UNSEEN

Youth Mental Health and Wellness in the Pandemic Era

Common Ground Health

CCSI Coordinated Care Services, Inc.
Innovative Solutions in Human Service Delivery

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A primary goal of this project was to authentically integrate community voice, demonstrating how systems, providers, caregivers and youth can co-create solutions together. Success for this project would not have been possible without the many stakeholders who came around the table to contribute to the work. A special acknowledgement goes out to the many youth who told their stories about the impact COVID-19 has had and continues to have on their mental health, including the eight youth workgroup members, 31 youth who participated in our qualitative interviews, six youth panelists who presented at our Community Wellness Summit, and community youth who vetted and provided feedback to the stories within and the resulting change agenda. Throughout this effort, they demonstrated vulnerability, bravery and leadership as they educated their adult peers about the realities of their everyday lives in the wake of the pandemic. The youth in our community are wise, and deserving of adults who can listen to and learn from their expertise.

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Third ACE Project Workgroup Members and Contributors:

Youth Leaders:
Caydence Dobbs
Aolani Siaca
Elijah Espada
Madeline Funchess
Diego Lee
Monique Carlton
Isaiah Santiago
Django Paine
Arjun Patel
Maria Moran
Nile Colson
Assata Evans
Calvin Holloway

Parents/Caregivers:
Shamika Fusco, MLIS
Roxanna Siaca
Lynn Mordenga
Allen Jackson
Jamia Williams

Organizational Partners:
Anne Kern
Beverly Hill
Danielle Jones, LMHC
Denise Stokes
Laura Shipley, MD
Erin Graupman
Eve Hosford, LCSW-R
LeKeyah Wilson, MD
Sara Taylor
Sarah Fletcher
Valerie Douglas

Staff:
Melanie Funchess
Elizabeth Meeker, PsyD
Alicia Evans
Anna Laurenza
Hannah Shippee
Dina Faticone
Holly Sienkiewicz, DrPH
Kathi Lynch

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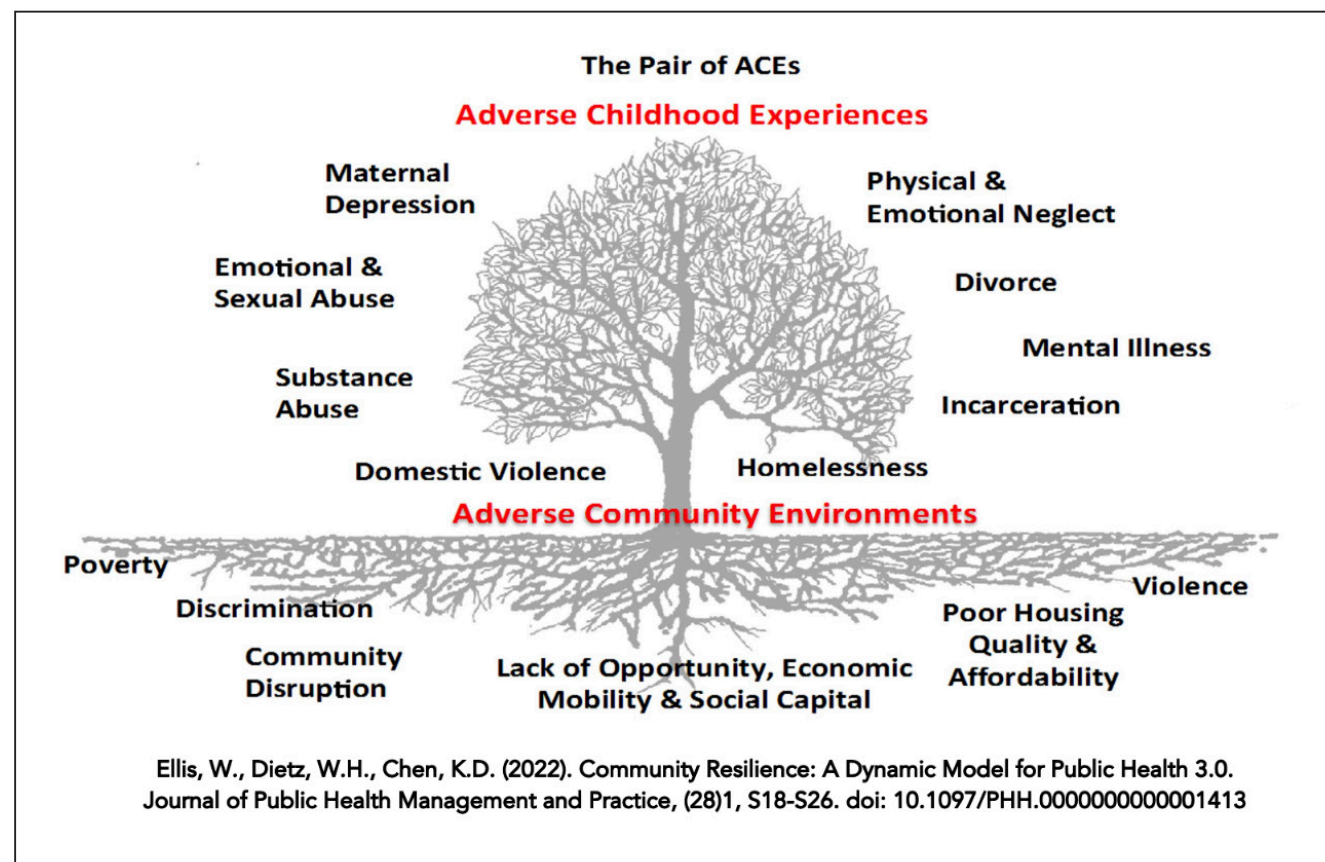ESL Charitable Foundation℠

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OVERVIEW

A home punctuated by violence. A chronically empty refrigerator. A parent in jail. These are some examples of **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** that can hurt childrens' health over their lifetime and are often unseen.

Adverse Childhood Experiences include emotional, physical or sexual abuse; emotional or physical neglect; violence, substance use or mental illness in the home; separation or divorce of parents; and incarceration of a household member.

Many young people in our community have experienced ACEs such as these. Toxic stress caused by such traumatic events can build up in the body if it is not addressed. The more often a child experiences traumatic challenges such as these ACEs before the age of 18, the greater the risk for physical and mental health challenges and even a shorter life span.

The Pair of ACEs
Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal Depression · Physical & Emotional Neglect · Emotional & Sexual Abuse · Divorce · Substance Abuse · Mental Illness · Domestic Violence · Incarceration · Homelessness

Adverse Community Environments

Poverty · Violence · Discrimination · Poor Housing Quality & Affordability · Community Disruption · Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital

Ellis, W., Dietz, W.H., Chen, K.D. (2022). Community Resilience: A Dynamic Model for Public Health 3.0. Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, (28)1, S18-S26. doi: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000001413

Some researchers have suggested that there are also Adverse Community Environments, which cause traumatic stress that can have similar negative impact on the developing mind and body like Adverse Childhood Experiences. These community environments include widespread poverty; discrimination; community instability, lack of opportunity, economic mobility and social capital; run-down and unaffordable housing; and violence outside the home. Together, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adverse Community Environments are called the "**Pair of ACEs**" *(see graphic above)*.

In March 2020, **COVID-19** spread quickly throughout the U.S., causing severe illness in some people. In response, schools and many workplaces closed abruptly, disrupting daily life for most people across the country including those living in Monroe County, New York. Children and adolescents generally didn't get as severe COVID symptoms as older adults. However, the pandemic has severely affected the mental, emotional and social well-being of young people.

As the pandemic wore on, child-serving and mental health experts at Common Ground Health realized we might be seeing the effects of "**Adverse COVID Events.**" We called these the "**Third ACE**," another form of trauma layered on top of already existing Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adverse Community Environments. These "Adverse COVID Events" include sudden and drastic disruptions to routines, such as remote learning; social isolation from friends and peers; heightened stress on families; increased screen time and presence on social media; and uncertainty when planning for the future.

While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was widespread and has impacted all youth, its lasting effects have been experienced at higher rates in communities of color where unequal health outcomes already existed. Data shows that discrimination across many systems including healthcare, criminal justice, human services and education, has led to worse outcomes and higher rates of disease and mental health challenges for Black, Latino and Indigenous people. COVID-19 shined a light on these disparities when members of these communities experienced higher rates of disease and death due to COVID-19 because of these ongoing challenges.

