

Adolescents and Young Adults Focus Groups Summary

This summary includes key findings about needs, gaps, and disparities related to health based on focus groups conducted with adolescents and young adults in February 2025. Participants recognize key assets available in the community to support health including wellness centers, physical education, and school resources. Key themes include barriers to accessing healthcare and healthy resources, the importance of healthy lifestyle choices and nutrition, the significance of mental health support and wellness resources, the impact of environmental factors on health, and the challenges faced by marginalized groups in accessing equitable healthcare. Participants expressed concerns about socioeconomic disparities, the availability and affordability of healthcare services, the prevalence of unhealthy food options, and the need for more comprehensive and inclusive health initiatives within their communities.

Access to Healthcare and Health Resources

People discuss barriers to accessing healthcare and healthy resources.

- Participants mention socioeconomic status as a barrier to accessing healthcare, with individuals with lower incomes facing more difficulties in seeking medical help and obtaining health insurance.
- The availability and proximity of healthcare facilities, as well as the operating hours, are identified as challenges in accessing health services.
- People express the need for more localized and informative health resources within their communities.

Quotes:

“I feel like if you're have if you have like a lower you're in the lower status like you fall into the lack of like not having transportation and having difficulty seeking medical help.”

“I think a big part about it is insurance. I did not have insurance for two years because I did not get covered by my parents”

“I would say for me it would be more localized in my town like health facilities because I think I can list like two urgent cares and not really like a health facility where they provide information.”

Healthy Lifestyle and Nutrition

People discuss the importance of healthy food options and physical activity.

- People acknowledge the efforts to provide healthy food options, but also express concerns about the prevalence of unhealthy food choices, such as chips and fast food.
- Physical activity, through sports and PE classes, is seen as an important aspect of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- People suggest the need for more affordable and accessible healthy food options within their communities.

Quotes:

“The food, they try and keep it as healthy as they can as they can, I guess.”

“People selling chips and stuff. It's a good business, but it's not keeping us very healthy.”

“For physical, the amount of like sports we have here, there's like a lot of options you can do boys and girls.”

Mental Health and Wellness

People highlight the importance of mental health support and wellness resources.

- People acknowledge the Wellness Center at Pacifica High School as a valuable resource for both mental and physical health, providing programs and a space for students to relax and unwind.
- The Wellness Center is highlighted as a key resource for mental health support within the school community.
- People emphasize the importance of mental health awareness and the need for more resources and urgent action to address mental health challenges.

Quotes:

“I think the wellness center brings a lot of people like healthier habits.”

“Maybe think back during this year, what's going on, what's been happening. There's too much drama. There's way too much drama and that affects mental health.”

“The black community is for some reason very, very scared of mental health. So then they get stuck in this like whole with a bunch of mental health issues and then the further issue

goes, well, where do I seek mental health?...I don't know like I've tried looking around the area and I'm just not sure and that makes me kind of scared, not just for black people like for all really because that's important."

Environmental Factors and Health Concerns

People discuss the impact of environmental factors on health.

- People express concerns about the impact of environmental factors, such as air and water quality, on the health of their communities, particularly in relation to respiratory issues and asthma.
- The deterioration of air quality during events like wildfires is identified as a significant health concern.
- People suggest the need for more public health initiatives and environmental improvements to address these health related issues.

Quotes:

"A lot of respiratory issues because of the pollution. Like my niece and nephew, they have really bad asthma."

"Poor water quality is a huge thing in my area."

"Air quality, especially because during the fires. I live in Encino so it went over the hill."

Health Disparities and Equity

People highlight the challenges faced by marginalized groups in accessing healthcare.

- People recognize the interconnectedness of various health related issues and the need for holistic solutions to address them.
- Participants express concerns about the health disparities experienced by minority and marginalized groups within their communities, such as racial minorities, the LGBTQ+ community, and individuals with disabilities.
- The need for culturally sensitive and inclusive healthcare services, as well as better support for individuals with special needs, is highlighted.

Quotes:

"I feel like if you solve one issue like it can solve a lot of the other issues like small changes make big differences."

“I feel like the longer I stay here, the more I'm seeing the minority health disparities.”

“Your socioeconomic status is what really like breaks makes or breaks like your health in general.”

