



# YOUTH VOICE REPORT

from the 2022 Southeastern  
PA Regional Community Health  
Needs Assessment



# INTRODUCTION

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At the center of every decision we make at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia is a commitment to advancing the healthcare for children through the integration of safe, high-quality, family-centered care with innovative research and professional education. Our goal to have a positive impact on children’s lives may begin internally but continues outside to the communities we serve.

Identifying and addressing unmet health needs of local communities is a core aspect of the care provided by hospitals and health systems across the United States. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) formalized this role by mandating that tax-exempt hospitals conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every three years and implement strategies focused on emergent priorities from the assessment. CHOP participated in a Regional Community Health Needs Assessment that identified health needs throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania. Identifying and addressing the unmet health needs of local communities is a core aspect of the care provided by hospitals and health systems across America and a goal that CHOP strongly supports.

Through primary and secondary data collection, including qualitative analysis of community discussions, inputs were organized into 12 community health needs that were categorized across three domains: health issues, access and quality of healthcare and health resources, and community factors. The priority health needs identified in the CHNA are:

- 1. Mental Health Conditions**
- 2. Access to Care (Primary & Specialty)**
- 3. Chronic Disease Prevention and Management**
- 4. Substance Use and Related Disorders**
- 5. Healthcare and Health Resources Navigation**
- 6. Racism and Discrimination in Health Care**
- 7. Food Access**
- 8. Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services**
- 9. Community Violence**
- 10. Housing**
- 11. Socioeconomic Disadvantage**
- 12. Neighborhood Conditions**

The full CHNA report can be found on CHOP’s website [here](#).

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# INTRODUCTION

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As a leading pediatric hospital, CHOP recognizes that children and youth represent a population with diverse health needs and unique vulnerabilities that require urgent attention to prevent lifelong negative repercussions and maximize the potential for growth and thriving. Unfortunately, the barriers of well-being for all children and youth in the region are significant, as many families struggle with economic stability to support their children, and racial and ethnic inequities related to education and health outcomes persist. The negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated these issues, and responses on youth learning and development are increasingly being documented.

To facilitate understanding of health issues specific to children and youth, inputs identified by the youth of community assets, community needs, youth needs and potential solutions are presented in this report. A consistent theme that emerged was the need for support systems to be incorporated in their communities.

Through this CHNA, we have facilitated this first step of trying to encourage the voices of our youth populations and have given them a platform from which to speak; however, more work must be done. By understanding the needs of the youth populations, CHOP is actively working to address these unmet needs. By better understanding service needs and gaps in a community, implementation plans — also mandated by the ACA — can more effectively respond to high priority needs. CHOP's implementation plan, describing how it will meet these needs, will be released in the fall.

A youth participant said, “Probably like more encouragement for youth to stand up for themselves, and just like encouragement from their parents, encouragement from teachers, because a lot of times when they don’t say anything or like they just let it slide by, it’s like you’re kind of like giving up on a child...” while another youth mentioned, “The youth don’t want the resources that are provided ... the youth need more help. They need people to actually go to them with the resources.”

# YOUTH VOICE

Children and youth represent a population with diverse health needs and unique vulnerabilities that require urgent attention in order to prevent lifelong negative repercussions and maximize the potential for growth and thriving.

Unfortunately, the barriers to well-being for all children and youth in the region are significant, as many families across the five counties [struggle with economic stability to support their children](#), and racial and ethnic inequities related to [education](#) and [health outcomes](#) persist. The negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and response on youth learning and development and a [wide array of issues like housing and health](#) are increasingly being documented

Against this backdrop, to facilitate understanding of health issues specific to children and youth, several types of inputs are represented in the report, including:

- Quantitative data on youth (middle and high school student) behavior related to mental health and substance use presented in the county profiles
- Qualitative information about the needs of children and youth from birth to age 18 gathered in each geographic community conversation and spotlight discussion (see individual summaries throughout the report).

In addition, the Steering Committee sought to hear directly from youth (ages 11-25) to ensure robust inclusion of youth voice in the rCHNA. A subset of participating health systems (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Einstein Healthcare Network, Main Line Health, Penn Medicine, and Trinity Health Mid-Atlantic) formed a committee to guide the development of this data collection process, which centered on the engagement of youth-serving organizations and programs based in the five-county region. Specifically, program leads were presented with an opportunity to facilitate discussions with youth participants about youths' perceptions of community assets and barriers to health, health needs specific to youth, and ideas for potential solutions. All organizations received funding to hold these discussions, and youth participants received gift cards for their time.

