University of New Hampshire
Cooperative Extension

Youth & Family Program Team Situational Analysis: 2014 Final Report Strafford County

As part of a strategic response to shifting funding and a desire to deliver high impact programming, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNH-CE) undertook a statwide assessment of citizen needs and stakeholder concerns in the area of Youth and Family programing.

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Situational Analysis: Final Report

Introduction

As part of a strategic response to shifting funding and a desire to deliver high impact programming, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNH-CE) undertook a statewide assessment of citizen needs and stakeholder concerns in the area of youth and family programming. The UNH-CE Youth & Family Program is currently comprised of four Area of Expertise teams focused on: 4-H Youth Development; Science Literacy; Children, Youth and Family Resilience; and Healthy Living. All members of these teams were involved in a thorough situational analysis process that began in early 2013 and culminated in the fall of 2014. This process was intended to take a snapshot of the most pressing needs of children and their families in New Hampshire (NH). The ultimate goal is to use the process and the results to help Extension best utilize the resources of the university to make meaningful impacts throughout the state.

Process

A three-phase process was conducted. Phase I involved interviews with key state leaders and stakeholders. Phase II involved interviews with current consumers of UNH Cooperative Extension programing. The intent of these initial phases was to determine major needs in NH in the areas of health/wellness, science education, mental health, youth development and more. The goal was to use these intial interviews to identify major needs and opportunities to be explored further by follow-up focus groups. These follow-up focus groups comprised Phase III of the Situational Analysis. The thirteen Phase III focus groups had representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups and were held throughout the state with at least one focus group occurring in each of NH's ten counties. (See Appendix 1 for a graphic illustrating the three-phase process).

The aims of the entire three-phase process included:

- Identify gaps and opportunities in current UNH-CE youth and family programming
- Use the interviews and focus groups to connect meaningfully with current and possible future collaborators
- Enagage stakeholders and the entire Youth & Family Team in the research process
- Inform future program design and implementation.

Methods

The following methods were utilized for the three phases of the situational analysis:

Phase I: Key State Leaders and Stakeholder Interviews

Participants: 22 key leaders in youth and family-related sectors from across NH

Procedure**:** Interviews were conducted by UNH-CE staff using the same set of open ended questions.

Phase II: Key Informant/Consumer Interviews

Participants: 10 clients/end-users of UNH-CE Youth & Family programs identified by staff – including youth and adults.

Procedure: Interviews were conducted by UNH-CE staff using the same set of open ended questions.

Data analysis: UNH-CE Field and State Specialists met and sorted interview results from Phase I and II into major themes. Focus group questions for Phase III were crafted based on these themes (see Appendix 2 for Focus Group Questions).

Phase III: County Focus Groups

Participants: A multi-sector approach was utilized when inviting potential participants. Focus group attendance was targeted at 10-12 participants. Representatives of the following types of local organizations/agencies were invited:

- County and city government – Administrators of important Extension liaisons
- School personnel – Superintendant, after school program directors, principal, etc.
- Law Enforcement/Judicial – Juvenile judge, juvenile probation, jail administration, DARE office or school resource officer, etc.
- Social Services – Either representatives of DHHS or from prominent non-profits serving children and families
- Youth – 4H Council Members, teen leaders, or youth serving on government boards as well as representatives of any youth program, after school program, or Courage to Care program active in communities
- Parents
- Health department, school nurse, physician, or other local health practitioner who is knowledgeable about the needs of youth and families
- Mental Health Professional – Someone who represents the mental health needs of youth and families in a community
- Business leaders – Prominent job providers

Care was taken to ensure that community representatives who were familiar as well as those who were not familiar with UNH-CE efforts were invited to the focus group sessions. These sessions included 123 community member participants.

Procedure: 13 focus groups were held throughout New Hampshire. Each county Extension office hosted at least one focus group session. Due to the presence of many large population areas, the Hillsborough county staff elected to hold three focus groups.

A standard set of questions and some suggestions for follow-up questions or "probes" were developed. These questions were derived from the themese identified through Phases I-II. The same questions were used as a guide throughout all 13 focus group sessions to allow for comparison of the data after it was analyzed. All participants had the option to refuse or "pass"

on any or all questions and not all questions were used in each focus group. (See Appendix 2 for Focus Group Questions).