“I feel like if you're have if you have like a lower status like you fall into the lack of like not having transportation and having difficulty seeking medical help.”

Unhoused and Housing Insecure Individuals Focus Group Summary

This summary includes key findings about needs, gaps, and disparities related to health based on a focus group conducted with unhoused and housing insecure individuals in February 2025. Participants recognize key assets available in the community to support health including local churches, county health and behavioral health department, substance use treatment services, and community-based organizations providing services for unhoused and housing insecure individuals. The feedback comments highlight the significant challenges people face in finding stable housing and accessing appropriate resources to address their needs. People describe barriers such as discrimination from landlords, lack of rental history or credit, and the criminalization of homelessness through new shelter policies. They also express frustration with the complex systems and processes required to navigate and receive assistance, often feeling that resources are not reaching those who need them most. Stigma and negative perceptions towards individuals with low income and families create additional obstacles, with people reporting experiences of class discrimination and lack of understanding from service providers and the community. The feedback also emphasizes the severe physical and mental health impacts of homelessness, and the need for specialized, trauma-informed support to address these issues. Despite these challenges, participants share examples of organizations and programs that have provided valuable assistance, such as the National Health Foundation, Community Memorial Health, and Saint Vincent de Paul. They also highlight the importance of peer support and one-stop-shops that can help connect individuals to a range of resources and services.

Homelessness and Housing Challenges

People struggle to find stable housing and overcome barriers to accessing resources.

- People face challenges finding housing due to past homelessness, lack of rental history or credit, and discrimination from landlords.
- Maintaining appointments and accessing resources during normal business hours is difficult for those who sleep during the day for safety.
- Lack of support and resources leads some people to turn to unsafe or illegal activities, putting them at risk of harm.

Quotes:

“A lot of people don't want to rent to you if you have a past of homelessness either because they think you're like dirty or something, you know, you're gonna be a hoarder or a trouble maker. So it's really hard when you try to describe where you've lived for like the last 10 years. You're trying to be honest with them and it's hard. Yeah, you don't have a history, or you don't have credit, you know, I don't have bad credit. I just don't have any credit.”

“Something else that tends to be a challenge is staying on top of appointments or doing anything that operates with, you know, during normal business hours due to staying awake at night and sleeping during the day just for safety purposes.”

“Trying to make appointments and you're living on the street is hard, you know, there's no address and sometimes address to send things or, you know, you can't shower before you go see the doctor. So there's all kinds of health issues like that. Staying bathed is really a tough job when you're homeless. That's probably one of the hardest. It's easy, it's not hard to get food, but staying bathed, that's really just the tough.”

Shelter and Criminalization of Homelessness

New policies raise concerns about criminalizing homelessness.

- A new year-round shelter in Oxnard has given police the authority to criminalize homelessness, with people facing arrest for not staying at the shelter.
- Concerns that resources and funding are not reaching the people who need them most, with people having to navigate complex processes to access assistance.
- Frustration that the system creates barriers and criminalizes basic human needs like resting and using the restroom.

Quotes:

“In Oxnard they made the armory 365 days a year now...But it's also given the police the right to tell people they're trespassing when they're on other property because now there's a 365-day shelter open so you can become a criminal now being homeless for not staying there, like staying out near the riverbed or whatever, that's now against the law. They can now arrest people for doing that.”

“It's illegal to pee if you're homeless or go to a restaurant. I heard that peeing in your own car is illegal now. It's a basic human right. We should have the right to rest. Some things are unconstitutional. They put you in jail if you got 5 illegal camping tickets.”

“It's like you can't sleep, you're gonna get in trouble. So what do you do? You get something help you or feel safe because you can't feel like something's gonna happen to you or just make you feel better.”

Stigma and Discrimination

People face stigma, discrimination, and lack of understanding from service providers and the community.

- People experience class discrimination, with the poor being further marginalized while the wealthy receive more support.
- Stigma and negative perceptions towards individuals and families with low income, including parents receiving government assistance, create barriers to accessing resources.
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds face additional challenges and stigma in the education system.

Quotes:

“Class discrimination, it's not ethnicity anymore it's about money but like that if people are lower economic or poor, they are continuing to fall down and not get helped up and then those who have money are getting helped up and it's not a balanced system.”

