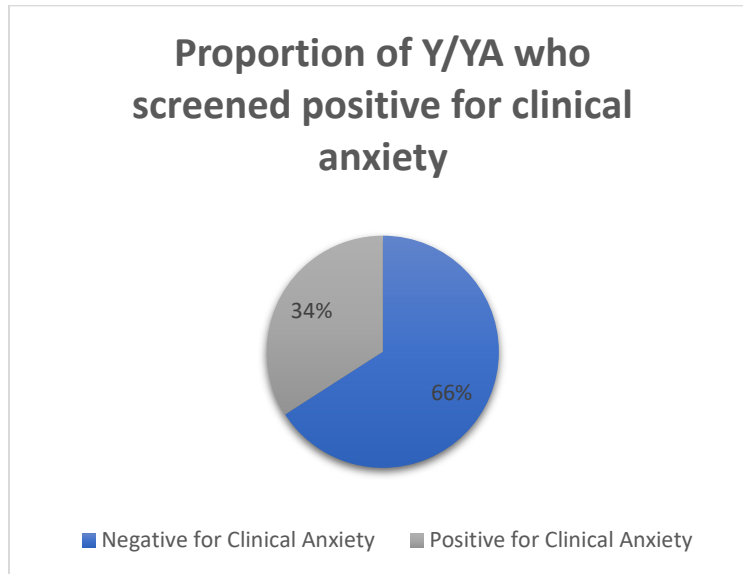


Figure 6: Proportion of TXST students who screened positive for clinical depression

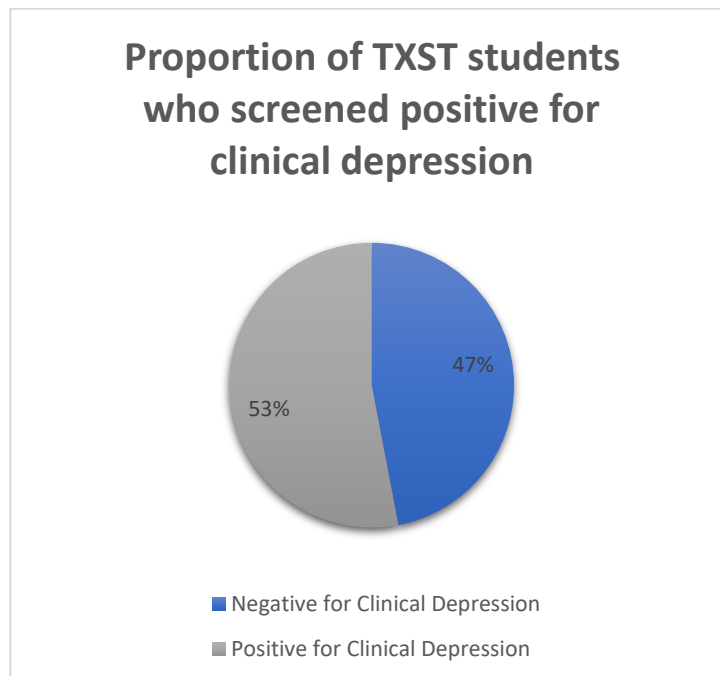
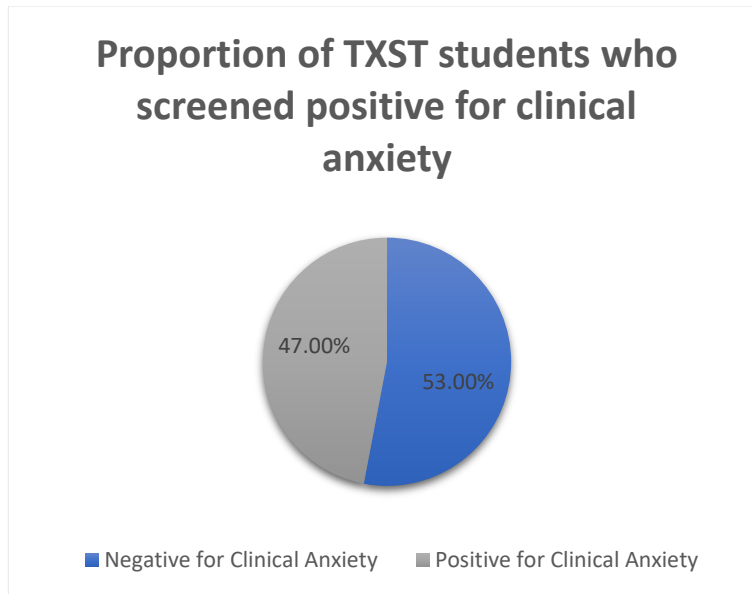




Figure 7: Proportion of TXST students who screened positive for anxiety disorder

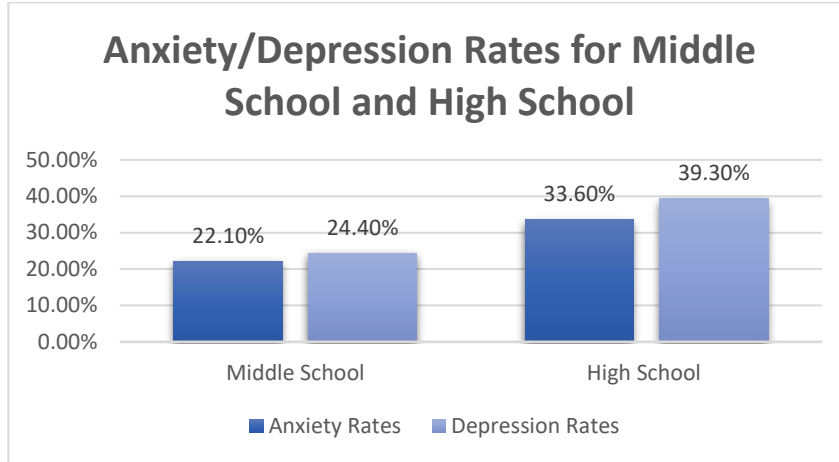


From the responses, we find that one in three Y/YA are experiencing moderate to severe depression or moderate to severe anxiety. For TXST students, we find that one in two students are experiencing moderate to severe depression or moderate to severe anxiety. These numbers indicate a significant portion of youth who are suffering from poor mental health and validate respondents' self-reports of poor mental health. While we cannot be certain that our volunteer sample is generalizable to all local youth and/or Texas State students, our data suggest that a sizable proportion of the respondents completing our surveys do experience clinical levels of depression and/or anxiety.

We were also curious about whether these rates differed across demographics. Figures 8 through 10 show anxiety/depression rates across middle and high school, gender, and race for Y/YA. We present only results that indicated statistically significant differences in depression and/or anxiety by subgroup (chi square; $p \leq .05$)

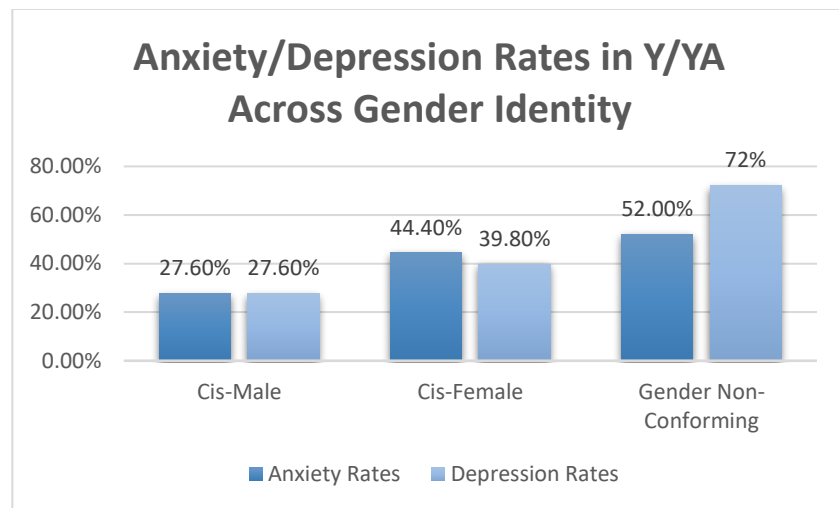


Figure 8: Anxiety/Depression rates in Y/YA between middle and high school



Based on the figure above, we find that high schoolers have higher rates for screening positive for anxiety or depression. This finding indicates that high school students may be experiencing poorer mental health than middle school students.

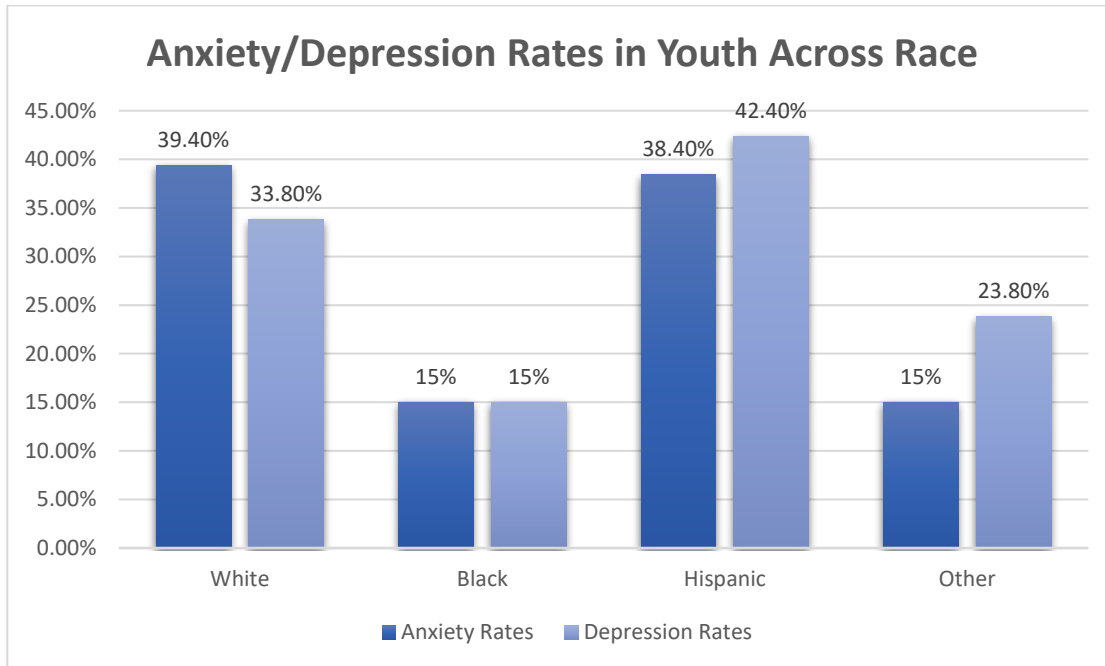
Figure 9: Anxiety/Depression rates in Y/YA across gender



In Figure 9 above, we find that gender non-conforming respondents (includes transgender, non-binary, etc.) have the highest rates of screening positive for anxiety and depression.



Figure 10: Anxiety/Depression rates in Y/YA across race



Lastly, from the figure above, we find that Hispanic youth have the highest rate of screening positive for depression. Both white and Hispanic youth have high rates of screening positive for anxiety.

There were no statistically significant demographic differences in depression and anxiety among the TXST student sample. We also looked into immigrant status as a factor and found that having immigrant parents or being an immigrant was not related to depression or anxiety rates for Y/YA and TXST students (chi square; $p > .05$).

Youth participants were also asked how often they used alcohol or recreational drugs to cope with stress. We asked this question because frequency of substance use is often an indicator or a response to poor mental health. About 6% of Y/YA self-reported using alcohol or recreational drugs to cope with stress at least monthly. Meanwhile, about 20% of TXST students self-reported use at least weekly. We can conclude that there is a greater concern about frequency of substance use for TXST students than for Y/YA.

All respondents were asked how they would rate youth mental health in the community on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning poor mental health and 5 meaning excellent. The average rating across all groups was 2.95, meaning neither poor nor excellent. The table below depicts the average rating of youth mental health for each group.



Table 2: Average ratings of Youth Mental Health

	Groups			
	Y/YA	TXST Students	Parents	Stakeholders
Youth Mental Health Scale of 1 (Poor Mental health) to 5 (Excellent)	3.16	2.95	2.95	2.71

The average score for the Y/YA is higher than the other groups, meaning that Y/YA’s perception of youth mental health is slightly more positive than the perceptions of other groups. These findings are interesting when compared to the findings of how individual respondents reported on their own mental health. The patterns suggest that Y/YA might think Y/YA are doing better than they are when compared to what parents and stakeholders report.