COVID also greatly affected family stability and added new pressures that didn't exist before. Parents were under tremendous stress to ensure that their children were learning remotely. Some childcare settings closed due to quarantines, exposures and other staffing issues. Some parents had to go without childcare altogether or to find unreliable childcare for younger children and/or children with disabilities. In many cases, older siblings stepped into the role of childcare provider for their families. As they navigated these challenges, parents had to absorb the stress and the effect on their children and teens – without the benefit of their traditional support structures. Many parents reported the deterioration of their own mental health. Alcohol use and suicide rates increased.

In January 2022, Common Ground Health and Coordinated Care Services, Inc. formed the Third ACE Workgroup to respond to the many ways COVID was affecting youth and their support structures. The group was made up of youth, parents, caregivers and service providers. It identified the ways in which the pandemic affected youth mental health. It also provided an opportunity for youth to tell stories from their own perspective and co-create a change agenda to address the challenges identified. The group has worked intentionally to elevate the experiences and voices of youth. It has explored non-clinical solutions and interventions to create a culture of positive youth mental health.

The workgroup defined root causes to the youth mental health crisis, such as stigma surrounding mental health concerns. It designed a primary research project, co-created by youth, to hear directly from other youth across the community about their experiences and the changes they want to see to support improved mental health now and into the future. Members interviewed 31 youth aged 14 to 21 to hear more about their experiences during the pandemic and learn the effects of these experiences on their mental and emotional health. Below are composite sketches of some of what the group heard. The composites include the voices of multiple youth for each age group and demonstrate the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on young people's mental health and well-being.

YOUTH VOICES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

When COVID started I was pretty young and used to go home and play outside like little kids do...playing kickball and just outside. My friends and I didn't really talk during COVID. We were young and didn't have cell phones to keep in touch regularly. I didn't have my own phone 'til 8th grade. Some of us had our Mom's phones sometimes.

Now, I never see anyone anymore. I don't know if they moved...there are new little kids outside, but where are my friends? We grew up without each other. We don't know who our friends became.

We lost friendships, childhood friendships at that. And if you had a connection with your teacher, especially elementary, that was kinda hard too.
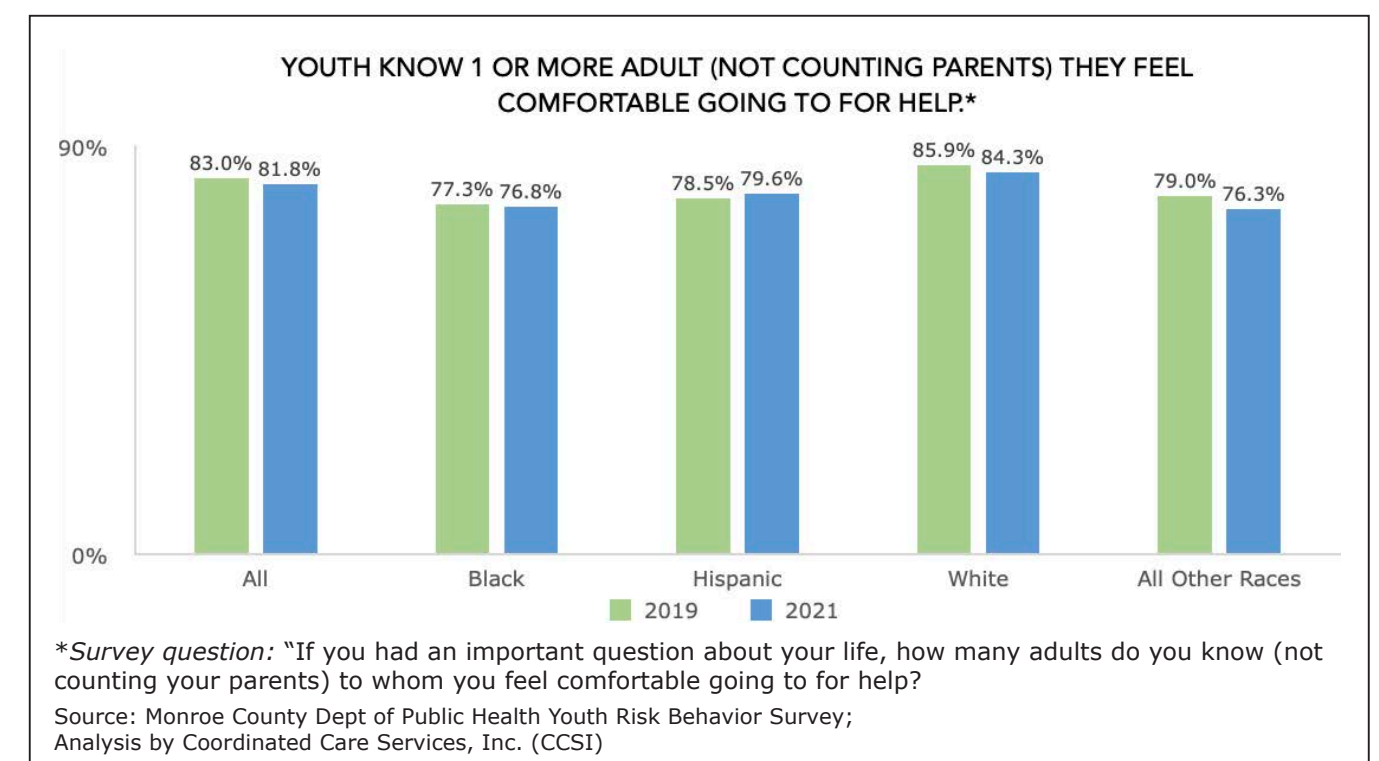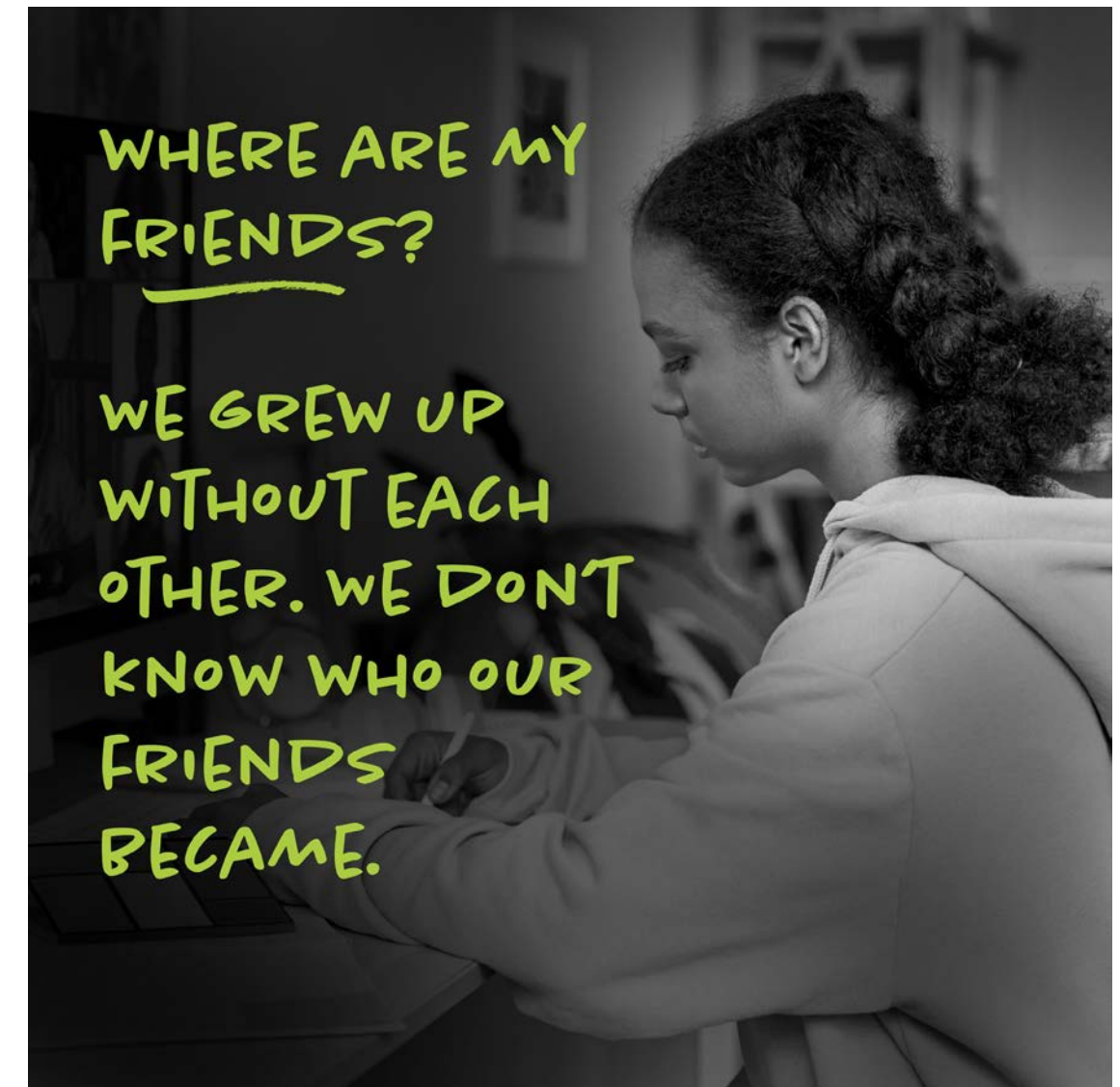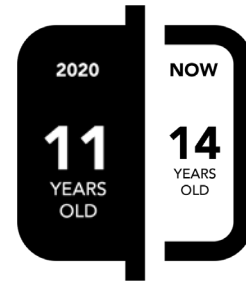
Starting middle school remotely was really hard. I didn't make any friends during COVID… it was hard to connect with people on a screen. I had trouble paying attention in school when it was online… I remember most people would not be paying attention, a lot of students were sleeping. It was a lot of online work. I don't do well with that. It made me stressed. I isolated myself away. I managed it on my own.