From an initial list generated by subcommittee members, additional outreach was conducted through existing networks (e.g., Greater Philadelphia Extracurricular Collaborative, Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative). Twenty-five organizations were engaged to participate in this data collection, representing youth in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties:

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## Falcons 215

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[After School Activities Partnerships \(ASAP\)](#)

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[Black Women in Sport Foundation](#)

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[Born With Purpose](#)

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[Caring People Alliance](#)

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[Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Adolescent Initiative](#)

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[Focused Athletics](#)

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[Ivy Hill Youth Association](#)

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[La Liga del Barrio](#)

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[Liberty Youth Athletic Association](#)

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[Lutheran Settlement House](#)

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[Mercy Neighborhood Ministries](#)

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[National Network for Youth / Valley Youth House \(Montgomery County\)](#)

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[Open Door Abuse Awareness Prevention](#)

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[Parent Power](#)

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[Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation](#)

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[Philadelphia City Rowing](#)

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[Philadelphia Robotics Coalition](#)

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[Philly Teen VAXX Ambassadors](#)

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[Starfinder Foundation](#)

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[Sunrise of Philadelphia](#)

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[The Common Place](#)

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[United Philly Soccer](#)

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[University of Pennsylvania Netter Center for Community Partnerships](#)

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[Youth Mentoring Partnership](#)

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About a third of organizations offer sports programming to youth, in addition to other educational and enrichment support, including mentoring and coaching. Others provide out-of-school-time programs, offering a variety of arts-based, educational/tutoring, and youth leadership development programming.

A total of 354 youth participated in 34 discussions held in November 2021 – February 2022. These discussions were conducted both virtually and in-person, at the discretion of the organization, and facilitated by trusted program leaders and staff. Discussions ranged from 30 to 129 minutes, with an average length of approximately 60 minutes. The age distribution of participants is as shown below:

Age	Count	%
<13	33	9.3%
13-15	170	48.0%
16-18	117	33.1%
19-22	24	6.8%
>22	6	1.7%
Missing	4	1.1%
Total	354	

Geographic representation was as follows:

County	# of groups
Bucks	1
Chester	3
Delaware	2
Montgomery	2
Philadelphia	29

NOTE: The number of groups does not add up to 34, as some groups included representatives from multiple counties.

Within Philadelphia, most groups represented either North or West Philadelphia. Residents of Southwest Philadelphia, Center City (including Chinatown), South Philadelphia, Northeast Philadelphia, and Northwest Philadelphia were also represented across the groups. One group included representatives from South New Jersey as well.

Facilitators were given a discussion guide with six questions and suggested prompts (see online Appendix) and provided additional guidance as requested. Facilitators were supported by note takers and, in some instances, opted to record the discussion to capture specific quotes from participants. Organizations summarized the discussion using a report-back form that was provided to them and, where appropriate, submitted additional materials such as notes or sign-in sheets. Based on the report-back form submissions and additional materials, responses were coded for key themes. Frequency of mention across discussions was calculated as a percentage based on 30 submitted reports (some organizations opted to combine multiple discussions into a single report). Since multiple themes were discussed in each group, percentages total over 100%. The themes, percentages, and, where appropriate, illustrative quotes from the discussions are presented on the following pages.

## Community Assets

Youth identified the following as key resources and assets that make their communities healthier:

Theme	%	Description and Examples
<b>Connections/mutual support</b>	47%	Participants cited the importance of <b>cohesive, community bonds/relationships and support networks</b> for health. These connections enable community members to be <b>accountable</b> to one another, as several groups valued being able to “watch out” for and check in on one another. Those <b>“willing to take the journey with you”</b> and who <b>“you can count on”</b> are sources of <b>motivation, inspiration, and “cheerleading.”</b> By confiding in one other and acknowledging shared struggles, these strong networks provide <b>mutual care</b> , and foster a sense of <b>belonging and inclusion</b> .
<b>Community spaces/ organizations</b>	33%	Youth frequently noted the importance of spaces like <b>recreation centers and outdoor greenspace</b> (e.g., parks, running trails) in promoting health. These represent not only a space for physical activity and sports, but as important, <b>safe places for community gathering</b> . Participants also noted the need for <b>spaces for creative exploration and expression</b> , as well as the critical role played by local non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, and businesses in creating a thriving community.
<b>Shared values/mindset</b>	30%	Youth participants underscored the value of shared values and positive mindset for community health. They repeatedly mentioned values related to <b>diversity, unity, freedom, voice, acceptance, inclusion, respect, and collaboration</b> as essential.
<b>Supports for healthy eating</b>	30%	Quite a few group discussions had a strong emphasis on the need for supports for healthy eating. Though youth noted a few existing supports (e.g., school lunches, grocery stores), they also noted the need for support through the growth of resources like <b>farmers markets and produce trucks</b> .
<b>Health resources</b>	27%	Youth recognized the contributions of facilities like <b>pharmacies</b> (especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic) and <b>health care professionals</b> (including mental health care providers and dentists) in fostering health. <b>Mental health supports</b> were of particularly interest for participants.
<b>Leaders and role models</b>	27%	Participants cited the crucial role of trusted community leaders and adults in their lives who can serve as positive role models and <b>mentors</b> . These include <b>teachers, coaches, counselors, and community police officers</b> who demonstrate that “they care.”
<b>Community activities</b>	27%	Opportunities to connect as a community through <b>community clean ups, donation drives, and cookouts</b> were mentioned by youth participants as positive influences on community health.
<b>School and extracurricular programs</b>	23%	Participants strongly endorsed the role of school-based and extracurricular programs in supporting health. These programs included <b>sports and other afterschool programs</b> that provide opportunities for <b>building connections</b> between youth, fostering <b>social emotional learning</b> , and enabling <b>creative expression</b> .
<b>Supports for physical activity</b>	17%	Participants discussed the importance of fostering opportunities for physical activity more generally, beyond the mention of specific facilities like recreation centers, gyms, or outdoor spaces.
<b>Clean, safe environments</b>	13%	Several groups noted the need to ensure neighborhood and school environments are <b>clean and safe</b> . Safety encompassed protection from air <b>pollution or mold/asbestos in schools</b> , as well as more generally from <b>physical, emotional, or psychological harm</b> .