The youth groups were asked about how they take care of their mental health. Figures 11 through 12 show the most common responses for each youth group.

Figure 11: What do Y/YA do to take care of their mental health

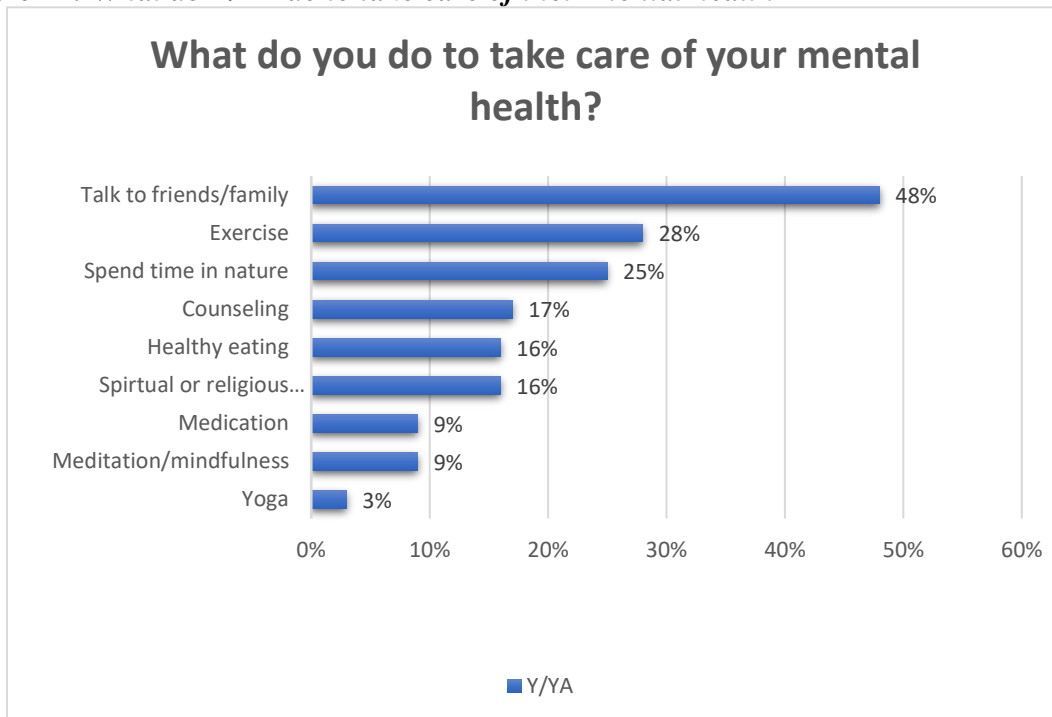
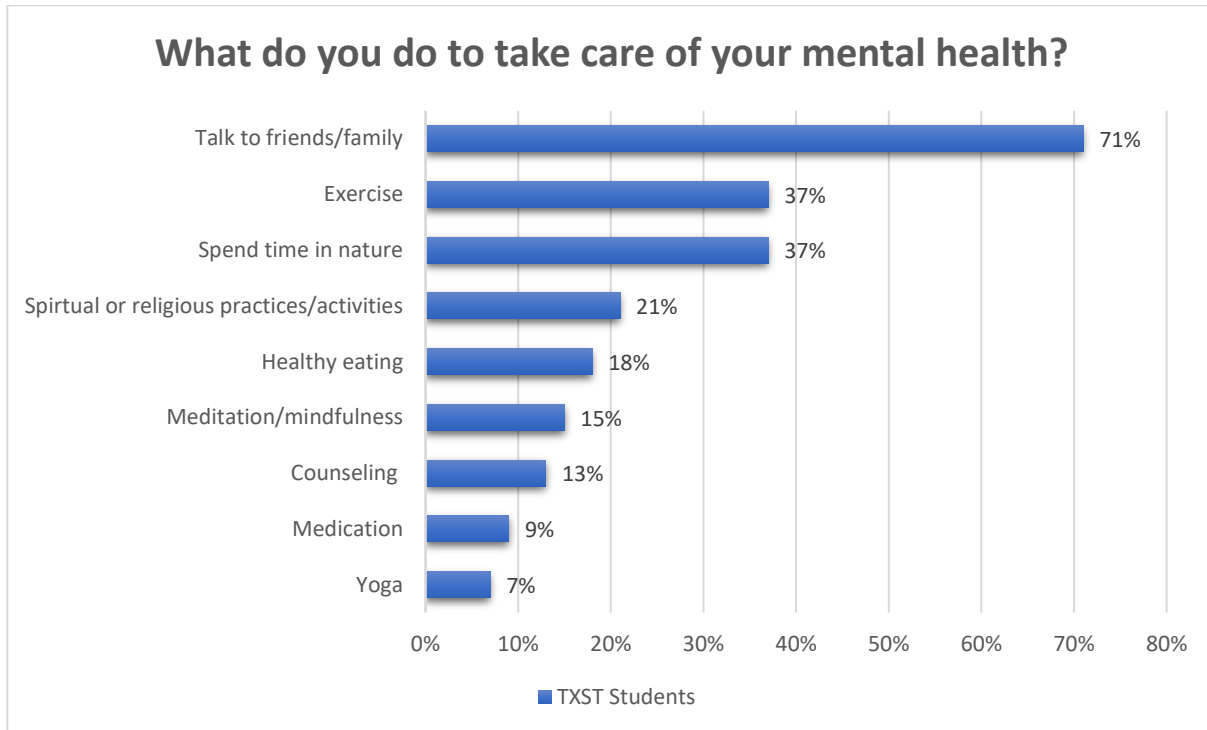




Figure 12: What TXST students do to take care of their mental health



Based on Figures 11 and 12, the most common ways youth are currently taking care of their mental health involve talking to friends or family, exercising, or spending time in nature. Yoga and meditation are among the least common methods for all youth respondents.

Respondents were asked to write in additional mental health practices, with most listing hobbies like music, sports, or art. The majority of responses indicate that youth in Hays County primarily rely on personal hobbies and social interactions with friends and family, as well as physical activities like exercise and spending time outdoors, rather than seeking out community services for mental health support.

In summary, our analysis reveals that while many young people are doing quite well in terms of their mental health, a significant portion are struggling. Interestingly, although perceptions of youth mental health are generally consistent across respondent groups, the Y/YA demographic tends to view youth mental health more positively. Moreover, parental perceptions may underestimate the challenges faced by their own children. Notably, social and physical activities, and hobbies are the most prevalent strategies employed by youth to maintain mental well-being.



The following section will delve into the sense of belonging and community connection among youth, to explore external influences on their mental health.

Community Belonging, Engagement, and Safety

Youth and young adults (Y/YA) and Texas State students were asked how they felt about different communities including their city, school, extracurricular communities (e.g. clubs, sports teams, organizations), and online communities. Table 3 and 4 summarize their responses. Respondents were asked to identify where they felt they mattered, belonged, and felt safe. We initially intended for respondents to be able to choose multiple responses (communities). Unfortunately, a technical problem with our online survey kept respondents from being able to enter more than one response to this question. However, this “forced” choice provided an unexpected, but intriguing glimpse at respondents’ choices for where they might feel most connected and safe.

Table 3: Youth/Young Adult Respondents (n=414)

	Matter In	Belong In	Feel Safe In
City	28.8%	33.5%	43.7%
School	28.8%	19.9%	18.9%
Extracurriculars (e.g. clubs, sports, organizations)	29.4%	29.7%	24.8%
Online Communities	13.0%	16.8%	12.6%
None of the Above	22.2%	23.9%	23.4%

Table 4: Texas State Students (n=205)

	Matter In	Belong In	Feel Safe In
City	20.6%	25.8%	30.3%
School	34.9%	34.9%	35.1%
Extracurriculars (e.g. clubs, sports, organizations)	36.5%	32.3%	29.3%
Online Communities	7.9%	7.0%	5.3%
None of the Above	7.8%	9.3%	8.3%

Table 3 reveals that Y/YA are most likely to report that they matter, feel a sense of belonging in, and feel safe in their city and extracurricular organizations. While a sizable percentage report that



they feel they matter in their school, they were much less likely to report that they belong or feel safe in their school. Very few Y/YA report online communities as their top choice in any area. This is interesting given the amount of time Y/YA engage in online communities; we'll speak about this later in the report. Results also reveal that almost one in four Y/YA do not feel they matter, belong, or feel safe in any of the communities listed. Table 4 shows Texas State students were much more likely to feel a sense of belonging and safety in their school, and far fewer respondents reported a lack of belonging in any community (relative to Y/YA respondents). In addition to asking respondents about various communities, the survey contained questions to help us dig more deeply into the concepts of belonging, engagement, and feeling safe. Feeling safe is essential for positive mental health and necessary before youth can develop a sense of belonging and connection with other people and environments. Results reveal notable concerns with feelings of safety.

While on school property, 17.6% of Y/YA feel unsafe and 0.2% have been threatened with a weapon. When asked if they ever brought a weapon to school, 90% of youth and young adults reported that they had not done so in the last 12 months. However, 16 out of 336 respondents said they have at some time in the past, a factor that could contribute to them not feeling safe. Witnessing violence was not uncommon among the students, with 43.8% of Y/YA observing physical fights on school property, and 7.4% reporting being directly involved. These statistics are notable and may reflect the lack of feeling safe at school.

Bullying can significantly impact a person's feelings of safety. Twenty-one percent of respondents reported experiencing bullying, with 4.8% facing it in-person, 7.8% encountering it online, and 8.4% experiencing both in-person and online.

Because safe spaces have a positive effect on mental health, we asked the youth several questions regarding safe spaces in their community. We defined a safe space as a place "where an individual or group can be free from discrimination, criticism, harassment, or harm."

- Just under half of Y/YA know of safe spaces in their community.
- TXST students demonstrate higher levels of awareness, with 60.1% reporting knowledge of safe space.
- Of those who know of safe spaces, 58% of Y/YA and 65.5% of TXST students have utilized them.
- If more safe spaces were created, 44% of Y/YA and 62.4% of TXST students would use them.

The physical characteristics of neighborhoods can also impact one's sense of safety. We asked how visibly untidy their neighborhoods are (e.g., litter or garbage on the street or sidewalk, poorly kept or rundown housing, vandalism such as broken windows or graffiti). This can affect a person's perception of their environment, causing unease when walking through it on a day-to-day basis.



Figure 13: Y/YA Respondents
How visibly untidy is your neighborhood?

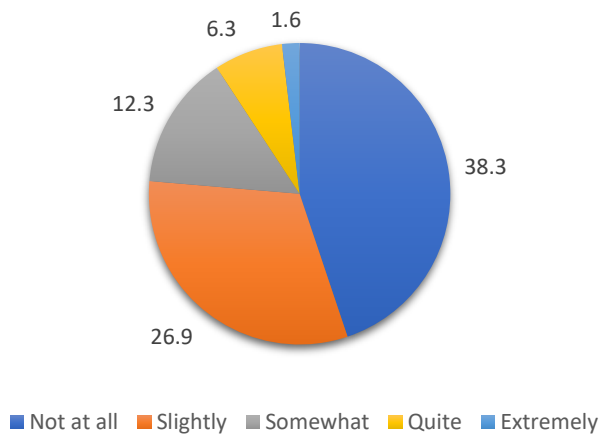
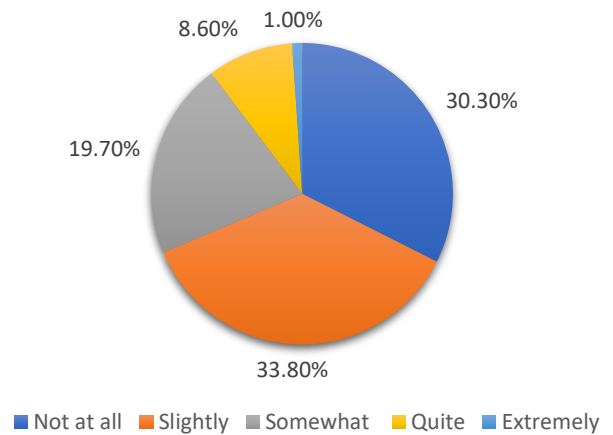


Figure 14: TXST Students
How visibly untidy is your neighborhood?