We're back in school now. The pandemic made the kids a lot meaner. And adults, they kind of shut down thoughts of teens and students. They should be more mindful and emotionally supportive...listen more, make students feel more comfortable. Like in the school environment, some teachers are just not it...they need sensitivity training.
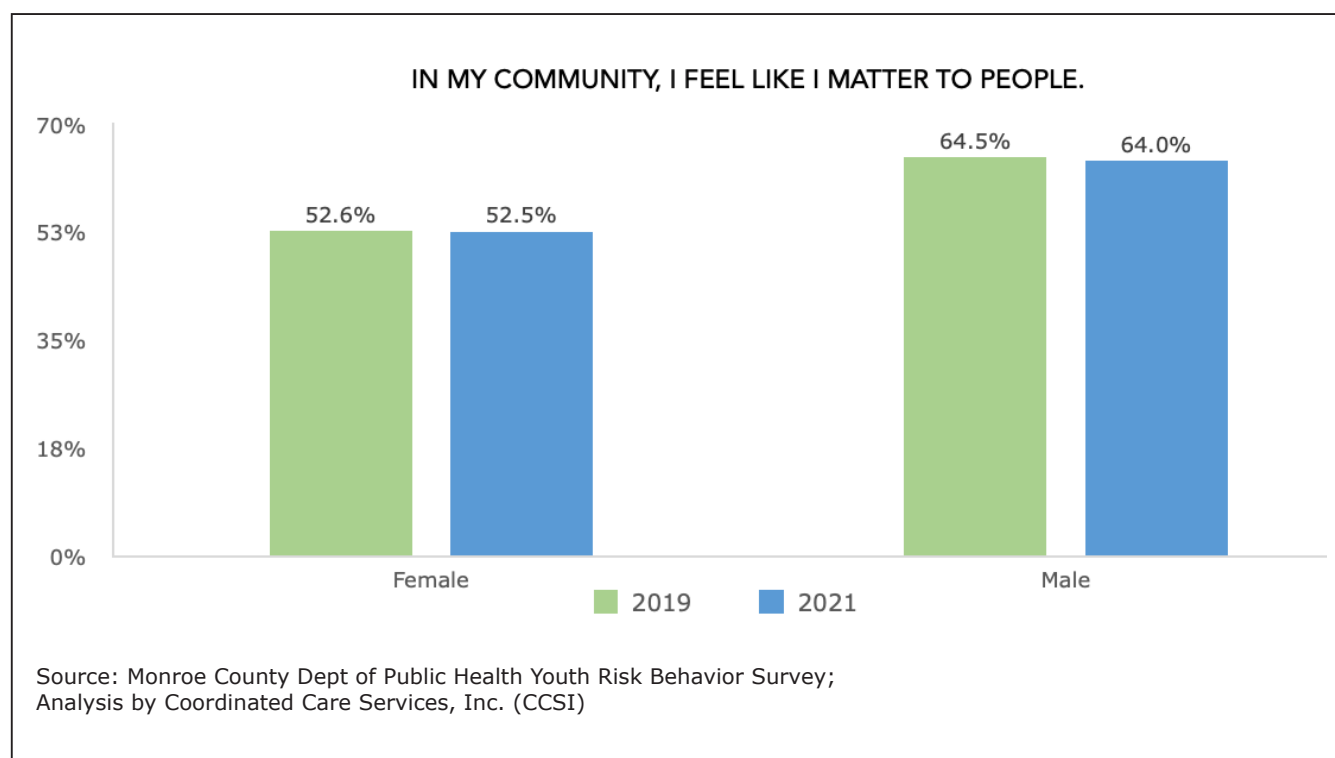
During COVID I stayed home a lot with my brother and sisters who would watch us. I fought a lot with my older brother because he talked down to me. I wasn't in my safe place with my friends in school. It was stressful and didn't make me feel good. And parents sometimes think that they always know what's best...they've experienced life and your life is similar to theirs, but...we're two different people. They grew up different from me.

During quarantine, my mindset was that I was mature for my age, but when I look back, I was kind of ignorant. I didn't really understand what was going on…I thought I did, but I didn't…I can't really describe it, it didn't make sense to me. Everyone was making a big deal, but I didn't understand what was going on. It happened so fast.
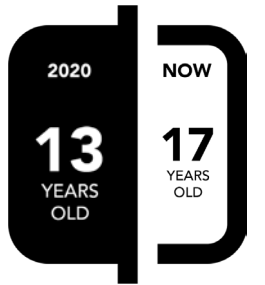
COVID's made me distant…more distant. I've lost contact with some family members and stopped talking with friends because it was hard to reach out to them. Having someone to talk to is very important… everyone needs someone.

2020	NOW
11 YEARS OLD	**14** YEARS OLD

WHERE ARE MY FRIENDS?

WE GREW UP WITHOUT EACH OTHER. WE DON'T KNOW WHO OUR FRIENDS BECAME.

YOUTH KNOW 1 OR MORE ADULT (NOT COUNTING PARENTS) THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE GOING TO FOR HELP.*

	All	Black	Hispanic	White	All Other Races
2019	83.0%	77.3%	78.5%	85.9%	79.0%
2021	81.8%	76.8%	79.6%	84.3%	76.3%

Survey question: "If you had an important question about your life, how many adults do you know (not counting your parents) to whom you feel comfortable going to for help?

Source: Monroe County Dept of Public Health Youth Risk Behavior Survey; Analysis by Coordinated Care Services, Inc. (CCSI)

IT FEELS LIKE PEOPLE WERE REPLACED WITH NPCs*, AND I DON'T FEEL WELCOME IN MY COMMUNITY.

*non-player characters in video games

IN MY COMMUNITY, I FEEL LIKE I MATTER TO PEOPLE.

	Female		Male	
	52.6%	52.5%	64.5%	64.0%

2019   2021

Source: Monroe County Dept of Public Health Youth Risk Behavior Survey;
Analysis by Coordinated Care Services, Inc. (CCSI)

MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE #1

2020   NOW

13 YEARS OLD   17 YEARS OLD

I was in middle school when the pandemic started, 13 years old. It was rough at first, especially with family. When I was going to school, I'd be gone 7 hours a day, then come home and only see them a little. Being home all the time, I got cabin fever. Everything they did would irritate me because I was around them all the time…needed time away from them. Instead of going to school or going to work, you see them from dawn to dusk. It gets annoying. "Dang bro, just go in your room. Do you have to be in the same room I'm in?" You don't give people time to miss each other.

You used to ask, "hey, how was your day?" Now it's like, "I've seen what you've done all day." And some parents are hard to talk to. It's hard with some parts of my family. When I argue with people I try to be calm 'cus that's what I've been taught, but parents keep on yelling. Making sure they're heard, but not you. It just gets annoying.