## Community Needs

Participants were asked to share the biggest challenges and barriers to health in their communities:

Theme	%	Description and Examples	Illustrative Quotes
<b>Violence and safety</b>	<b>67%</b>	A predominant concern for youth was the rampant violence in their communities. This is largely in the form of <b>gun violence</b> , but participants also cited instances of <b>interpersonal violence</b> . Youth mentioned <b>fight in schools, police brutality, and gangs</b> in association with violence. For youth of Asian descent, fear of <b>anti-Asian hate crimes</b> was significant. This threat of violence had cascading impacts on youth, both direct and indirect, resulting in <b>not feeling safe enough to go to parks or work out outside</b> . This fear also has a strong negative impact on mental health through experience of <b>toxic stress</b> .	<p><i>"Gun violence...We all know that we were on track to break the record for the most homicides in a year, and I know that it was a lot of killing going on and I know a lot of people affected by it. And I just wanted to say that's a big problem because...we're losing people and people are losing their lives all over dumb stuff like a simple argument or even things that people shouldn't be doing like drug deals, stuff like that."</i></p> <p><i>"There needs to be better gun control. Like everyone – anybody can handle a gun at this point. There's some crazy people out there that just go straight to the killing and not really any solutions."</i></p> <p><i>"And it makes me even more feel some type of way because I cannot wait to move out of Philly and I grew up here. And things, when I was growing up, wasn't like this at all. They do have violence here and there but nothing like this."</i></p>
<b>Food</b>	<b>50%</b>	Participants were concerned about the <b>lack of access to healthy foods</b> in their communities and <b>food insecurity</b> . Many noted the easy access to cheaper fast food and unhealthy foods in corner stores, with supermarkets being further away and less accessible without a car. Youth were interested in increasing access to fresh produce and <i>"good-tasting, nutritious food that will fuel kids for the day."</i>	<p><i>"A lot of people don't have access to healthy food. And so a change I think should be made is one that promotes access to healthy food. Because food insecurity is not only access to food at all but access to food that is healthy and benefits you rather than harms you."</i></p> <p><i>"I think changes, like really big changes such as Pennsylvania has a P-EBT, like all of those benefits have helped my family at least, because during the pandemic one of my parents actually lost their job. And my other parent was affected significantly, because her job involves like, a more person-to-person thing. And she was unable to do that obviously because the COVID-19, which caused us to be in a weird financial situation, so benefits such as P-EBT and Pennsylvania's support has been really helpful. Those changes, I think, were like some of the biggest ones in my family."</i></p>

<p><b>Mental health</b></p>	<p><b>50%</b></p>	<p>Mental health is a pressing issue for youth. Participants shared the multiple factors influencing mental health in their communities, including concerns about <b>violence and safety</b> as mentioned above and the impact of <b>COVID-19 pandemic</b> stay-at-home orders. Youth frequently mentioned their experience of stress. For example, some cited <b>generational trauma and toxic stress</b> associated with directly experiencing AND living in communities contending with <b>racism, poverty, violence, or substance use</b>. Others cited the challenges of <b>balancing competing demands</b> of schoolwork and parental expectations. Compounding these factors are issues related to <b>stigma</b> associated with mental health concerns in some communities of color and <b>challenges with accessing mental health supports</b> and treatment (lack of awareness of available resources, not being able to get timely appointments, affordability). There is a sense that youth mental health concerns are <b>not taken seriously</b> by adults in their lives, with some telling themselves that <i>"it's not that bad"</i> and getting the message that they should <i>"keep going, you will be alright, get over it."</i></p>	<p><i>"For physical health, people are a lot more willing to go to doctors and learn about their challenges but with their mental health there is a certain stigma, and they don't want to talk about their issues."</i></p> <p><i>"In the community, trauma builds up. That's why they reflect also the trauma..."</i></p> <p><i>"Even though resources are available for mental health support, there is a stigma, especially in the Asian community where one can go for help and not feel judged. People may not get help because of the stigma."</i></p> <p><i>"The Black community does not think that mental health is a thing."</i></p>
<p><b>Substance use</b></p>	<p><b>33%</b></p>	<p>Participants shared the impact of substance use in their communities, including <b>drug addiction and overdose</b> and <b>peer pressure</b> related to smoking and alcohol use. For several groups, drugs were mentioned in association with violence in their communities.</p>	<p><i>"I wanna throw in instead of like the strengths, I would say the weakness like drugs especially in Philly like in Kensington areas are horrible."</i></p>
<p><b>Environment</b></p>	<p><b>30%</b></p>	<p>Youth noted the negative impacts of <b>pollution and lack of trees and greenspace</b> in their communities. Several groups were particularly concerned about the presence of <b>trash in public areas and illegal dumping</b> in their communities.</p>	<p><i>"A challenge that we face is people taking advantage of the community and littering and putting trash everywhere basically."</i></p>