Figures 13 and 14 reveal that 7.9% of Y/YA and 9.6% of TXST students report that their neighborhoods are quite or extremely untidy. However, a majority of respondents (65.2% Y/YA; 64.1% TXST students) reported their neighborhoods *are* tidy (Not at all + Slightly). The effects of the tidiness of neighborhoods on mental health will be explored in the Predictors of Mental Health section.

The survey also asked about the different ways respondents are engaged with their communities and the types of support they might get from them. Among Y/YA respondents, 48.7% participate in clubs and organizations, 39.8% engage in community service, and 32.5% are involved in paid work. While these figures indicate a substantial portion of Y/YA respondents are active in their communities, there is also a notable proportion who are not engaged.

Respondents were asked whether they receive the emotional and social support they need and if they feel socially distant from others. Results reveal that most Y/YA report feeling socially connected and supported, and they receive this support in person. However, about one-third report that they don't receive the support they need (29%) and feel socially distant from others (34.3%). These numbers show that a significant portion of youth lack emotional and social support and feel socially disconnected.

Likewise, most Texas State students report feeling socially connected and supported. The majority of those who do receive social and emotional support receive it in person (63%). However, approximately one in five indicated not receiving needed support (19.5%), and one-

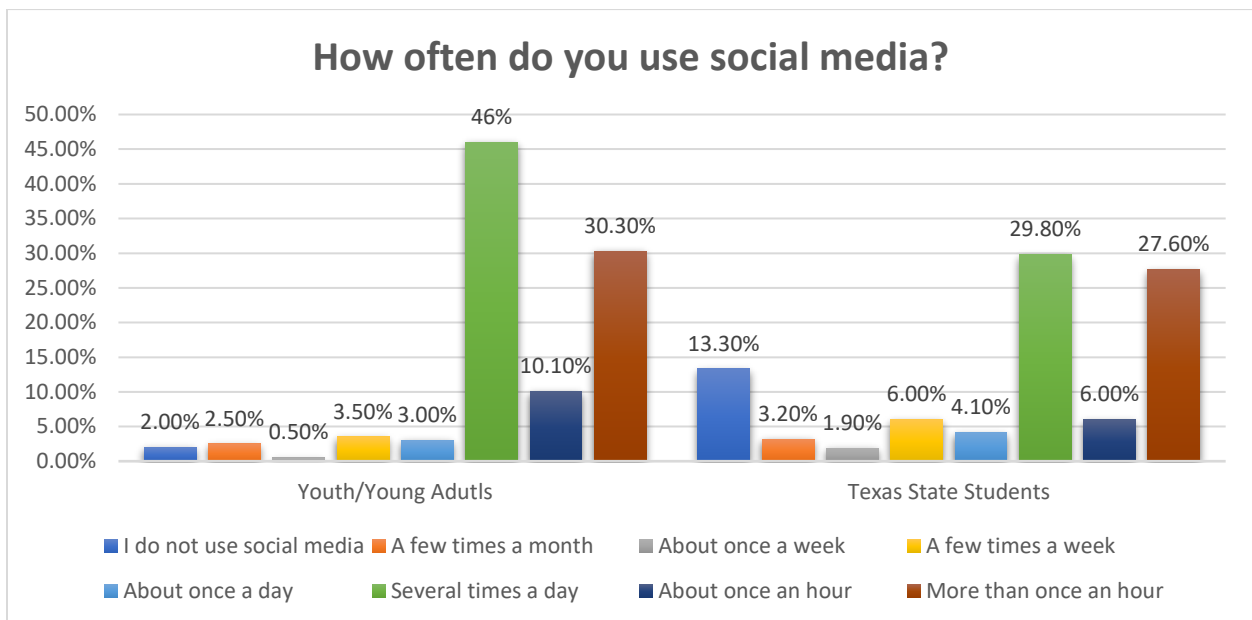


third (34.3%) report feeling socially distant from others. Alongside social connection, engagement emerges as another crucial aspect of mental well-being.

Regarding engagement, two out of three TXST student respondents reported participating in clubs and organizations (65.2%), and/or community service (62.6%), and 74% participated in paid work. This means that overall, two-thirds of the TXST respondents are active in the San Marcos community.

Social media was another place we looked into for engagement. Figure 14 chart shows social media usage of Y/YA and TXST students.

Figure 15: Social media usage among youth



Based on the data, 89% of Y/YA respondents and 68% of TXST respondents use social media at least once a day. These statistics indicate that social media is a large component of the youth’s lives. In the “Predictors of Mental Health” section, we explore how social media affects youth mental health.

This section highlights the critical role of feeling safe in fostering the youth's sense of belonging. While most Y/YA generally feel a sense of safety in their city and extracurricular activities, Y/YA express the least sense of safety within their schools. Moreover, concerning community



engagement, a substantial number of youth participate in extracurriculars, jobs, or volunteer work, although the majority of Y/YA do not.

Furthermore, regarding feeling supported and connected, one-third of the youth experience feeling social distanced, and a significant portion of Y/YA, along with a fifth of TXST students, do not receive the necessary support. The relationship between these variables and youth mental health will be further examined in the Predictors of Mental Health section.

Basic Needs

Respondents were asked questions about their basic needs such as financial needs and affording nutritious food. Many youth/young adults (Y/YA), their families, and Texas State students have significant basic and financial needs. Respondents were asked if they or someone in their family didn't get the health care they needed in the last year because they couldn't afford it. Among parents, 43.9% said yes (only 16.6% of youth said yes but may not be aware of their parents' situation). Among Texas State students, 28.8% reported that they did not receive the health care they/their family needed because of the cost.

Among parents, 42.5% report that they have had trouble paying their bills, and 34% report that the utility companies threatened to cut off their services in the past year. Approximately one in four (26.6%) Y/YA report that they often can't afford to eat nutritious meals and an additional 9.5% report not being able to afford enough food at all (total=36.1%). These concerns are present to an even greater degree for Texas State students, where 38% report they have trouble affording nutritious food, and an additional 15.6% say they don't have enough money for food (total=53.6%). Food insecurity is also confirmed by parents, where 34.9% reported that they often can't afford healthy food and an additional 20.8% reported not always having enough money to buy food (total=55.7%). With respect to health insurance, most survey respondents report that they do have health insurance (63.4%, 68.2%, and 73.1% respectively). However, a sizable percentage of Y/YA did not know if they have health insurance (26.4%). Lastly, transportation was a problem for about one in five survey respondents (20% for Y/YA, 23% for Texas State students, and 22.4% of parents).

Career Planning

High school respondents were asked about the different career-planning, career-exploration, and work-based opportunities they participated in in high school (*Note: The names of the high schools the respondents attend was not recorded*).

Based on the survey, most of the high school students in Hays County are solely receiving career-based education, but not given sufficient opportunities for career application, for example, less than 10% reported ever attending a career fair, engaging in job shadowing or receiving



financial literacy training. The following graphs display the distribution of the responses from high school students.

Figure 16: Career-Planning Experiences while in high school

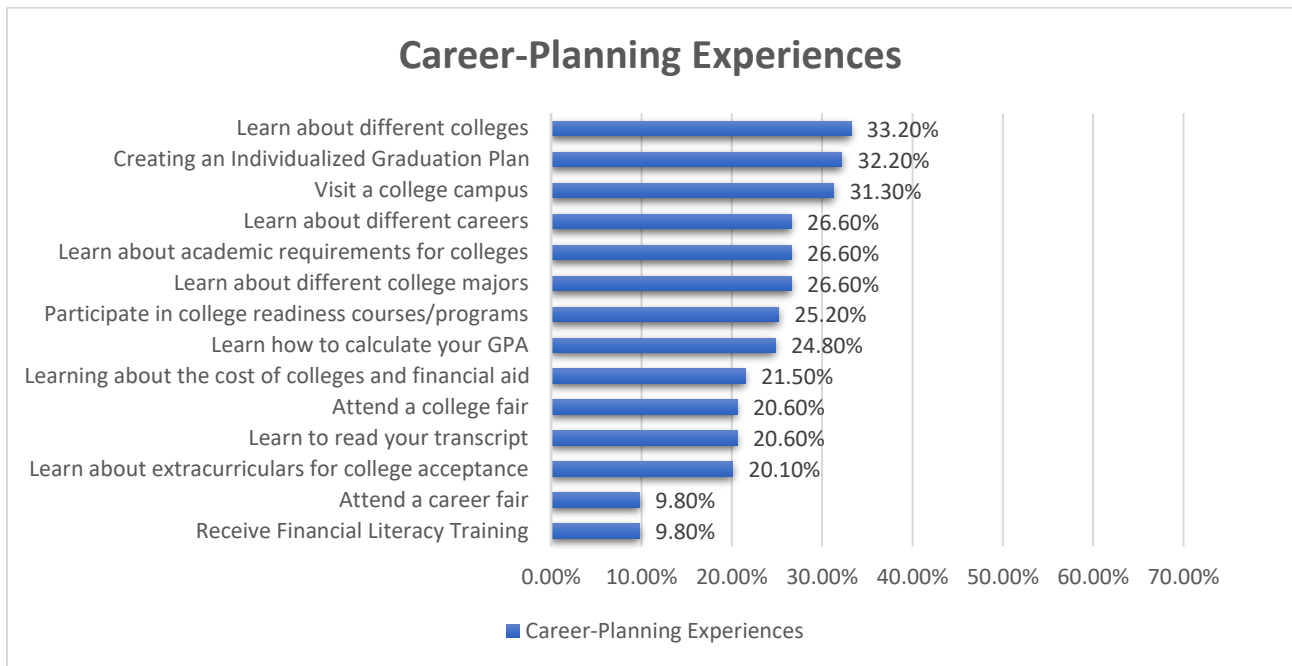


Figure 17: Career Exploration In High School



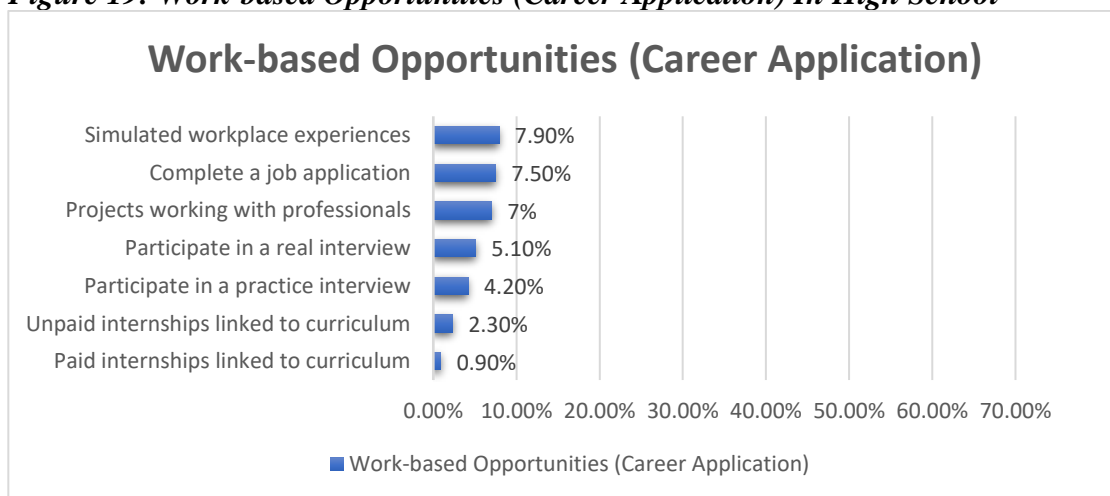


From Figures 16 and 17, we observe that high school students are most likely to learn about moving through the educational system (graduation plans, learning about colleges and college majors), and one in five (20.6%) have heard about careers through speakers. However, most high school students report that they have not engaged in career planning/exploration in high school, particularly those involving experiential or real-world activities (job shadowing or internships). Also, though financial literacy training is an important life skill for youth as they transition into adulthood, very few students, 9.8%, are receiving it. Overall, there is a strong emphasis for higher education planning for high school students, but there is a lack of focus on post or even non-college exploration for them.

Figure 18: Work-based Opportunities (Career Preparation) In High School



Figure 19: Work-based Opportunities (Career Application) In High School





From Figures 18 and 19, we observed that high school students are underexposed to a wider range of applicable experiences related to work-based opportunities, such as paid/unpaid internships and projects working with professionals.