“I see a lot of homeless out in the street, you know, on wheelchairs and they're crying, they don't have any shoes on, and it's sad, you know. And they say no one wants to help them because they look a certain way and there's a certain age, you know, it's terrible. There's resources out there, but yet you're looked down upon and so a lot of times people don't wanna help you.”

“I feel like some groups that come across challenges are those with a history. They go to get help and if they already have a history of something, that's gonna be looked at before they're getting their work so they're not gonna get help because they already are labeled.”

“We need to redefine homelessness. Homeless people and junkies are not the same thing, and they assume everyone is homeless as a junkie and therefore we're pushed away, but yet we're out here being homeless, not being junkies, and trying.”

Navigating Complex Systems and Accessing Resources

People struggle to navigate complex systems and access appropriate resources.

- People face challenges navigating complex systems and accessing appropriate resources, even with housing vouchers or disability benefits.
- Lack of support and guidance in finding housing and navigating processes leads to frustration and setbacks.
- People highlight the value of one-stop shops and case managers that can help connect them to a variety of community resources.

Quotes:

“Saint Vincent de Paul helped me a lot. Even though it's not with housing, but they take anybody with no means and they just take anybody if it's housing, rent, mortgage, car issues, smog, they will, if they have the funds and the money, they will help you.”

“I was still homeless even with a housing voucher and being on Social Security disability, I could not find a place...They only give you first and last. They don't help you find a place. So that was a major, major, issue. And then I couldn't even get a hotel room and I had my stuff in storage.”

Health and Mental Health Challenges

Homelessness exacerbates health and mental health issues, requiring specialized support.

- Homelessness exacerbates both physical and mental health issues, making it difficult for people to address their basic needs.
- Specialized programs and organizations provide critical support for people experiencing severe medical and mental health challenges due to homelessness.
- Maintaining appointments and accessing resources during normal business hours is a significant challenge for those who sleep during the day for safety reasons.

Quotes:

“It's kind of like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. And really, when you're not having those basic needs met, it just makes everything, you know, often impossible.”

“You get overwhelmed and now you start getting like go through days then anxiety kicks in you start stressing and then it goes on and on.”

“Urgency and danger associated with around domestic violence victims and their children really needs to be, you know, pushed to the top cause it's a very big issue.”

Social Services Listening Session

Summary of Polling Results

Top Health Needs:

- **Mental Health**
 - Stress, mental health services, addiction services, lack of skilled services, emotional wellness, trauma, stigma
- **Housing**
 - Affordable housing, homelessness
- **Socioeconomic Challenges**
 - Cost of living, poverty, low income
- **Chronic Diseases - Obesity**

Top Barriers and Challenges:

- **Funding**
 - Services providers rely on unstable funding sources for support, lack of federal investment in education, health and social services.
- **Navigation of Services/ Systems Navigation**
 - Low service availability after work hours, lack of comprehensive care in a single facility, lack of knowledge of support services or resources
- **Transportation**
 - Poor access to services from rural areas, disabled populations, older adults
- **Cultural Competence in Healthcare and Services**
 - Lack of training for service providers, fear and distrust of service providers, lack of follow-up, lack of specialty care services, lack of whole person care, lack of prevention education, lack of awareness of needs of people living with disabilities.

Populations of Concern:

- Undocumented individuals
- Indigenous populations
- Mixteco
- People with disabilities
- Caregivers

- Unhoused
- Older Adults
- Rural Communities

Summary of Discussion

The comments reflect a community discussion focused on identifying and addressing health needs within various populations served by different organizations. Participants engaged in a structured dialogue, using a polling tool to submit and vote on responses, and discussed topics such as mental health, housing, and the challenges faced by specific communities like the undocumented and indigenous populations. The conversation also touched on the effectiveness of existing programs, barriers to service delivery, and opportunities for improvement. The participants, representing a diverse array of service providers and stakeholders, shared insights into the complexities of health needs, the impact of trauma, and the importance of funding and collaboration to enhance health outcomes in their community.

Mental Health. Mental health was identified as a top health need, with participants discussing the impact of trauma, the importance of follow-through in care, and the challenges faced by previously homeless individuals.