Data analysis: The focus group discussions were recorded and the recordings were transcribed. Multiple Youth & Family Team staff reviewed the transcripts of the focus group recordings and noted the most mentioned and most discussed responses. They then grouped those ideas into a theme and gave the theme a name. Significant themes were determined for each question for each county focus group. Member checks were conducted by having Youth & Family Team staff and community member participants from each session review the themes for accuracy. (See appendix 3 for the themes that emerged from Strafford County specifically). The county themes from all ten counties were then compiled into a list of statewide themes. These are summarized in the following sectionof this report.

Results

The following is a statewide compilation of the major themes that emerged from the Youth & Family Situational Analysis Phase III county focus groups conducted in the fall of 2013. These themes are organized under the focus group questions that elicited them.

1. From your perspective, what are the biggest current challenges facing youth in your community?

   A. Poverty – Financial instability; joblessness leads to homelessness; lack of affordable housing and affordable health care
   B. Family instability – Lack of parent support; disengaged parents; working parents; single/divorced parents; poor supervision, abuse, neglect
   C. Need for transportation – Which could allow families to participate in activities or get services
   D. Substance abuse and mental health issues and lack of adequate mental health services
   E. Lack of parenting skills – Parents lack skills and family values because they are young, struggling or mentally ill
   F. Need for job skill training and career education for youth. People lack knowledge or a roadmap of resources available.
   G. Managing screen time – Too much screen-time contrinutes to inactivity and obesity as well as the difficulty of managing impacts of social media
   H. Kids lack structure and opportunities including affordable childcare, after school care/programming, and summer programming that can build resiliency and life skills
   I. Social isolation – Need for a tolerant, nonjudgmental and connected community across age, culture, technology and language with adults/teachers who know and care about kids.
   J. Time to eat and live – Balance and wellness

2. What types of youth and family programs in your community are being well utilized?

   A. Public Library
   B. Medicaid for children
   C. SNAP/TANF

D. Thrift stores, Salvation army, food pantries
E. Technical education opportunities (CTE centers in high schools)
F. Youth organizations, ex. educational, theater, collaborative
G. Work Ready
H. Community Action, Family Resource Center/parenting classes, Headstarts/Early Headstart, home visits
I. Outdoor recreation
J. Youth Sports
K. Online parenting classes
L. Afterschool programs, YMCA
M. School meal program
N. Mental health and family therapy, Substance abuse treatment
O. Faith community
P. Subsidized housing

2A. Can you think of other programs that need to be developed?
A. Need for door to door transportation
B. Need for more mental health and substance abuse treatment and prevention
C. Need navigational aids for folks to access services
D. Attendance at most youth programs drops off at age 12 - Programs to engage teens
E. Long-term Juvenile Court diversion over time
F. Existing mental health and domestic violence programs unable to meet all of current need
G. Financial literacy education
H. Youth court diversion

3. In your community, what opportunities are available for youth to learn about future jobs and careers?

A. Voc-Tech Centers/schools
B. Community youth programs – 4-H; Boys & Girls Club Career night
C. School-based job fairs and counseling – School-to-Career, Career days at schools, school career counseling, job shadowing
D. Extended learning opportunities and internships through school
E. Municipal programs – Parks and Rec local business visits for youth and adult education resume writing for adults; Police and Fire Explorers programs
F. Chamber of Commerce job exploration program and local business open-houses
G. Other organizations mentioned by more than one county: Health Career Summer Camp; AMC & NH Trails program; Tin Mountain
H. Others mentioned: Mt. Washington Valley Science Fair; Students work in preschools; Leadership Mt Washington Valley; Mt Washington Observatory; some casework available from Keene Youth Services; Mentoring; Plum Creek Forestry; Youth Build; Work Ready Community College program; Job Corps; OWLS - formerly Ombudsman; ROTC

3 A. If 7 of 10 jobs will require science or technology training, what changes must be made to better prepare our future workforce?