Moreover, high school students reported moderate confidence in career planning, and less than half named two or more possible career areas of interest. Although youth reported feeling adequately equipped to handle a future career, their career-planning confidence is relatively low. Furthermore, the top three career fields of interest that high school students reported were Human Services and Resources (25.8%), Health Sciences (24.2%), and Industrial, Manufacturing, and Engineering Systems (15.3%). For reference, the six career fields mentioned are as follows: 1) Industrial, Manufacturing, and Engineering Systems; 2) Business, Marketing, and Management; 3) Human Services and Resources; 4) Communication and Information Systems; 5) Health Sciences; and 6) Environmental and Agricultural Systems.

Lastly, high school students reported that they sought to pursue higher education right after high school, such as attending a four-year college (41.1%) or working a part-time job while attending school/training (20.1%).

When we observed TXST students who come from different counties outside of Hays County, we observed several similarities to high school students. Both groups were underexposed to application-based career planning and work-based experiences and felt moderate about career planning.

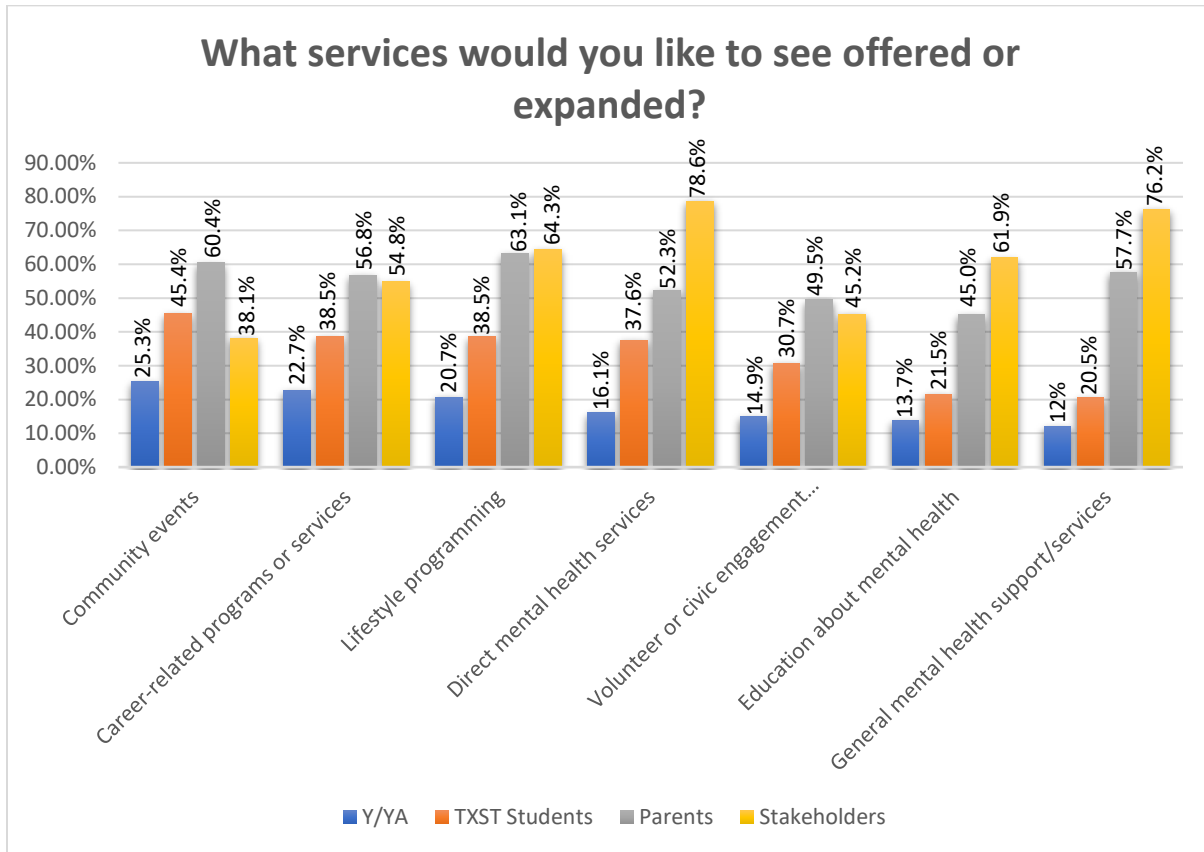
Next, we'll look at respondents' engagement with services and their preferences regarding community services and programs.

Services

Participation in youth-focused programming and services can positively impact one's feelings of belonging and support mental wellbeing. We asked each group what offerings they were participating in and/or would like to. Parents and stakeholders noted programming and services they believe need expanding.



Figure 20: Expanding Program Offerings



According to Figure 20, parents and stakeholders expressed a desire to expand services with a different emphasis compared to TXST students and Y/YA. Specifically, parents and stakeholders have very high levels of support for expanding direct and general mental health services and lifestyle programming. In contrast, Y/YA and TXST students expressed considerably less interest in additional services and programs, particularly direct or general mental health services. Their highest level of support was for community events, career programs/services, and lifestyle programming.

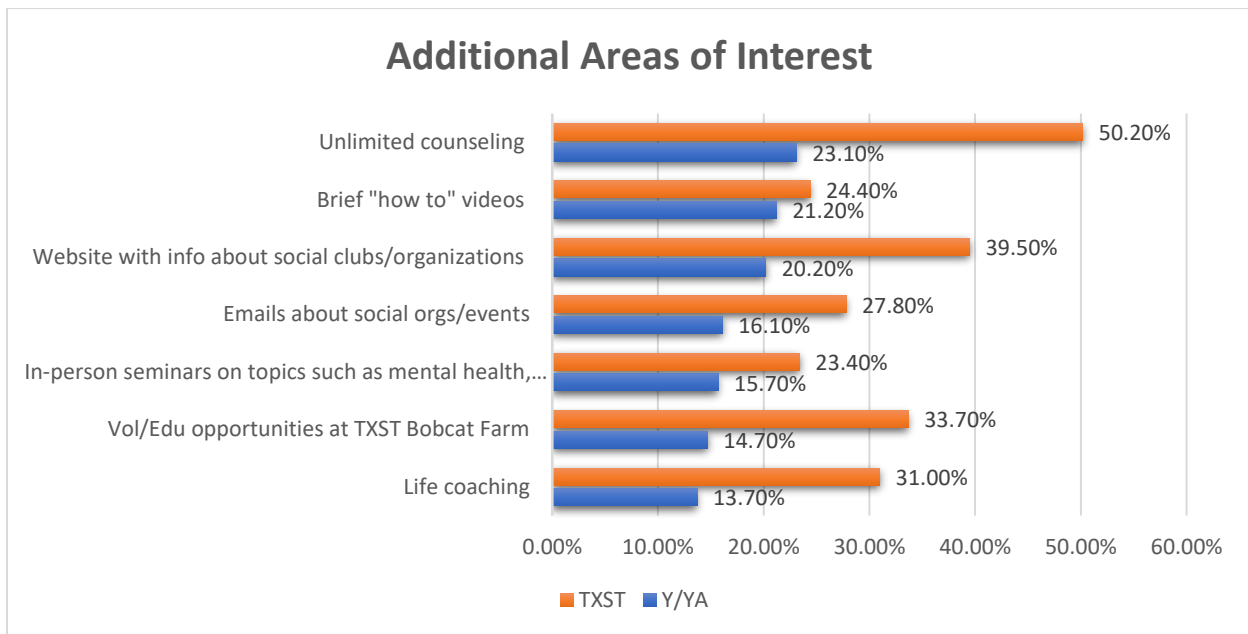
A significant portion of stakeholders reported providing mental health services, support, and education programming. Among them, 36% offer direct mental health services, 57% provide general mental health support, and half offer mental health education. However, only 16.1% of Y/YA expressed interest in direct mental health services, and 12% in general mental health support. Conversely, the interest is higher among TXST students, with 37.6% indicating an interest in direct mental health services and one in five expressing interest in general mental health support or services. Parents and stakeholders emphasized the need for expanding mental



health offerings, while TXST students and Y/YA expressed a desire for more community and career-related programs.

We next asked Y/YA and TXST students to consider what other types of programs and services they would like to see offered.

Figure 21: Additional Services and Resources of Interest



Unlimited counseling (see Figure 21) was the primary response for both Y/YA (23.1%) and TXST students (50.2%), followed by “how to” videos for Y/YA (21.2%) and a website with information on social clubs and organizations for TXST students (39.5%). Life coaching is an additional service that Y/YA and TXST students report interest in. The Core Fore may consider these areas of interest when considering new partnered services.

Providing programs and services is vitally important to the Core Fore Partnership, and stakeholders noted attendance as a current challenge, so we asked Y/YA and TXST students how they typically learn about such things.



Figure 22: How Y/YA Learned about Events and Services

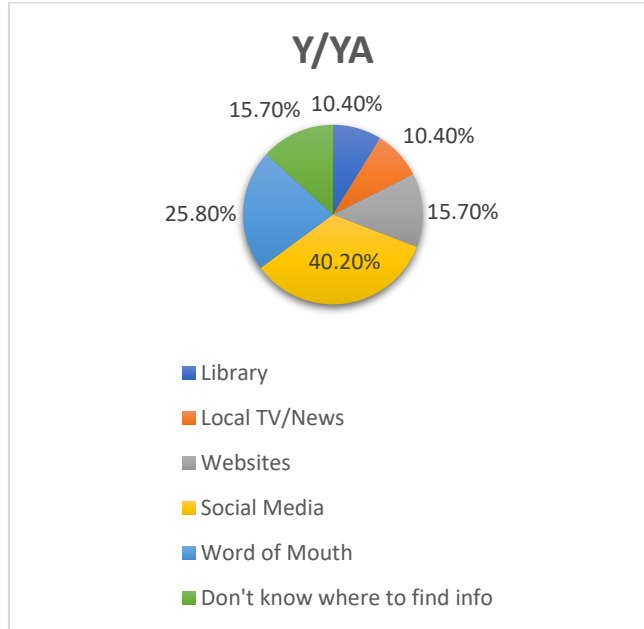


Figure 23: How TXST Students Learned about Events and Services

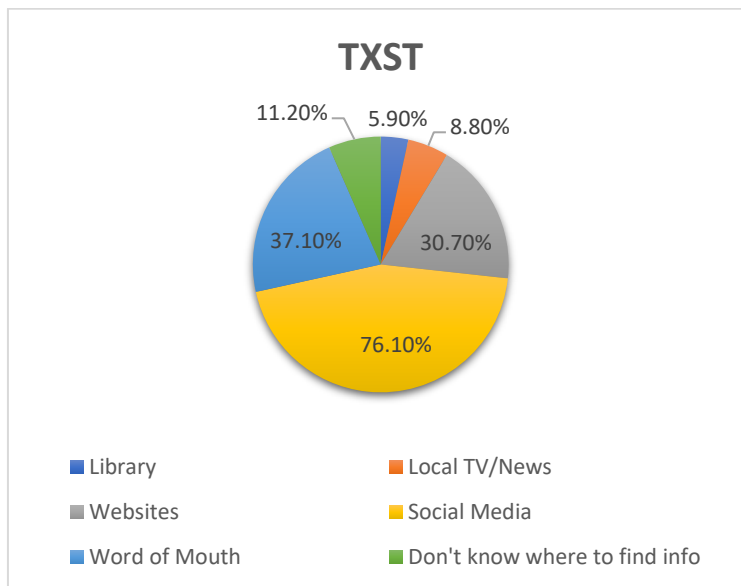
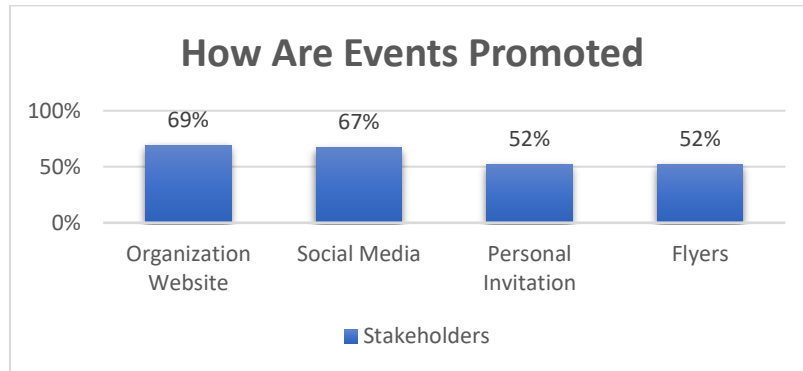




Figure 24: How Stakeholders Promoted Events



Figures 22 and 23 show that social media and the library are the two primary routes to information for both Y/YA and TXST students. Interestingly, stakeholders are using social media almost as frequently as their websites to share information about events and programming (Figure 24).