We're back at school now. There's a whole group of kids that don't know how to socially interact with people. It's insane, bouncing off the walls. It's not, "Oh, I'm shy," it's "you looked at me funny and I'm gonna punch you." No one knows how to communicate their feelings. They project their emotions by fighting.

Security's getting tighter because of all the fighting, but it's not helping. Security guards would hit kids to break up fights. They're doing more damage than good. There are so many rules they try to put on kids and push their authority. It feels more like a prison than a school. No kids want to go there anymore. It's a terrible environment to be in and I think, for a lot of kids, it causes a lot more damage than good. When kids are acting bad, teachers don't try to see why they're acting bad…they don't look deeper into it. Adults just pretending that COVID never happened.

Now that I've locked away my feelings, how am I supposed to unlock them? What am I to do? What are we to do?

The neighborhood's not any better. I was outside all of the time before COVID. There were lots of events for kids. Now my block looks like a wasteland. No one's outside anymore, and if they are it's not for a good reason. It feels like people were replaced with NPCs *[non-player characters in video games]* and I don't feel welcome in my community.
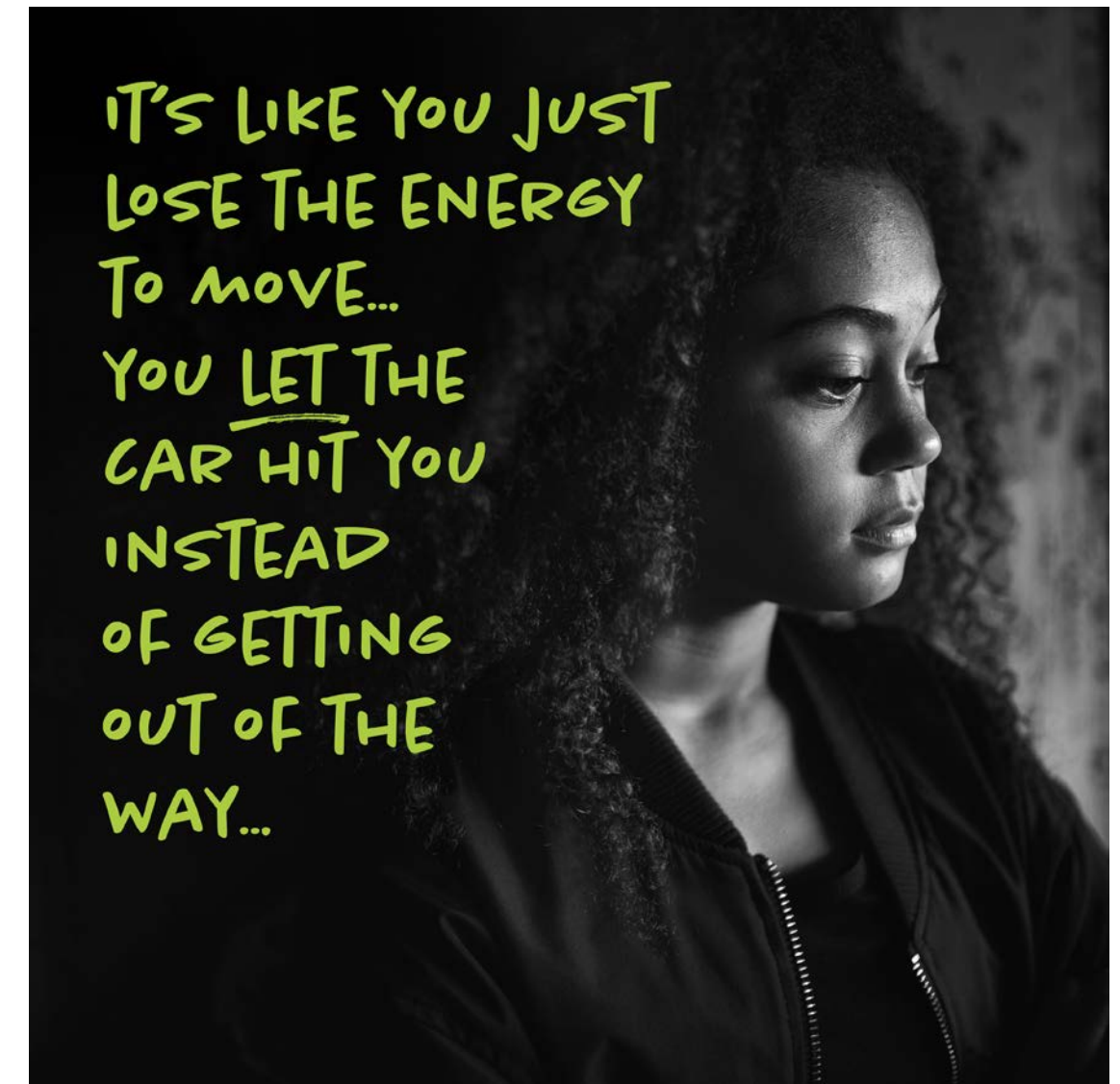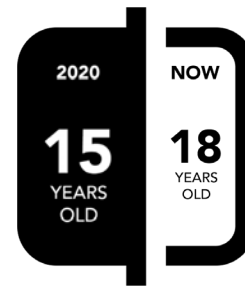
But I feel welcome at TE *[Teen Empowerment]*. I feel supported here. It's one of the only places that accepts us teens and don't see us as nuisances or menaces to society…teens are just seen as aggressive, violent people. They're the only ones in our community, specifically, that care about our opinions and do something with our opinions and listen. It's like a second home here.

MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE #2

2020 — 15 YEARS OLD

NOW — 18 YEARS OLD

I feel like every relationship I had disappeared during COVID. At the start of the pandemic, me and my friends from high school would talk all the time about school, play games, talk about where we were going…as time went on through the pandemic though, we all kind of split up, didn't talk that much. You really don't know what you got until you lose it. Kind of what COVID did to us. We didn't realize how much we socialize and how many friends we had and how many times we got to see them before, until we lost it.

COVID hit and I was down…It was just, I shut down… I didn't have the motivation to do anything. I felt a lack of motivation towards my family and friends. I wanted to get my work done and go back to bed. I didn't want to interact as much. It was really easy to just curl up and…let the world hit you. That's what happens with depression. It's like you just lose the energy to move… you let the car hit you instead of getting out of the way. I felt low energy. There was low energy in my whole family. Depression, darkness…you couldn't go anywhere. The streets were empty. It was quiet… too silent. Everything was dead outside. No one came out, no one to clean up the neighborhood. Dead outside. And now, there are some faces I see every day. I don't say a word to them. They're complete strangers.

During COVID I was severely depressed. I'm still trying to get out of that. I kept my room dark with the AC on. It made me lose interest in stuff and I lose focus a lot now, but I was really sad, and I don't think I have adjusted just yet. I've learned to live with it, but I haven't gotten used to it. How do I manage my depression? I listen to music, draw, write…anything to keep my mind stable. I had done self-harm before and hadn't shared that with my mom, but she finally noticed. I promised her I would stop cutting. I want to go back to being my old self.

IT'S LIKE YOU JUST LOSE THE ENERGY TO MOVE… YOU LET THE CAR HIT YOU INSTEAD OF GETTING OUT OF THE WAY…

INTENTIONAL SELF-HARM EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISIT RATE, 21 YEARS AND YOUNGER, BY RACE, MONROE COUNTY