<p><b>Racism and inequity</b></p>	<p><b>27%</b></p>	<p>Racism and resulting inequities in health, as well as inequity arising from discrimination based on <b>other identities</b> (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, ability, intersectional), were of great concern to youth participants. <b>Disparities in COVID-19 outcomes, differing levels of investment in certain communities, associated socioeconomic disparities, and hate crimes</b> were raised in these discussions.</p>	<p><i>"Within health care, there's a lot of discrimination based on color and sexual orientation, which is crazy, because that affects a person's health. Also one thing for individuals who are part of LGBTQ, doesn't really trust...doesn't receive the right medical care. And within the Black community, 37 percent of Black women don't really trust the health community. So I think that ties into being a part of the Black community and being part of the LGBTQ+ community."</i></p> <p><i>"Looking back to the past few years, as a young person going through taken out of school, no vaccine to begin with, seeing Black people that look like you getting murdered, seeing an uprising on TV and try to focus on academics, trying to work, go to college - going through these things and not enough time to process and trying to push through saying 'it's not that bad.' Then thinking about 'Even with access to vaccines and mental health resources it's still very hard to keep going and go get the vaccine and mental health.'"</i></p>
<p><b>Housing/ neighborhoods</b></p>	<p><b>23%</b></p>	<p>Several groups discussed <b>lack of affordable housing</b> in communities, <b>housing insecurity, homelessness</b>, the impact of gentrification, and the <b>lack of sustained investment</b> in neighborhoods. One group discussed the interrelationship between lack of housing and mental health concerns.</p>	<p><i>"Homeless people being out on the street 24/7."</i></p> <p><i>"I'd like to change the gentrification of the neighborhoods."</i></p>
<p><b>Resource information and navigation</b></p>	<p><b>23%</b></p>	<p>Youth shared challenges related to getting information about available health resources and navigating systems to obtain these resources. They expressed a desire for <b>clear communication and education</b> about these resources. They advised potentially using <b>social media</b> and adopting <b>positive, youth-focused approaches</b> to reach youth with health information and messages.</p>	<p><i>"Maybe more of like advertising things that aren't bad. Like, for example, everywhere I go...we see a lot of posters everywhere but it's all advertising parties and nothing is really advertising like yoga classes or meetings like this that we can actually put our input in. I feel like it's very limited to...this information to who we can extend it to. I'm pretty sure there are parents who would love to join and give their input...Being more vocal about the good things and the little things."</i></p>