Predictors of Mental Health

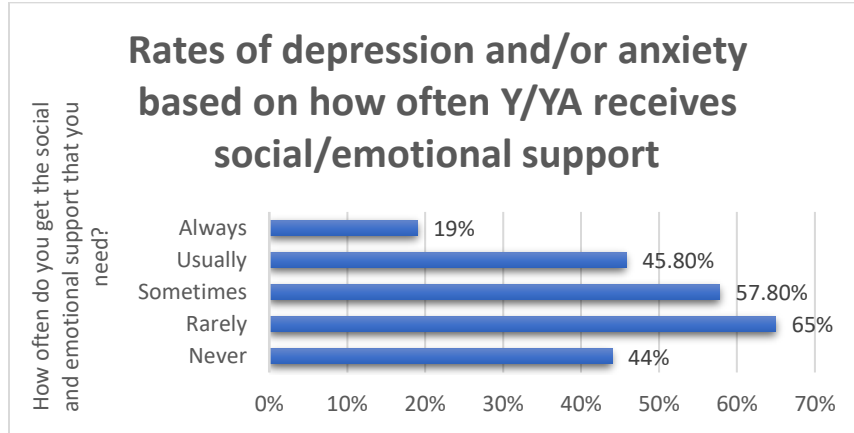
In this section, we sought to identify the social and/or economic strains that might be associated with poor mental health, possibly contributing to depression and anxiety. We examined a number of potential risk factors and highlight those that emerged as statistically significant predictors of poor mental health.

Causes for Poor Mental Health

We looked into the respondents’ sense of belonging as a potential predictor of depression. To start, we compared the respondents’ depression (PHQ9 score) and anxiety (GAD7 scores) with their frequency of receiving social and/or emotional support and found a significant association. The figure below shows varying rates of depression and/or anxiety based on how often the respondent received social/emotional support they needed.



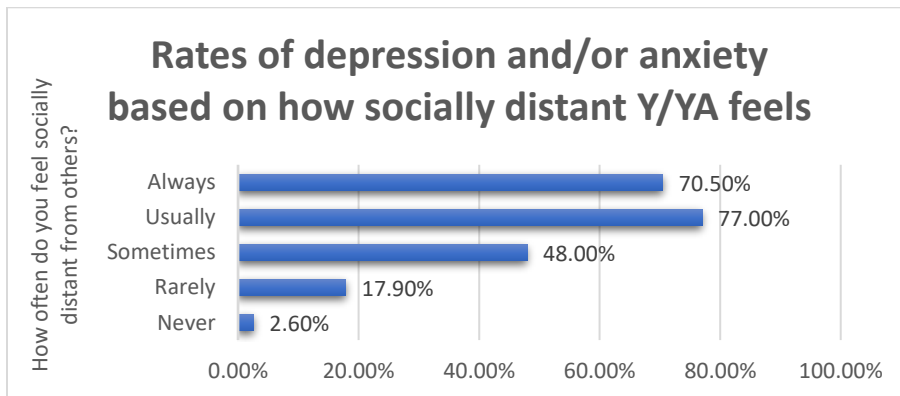
Figure 25: Rates of depression and/or anxiety for Y/YA based on receiving social/emotional support



Based on Figure 25 above, we find that those who frequently receive the social/emotional support they need are less likely to screen positive for clinical depression or anxiety disorder. This finding was consistent with TXST students. Thus, having access to social and emotional support when needed is an important factor in predicting the youth’s mental health for both youth groups.

We also investigated the relationship between how frequently the youth feel socially distant and their mental health screener scores. Similar to the previous finding, we found a significant association between how often the youth feel socially distant and their PHQ9 scores as well as their GAD7 scores. Figure 26 below shows the pattern of screened depression rates based on how often the youth felt socially distant.

Figure 26: Rates of depression and/or anxiety based on how socially distant respondent feels

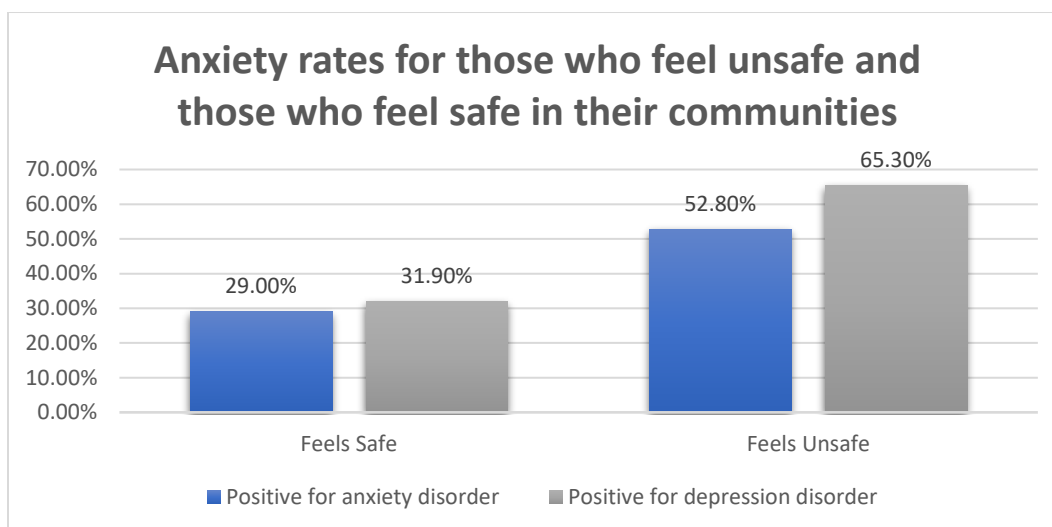




We found that the less socially distant the respondent felt, the less likely they were to screen positive for clinical depression. As a result, how often a person feels socially distant is a factor for predicting youth poor mental health as well. This finding was consistent with TXST students.

One area of concern was safety. Using various questions from the survey, we combined some indicators of safety to measure a person's sense of safety. We then ran a statistical test to find any association between a person's feeling of safety and their PHQ9 or GAD7 scores. For both screeners, we found there was a significant association between a person's feeling of safety and their mental health screener scores. Figure 24 shows the anxiety and depression rates for those who feel unsafe compared to those who feel safe in their communities.

Figure 27: Anxiety and depression rates for Y/YA who feel unsafe and those who feel safe

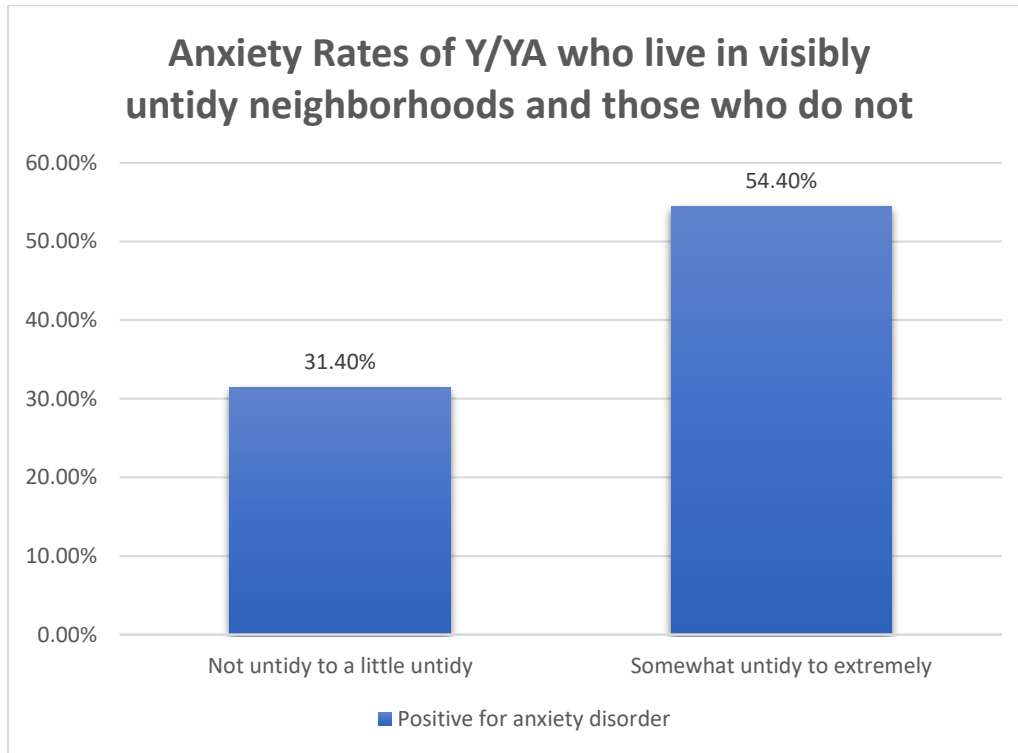


The data in Figure 27 shows Y/YA who reported feeling unsafe at school were much more likely to screen positive for clinical depression or anxiety. These findings were only true for Y/YA. TXST students did not indicate the same significant association.

We also analyzed the respondents' PHQ9 and GAD7 scores with how visibly untidy the respondents viewed their neighborhood to be. While we found no significant association between the visible untidiness of neighborhoods and depression, we did find a significant association with the respondents' anxiety screener scores. Figure 28 below shows anxiety rates for those who live in visibly untidy neighborhoods versus those who do not.



Figure 28: Anxiety rates for Y/YA who live in visibly untidy neighborhoods and those who do not

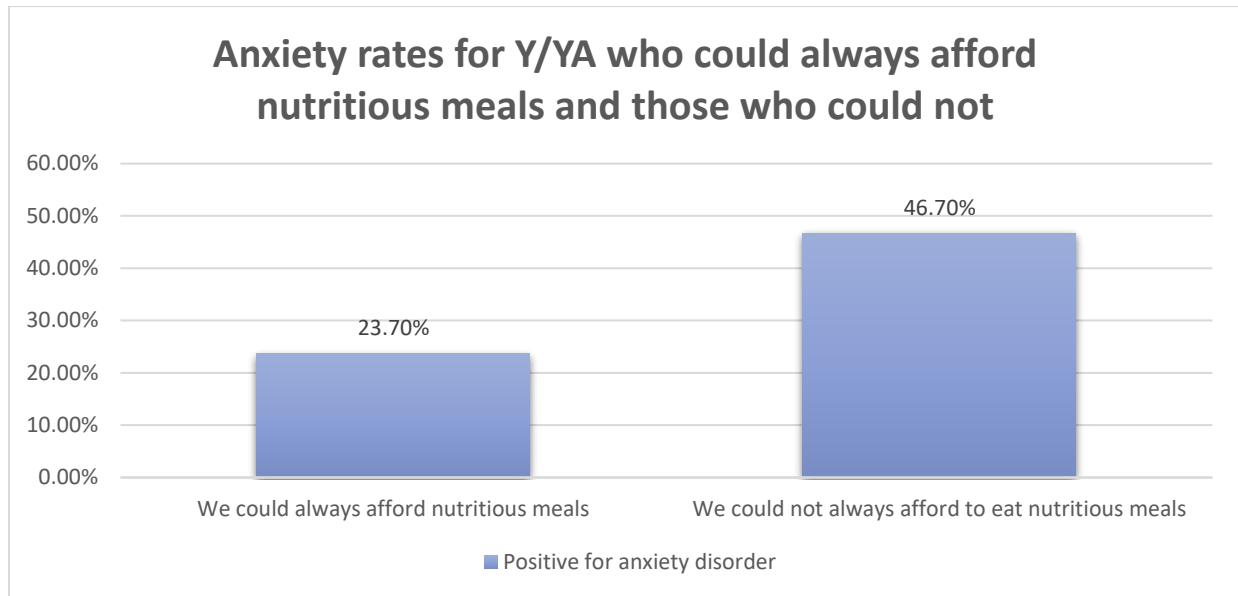


The data in Figure 28 illustrated that the more visibly untidy a respondent’s neighborhood was, the more likely it was for them to screen positive for moderate to severe anxiety. These findings differ from TXST students which show no significant association overall between visible untidiness of neighborhoods and both mental health screeners.

Additionally, we found a significant association between one’s ability to afford healthy food and anxiety. The chart below shows this relationship.



Figure 29: Anxiety Rates Comparing Y/YA Who Could and Could Not Afford Nutritious Meals



From Figure 29, we find that those who struggle to afford nutritious meals are more likely to screen positive for moderate to severe anxiety. Therefore, lack of basic needs is a considerable component in predicting youth mental health.