Black non-Hispanic — Hispanic — White non-Hispanic — All other races — All
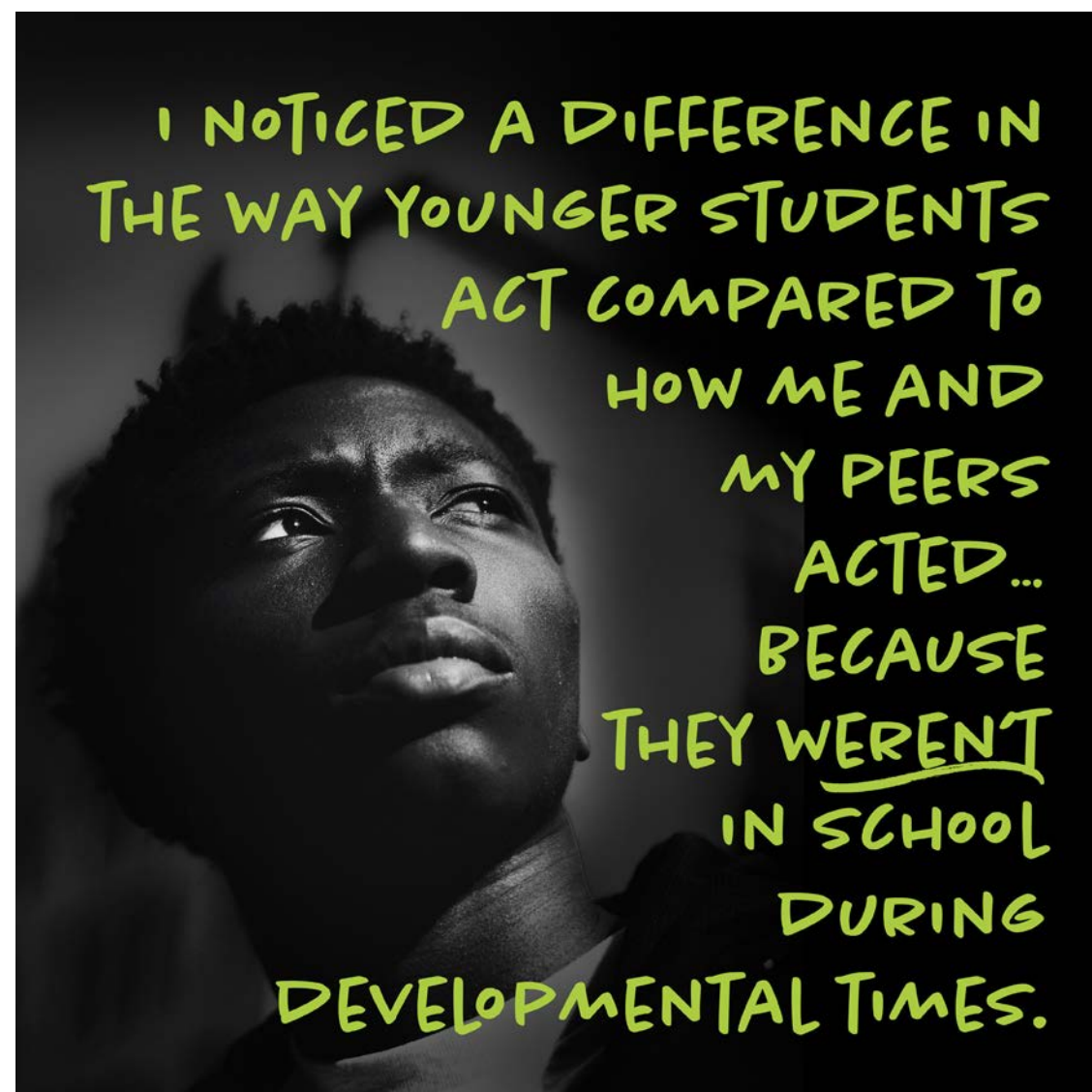
Source: NYS DOH Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS); Analysis by Common Ground Health

INTENTIONAL SELF-HARM EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISIT RATE, 21 YEARS AND YOUNGER, BY GENDER, MONROE COUNTY

Female — Male — All

Source: NYS DOH Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS); Analysis by Common Ground Health

I NOTICED A DIFFERENCE IN THE WAY YOUNGER STUDENTS ACT COMPARED TO HOW ME AND MY PEERS ACTED… BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T IN SCHOOL DURING DEVELOPMENTAL TIMES.

DO YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING, REMEMBERING, OR MAKING DECISIONS BECAUSE OF MENTAL, OR EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES?

	All	9th grade	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade
2019	37.7%	34.0%	38.9%	38.5%	39.6%
2021	40.1%	35.4%	40.0%	43.0%	43.1%

Source: Monroe County Dept of Public Health Youth Risk Behavior Survey;
Analysis by Coordinated Care Services, Inc. (CCSI)
A total of 7,703 youth responded to this question in 2019 (9th grade: n=1,810; 10th grade: n=2,156; 11th grade: n=1,996; 12th grade: n=1,741) and 7,671 responded in 2021 (9th grade: n=2,139; 10th grade: n=2,090; 11th grade: n=1,831; 12th grade: n=1,611).

HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE #1

2020 / NOW
15 YEARS OLD / **19** YEARS OLD

I was in 9th grade when COVID started…it was very hard.

At the beginning of the year, I had a 3.0. I was always straight As, but it got tougher in 10th grade. It was hard doing school remote. I had always been at the top of my class, but it was difficult to stay there during quarantine.

My parents expected me to do well in school, which is why I was stressed a lot. I'm a visual learner and remote learning was challenging. It was better in 11th and 12th grade when my GPA went back up. Being back in school and interacting with teachers and friends, it was better for me being back in school.

I noticed a difference in the way younger students act compared to how me and my peers acted…because they weren't in school during developmental times. They behave very differently.

Younger students on social media, Instagram mimicking what they see. They're very impressionable. If you do something, they'll want to be like you and do it. See influencers and celebrities living out their quote unquote perfect life. I wouldn't say everything was positive in the beginning, but now everyone is doing stuff just to go viral…the dumbest stuff.

It's much different now from when I was younger.

COVID basically made me value some relationships more, made me notice who I need and don't need in my life, and broke some relationships as well. I realized that not everyone is meant to be in your life forever, some people are just meant to be there for a point in time.

And that's OK. I'm enjoying my own time more. I've always been the introvert of my family. I spend less time online and I really stopped socializing with people unless you were my main friend group. I'm cool with just being with my close friends…I don't need the socialization.

Since October 2020, it feels like things have gone back to normal. Not much has changed with peers, family has always been close and they share everything with each other.

HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE #2

2020	NOW
17 YEARS OLD	**21** YEARS OLD
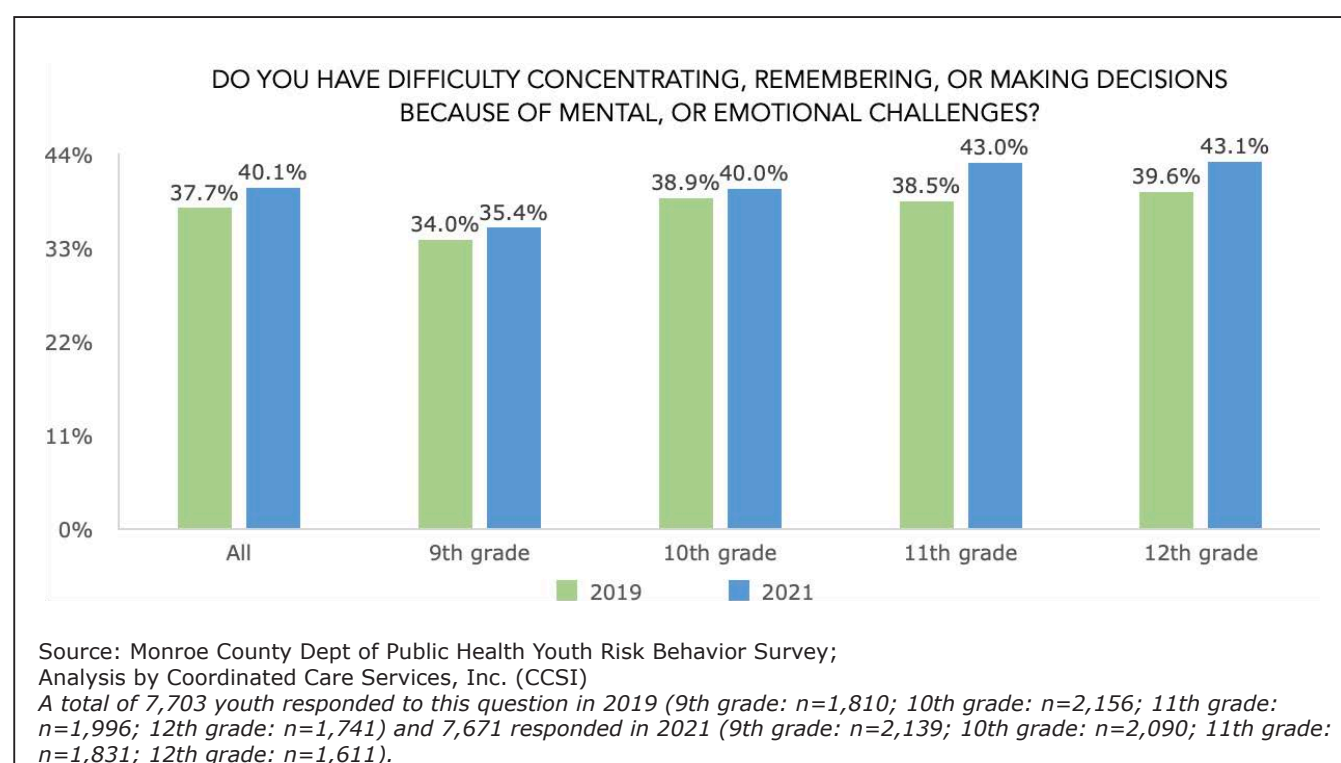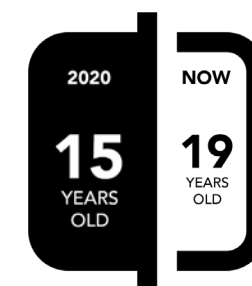
COVID changed things. My life changed a lot by the way I had to go through school. I was a senior when it started, ready to graduate, went from going to school every day, to not going every day, to not knowing if we'd go back before graduation— We never went back.
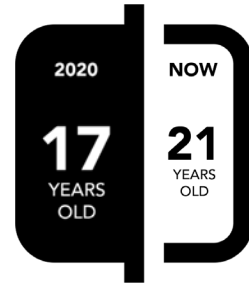
At graduation we had to walk the stage one by one, in groups of 3-4. In college in the fall, we had to come into school always wearing a mask, couldn't go out of our dorms for that long, and a lot of places were off limits to a certain number of people. I kinda got used to being alone, so it was kinda weird trying to be friends with people in person. I got so used to being alone in my room.