A. Need STEM taught early – e.g., in elementary school, but this is lacking, due to testing
B. Older youth need more solid and in depth STEM classes (e.g., using CAD or IT) – younger can be more hands-on and after-school oriented (e.g., Odyssey of the Mind) – must be relevant
C. Technology and engineering should be taught directly – not just science

3 B. What employment life skills can we address to expand youth's career options?

A. We need: job skill development – public speaking, interviews, applications, on-line identity management, and writing. "Soft Skills" and not just college Prep.
B. We need youth to be able to develop hope and self-esteem; (e.g., Junior Achievement programs)
C. We need businesses to connect with schools and career days

4. How do we affect change in our communities to promote health and prevent obesity?

A. Expanding insurance – especially for adults
B. Access to food/cooking/nutrition education for all audiences
C. Access to affordable healthy foods—expending SNAP dollars at farmers markets
D. Increasing public transportation
E. Creating walkable communities, ex. safe walks to schools, Community wellness coalition, School & Community Gardens
F. Incentivizing exercise/affordable exercise options
G. Family exercise options, engaging and fun
H. Engaging whole families in positive activities around food/exercise, cooking
I. Youth home economics, cooking, appealing healthy menus
J. Life skills, education, menu planning, budgeting
K. Find ways to increase physical activity in everyday routines, any solution needs audience input
L. Improve School Lunches

5. Can you describe any opportunities you know of in your community for young people to make a difference through partnership with adults?

A. Community-based youth programs – 4-H, Scouts, Big Brothers/Sisters
B. School boards – High school rep and youth voice in School administrative processes, Student government
C. Church
D. School advisory groups: Key Clubs & High School student groups; School-based mentoring; social contracting with High School groups, National Honor Society
E. Music/Arts Programs, School drama programs, programs at local performing arts centers

F. Afterschool Programs; Leaders Club at YMCA
G. Interact/Rotary
H. Sports/Outdoor Recreation
I. Other maintained by one county: Project Extra; some good summer hands-on programs; Middle School Orientation program 'Twist'; Freedom Found; AMC; Youth Prevention Council with Sean O'Brien; Winter Carnival brings folks together; United Way; Hand in Hand; Builder club at Middle School; Libraries; Family-based school involvement like PTO

6. What are some of the activities you participate in as a family?

A. Large community event – "family night out" - involving social service agencies, public safety agencies and more.
B. Multicultural Fair
C. Holiday events
D. Outdoor activities – camping, skiing, fishing, hiking, sledding, beach/swimming
E. Youth Sports
F. Blueberry/Apple picking
G. Church
H. 4H
I. Volunteering/Community Service
J. Anything Free

7. What are the behavioral, mental health and substance abuse issues that have a major impact on the youth and families in your community?

A. Drugs, especially heroin, marijuana and prescription, but also alcohol and bath salts etc.
B. Broken system – no long term help for mental health patients; shortage of mental health services beyond ER is a major issue; lack of child psychology
C. Depression – Youth feel hopeless; self-injurious behavior
D. Emotional violence at school – new "normal" is less nice; bullying in schools; on-line bullying
E. Mental health issues in schools – classroom growing and schools have to deal with reduced mental health services elsewhere
F. Stress, anxiety and family Instability
G. Community connections and values not there anymore
H. Stigma, fear of being in the "system"
I. Can't afford insurance or transportation to access treatment