Quotes

- "mental health is a huge thing that we find here where there's a lot of trauma wrapped up in our individuals"

Funding. Funding was repeatedly mentioned as a critical barrier to addressing health needs, with concerns about the sustainability of programs and the need for financial resources to support housing, mental health services, and other health-related initiatives.

Quotes

- *"we're actively losing programs that can help connect our people with mental health [due to changes in funding sources]"*
- *"we need the ability to operate, and that takes funding"*

Housing and Homelessness. Housing challenges, including homelessness, were highlighted as significant health needs, with a focus on the lack of affordable housing and the need for supportive services for those experiencing homelessness.

Quotes

- *"affordable housing, homelessness or houselessness"*

- *"there doesn't seem to be any residential programs to refer them to that work with a dual diagnosis [of mental and physical health issues combined]"*

Access and Navigation. Participants discussed the difficulties in navigating health services, particularly for vulnerable populations, and the need for better coordination and support to connect individuals with the appropriate care.

Quotes

- *"people with disabilities are often turned away for lack of ability to serve, so when they see something available that could be helpful, they assume that it is not for them"*

Undocumented and Indigenous Populations. The conversation highlighted the unique challenges faced by undocumented and indigenous populations, including fear of deportation, language barriers, and cultural misunderstandings, which contribute to these communities being difficult to reach and serve.

Quotes

- *"indigenous communities are hard to reach due to lack of language access"*
- *"these services should be accessible and [in] different languages such as Mixtec"*

Mental and Behavioral Health Listening Session

Summary of Polling Results

Top 3 Health Needs:

- **Mental Health**
 - Stigma, misinformation
- **Access to Healthcare**
 - No Insurance, shortage of MH clinicians, monetary and opportunity costs of health services, lack of cultural competence in healthcare services, fear and mistrust of providers.
- **Environment and Safety**
 - threats to personal and family safety, fear of deportation
- **Housing**
 - Affordable housing, homelessness

- **Socioeconomic Challenges**

- Threats to social security, food insecurity, poor nutrition, lack of trust in health information, vaccines misinformation, high cost of living, low incomes, high housing costs,

Top Barriers and Challenges:

- **Access to Mental Health Services**

- Long process to get connected to health plans, lack of dual diagnosis programs for mental and physical health services, inadequate early intervention upon onset of mental illness symptoms, stigma associated with mental health services being recorded on employment records, substance use/addiction, lack of awareness or mental health education

- **System Navigation**

- Social Security, low health systems and services navigation literacy,

Populations of Concern:

- People with limited English proficiency
- Filipino
- Farsi
- Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx
- Transitional Aged Youth
- Parents
- Rural populations

Summary of Discussion

The comments reflect a community engagement session focused on identifying and addressing health needs, particularly mental and behavioral health, within a specific community. Participants utilized a live polling tool to discuss various topics, including the use of QR codes and links for interactive participation. The session aimed to identify top health needs, factors contributing to these needs, populations that are difficult to reach or serve, effective programs, and potential opportunities for improvement. The conversation was rich with insights from professionals working with diverse populations, discussing the challenges and solutions related to social security, housing insecurity, substance use, and the impact of these issues on mental health.

Threats to Social Security. Participants expressed concern over the potential impact of Social Security threats on vulnerable populations, particularly those with severe mental illness who rely on these benefits for their basic needs.

Quotes

- *"this could literally be life or death impact for our population and um that scares me for them."*
- *"the president's speech last night indicated Social Security is being reviewed for potential cuts."*
- *"if there are any delays to payments that people are check to check dependent upon, then basic life necessities are all at threat."*

Housing Insecurity. Housing insecurity was highlighted as a significant health need, with high costs and scarcity of affordable housing forcing individuals to make difficult choices, such as skipping meals to pay rent.

Quotes

- *"I'll have one meal today because I've got to save up money for my rent."*
- *"housing insecurity and threats to Social Security can actually kind of go hand in hand."*
- *"there's 3 to 5 families living in a household because um they can't afford um paying the rents."*

Substance Use Challenges. Substance use was identified as a barrier to addressing mental health issues, with a lack of dual diagnosis programs and the need to address substance use before mental health in some services.