Things changed a lot at home as well. Family is not family anymore, we're just people who are related by blood. We went from seeing each other a lot and not arguing, and then COVID came around so we hadn't seen each other in two years. We used to be close, but now all we do is argue and fight much more often and I noticed that family members developed a habit for alcohol and marijuana.

As for my parents…I look at my brokenness and I see their brokenness. I lost a lot of family and a lot of friends because of [the pandemic]. So it forced me to be more independent, so if I lost a very close loved one, I'm not going to tell anyone what's going on. I'm gonna handle it myself. Cause that's what I was used to for the past two years, so there's really nothing new.
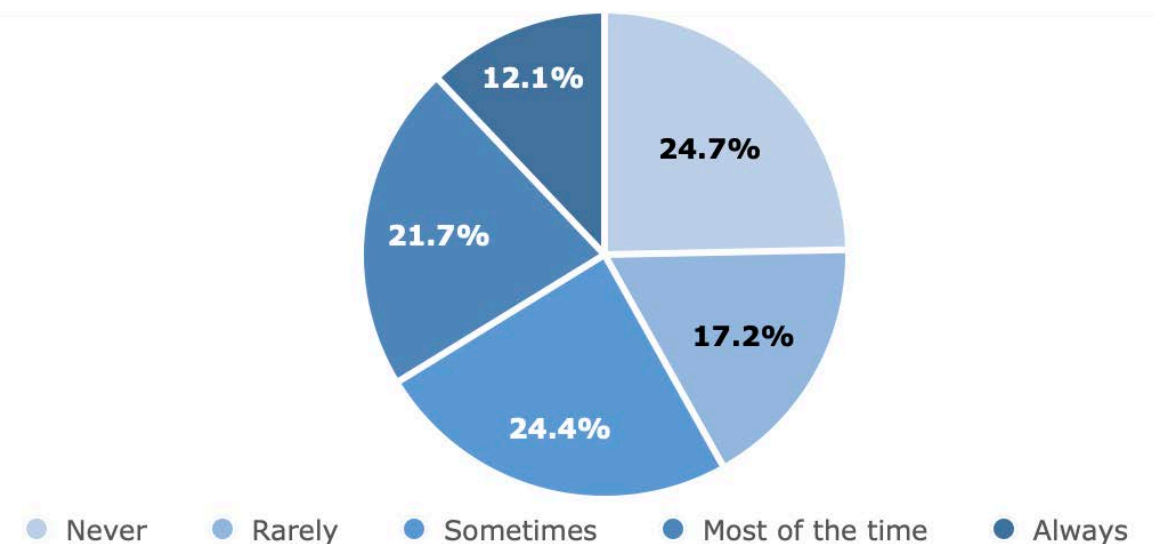
So that's how it's continuing and growing. So I'm just more independent in everything I do. I don't tell anybody my next move. I don't tell anyone what I want to do in the future. I just do what I gotta do. You'll find out when the time comes or when I'm doing it. The whole thing just gave me more of an "I don't care" attitude. There's the development of a numbness to more serious topics… if someone gets sick or hurt, it's like 'so what' now? It was expected for bad things to happen, so now when it happens it's just like, we just shrug it off. Yesterday my boss was telling me about a shooting that happened two hours earlier near her transit stop. Two teens were shot and killed. It's not like I don't feel anything, but, it's so normal now. Even last year, a 6-year-old got shot across the street from my house and he died.

I don't know how to feel about those things cause it's happening so constantly around me. I'll be asleep, or up, and I'll hear 'pop,pop,pop' and I'm like somebody's shooting again. I don't know how to feel about it. It's just out there, it's a part of the world. So I don't really feel anything about those things. If someone dies, that's tragic, but I didn't know them personally, so I can't really feel too much about it. If I hear how they died and the facts about it, then I'll feel the story, but I can't really connect to those thing. So I think maybe a disconnect from society in some ways.

It feels embarrassing to be this emotionless.

THERE'S THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NUMBNESS TO MORE SERIOUS TOPICS… IF SOMEONE GETS SICK OR HURT, IT'S LIKE "SO WHAT" NOW?
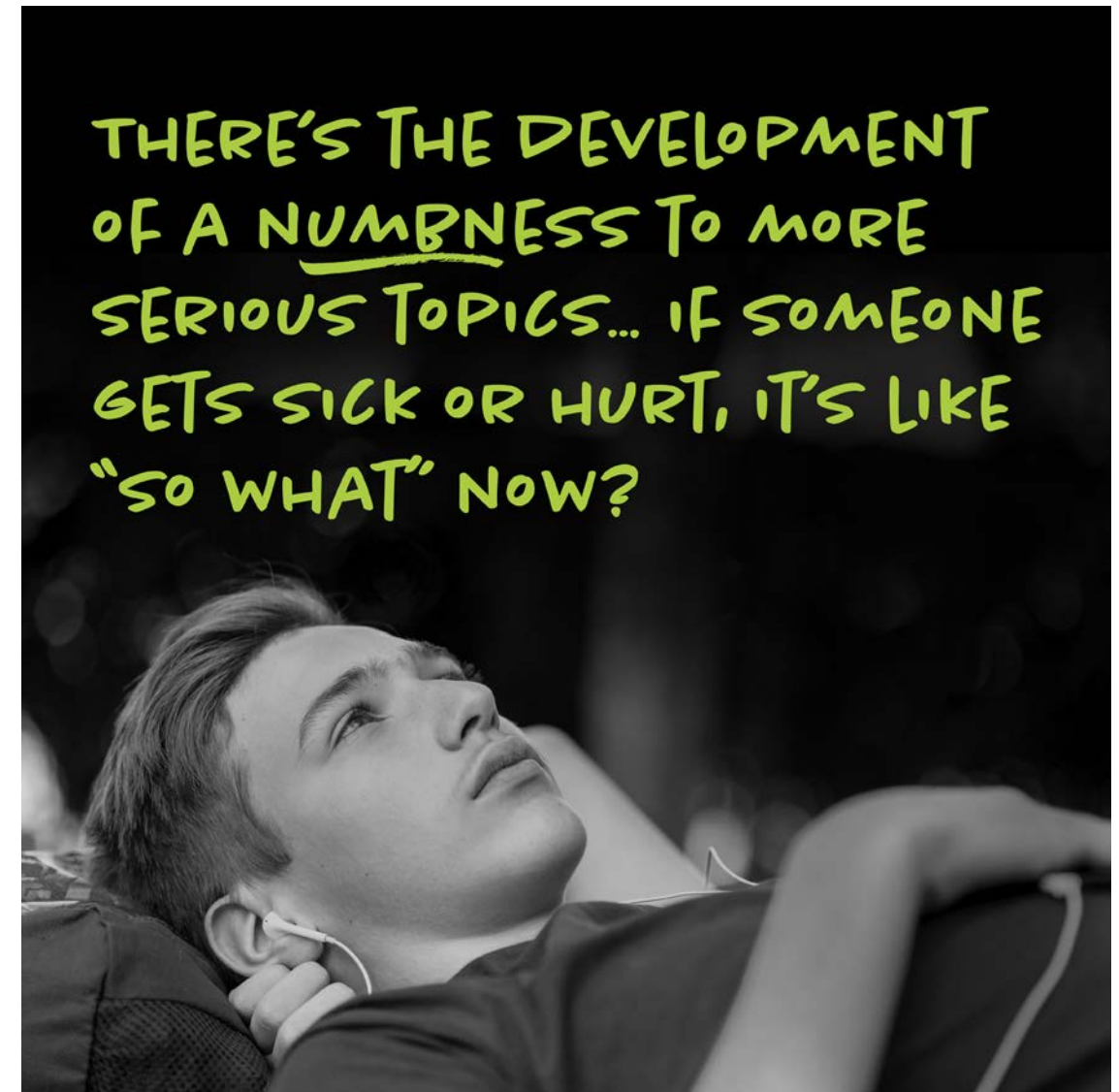
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, HOW OFTEN WAS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH NOT GOOD?