7 A. How are these issues being addressed currently and what do you feel is needed to adequately address them?

A. Home visiting programs for families of children with behavioral issues – Social worker/substance abuse counselors in every school in NH.
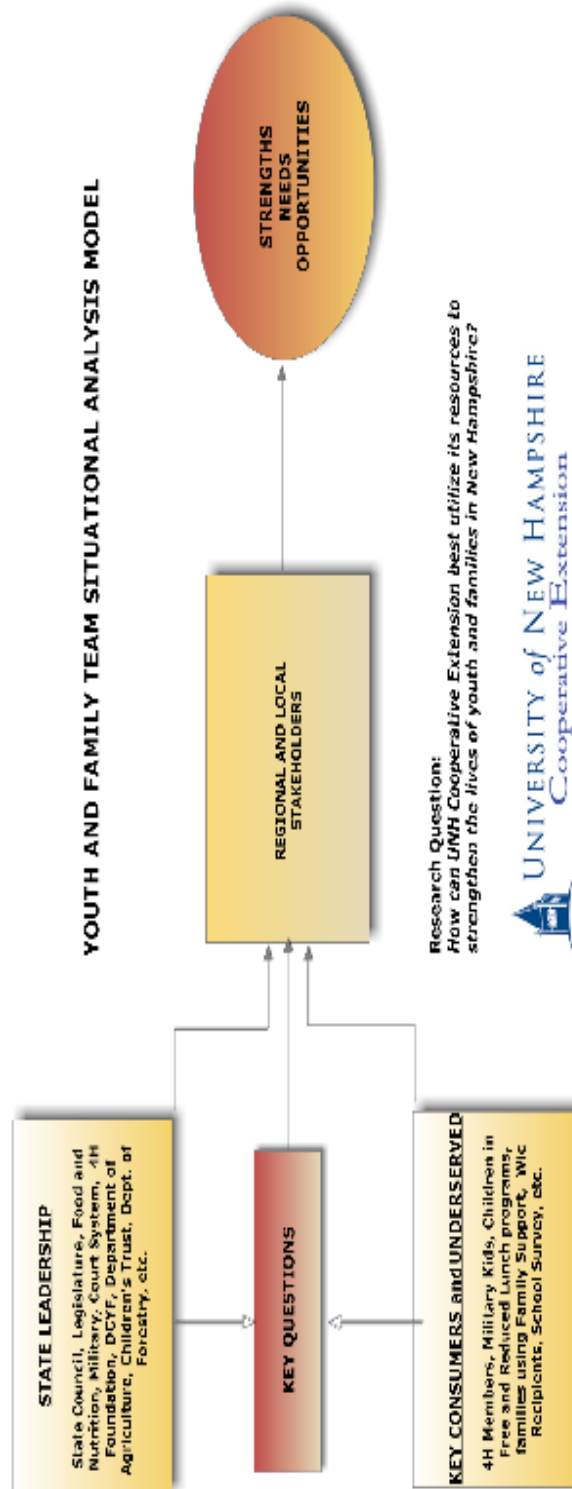
B. Universal preschool programs for three and four year olds
C. Easier to engage parents of children with difficult behaviors when the children are younger
D. Prevention coalitions
E. Systems talking to each other: mental health, schools, law enforcement etc.
F. Reinstate school and home-based services that were cut by the legislature such as "Family Strengths" which were really useful and now are gone
G. Access to mental health medication for parents who cannot afford them
H. Interpreting the new health care laws

8. Within your community what do you see as the greatest barriers to families achieving financial stability?

A. No work benefits
B. Inconsistent work (20 hours one week, 40 the next, laid off etc.)
C. Different ethic/skills/mindset around managing money
D. Squeezed out of the labor market—not educated enough for some jobs, low wage jobs can't pay bills and fewer livable wage middle class jobs exist.
E. No housing for young and lower middle income families. Housingis available for the poor and the rich with no in between.
F. Lack of good public transportation
G. Access/affordability of childcare
H. Gap between living well and ability to have access to support services
I. Struggles with soft skills related to employment, emotional regulation, planning skills, problem solving
J. Geographic distance to work/isolation
K. Lack of community will to pay higher wages
L. Lack of affordable, quality childcare

8 A. What strategies/changes could your community apply to increase access to economic and workforce opportunities?

A. Mentoring for kids

9. UNHCE is supposed to be bringing the resources of the University to NH communities like yours/ours. Based on our discussion today, if you had one minute with UNH President Huddleston, what would you bring to his attention?

A. Increasing applied research/establishing connections to local industry
B. Emphasizing workforce training and supporting non-trade students
C. Making Cooperative Extension a "sacred cow"- they fill the outreach mission and should not be fearing for their budget every year and cutting needed programs that reach the community
D. Comprehensive multi-disciplinary family strengthening
E. Focusing on supporting high-need populations

F. Break the "UNH bubble" or "ivory tower" approach
G. College classes for inmates
H. Community gardening for community connections to food
I. Help community to see worth of investing in itself
J. Focus programs on just a few things – depth better than breadth
K. Tying resources that already exist together
L. Parenting education and universal early childhood education
M. Cut top admin salaries, affordable higher education

Appendix 1
Situational Analysis Process Overview

YOUTH AND FAMILY TEAM SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS MODEL

STRENGTHS
NEEDS
OPPORTUNITIES

REGIONAL AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

STATE LEADERSHIP

State Council, Legislature, Food and Nutrition, Military, Court System, 4H Foundation, DCYF, Department of Agriculture, Children's Trust, Dept. of Forestry, etc.

KEY QUESTIONS

KEY CONSUMERS and UNDERSERVED

4H Members, Military Kids, Children in Free and Reduced Lunch programs, families using Family Support, Wic Recipients, School Survey, etc.

Research Question:
How can UNH Cooperative Extension best utilize its resources to strengthen the lives of youth and families in New Hampshire?