Next, we looked at confidence in career planning and how that may affect anxiety. We found a significant association between how confident the youth feel in their career planning and the incidence of anxiety. The more confident they feel, the less likely they are to screen positive for anxiety disorder. However, this finding was not consistent with regard to TXST students where there is no significant association between career planning and anxiety.

Lastly, factors that may influence youth mental health but had no significant association with depression or anxiety were social media use and participation in activities outside of academics for example, clubs, organizations, volunteering, and paid work. We do not necessarily believe these factors to be irrelevant to mental health. However, consistent with existing literature, it is possible that the quality of the experience associated with these activities matters more than simply engaging in these activities.

How Youth are Coping with Mental Health

There are significant lifestyle differences between those reporting poor mental health and those who are not. For instance, we found that 20% to 25% of those who screened positive for depression or anxiety do not do anything to take care of their mental health. We also found that



those who screened positive for depression or anxiety were less likely to eat healthy and exercise. Given that these habits tie into a person’s basic needs, these points could speak to a lack of basic needs being met during episodes of poor mental health.

We mentioned in the Mental Health section that there was a concern for potential frequent substance use for TXST students. Given that 20% of TXST students reported using alcohol or recreational drugs at least weekly to cope with stress, we were curious about how substance use affects mental health, particularly anxiety. We found a significant association between how often a respondent used alcohol or recreational drugs to cope with mental health and screening positive for clinical anxiety. Those who screened positive were more likely to use alcohol or recreational drugs to cope with stress.

To conclude, we find that most predictors for Y/YA’s mental health involve safety, sense of connection, basic needs, and career planning. For TXST students, the predictors for their mental health were focused on receiving emotional/social support and feelings of social disconnection. We also find that those who have poor mental health are less likely to meet their basic needs.



Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey data produced a wide array of findings. The following represents our view of the most striking and actionable findings and the corresponding implications for practice.

Finding: A sizable percentage of Y/YA and Texas State students are struggling with their mental health. One in three Y/YA and one in two Texas State students in the sample report clinical levels of depression and/or anxiety.

Recommendation: Additional programs/services are needed to provide evidence-based approaches to improving Y/YA and Texas State student mental health.

Finding: Approximately one in three Y/YA feel socially distant, and social distance is strongly correlated with depression and anxiety.

Recommendation: Programs and events that build a sense of community connection and belonging are important.

Finding: A sizable percentage of Y/YA and Texas State students are not getting their fundamental needs met. Many respondents report living in poorly kept neighborhoods, feeling unsafe at school, and that they don't have access to healthy food. These three factors were very strongly correlated with depression and/or anxiety.

Recommendation: These issues represent potential priority areas for the Partnership.

Finding: Social media use and engagement with clubs, organizations, volunteer work, and/or paid work were not significant predictors of depression and/or anxiety.

Recommendation: While these factors are important, these findings suggest that simply encouraging or discouraging these activities may not be sufficient. The quality of these interactions may need to be considered as well.

Finding: Youth/young adults were most likely to request additional community events, lifestyle programs, and career planning and academic support services.

Recommendation: New events and programming may want to focus on these preferences and merge these with other needs identified through the research (e.g. to build community, improve neighborhood quality, provide safe spaces, and increase access to healthy food).

The SOAR Scholar's program provides this summary of the research findings to the Core Four Partnership for their review. We hope that the findings summarized here (and the detailed survey responses in the Appendix) will be useful to the Core Four Partners as they plan their services and programming for year two. We appreciate the opportunity to assist with this needs assessment.





Acknowledgements

The Core Four Partnership Youth Coalition would like to thank Texas Youth Action Network for the support and providing the resources to conduct this youth survey. We would like to thank the following organizations for their support:

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San Marcos Public Library- Star Teens
San Marcos Housing Authority- Teen Programs
Greater San Marcos Youth Council
Students for Opportunities of Applied Research (SOAR)
Student Support Services Association (SSSA)
City of San Marcos Parks and Recreation Department
SMCISD Project Aware

All the youth, parents, and stakeholders who took the time to complete the survey. We appreciate the support, guidance, and feedback in our efforts to help serve the needs of our local area youth and young adults in the Greater San Marcos Area.

Special Thank you to our Youth Coalition Working Group Members and SOAR Scholars:

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Nancy Morales
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Cristal Lopez



Appendix

A – 1

Youth/Young Adult and Texas State Student Survey

Start of Block: Age and Mental Health

Q1 The Core Four Partnership: City of San Marcos, Hays County, San Marcos CISD, and Texas State University is conducting this survey to help local agencies and organizations better serve Hays County youth, young adults, and their families. We need your help as we begin to think about what those programs and projects should be.

Expect to spend approximately 10 to 15 minutes completing it. You may skip any questions that you prefer not to answer.

Your survey responses are completely confidential.

Q2 Would you like to complete the survey?

- Yes, I would like to complete the survey. (1)
- No, I would not like to complete the survey. (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Would you like to complete the survey? = No, I would not like to complete the survey.

Page Break

Q3 How old are you?

Use the drop down menu to select your age (4)

▼ 11 (1) ... 24 (14)

Q4 Are you currently enrolled in school?

- Yes, in Middle School (1)
- Yes, in High School (2)
- Yes, in a Training Program (3)
- Yes, in college part-time (Less than 12 credit hours) (4)
- Yes, in college full-time (12 credit hours or more) (5)
- No, I am not currently enrolled in school (6)

Q5 Thinking of most of the time, how many people are currently living with you in your household including yourself?





Q6 Which of these statements best describes your household's ability to afford the food you needed during the past 12 months?

- We could afford to eat good nutritious meals often (1)
 - We could afford enough to eat often but not always nutritious meals (2)
 - Sometimes we could not afford enough to eat (3)
 - Often, we could not afford enough to eat (4)
 - Don't Know/Not Sure (5)
-

Q7 During the past 12 months, has a lack of reliable transportation kept you from medical appointments, meetings, work, school, or from getting things needed for daily living?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q8 Do you and/or your family have health insurance?

- Yes my family and I have health insurance (1)
- I have health insurance but my family does not (2)
- My family has health insurance but I do not (3)
- I do not have health insurance and neither does my family (4)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (5)

Q9 Do you know where to go to receive healthcare services (ex: wellness check-up with a doctor or nurse)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q10 Is there a place in your community to receive healthcare services?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q11 Was there a time in the past 12 months when you or your family needed to see a doctor but could not because you could not afford it?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)



Q12 When did you last visit a doctor for a routine checkup?

- Within the past year (1)
- Within the past two years (2)
- Within the past five years (3)
- 5 or more years (4)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (5)

Q13 During the past 30 days, how often was your mental health not good (Poor mental health includes stress, anxiety, and depression.)?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Most of the time (4)
- Always (5)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (6)

Q14 Have you ever experienced a mental health condition (diagnosed or undiagnosed)?

- Yes diagnosed and undiagnosed (1)
- Yes diagnosed (2)
- Yes undiagnosed (3)
- No (4)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (5)

Q15 Have you ever seen a mental health professional?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q16 How would you rate the mental health of the youth in our community? Please select a number on the scale from 1 to 5.

	Poor				Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5
Please slide the slider ()					

End of Block: Age and Mental Health



A – 2

Start of Block: PHQ9 & GAD Screeners

Q17 The following questions are from the PHQ-9 which measures the level of depression you have experienced recently. Over the past two weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

	Not at all (1)	Several days (2)	More than half the days (3)	Nearly every day (4)	Prefer not to Answer (5)
Little interest or pleasure in doing things (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling tired or having little energy (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor appetite or overeating (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling bad about yourself or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed or being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



A – 3

Q18 The following questions are from the GAD-7 which measures the level of anxiety you have experienced recently. Over the past two weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

	Not at all (1)	Several days (2)	More than half the days (3)	Nearly every day (4)	Prefer not to answer (5)
Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not being able to stop or control worrying (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worrying too much about different things (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trouble relaxing (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being so restless that it is hard to sit still (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Becoming easily annoyed or irritable (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: PHQ9 & GAD Screeners



Start of Block: Safety and Sense of Belonging

Q19 How often do you use alcohol or recreational drugs (using illegal drugs or drugs for non-prescribed purposes) to cope with stress?

- Never (1)
- Once or twice a year (2)
- Monthly (3)
- Weekly (4)
- Daily (5)
- Prefer not to answer (6)

Q20 During the past 12 months, have you carried weapons on school property?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

Q21 During the past 12 months, have you felt unsafe or been threatened by someone with a weapon on school property?

- Yes, both (1)
- Yes, unsafe (2)
- Yes, threatened (3)
- No, neither (4)
- Prefer not to answer (5)

Q22 During the past 12 months, have you been involved in or witnessed physical fights on school property?

- Yes, both (1)
- Yes, involved (2)
- Yes, observed (3)
- No, neither (4)
- Prefer not to answer (5)

Q23 During the past 12 months, have you been forced into sexual behaviors you did not want to take part in or been physically abused on purpose?

- Yes, both (1)
- Yes, forced into sexual behaviors (2)
- Yes, physically abused on purpose (3)
- No, neither (4)
- Prefer not to answer (5)



Q24 During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied in-person and/or electronically?

- Yes, both (1)
- Yes, in-person (2)
- Yes, electronically (3)
- No, neither (4)
- Prefer not to answer (5)

Q25 What do you do to take care of your mental health? These would be practices that you currently engage in on a regular basis (check all that apply)

- Counseling (1)
- Medication (2)
- Yoga (3)
- Meditation/mindfulness (4)
- Healthy eating (5)
- Exercise (6)
- Spend time in nature (7)
- Talk to friends/family (8)
- Spiritual or religious practices/activities (9)
- None of the above (10)
- Other (please specify) (11) _____

Q26 How often do you get the social and emotional support that you need?

- Always (1)
- Usually (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Rarely (4)
- Never (5)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (6)

Display This Question:

*If How often do you get the social and emotional support that you need? = Always
Or How often do you get the social and emotional support that you need? = Rarely
Or How often do you get the social and emotional support that you need? = Sometimes
Or How often do you get the social and emotional support that you need? = Usually*

Q27 Do you receive the social and emotional support that you need in-person or online?

- In-Person (1)
- Online (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)



Q28 How often do you feel socially distant from others?

- Always (1)
- Usually (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Rarely (4)
- Never (5)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (6)

Q29 During the past 12 months, did you participate in any clubs or organizations after school or on weekends?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q30 During the past 12 months, did you participate in any type of community service or volunteer work at school, a place of worship, or in the community?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q31 During the past 12 months, did you participate in any paid work, including regular jobs as well as babysitting, cutting grass, or other occasional work?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q32 Do you know of any safe spaces (A safe space is where individuals or groups can be free from discrimination, criticism, harassment, or harm. e.g., libraries, parks, community centers)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Display This Question:

If Do you know of any safe spaces (A safe space is where individuals or groups can be free from disc... = Yes

Q33 If you answered yes to the question above, do you utilize safe spaces?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)



Q34 If more safe spaces were created in your community, would you utilize them?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q35 How visibly untidy is your neighborhood (e.g., litter or garbage on the street or sidewalk, poorly kept or rundown housing, vandalism such as broken windows or graffiti)?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Somewhat (3)
- Quite (4)
- Extremely (5)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (6)

Q36 Have you ever used a substance while attending school (e.g., alcohol, marijuana, electronic vape)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)
- Prefer not to answer (4)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever used a substance while attending school (e.g., alcohol, marijuana, electronic vape)? = Yes

Q37 If you answered yes to the previous question, how much did you feel like you belonged with your peer group after using a substance?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Somewhat (3)
- Quite (4)
- Extremely (5)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (6)

Q38 How often do you use social media?

- I do not use social media (1)
- A few times a month (2)
- About once a week (3)
- A few times a week (4)
- About once a day (5)
- Several times a day (6)
- About once an hour (7)
- More than once an hour (8)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (9)

End of Block: Safety and Sense of Belonging



Start of Block: Social Connection and Sense of Belonging

Q39 Thinking of the different communities you may be a part of, please indicate whether you:

	The City You Currently Live In (1)	The School You Attend (2)	Extracurricular (clubs, sports teams, church or volunteer groups) (3)	Online Communities (4)
Feel you matter in (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel safe in (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel you belong in (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q40 Have you participated in or used any of the following services or programs offered by your community (not including your school)? Select all that apply.