Quotes

- *"you kinda get routed to substance use first."*
- *"people hide substance use due to shame."*

Fear of Deportation. Fear of deportation was discussed as a key factor affecting mental health, leading to individuals avoiding participation in programs and services due to concerns about information sharing with government entities.

Quotes

- *"the lack of people wanting to participate because they were thinking that they were gonna be taking that information and giving it to the government."*

- *"individuals were calling in and canceling their health coverage because um they didn't want, they were thinking that, um, that information was gonna be shared with the federal government leading to those deportations."*

Limited English Proficiency Populations. Participants noted that individuals with limited English proficiency face significant barriers in accessing services, compounded by stigma and a lack of representation among service providers.

Quotes

- *"it's just always harder if English is not your, your primary language."*
- *"we don't have any staff, we do, but they're more administrative, not direct service that are Tagalog speaking."*
- *"a lot of stigma between um all these populations, um, they, especially with mental health."*

Adolescent Health Listening Session

Summary of Polling Results

Top Health Needs:

- **Mental Health**
 - Mental wellness, mental health supports, low access to behavioral health treatment, substance abuse, lack of awareness by youth of addiction and side effects of drug use, perception of “harmless” drug use, lack of support from family, school and peers, stigma, insufficient investment in behavioral health treatments, social media
- **Access to Healthcare**
 - Immigration status, fear of deportation, insurance, low provider availability, long appointment wait times, low affordability, insufficient staffing, lack of qualified staff
- **Environment and Safety**
 - threats to personal and family safety, fear of deportation, domestic, sexual and environmental violence
- **Housing**
 - Housing security, rent increases
- **Employment**
 - Living wage

Ventura County Community Health Improvement Collaborative
2025 Community Partner Listening Session Summary

- **Transportation**
- **Socioeconomic Challenges**
 - Positive mentors, access to positive social outlets including athletics, art, music and academics, lack of culturally, poverty
- **Caretakers**
 - Support for families
- **Cultural Competence in Healthcare and Services**
 - Low availability of culturally sensitive care, trauma informed care, multi-generational trauma, lack of bilingual supports, lack of training, location of services, competition between agencies,

Top Barriers and Challenges:

- **Funding**
- **System Navigation**
 - Lack of effective communication to community members about available services and programs
- **Prejudice**
 - Racism, homophobia, transphobia

Populations of Concern:

- **Hispanic/Latino/Latina**
- **Indigenous communities**
- **Incarcerated youth**
- **Transitional aged youth**
- **LGBTQIA+**

Summary of Discussion

The comments reflect a discussion focused on identifying and addressing the health needs of the adolescent population in a specific community. Participants, representing various organizations, shared insights on challenges such as mental health, access to healthcare based on immigration status, and the need for culturally responsive and trauma-informed care. The conversation highlighted the importance of support systems, stigma reduction, and the role of funding in facilitating services. The effectiveness of teen centers, school-based wellness centers, and collaborative efforts was also discussed, alongside the need for advocacy and parent education to bridge service gaps.

Mental Health. Participants identified mental health as the most pressing challenge for adolescents, emphasizing the need for therapy and support groups, especially for LGBTQ+ youth and those affected by the current political climate.

Quotes

- *"there's a lot of suicidal ideations with the young folks that we are working with."*
- *"there's increased hostility and rejection, particularly a family rejection, which is really important."*
- *"we are at capacity. So we're doing what we can to support."*

Access to Health Care. Access to healthcare based on immigration status was discussed as a significant barrier, with bullying at schools and financial situations exacerbating mental health issues.

Quotes

- *"especially they're being bullied at schools because of the immigration status."*
- *"mental health is increasing even more, economical situations, financial situations."*
- *"the lack of support that they're feeling at schools is also another big factor."*

Culturally Responsive Care. The need for culturally responsive and trauma-informed care was highlighted, particularly for youth in custody and those with adverse childhood experiences.

Quotes

- *"Ensuring that it's accessible to in languages that are that our community's youth understand."*
- *"trauma informed care is the biggest thing that we see as far as on the behavior health treatment side."*
- *"there seems to be huge gaps in services throughout the county, both geographically and culturally and linguistically."*

Support Systems and Stigma. The lack of support from family, schools, and peers was identified as a root cause of mental health challenges, with stigma being a significant barrier to seeking help.

Quotes