<p><b>COVID-related concerns</b></p>	<p><b>17%</b></p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic had and continues to have a significant impact on youth and their communities. The stay-at-home orders associated with the pandemic negatively impacted youth mental and physical health. In addition, the challenges associated with <b>vaccines and masking in schools</b> persist, leading to a great deal of confusion with <b>changing rules and eroding trust in adults</b>.</p>	<p><i>"...the thing is that with the pandemic, especially during like the more harsh periods of the pandemic, I don't think anyone can learn during virtual learning at all. Like the majority of students who are more hands on or like who are definitely more used to in-person learning definitely had a hard time, and now they're having an even harder time adapting to school that's going back in person and it just feels like we're all behind. And it's very easy to feel overwhelmed, especially for those with a lot of responsibilities at home as well."</i></p> <p><i>"My mental health and emotional health were affected because of fear of getting sick and being angry that people would not get vaccinated and might inconvenience them but do good for the community's health."</i></p> <p><i>"I used to not talk to people and now I do because I needed to because of being lonely and I got more comfortable with new people. But now I get highly anxious by the lack of people but also having people around, because I am concerned for my family's health and I am concerned about people's view on the vaccine. I am afraid of saying something if I say I support the vaccine. Will that turn people against me?"</i></p>
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<p><b>Interpersonal dynamics and communication</b></p>	<p><b>23%</b></p>	<p>Several groups were concerned with negative interpersonal dynamics and communication in their communities. Some cited the detrimental effects of <b>“toxic” attitudes, disrespect, comments that impact body image, and making assumptions</b>. Some of these negative dynamics can play out on <b>social media</b>. Other youth shared that sometimes they experienced language barriers and that there were <b>no spaces to express themselves and foster meaningful, deep connections</b> among community members.</p>	<p><i>“...Most of the issues is basically people not communicating with each other as much as they should be or like not understanding where the other person is coming from in order for them to help...”</i></p> <p><i>“People not being able to understand someone else’s opinion...it’s like when you don’t understand it creates conflicts. It will not be a healthy community.”</i></p> <p><i>“...people don’t want to change what they’ve been doing for periods of time, it’s what they’re used to. So if you have like something new or you want to change what’s going on, it’s like an issue and then it becomes like a big problem. And they tend to go on... people aren’t getting heard, no one’s understanding what others are saying...down to it is people who undermine others and don’t try to listen on other people’s issues.”</i></p>
<p><b>Transportation</b></p>	<p><b>17%</b></p>	<p>Some participants shared barriers to accessing transportation, even with critical needs like attending school and going to medical appointments. The main issues include <b>lack of available, affordable options</b>.</p>	<p><i>“I would use Transnet [a program by Medicaid] but you need to schedule in advance. If you have something urgent it’s hard to get there. For example, when I was pregnant and going into labor, I called and couldn’t get a ride.”</i></p>
<p><b>Health care access</b></p>	<p><b>17%</b></p>	<p>Youth brought up challenges with <b>accessibility and affordability of health care</b>. The lack of free clinics, the significant distance needed to be traveled for some facilities (or, put differently, few options close by), low appointment availability, long wait times, lack of insurance, and high costs of deductibles were particularly noted. Related to other needs raised, <b>lack of knowledge of available resources where they can go without parents and are free</b> was shared.</p>	<p><i>“Yeah, like, my dad, he works for himself. He has his own business and he doesn’t have insurance and he got hurt working ‘cause he’s a construction worker and like, he’s been – his back is like really bad and I’m like, ‘Are you going to the doctor?’ ‘No, it’s too much. I’m gonna have to tough it out.’ And I think that’s kind of messed up ‘cause he’s doing all this work and he can’t even – he can’t afford insurance ‘cause he has three daughters, so, it’s just a lot.”</i></p> <p><i>“...so, with difficulty accessing mental health, I think that mental health resources, like I think it’s hard to find providers, and like to pay for it too. I have personal experience with this, like I was trying to find with my mom, but a lot of places are either just like - there wasn’t like enough staff. And some of them just didn’t pick up - they had like a waitlist. So, it was just very hard to find like - to get access to help. So, I think that should be improved.”</i></p> <p><i>“I have been to the emergency a few times and each time it was more than a 2-hour wait.”</i></p>

## Youth Needs

The main issues for health for youth (with particular prompts related to health care) were shared as follows:

Theme	%	Description and Examples	Illustrative Quotes
<b>Mental health</b>	<b>60%</b>	<p>Similar to what was expressed related to mental health needs in their communities, youth shared with greater intensity their own experiences with <b>stress, pressure, and burnout. Depression, anxiety, and trauma</b> due to the COVID-19 pandemic and community violence were widely shared across groups. A theme of <b>balancing</b> between school, parental expectations, other responsibilities, and social life was consistent across several groups. Other sources of stress and toxicity include <b>expectations around physical appearance and beauty</b>, often exacerbated by social media. Challenges of not talking about mental health issues due to <b>stigma and accessing mental health resources</b> like therapy (long wait times for appointments, limited number of therapists within insurance networks, difficulty finding information, need for parental consent, lack of affordable options) were also raised by participants.</p>	<p><i>"I said the most important issues when it comes to youth nowadays, was mental health. Although COVID-19 does affect our physical health quite a bit I feel like mental issues right now are more prevalent, because as we're starting to like go back and forth between the COVID restrictions. I feel like...it's a lot easier for everyone, especially the youth, to feel overwhelmed. Especially how like earlier, she talked about how her friend was getting overwhelmed with schoolwork. I feel like the pandemic and the two years of completely virtual school has like really made it hard for us to get used to our pace when it comes to schoolwork, and academics, and extracurriculars now that we're like starting to uplift those restrictions. It's really hard to keep up with everything when you haven't done it at all for like two years, and it's like quite abrupt as well."</i></p> <p><i>"On the subject of mental health, a lot of the times people my age will joke about it... it's become such a...maybe convenient or casual topic that you can't ever really tell when someone's serious about something. Like it's just hard to determine who actually needs help."</i></p> <p><i>"I have heard people call our generation the generation of mental health. Some people in the older generation don't take it as seriously as it's supposed to be. They think that it's just 'oh, you're sad...go to church, go pray, go read the Bible'—it's always the same answer. So I think our biggest issue is mental health as the younger generation."</i></p> <p><i>"How things are portrayed toward youth. I feel like we see a lot of things, pick up on a lot of things that we shouldn't, like body health or people trying to be things that they're not and it'll turn out bad for them...like anorexia or especially with the oversized community. Because I feel like people equal health as in you're not bigger but in all actuality, you can be healthy in any size, and I feel like that targets children more than it should."</i></p> <p><i>"It's not always easy to talk to people, like actually have a conversation about your mental health with everybody because not everybody's gonna care...it's been times where I've actually tried to talk to somebody about my mental health and they just like 'I don't care.' So with that, you shut down and you don't wanna talk to anybody because you feel like you can't talk to anybody."</i></p> <p><i>"Doctors prescribing [psychiatric] medication to kids rather than looking deeper into a situation. In school, teachers suspending kids rather than talking to them."</i></p>