12.1%   24.7%   21.7%   17.2%   24.4%

● Never   ● Rarely   ● Sometimes   ● Most of the time   ● Always

Source: Monroe County Dept of Public Health Youth Risk Behavior Survey; Analysis by Coordinated Care Services, Inc. (CCSI)

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the COVID-19 pandemic may be behind us, the lingering impacts on youth are still very much with us today. Overwhelmingly, youth said they felt that adults have moved on from the pandemic and left them behind—unseen. They also told us that they felt it was hard to speak openly about mental health.

The results convey that this generation of young people is missing their "village" and are calling for transformational change that reflects their voices and hopes for the future. To move forward and heal from the lasting effects of the pandemic, the Third ACE Workgroup developed recommendations informed by our youth interviews as well as discussions with 17 organizational partners who provide support to youth.

> YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU GOT UNTIL YOU LOSE IT... KINDA WHAT COVID DID TO US; WE DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH WE SOCIALIZE AND HOW MANY FRIENDS WE HAD AND HOW MANY TIMES WE GOT TO SEE THEM BEFORE UNTIL WE LOST IT.

The recommendations call for a new way of supporting youth that is grounded in culturally responsive and trauma responsive practices. It calls for co-creation of solutions with youth. Finally and perhaps most importantly, it calls for authentic and meaningful connections among adults and young people—We must truly see our youth.

Many efforts are already underway to support youth mental health in schools and community settings like out-of-school time programs, and in healthcare and public health. The recommendations shared here can be integrated into existing strategies currently underway such as community schools and restorative justice practices. The youth involved in co-creating this agenda aim for individual community members, organizations and decision-makers to consider how they can make a difference in the lives of youth now and into the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE:

Priority 1: Build positive relationships and nurture connections with youth that are meaningful and authentic.

Priority 2: Create a culture that **breaks the stigma** and normalizes conversations around mental health at home and in schools, communities and systems that serve youth and families.

Priority 3: Redesign policies, practices and systems that are reflective of the needs of youth and families.

Within each priority area we have identified the current state and have outlined a path to achieve the desired state based on direct input from the youth and families interviewed and

involved in the project. Any action that moves forward because of this agenda must include youth and families as co-creators of the design and decision-making process.

PRIORITY 1: BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Currently, youth share there is a lack of positive relationships and connections among adults and the youth they serve. Instead, authentic relationships will help youth feel safe and supported.

Ways to achieve this:
1. Engage youth to identify the elements of authentic relationships with adults across settings.
2. Create opportunities for adults to build a better understanding and respect for youth culture.
3. Build capacity of adults to initiate and maintain meaningful and equitable relationships with young people.
4. Increase community capacity for the provision of culturally responsive support.
5. Provide expanded hours at youth-serving facilities so youth have access to adults when they need them.

Currently, there is a lack of connection to neighbors and neighborhood resources. Instead, thriving connected communities could help demonstrate to youth that childhood is valued.

> I USED TO STAY AFTER SCHOOL IN THE REC CENTER AND IT FELT LIKE A COMMUNITY AND THERE WERE PEOPLE THERE WHO ACTUALLY CARED ABOUT US... I DON'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO GET THAT FROM...

Ways to achieve this:
1. Invest in community-building infrastructure like neighborhood associations and block clubs that include youth as members.
2. Invest in neighborhood hubs where youth can go for programming, healing circles and peer support.
3. Improve neighborhood safety through community building and implementation of crime prevention strategies.
4. Address neighborhood blight through reinvestment opportunities that are community-driven.
5. Identify neighborhood spaces and businesses that welcome youth.

Currently, youth feel a sense of hopelessness, which can lead to a loss of intrinsic motivation, a numbness to the world around young people, social isolation and a lack of trust in others. Instead, young people should feel a sense of social connectedness to peers, adults and the broader community that instills hope for their present and future.

Ways to achieve this:
1. Provide intergenerational opportunities for youth to engage with adults and older adults.
2. Provide training and coaching to lay people in neighborhoods to facilitate healing circles.
3. Expand peer mentoring programs in all settings where youth are served.
4. Build youth exchange opportunities across municipalities and school districts.

Currently, youth are feeling lasting effects from being chronically online or connected to media through screens. Instead, young people should use technology in ways that support their mental health and wellness.

Ways to achieve this:
1. Increase online literacy among youth and adults to distinguish between supportive and toxic/depleting online experiences/places.
2. Demonstrate for adults the value of virtual/online engagement for youth and support youth in curating positive online activity.
3. Develop and promote apps/social media channels that provide online spaces for youth to interact positively with peers and talk about mental health.

PRIORITY 2: BREAK THE STIGMA

Currently, there's a lack of knowledge and understanding about mental and emotional health, and the resulting stigma causes harm to young people. Instead, we should have a community with a high level of mental health literacy that eliminates stigma and supports young people reaching their highest potential.

Ways to achieve this:
1. Create age appropriate and accessible tools to build knowledge around mental and emotional health for children, parents, and caregivers.
2. Normalize conversations about mental and emotional health beginning in infancy and early childhood.
3. Develop intergenerational healing spaces for families to process generational trauma and talk about mental health.
4. Provide educational opportunities for youth and families on the impact of trauma and toxic stress and ways to promote healing.

...NOWADAYS NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO COMMUNICATE THEIR FEELINGS; THEY PROJECT THEIR EMOTIONS BY FIGHTING.

Currently, school environments hinder the positive mental and emotional development of youth. Instead, there should be a culture of positive mental health and wellness in schools.

Ways to achieve this:
1. Invest in building maintenance and restoration.
2. Increase racial, cultural and linguistic diversity among staff to achieve a precision of fit with the youth population in school buildings.
3. Provide professional development that builds the capacity of staff to connect authentically with students.
4. Expand mental health supports for staff to decrease burnout and turnover.
5. Improve school food and cafeteria environments.

Currently, the health care system is structured to be problem- and crisis-focused. Prevention efforts haven't fully integrated approaches that include mental, emotional and behavioral health. Instead, mental, emotional, behavioral, and physical health should be fully integrated through intentional engagement, prevention, and proactive practices.

Ways to achieve this:
1. Increase trust between youth, families and providers by increasing health care teams understanding of relational approaches to care and culturally-responsive models.
2. Provide adequate funding to sustain interdisciplinary care teams and increase cross-sector knowledge and understanding between primary care and behavioral health providers.
3. Fully fund and build to scale the capacity of healthcare teams to deliver whole person care through team and individual consultation models.
4. Engage in practice transformation activities that result in the delivery of trauma-informed and trauma-responsive approaches that are grounded in culturally relevant frameworks.
5. Build the capacity within the healthcare system to include and center youth and family voice in shaping the delivery of care.

MY FIRST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL WAS BEHIND A CAMERA. HALF THE STUDENTS DIDN'T HAVE THEIR CAMERAS ON SO I DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE. THE TEACHERS DIDN'T REALLY TEACH, THEY JUST GAVE ASSIGNMENTS, AND IT WAS VERY HARD TO CONNECT WITH THEM.

PRIORITY 3: REDESIGN POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND SYSTEMS

Currently, youth say they are not valued and they are left out of decision-making that directly affects their lives. Instead, youth should be integrated into decision-making at all phases including design, implementation and evaluation, and opportunities and services match the interest and needs of young people.