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Appendix 2
Situational Analysis Focus Group Questions

Opener (everyone answers):

1. From your perspective, what are the biggest current challenges facing youth & families in your community?

2. What types of youth and family programs in your community are being well utilized?

> Possible probe 1: Which of these programs are at capacity or are underutilized?

> Possible probe 2: Can you think of other programs that need to be developed?

3. In your community, what opportunities are available for youth to learn about future jobs and careers?

> Possible probe 1: If 7 of 10 jobs will require science or technology training, what changes must be made to better prepare our future workforce?

> Possible probe 2: What employment life skills can we address to expand youth's career options?

4. How do we affect changes in our communities to promote health and prevent obesity?

> Possible probe 1: How is access to healthy food different for different demographic groups? (i.e. family, singles, elderly, rural/town, disabled, chronically ill, etc.)

5. Can you describe any opportunities you know of in your community for young people to make a difference through partnership with adults?

> Possible probe 1: How do you think your schools are doing at encouraging civility, citizenship and positive relationships? Can you give examples of what is or needs to be done?

> Possible probe 2: In what ways are young people able to have a voice in community affairs?

6. What are some of the activities you participate in as a family?

> Possible probe: Imagine you could design the perfect family activity – tell us about it.

7. What are the behavioral, mental health and substance abuse issues that have a major impact on the youth and families in your community?

   Possible probe: How are these issues being addressed currently and what do you feel is needed to adequately address them?

8. Within your community do you see as the greatest barriers to families achieving financial stability?

   Possible probe: What strategies/changes could your community apply to increase access to economic and work force opportunities?

9. UNHCE is supposed to be bringing the resources of the University to NH communities like yours/ours. Based on our discussion today, if you had one minute with UNH president Huddleston what you would want to bring to his attention?

10. Did we miss anything?

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Appendix 3
Youth & Family Situational Analysis: Focus Group Questions & Themes
Strafford County, Fall 2013

1. From your perspective, what are the biggest current challenges facing youth & families in your community?

    A. Substance abuse/access to treatment services
    B. Access to mental health services
    C. Negotiating social media
    D. Transportation
    E. Affordable housing
    F. Childcare
    G. Workforce prep
    H. Some sense of ethic: having families be engaged, feeling hopeful about a way out of poverty, creating a strong work ethic—recurring theme, all related but stated somewhat differently

2. What types of youth and family programs in your community are being well utilized?

    A. Medicaid for children
    B. SNAP/TANF
    C. Technical education opportunities (CTE centers in high schools)
    D. Youth organizations
    E. Work Ready
    F. Community Action

3. In your community, what opportunities are available for youth to learn about future jobs and careers?

    A. *Question not answered*

4. How do we affect changes in our communities to promote health and prevent obesity?

    A. Expanding insurance – especially for adults
    B. Access to food/cooking/nutritional education
    C. Access to affordable healthy foods—expanding SNAP dollars at farmers markets
    D. Increasing public transportation and creating walkable communities
    E. Incentivizing exercise
    F. Engaging whole families in positive activities around food/exercise

5. Can you describe any opportunities you know of in your community for young people to make a difference through partnership with adults?

   A. Student panels/student inclusion on boards and councils
   B. School based student clubs
   C. Community youth organizations (4-H, boy scouts, youth to youth)
   D. Youth ministries
   E. Music
   F. Libraries
   G. Family based school involvement- school activity nights, PTA/O

6. What are some of the activities you participate in as a family?

   A. *Question not answered*

7. What are the behavioral, mental health and substance abuse issues that have a major impact on the youth and families in your community?

   A. Families/individuals afraid to disclose issues to case workers or other professionals "in the system"
   B. Stigma
   C. Cost/lack of access
   D. Broken system/nowhere to go/waiting lists

8. Within your community what do you see as the greatest barriers for families achieving financial stability?

   A. No work benefits
   B. Inconsistent work (20 hours one week, 40 the next, laid off etc.)
   C. Different ethic/skills/mindset around managing money
   D. Squeezed out of labor market—not educated enough for some jobs, low wage jobs can't pay bills and fewer livable wage middle class jobs exist.
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   B. Emphasizing workforce training and supporting non-trade students
   C. Making Cooperative Extension a "sacred cow"- they fill the outreach mission and should not be fearing for their budget every year and cutting needed programs that reach the community
   D. Increasing community outreach
   E. Focusing on supporting high-need populations
   F. Break the "UNH bubble" or "ivory tower" approach