<b>Violence and safety</b>	<b>40%</b>	<p>Like the discussion of violence and safety in their communities, youth brought up the impact of widespread gun violence/ easy access to guns on their feelings of safety. They shared that they want to have <b>safer options for being outside and active. Trauma and concerns that “they will die either by the virus or gun violence”</b> were expressed. Some youth expressed a desire to find out how to respond to racist violence without resorting to violence themselves. <b>Cyberbullying</b> was also raised as another form of violence experienced by youth.</p>	<p><i>“There’s something traumatizing about exiting a train station and seeing someone being carjacked at knifepoint does something to you and having to walk past things like that on your way to school is super problematic.”</i></p> <p><i>“And it’s like, when I was younger, back in like middle school and elementary school days, it was not like that. Like, I could go to a park and it’s a lot of people there. I don’t have to worry about running into a gang or seeing a group of kids with black hoodies on, walking around, messing with people or starting stuff. It’s like, I don’t have to worry about that. I went to the park, played and went home safely. And now, it’s like, ‘cause I walk home, you know, from school but I change my route every single time going home. Like I can take three different routes in walking home to get to my house just so I make sure that I’m not being followed or no one’s coming from behind me. Like, I’m very aware, especially now that I’m further away, like, walking from West Philly to Southwest, I’m just more aware of my surroundings.”</i></p> <p><i>“A while back when I was sitting with some people that I called friends, people started driving up slowly in black cars with tinted windows. I told them we should leave. They were like no its fine. I left. They rolled down the windows and started shooting. Two to three people died at that party. Everyone started running but I had a head start. You can’t even sit at a park anymore.”</i></p>
<b>Health care access</b>	<b>30%</b>	<p>The major points across discussions related to health care access emphasized challenges with getting the right information about available health care resources and how to access them, <b>understanding and navigating confusing systems</b>, and managing insurance (and related cost issues, to be discussed below). Participants raised challenges with not getting navigational support from providers, as well as quality issues stemming potentially from <b>bias/ stereotyping and lack of staffing</b>. The issue of a local hospital closing was also mentioned.</p>	<p><i>“I think that for the Black community, it’s very hard to see a doctor, especially given the...current and past racial discrimination within the medical field. It’s very hard for Black people to say, ‘oh I’m gonna go to the doctor to get a checkup’ or ‘oh I’m gonna go to the doctor because I have X, Y, and Z medical condition.’ ‘I’ll figure it out on my own, I’ll be fine, I’ll use these natural resources’...I’m going to go to a hospital that’s not gonna give me the same care because of my skin color?—absolutely not! Just not being able to see doctors in that position that look like us, it discourages you from going.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s hard to get myself to get meds.”</i></p>
<b>Social needs</b>	<b>30%</b>	<p>The most commonly cited social needs raised were related to <b>food (access to healthy foods), housing, financial instability, and transportation</b>.</p>	<p><i>“I know a lot of people who...had to hurt other people to make sure their family was ok. So when I think about health in my community, I think like financially, making sure everyone is cool so they don’t have to hurt other people so that their family can eat and can have food for the household...”</i></p>