Ways to achieve this:
1. Develop shared best practices informed by youth for organizations and systems to integrate youth voice in decision-making.
2. Build non-traditional ways for youth to provide input and feedback through creative means.
3. Provide support to young people to develop the skills and language needed to participate in decision-making processes.
4. Support leadership development beginning in early childhood.
5. Provide advocacy training for youth and include youth in advocacy opportunities.

Currently, policies and systems hinder innovation and responsiveness. Instead, policies and systems should work in service of the betterment of our community by supporting innovation that is responsive to youth and families.

Ways to achieve this:

1. Provide flexible funding to community-based organizations that allows for customized and holistic interventions based on need and input from youth/families, and bolsters the ability of organizations to invest in infrastructure, staff capacity and retention.

2. Restructure funding practices for small community-based organizations that doesn't require they wait to be reimbursed until after the work is complete.

3. Increase investments in Out-of School-Time programs to bring to scale what works.

4. Streamline processes for reimbursement for family and parent/child therapy.

5. Ensure a full range of resources are provided for youth who experience homelessness.

> WE'RE ADDICTED TO SOCIAL MEDIA. I USED TO BE ABLE TO LEAVE MY PHONE ANYWHERE. I STILL COULD, BUT... I COULD SPEND HOURS JUST GOING ON TIKTOK...

Currently, existing mental health and well-being measures do not reflect the reality of young people's experiences. Instead, measurement tools/measures should be co-created with, and relevant to, young people and their families. Data should be accessible to youth and families.

Ways to achieve this:

1. Develop shared measures and targets informed by youth and families to be used across systems.
2. Publish data and progress towards targets on a regular basis and in ways that are accessible to families. ■

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE RIGHT NOW?
Crisis Lifeline: Call 988 or chat online at **988lifeline.org**
Crisis Text Line: Text 741-741
Línea de crisis en español: Llama al 1.888.628.9454

RESOURCES FOR TEENS
Empower OC: Online platform with health related topics for youth from the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Ontario County
Mental Health Literacy 101
Teen Central: Mental health information, tips and tools for youth & peer support
The Trevor Project: Crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for LGBTQIA+ youth
Youth Engaged 4 Change: Empowering you to improve your life and the world around you
How to Help a Friend (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention –Western NY Chapter

RESOURCES FOR ADULTS, PARENTS, AND CAREGIVERS
Kids Thrive 585: Local youth mental health services
Monroe County Office of Mental Health
Center for Youth
Breathe Deep: Youth education and restorative wellness programs
Mental Health Association of Rochester
Mental Health Literacy 101
Mental Health America
Child and Adolescent Mental Health (National Institute of Mental Health)
Connectivity & Youth Mental Health (CDC)

BIPOC MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES
Association of Black Psychologists Directory
LBGTQ Psychotherapists of Color
National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network

RECURSOS DE SALUD MENTAL EN ESPAÑOL
Empower OC: Una plataforma en línea con temas relacionados a la salud para los jóvenes de la Coalición Contra el Abuso de Sustancias del Condado de Ontario
Comprendiendo la salud mental: Información básica de educación en salud mental para los adolescentes y adultos
El Proyecto Trevor: Servicios de intervención en crisis y prevención del suicidio para jóvenes LGBTQIA+
La Alianza Nacional de Salud Mental
Prevención del Suicidio

ABOUT

COMMON GROUND HEALTH
Founded in 1974, Common Ground Health is the health research and planning organization for the nine-county Rochester-Finger Lakes region. We bring together leaders from health care, education, business, government and other sectors to find common ground on health challenges. Through regional collaboration and partnerships, we bring greater focus to community health issues via data analysis, resident engagement and solution implementation. Learn more at **commongroundhealth.org**.

COORDINATED CARE SERVICES, INC. (CCSI)
CCSI is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring innovation in practice by providing essential business services in partnership with organizations that improve lives and strengthen communities. CCSI provides a broad array of management services and technical assistance specifically tailored to meet the needs of local behavioral health, social and human services departments, state agencies, and community-based organizations in Monroe County, across New York State, and beyond. Learn more at **ccsi.org**.
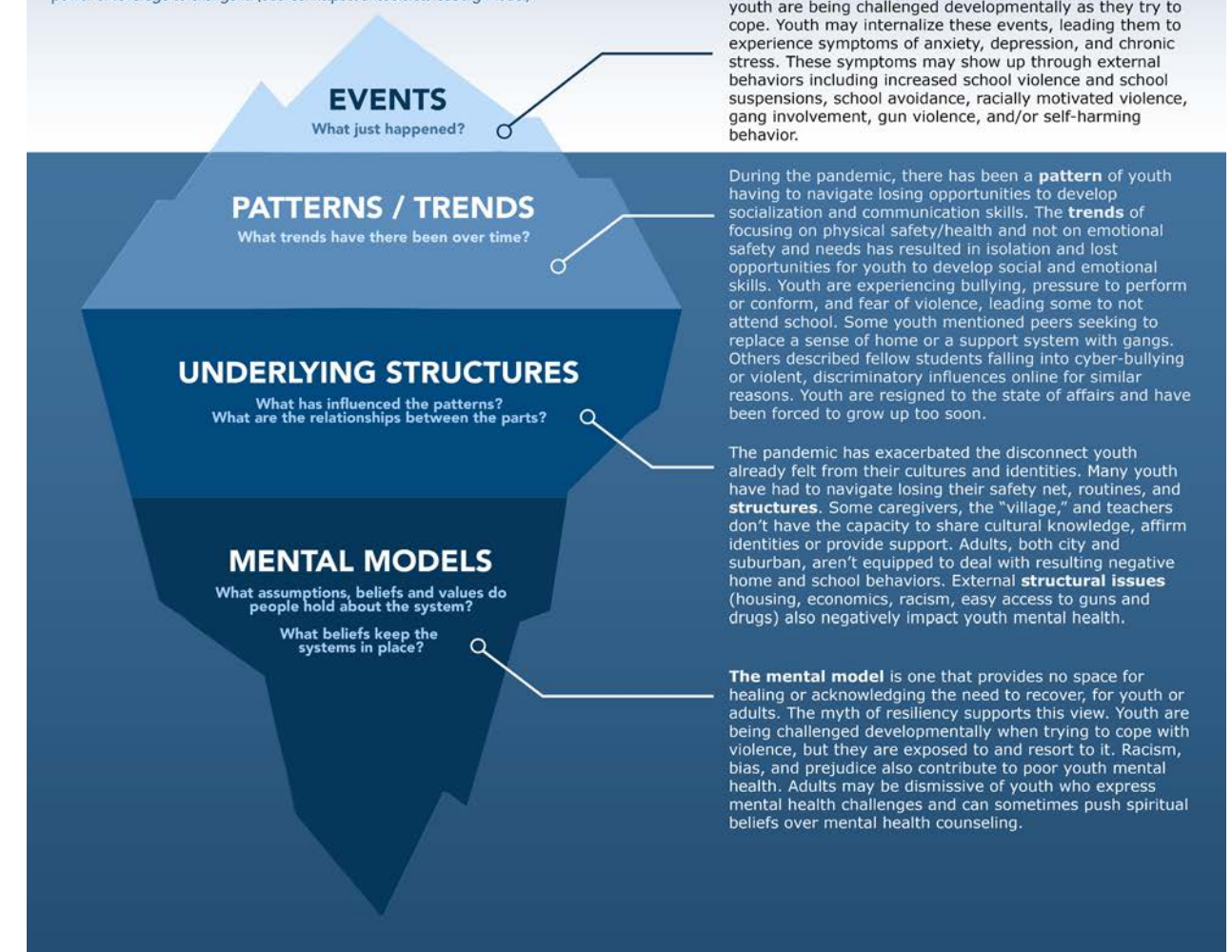
APPENDIX: THIRD ACE ICEBERG

In 2022, the Third ACE Workgroup was formed as a response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellness of youth in Rochester and Monroe County. To frame our initial understanding of the experiences of youth prior to, during and after the pandemic emergency, the group identified root causes to the youth mental health crisis using the Iceberg Model.

The Iceberg *(below)* explores what's happening and can be easily seen through actions and events "above the surface" of the water. It then dives below the surface to uncover the patterns, structures and mental models that often go unseen but lead to those events.

By going deeper, we began to identify ways to change systems to support youth. The Third ACE Iceberg reflects the perspectives and lived experience of the youth and caregivers who participated in the workgroup and generously shared their wisdom and knowledge. Visit **commongroundhealth.org/iceberg** to download a larger version of the model below.