- Direct mental health services (from licensed providers) (1)
- General mental health support/services (support groups or programs with peers) (4)
- Lifestyle programming (eating health, exercise, stress management) (5)
- Community events (6)
- Education about mental health (7)
- Volunteer or civic engagement opportunities (8)
- Career-related programs or services (9)

Q41 Which of the following services or programs would you be interested in? Select all that apply.

- Direct mental health services (from licensed providers) (1)
- General mental health support/services (support groups or programs with peers) (4)
- Lifestyle programming (eating health, exercise, stress management) (5)
- Community events (6)
- Education about mental health (7)
- Volunteer or civic engagement opportunities (8)
- Career-related programs or services (9)
- Other (please specify) (3) _____

End of Block: Social Connection and Sense of Belonging



Start of Block: Career

Display This Question:

If Are you currently enrolled in school? = Yes, in High School

Or How old are you? = 14

Or How old are you? = 15

Or How old are you? = 16

Or How old are you? = 17

Or How old are you? = 18

Or How old are you? = 19

Or How old are you? = 20

Or How old are you? = 21

Or How old are you? = 22

Or How old are you? = 23

Or How old are you? = 24

Q42 We are going to ask you a few questions about your career-planning experiences in high school.

While in high school did you: Check all that apply.

- Create an Individualized Graduation Plan (e.g., a plan that lets you know what classes you need to graduate)? (1)
 - Learn how to calculate your Grade Point Average (GPA)? (2)
 - Learn to read your transcript? (3)
 - Participate in college readiness courses/programs (4)
 - Learn about different types of colleges? (5)
 - Learn about different college majors? (6)
 - Learn about the academic requirements for getting into different colleges? (7)
 - Learn about the types of extracurricular activities that are helpful for getting into college? (8)
 - Learn about how much different types of colleges cost and about financial aid? (9)
 - Receive Financial literacy training (e.g., how to open a bank account, pay taxes, create a budget) (10)
 - Attend a college fair? (11)
 - Visit a college campus? (12)
 - Learn about different careers? (13)
 - Attend a career fair? (14)
 - None of the above (15)
 - Don't Know/Not Sure (16)
 - Other (please specify) (17) _____
-



Display This Question:

- If How old are you? = 14*
- Or How old are you? = 15*
- Or How old are you? = 16*
- Or How old are you? = 17*
- Or How old are you? = 18*
- Or How old are you? = 19*
- Or How old are you? = 20*
- Or How old are you? = 21*
- Or How old are you? = 22*
- Or How old are you? = 23*
- Or How old are you? = 24*
- Or Are you currently enrolled in school? = Yes, in High School*

Q43 What types of career exploration did you participate in through your high school? Check all that apply.

- Videos that describe various careers (e.g., Road Trip Nation, Career Zones) (1)
- Career assessments (e.g., Holland Code) (2)
- Consultation with counselors about careers (3)
- Hear from speakers who came to talk about their careers or speakers who came to talk about job options (4)
- Job Shadowing (following a person at the job site to see what he/she does) (5)
- None of the above (6)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Display This Question:

- If How old are you? = 14*
- Or How old are you? = 15*
- Or How old are you? = 16*
- Or How old are you? = 17*
- Or How old are you? = 18*
- Or How old are you? = 19*
- Or How old are you? = 20*
- Or How old are you? = 21*
- Or How old are you? = 22*
- Or How old are you? = 23*
- Or How old are you? = 24*
- Or Are you currently enrolled in school? = Yes, in High School*



Q44 What types of work-based learning opportunities did you participate in that were offered by your high school? Check all that apply.

- Schoolwide projects (e.g. guest speakers, professional judging of student projects, career-specific field trips) (1)
- Community-based projects (work on a project to improve community) (2)
- Projects working with professionals (e.g. doctors, filmmakers, chefs) (3)
- Simulated workplace experiences (e.g. Virtual Enterprise or experiences that are similar to an office or workplace) (4)
- Paid or unpaid work experience (work or volunteer at any location) (5)
- Paid internships linked to curriculum (e.g. medical pathway student work at a hospital) (6)
- Unpaid internships linked to curriculum (e.g. medical pathway student work at a hospital) (7)
- Work toward or earn an industry certificate? (8)
- Create a resume? (9)
- Complete a job application? (10)
- Participate in a practice interview? (11)
- Participate in a real interview for an internship or job (12)
- None of the above (13)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (14)
- Other (please specify) (15) _____

Display This Question:

- If How old are you? = 14*
- Or How old are you? = 15*
- Or How old are you? = 16*
- Or How old are you? = 17*
- Or How old are you? = 18*
- Or How old are you? = 19*
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- Or How old are you? = 21*
- Or How old are you? = 22*
- Or How old are you? = 23*
- Or How old are you? = 24*
- Or Are you currently enrolled in school? = Yes, in High School*

Q45 How confident do you feel about career planning?

	Not Confident at all				Very Confident
	1	2	3	4	5
Please slide the slider ()					



Display This Question:

- If How old are you? = 14
- Or How old are you? = 15
- Or How old are you? = 16
- Or How old are you? = 17
- Or How old are you? = 18
- Or How old are you? = 19
- Or How old are you? = 20
- Or How old are you? = 21
- Or How old are you? = 22
- Or How old are you? = 23
- Or How old are you? = 24
- Or Are you currently enrolled in school? = Yes, in High School

Q46 Do you know yet what career areas you are interested in?

- Yes, I can name 2 or more possible career areas that might interest me (1)
- Yes, I have one strong career goal (2)
- Not yet, but I am starting to think about careers (3)
- No, I do not know yet what type of career I want (4)

Display This Question:

- If How old are you? = 14
- Or How old are you? = 15
- Or How old are you? = 16
- Or How old are you? = 17
- Or How old are you? = 18
- Or How old are you? = 19
- Or How old are you? = 20
- Or How old are you? = 21
- Or How old are you? = 22
- Or How old are you? = 23
- Or How old are you? = 24
- Or Are you currently enrolled in school? = Yes, in High School

Q47 If you can, please list one or more career areas that might interest you.

- Career interest #1: (1) _____
- Career interest #2: (2) _____
- Career interest #3: (3) _____



Display This Question:

- If How old are you? = 14*
- Or How old are you? = 15*
- Or How old are you? = 16*
- Or How old are you? = 17*
- Or How old are you? = 18*
- Or How old are you? = 19*
- Or How old are you? = 20*
- Or How old are you? = 21*
- Or How old are you? = 22*
- Or How old are you? = 23*
- Or How old are you? = 24*
- Or Are you currently enrolled in school? = Yes, in High School*

Q48 What do you plan to do after high school? Or, if you are already out of high school, what are you currently doing? Check all that apply.

- Attend a two-year college (1)
 - Attend a four-year college (2)
 - Attend a career training program (3)
 - Enter an apprenticeship program (4)
 - Enter the military (5)
 - Work in a part-time job while attending school or training (6)
 - Work full-time (7)
 - Work or volunteer for a year before attending school/training (8)
 - None of the above (9)
 - Don't Know/Not Sure (10)
 - Other (please specify) (11) _____
-



Q49 If your community implemented the following resources, which of them would you take advantage of? Check all that apply.

- Unlimited counseling (ex: therapy, career counseling) (1)
- Life coaching sessions (2)
- Brief "how to" videos (e.g., how to apply for college, how to explore careers, etc.) (3)
- A website with information about social clubs/organizations in your school or local community (4)
- Emails about social organizations/local events (5)
- In person seminars on topics such as mental health, wellness, careers, etc. (6)
- Volunteer/Educational Opportunities at Texas State's new Bobcat Farm (7)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (8)
- Other (please specify) (9) _____

Q50 Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how the Core Four Partnership could work to improve the health and well-being of local youth, young adults, and their families?

End of Block: Career



Start of Block: Demographics

Q51 Which of these groups would you say best represents your race/ethnicity? Check all that apply.

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- Hispanic or Latino/a (3)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (4)
- Asian (5)
- Pacific Islander (6)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Q52 Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

- Cisgender Male (1)
- Cisgender Female (2)
- Transgender male (3)
- Transgender female (4)
- Nonbinary (5)
- Gender Non-Conforming (6)
- Prefer not to answer (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Q53 What is the ZIP Code where you currently live?

Q54 Are one of your parents an immigrant?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q55 Are you an immigrant?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q56 Are you the parent of a child or children that live with you part-time or all the time?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)



Q57 Where do you get information about local services and/or events for youth? Check all that apply.

- The Library (1)
- Local TV News (2)
- Websites (3)
- Social Media (4)
- Word of Mouth (5)
- Don't know where to find information (6)
- Other (please specify) (7) _____

Q58 Which of these organizations did you receive the survey from? Check all that apply.

- Star Teen Program (from the San Marcos Public Library) (1)
- Student Support Services Association (2)
- San Marcos Housing Authority (3)
- Greater San Marcos Youth Council (4)
- Community Action, Inc. of Central Texas (6)
- Texas State University (8)
- City of San Marcos (7)
- Hays County (9)
- SMCISD (10)
- Don't know/no answer (11)
- Other (please specify) (12) _____

End of Block: Demographics



PARENT/STAKEHOLDER COPY - Youth Assessment

Start of Block: Introduction and Initial Question

Q1 Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. The Core Four Partnership: City of San Marcos, Hays County, San Marcos CISD, and Texas State University is conducting this survey to help local agencies and organizations better serve Hays County youth, young adults, and their families. We need your help as we begin to think about what those programs and projects should be.

Expect to spend less than ten minutes completing it. You may skip any questions that you prefer not to answer.

Your survey responses are completely confidential.

Q2 Are you a parent and/or a key stakeholder (e.g., you work with youth or on related issues)? Check all that apply.

- Parent of youth/young adults (ages 11 - 24) (2)
- Key Stakeholder (work with youth/young adults or related issues) (3)

End of Block: Introduction and Initial Question

Start of Block: Stakeholders Section

Q3 Which organization do you currently work for?

Q4 Which of these services does your organization currently offer to youth in Hays County? Check all that apply.

- Direct mental health services from licensed providers (1)
- General mental health support or services (support groups or programs with peers, etc.) (2)
- Lifestyle programs (eating healthy, exercise, stress management, etc.) (3)
- Community events (4)
- Education about mental health (5)
- Volunteer or civic engagement opportunities (6)
- Career-related programs or services (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____



Q5 Which programs or events do you think have been particularly successful for serving youth/young adults and what do you see as the reason for these successes?

Q6 Have there been any programs or services offered to youth/young adults that did not have the desired participation and/or outcomes? If so, why do you think these programs/events were less successful than others?

Q7 How do you promote youth events in the community? Check all that apply.

- Social media like Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook (1)
- On your organization's website (2)
- Personal invitation via email (3)
- Flyers posted around San Marcos (4)
- Other (please specify) (5) _____

Q8 Has your organization collaborated with other organizations to offer youth services and programming and if so, which organizations have you partnered with?

End of Block: Stakeholders Section

Start of Block: Parent Section

Page Break

Q9 Thinking of most of the time, how many people are currently living with you in your household including yourself?

Q10 Which of these statements best describes your household's ability to afford the food you needed during the past 12 months?

- We could afford to eat good nutritious meals often (1)
- We could afford enough to eat often but not always nutritious meals (2)
- Sometimes we could not afford enough to eat (3)
- Often, we could not afford enough to eat (4)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (5)

Q11 During the past 12 months, has a lack of reliable transportation kept you from medical appointments, meetings, work, school, or from getting things needed for daily living?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Don't Know/Not Sure (3)
-



Q12 During the last 12 months, was there a time when you were not able to pay your mortgage, rent or utility bills?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q13 During the last 12 months, was there a time when an electric, gas, or water company threatened to shut off services?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q14 During the past 12 months, have you or your family received food stamps, also called SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program on an EBT card?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Page Break

Q15 Do you and/or your family have health insurance?

- Yes my family and I have health insurance (1)
- I have health insurance but my family does not (2)
- My family has health insurance but I do not (3)
- I do not have health insurance and neither does my family (4)
- Don't know/No answer (5)

Skip To: Q17 If Do you and/or your family have health insurance? = I do not have health insurance and neither does my family

Skip To: Q17 If Do you and/or your family have health insurance? = My family has health insurance but I do not



Q16 What is the current primary source of your health insurance?

- A plan purchased through an employer or union (1)
 - A private nongovernmental plan that you or another family member buy (2)
 - Medicare (3)
 - Medigap (4)
 - Medicaid (5)
 - Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (6)
 - Military related healthcare (7)
 - Indian Health Service (8)
 - No coverage of any type (9)
 - Don't Know/Not Sure (10)
 - Other government program (please specify) (11)
-

Q17 Do you know how to sign up for an insurance plan?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q18 Do you know at least one person who you would consider your primary doctor/healthcare provider?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q19 Do you know where to go to receive healthcare services (e.g., wellness check-up with a doctor or nurse)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q20 Is there a place in your community to receive healthcare services?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q21 Was there a time in the past 12 months when you or your family needed to see a doctor but could not because you could not afford it?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)



Q22 When did you last visit a doctor for a routine checkup?

- Within the past year (1)
- Within the past two years (2)
- Within the past five years (3)
- 5 or more years (4)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (5)

Page Break

Q23 During the past 30 days, how often was your mental health not good (Poor mental health includes stress, anxiety, and depression.)?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Most of the time (4)
- Always (5)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (6)

Q24 Have you ever experienced a mental health condition (diagnosed or undiagnosed)?

- Yes diagnosed and undiagnosed (1)
- Yes diagnosed (2)
- Yes undiagnosed (3)
- No (4)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (5)

Q25 Have you ever seen a mental health professional?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Page Break

- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q26 As you respond to the next series of questions, please randomly select one of your children ages 11-24, and answer the questions that follow about that same child.

Q27 How old is the child you have selected?

Use the drop down menu to select your age (1)

▼ 11 (1) ... 24 (14)



Q28 What is this child's education status?

- In Middle School (1)
- In High School (2)
- In a Training Program (3)
- In college part-time (Less than 12 credit hours) (4)
- In college full-time (12 credit hours or more) (5)
- Not currently enrolled in school (7)

Q26 In the past 30 days, how often was this child's mental health not good (poor mental health includes feeling stress, anxiety, and depression)?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Most of the time (4)
- Always (5)

Q30 How often do you think your child uses alcohol or recreational drugs (using illegal drugs or drugs for non-prescribed purposes) to cope with stress?

- Never (1)
- Once or twice a year (2)
- Monthly (3)
- Weekly (4)
- Daily (5)
- Prefer not to answer (6)

Q31 During the past 12 months, has your child ever been bullied in-person and/or electronically?

- Yes, both (1)
 - Yes, in-person (2)
 - Yes, electronically (3)
 - No, neither (4)
 - Prefer not to answer (5)
-



Q32 What does your child do to take care of their mental health? These would be practices that they currently engage in on a regular basis. Check all that apply.

- Counseling (1)
 - Medication (2)
 - Yoga (3)
 - Meditation/mindfulness (4)
 - Healthy eating (5)
 - Exercise (6)
 - Spend time in nature (7)
 - Talk to friends/family (8)
 - Spiritual or religious practices/activities (9)
 - None of the above (10)
 - Other (please specify) (11)
-

Q33 Does your child have a mentor outside of your family?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Don't Know/Not Sure (3)
-

Q34 During the past 12 months, did your child participate in any clubs or organizations after school or on weekends?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Don't Know/Not Sure (3)
-

Q35 During the past 12 months, did your child participate in any type of community service or volunteer work at school, a place of worship, or in the community?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Don't Know/Not Sure (3)
-

Q36 During the past 12 months, did your child participate in any paid work, including regular jobs as well as babysitting, cutting grass, or other occasional work?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)



Q37 How often does your child use social media?

- They do not use social media (1)
- A few times a month (2)
- About once a week (3)
- A few times a week (4)
- About once a day (5)
- Several times a day (6)
- About once an hour (7)
- More than once an hour (8)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (9)

Q38 Thinking of the different communities your child may be a part of, please indicate whether:

	The City they Currently Live In (1)	The School they Attend (2)	Extracurricular Groups (clubs, sports teams, church or volunteer groups) (3)	Online Communities (4)
They feel that they matter in (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They feel safe in (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They feel they belong in (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q39 Does your child participate or use any of the following services or programs? Check all that apply.

- Direct mental health services from licensed providers (1)
- General mental health support or services (support groups or programs with peers, etc.) (2)
- Lifestyle programs (eating healthy, exercise, stress management, etc.) (3)
- Community events (4)
- Education about mental health (5)
- Volunteer or civic engagement opportunities (6)
- Career-related programs or services (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____



Q40 Which of the following services or programs do you think your child would be interested in? Check all that apply.

- Direct mental health services from licensed providers (1)
- General mental health support or services (support groups or programs with peers, etc.) (2)
- Lifestyle programs (eating healthy, exercise, stress management, etc.) (3)
- Community events (4)
- Education about mental health (5)
- Volunteer or civic engagement opportunities (6)
- Career-related programs or services (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Page Break

Q41 Do you know of any safe spaces (A safe space is where individuals or groups can be free from discrimination, criticism, harassment, or harm. e.g., libraries, parks, community centers)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Display This Question:

If Do you know of any safe spaces (A safe space is where individuals or groups can be free from disc... = Yes

Q42 If you answered yes to the previous question, does your child utilize safe spaces?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q43 If more safe spaces were created in your community, would your child utilize them?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

Q44 How visibly untidy is your neighborhood (e.g., litter or garbage on the street or sidewalk, poorly kept or rundown housing, vandalism such as broken windows or graffiti)?

- Not at all (1)
- Slightly (2)
- Somewhat (3)
- Quite (4)
- Extremely (5)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (6)



Q45 Do you participate in a support program such as Parent's Night Out, Respite Night, etc.?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't Know/Not Sure (3)

End of Block: Parent Section

Start of Block: Parents AND Stakeholder Questions

Q46 In your opinion, which of these youth services or programs need to be expanded? Check all that apply.

- Direct mental health services from licensed providers (1)
- General mental health support or services (support groups or programs with peers, etc.) (4)
- Lifestyle programs (eating healthy, exercise, stress management) (5)
- Community events (6)
- Education about mental health (7)
- Volunteer or civic engagement opportunities (8)
- Career-related programs or services (9)

Q47 What additional youth services or programs do you think are needed?

Q48 How would you rate the mental health of the youth in our community? Please select a number on the scale from 1 to 5.

	Poor			Excellent	
	1	2	3	4	5
Please slide the slider ()					

End of Block: Parents AND Stakeholder Questions

Start of Block: Demographics



Q49 Which of these groups would you say best represents your race/ethnicity? Check all that apply.

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- Hispanic or Latino/a (3)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (4)
- Asian (5)
- Pacific Islander (6)
- Don't know/Not sure (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Q50 Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

- Cisgender Male (1)
- Cisgender Female (2)
- Transgender male (3)
- Transgender female (4)
- Nonbinary (5)
- Gender Non-Conforming (6)
- Prefer not to answer (7)
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Q51 What is the highest grade or level of school you completed?

- Less than high school (1)
- Some high school (2)
- High school graduate/GED (3)
- Some college (4)
- Associate's Degree (5)
- Bachelor's Degree (6)
- Graduate Degree (7)
- Vocational Program (8)
- Don't Know/Not sure (9)
- Prefer not to answer (10)

Q52 What is the ZIP Code where you currently live?

Q53 Are you an immigrant?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't know/Not sure (3)



Q54 Are you the parent of a child or children that live with you either part-time or all the time?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)
- Not applicable (4)

Q55 Where do you get information about local services and/or events for youth? Check all that apply.

- The Library (1)
- Local TV News (2)
- Websites (3)
- Social Media (4)
- Word of Mouth (5)
- Don't know where to find information (6)
- Other (please specify) (7) _____

Q56 Which of these organizations did you receive the survey from? Check all that apply.

- Star Teen Program (from the San Marcos Public Library) (1)
 - Student Support Services Association (2)
 - San Marcos Housing Authority (3)
 - Greater San Marcos Youth Council (4)
 - Community Action Inc. of Central Texas (6)
 - SMCISD (9)
 - Hays County (10)
 - City of San Marcos (11)
 - Don't Know/No Answer (12)
 - Other (Please Specify) (13)
- _____

End of Block: Demographics



For YOUTH

“Good afternoon/welcome and thank you for joining us today. My name is Lydia and I’m a SOAR scholar and a sociology major at Texas State. I have been given an opportunity to conduct research in Hays County, and I am delighted to be conducting my first focus group with you all today.”

“The purpose of this focus group is to get your impression/sense of the youth’s thoughts, perceptions, and feelings regarding their own mental health, their sense of belonging, and college and career support – how are they feeling; how are they receiving needed services and support; and what are the barriers?”

“To ensure our research is accurate, my colleague is taking notes, and we are recording the audio of this meeting. Please know that protecting everyone’s privacy is very important to us and so your names will be replaced with pseudonyms, and we ask that you keep the details of this conversation 100% confidential. It is not a secret, but it is private. “

“Please feel free to get up and grab a snack or a drink. Thank you, Cristal, for providing those things. The restrooms are located XXXXX. “

“Do you have any questions before we begin?”

There will be a questionnaire that the participants will complete before the interview; if they are being completed all at once, say A. If the participants are completing the questionnaires as they walk in, say B.

- A. “We’d like you to complete a short questionnaire with some information about your organization.”
- B. “If you’ve not had time to complete the brief questionnaire, please do so now.”

“First, let’s start with brief introductions:

Name

What’s the last show or movie you watched?

Icebreaker things

“Let’s talk about youth mental health in Hays County.”

- “What are some issues you see with youth mental health and well-being?”
- “What services exist for youth mental health?”
- “What are some of the barriers to accessing those services?”
 - o “Are there any services that you think are missing?”

“Let’s move on to talk about youth and their sense of belonging.”

- “Do you think young people are feeling connected to their communities?”
- “What services help to connect youth to their communities?”
- “What are some barriers to feeling connected to their community?”
 - o “Is transportation and/or communication a roadblock?” {**PROBE**}

“Next, let’s talk about college and career support planning.”

- “What resources are there to help youth plan for post-HS activities (college, training, jobs) and success?”
- “What are some of the barriers to accessing post-HS activities or career planning resources?”

“Is there anything else that you would like to add that we did not already discuss?”



For STAKEHOLDERS & PARENTS

“Good morning everyone and thank you for joining us today. Our names are Julianne and Isha, and we are SOAR scholars and sociology majors at Texas State. We have been given an opportunity to conduct research in Hays County, and we are delighted to be conducting our first focus group with you all today.”

“The purpose of this focus group is to get your impression/sense of the youth’s thoughts, perceptions, and feelings regarding their own mental health, their sense of belonging, and college and career support – how are they feeling; how are they receiving needed services and support; and what are the barriers?”

“To ensure our research is accurate, we will be taking notes, and we are recording the audio of this meeting. Please know that protecting everyone’s privacy is very important to us and so your names will be replaced with pseudonyms, and we ask that you keep the details of this conversation 100% confidential. It is not a secret, but it is private. We also want you to share whatever you feel comfortable with sharing, and we also have a list of mental health resources in the area for you to check out.”

“Please feel free to get up and grab a snack or a drink. Thank you, Cristal, for providing those things. The restrooms are located XXXXX. “

“Do you have any questions before we begin?”

There will be a questionnaire that the participants will complete before the interview; if they are being completed all at once, say A. If the participants are completing the questionnaires as they walk in, say B.

- A. “We’d like you to complete a short questionnaire with some information about your organization.”
- B. “If you’ve not had time to complete the brief questionnaire, please do so now.”

“First, let’s start with brief introductions:

Name

What was your very first job other than mowing lawns or babysitting?”

“Let’s talk about youth mental health in Hays County.”

- “What are some issues you see with youth mental health and well-being?”
- “What services exist for youth mental health?”
- “What are some of the barriers to accessing those services?”
 - o “Are there any services that you think are missing?”

“Let’s move on to talk about youth and their sense of belonging.”

- “Do you think young people are feeling connected to their communities?”
- “What services help to connect youth to their communities?”
- “What are some barriers to feeling connected to their community?”
 - o “Is transportation and/or communication a roadblock?” {**PROBE**}

“Next, let’s talk about college and career support planning.”

- “What resources are there to help youth plan for post-HS activities (college, training, jobs) and success?”
- “What are some of the barriers to accessing post-HS activities or career planning resources?”

“Is there anything else that you would like to add that we did not already discuss?”

“Thank you again for participating in this focus group. Your participation has been incredibly helpful for our work and The Core Four Partnership.”