<b>Substance use</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>Ready access</b> to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and vapes was raised by several groups, leading to problems with addiction. One group raised that use of such substances was a <b>coping mechanism</b> for stress and pressure.	<i>"And I feel like anybody could get vape. It's like so easy. It's not like they need to make the like age limit to where you can smoke or a little bit higher so that people can – no kids can buy it and have more education in schools about that type of stuff. Like nobody knows that vaping is way worse than cigarettes and it's like killing your lungs faster than cigarettes did to the organs, that we all see people dying from lung cancer and having like cold and then burns."</i>
<b>Need: Supportive adults</b>	<b>23%</b>	The need for supportive adults in youths' lives was mentioned several times across groups. The important role of these adults as <b>volunteer mentors, positive and responsible role models, and "trusted people that they can go to in order to discuss things"</b> was emphasized by youth, especially to provide support and a sense of safety for difficult or uncomfortable issues they may be experiencing. Youth shared a sense of feeling <b>"let down"</b> by adults at school due to lack of nurses and medical staff; lack of timely and supportive response from security personnel, teachers, and police to violence and bullying; and a lack of mentorship.	<i>"I would say that something we're missing in our community is responsible role models or good role models for the youth, you know. Because it's easy to go out there and just be out and doing whatever you want to do, but when you go out and all you see, you know, is people doing the wrong thing, you know, it's hard to see people doing the wrong thing and not do it yourself 'cause it's even more difficult to know what you're supposed to be doing..."</i>  <i>"Probably like more encouragement for youth to stand up for themselves, and just like encouragement from their parents, encouragement from teachers, because a lot of times when they don't say anything or like they just let it slide by, it's like you're kind of like giving up on a child..."</i>  <i>"Counselors mainly just help you get into college, but don't wanna talk about your feelings."</i>
<b>Physical health</b>	<b>20%</b>	In contrast to their responses to questions about community needs, youth did raise a few points about physical health issues experienced by youth. Several pointed out <b>obesity and lack of sleep</b> being prevalent across youth. One group shared the importance of greater awareness of <b>chronic conditions</b> affecting youth and increasing support for such conditions.	<i>"I think physical health is also important. Many of my peers don't sleep much because of too much school work."</i>
<b>Need: Communication/connection</b>	<b>20%</b>	Several groups noted the importance of efforts related to increased and improved communication between peers and with adults. Youth across groups shared challenges with <b>socializing (including experiencing anxiety), communicating with new friends, and feeling lonely and disconnected</b> as a result. The negative impact of communicating through <b>social media</b> was also mentioned.	<i>"And then like just a lot of face-to-face interaction, and also like text each other, I guess, but not as much as right now. But then right now, because of how advanced technology is, there's so many social media apps that you can use to communicate with each other. And also, because of COVID, you kind of like - I see some youth be kind of like lost the way of...just like being able to communicate with others."</i>

<p><b>Need: Wellness supports for youth</b></p>	<p><b>13%</b></p>	<p>A number of discussions mentioned the need for more general resources for youth mental and physical wellness. These could include <b>informational resources, social or emotional wellness resources, or creation of spaces or activities</b> where they can be free, safe, and have fun.</p>	<p><i>"I think it's habits, like we - like young people...are like learning about stuff they need to do - they can do better to help themselves keep themselves healthy. But...like once you have bad habits over time, and it's really hard to change those."</i></p> <p><i>"I think I'd say especially rec centers. 'cause one thing I know that makes me stressed is my work so I want tutoring but I want affordable tutoring or even free, 'cause in my area everything is so expensive and I don't get that because a majority of minorities can't afford that."</i></p>
<p><b>Cost of health care</b></p>	<p><b>13%</b></p>	<p>In addition to issues with health care access noted above, several groups discussed the impact of <b>insurance coverage limitations and high costs associated with specialty care and therapy.</b></p>	<p><i>"I was at the doctors and somebody was just talking about like trying to get on birth control and I overheard the doctor say, 'Well, your insurance doesn't cover this, so, you can't get on it.' And they was like just telling her, like, 'Just keep using condoms.' And stuff like that. And I just feel like, and for females, like, that's just like us having to pay for - pay for pads. Why should we have to pay for something that we can't control our period? So, I just feel like pads should be free and if somebody wants to get on birth control, they need birth control, they should just get it for free."</i></p>
<p><b>Youth autonomy, decision-making, and voice</b></p>	<p><b>10%</b></p>	<p>The importance of youth voice and autonomy for health-related decision-making was emphasized by a few groups. Instead of telling them what to do, <b>providing relevant information so that they can make informed decisions</b> was preferred by youth.</p>	<p><i>"When you bring to them [elder people] your problems, they're gonna try to tell you things that the way they see it. I'm telling you that I see it this way and you're trying to tell me to see it that way, so we're not going to get like the solution. When I bring to you the problem, you should sit down with me and we should discuss it, like what can we do to solve it. The elder people sometime they think that they know everything and they don't want to listen to us and our own opinion."</i></p>
<p><b>Sexual health</b></p>	<p><b>10%</b></p>	<p>A few groups raised that issues of sexual health were specific to youth, especially as they are experiencing puberty.</p>	<p><i>"In terms of the female community, with like both mental health and physical health, I think that like better sex education in schools is something that's really important. And sex education that is updated to like our modern perceptions of gender and sexuality. I think that's something that's really important for improving both the mental and physical sexual health of especially teenagers, and especially women and people in the LGBTQ community. Because good education can sort of combat stereotypes which can be very harmful like both mentally and physically to people in those communities."</i></p>

## Potential Solutions

Participants contributed ideas for potential solutions for improving health for youth and their communities:

Theme	%	Description and Examples	Illustrative Quotes
<b>Social needs</b>	<b>53%</b>	Youth shared ideas for improving <b>food access</b> (e.g., food delivery/car services to increase accessibility for those particularly in need), <b>building affordable housing</b> and providing more resources to those experiencing homelessness, making <b>transportation options more accessible</b> , and <b>providing workforce development</b> and employment opportunities.	<i>"Housing... definitely housing because there's many buildings that could be rebuilt that's in Philly that aren't used and that could be used for housing. But also equity within housing. Equity in jobs. And education."</i>
<b>Mental health supports</b>	<b>50%</b>	Participants offered many creative ideas for providing mental health supports in the community and in schools. Increased <b>access to mental health professionals</b> (counselors, therapists) in community settings, as well as in schools was raised. <b>Peer advocates and teen mentors</b> supporting mental health were also suggested. Youth had ideas for <b>creating spaces for openly talking about mental health</b> (including as a student-led club), as well as <b>measures schools could adopt</b> (periodic anonymous mental health check ins, mental health periods, mini-breaks, or wellness days, mental health days off, de-stressing equipment like weighted blankets in a room focused on wellness). Other ideas included providing <b>workshops on self-care</b> that offer tools such as meditation, as well as <b>campaigns</b> with messages to raise awareness of the body neutrality movement. Youth viewed these efforts as all serving to <b>normalize and destigmatize</b> mental health issues, with some noting the importance of educating parents. It was also emphasized that mental health supports should be <b>free or low cost</b> to increase accessibility.	<p><i>"I said this before, but just like getting more access to mental health resources. I guess, maybe, like giving schools - having schools have more counselors so that students can talk to them."</i></p> <p><i>"A lot of our youth and even the young adults and adults period have gone through a traumatic experience so just having that trauma-informed care..."</i></p> <p><i>"Certain groups where you can just sit and listen to someone talk. Because a lot of the times people treat their disorders so casually that if you just let them speak they'll go to rambling on and start revealing things that they would have never said if they were actually paying attention. So you should sit and listen to people sometimes...and you never know what they're gonna say, as long as you're just quiet you listen they can talk on and on and you'll actually find something out that you can see if you could help them with."</i></p> <p><i>"I would try to like "casualize" therapy because it seems like therapy is such a taboo. Like everybody's like, oh, if you go to therapy you're crazy or therapy is not for you, you don't need it...I would try to normalize therapy, casualize it, casualize talking about mental health in a positive way... And to make group therapy sessions and things like that and have communication, instead of having like someone says something and it doesn't get heard by someone else, things like that."</i></p>



<p><b>Safety</b></p>	<p>43%</p>	<p>Youth noted several strategies to potentially <b>increase safety in play areas and neighborhoods</b> (e.g., cameras, officials and other monitoring of playgrounds). To stop gun violence, participants mentioned <b>gun control</b> to get guns off streets. Others suggested building capacity for <b>healthy conflict resolution</b> and creating <b>positive outlets for arguments or anger</b>. Youth discussed the <b>role of police</b> (increasing numbers, having more officers who “look like me”) and strengthening <b>community policing</b>.</p>	<p><i>“Better gun protection laws...who’s accessing this type of stuff? How they’re getting their hands on it and how can we make it safer for those communities so that people who may not be in the right state having access to this type of stuff, or children getting access to it. What we can do to protect ourselves and others, along with the children in the neighborhood getting access to this type of stuff. Better safety measures.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think definitely fixing up Germantown but not pushing out people that lived in Germantown. But fixing it up to a point that it feels like a stable environment. I don’t want to say more police around Germantown because that wouldn’t help but doing something that would help prevent violence.”</i></p> <p><i>“Our police are a major part of this community and they have a lot to do with the interactions between the community and them and so trying to strengthen those community relations and realize that every single cop that you see is not necessarily a bad cop....Just strengthening community policing would be major for communities in general.”</i></p>
<p><b>Community activities/facilities</b></p>	<p>43%</p>	<p>Participants felt that increasing community activities like <b>clean ups and social events</b>, as well as facilities like <b>recreation centers or skating rinks</b>, would improve health in their communities. In particular, they emphasized creating <b>safe spaces for youth</b>, such as community gardens, or events like sports tournaments. Such gathering places could offer health-related programming. One group discussed a <b>one-stop-shop for youth</b> to get services and assistance with navigating complex systems, as well as connect with other youth.</p>	<p><i>“I will like kind of say what you said, like community service. And I feel like our biggest issue may be ...the many homeless people that you see out there, there’s probably like, as I came here today I probably seen like 10 homeless there, I always see every day. And I feel like we as community could do... what is it like donation to give out food and stuff and clothes since there’s also COVID so it’s like obviously, they’re affected by all this COVID and stuff. And like me and my friends during COVID we actually planned out and made food, and then we surprised homeless people, we drove around South Philly or North Philly and stuff, we just gave out food. So, I feel like if our community do that, I feel like we could get more people, more homeless out the streets and stuff.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would say like more recreation centers around the community to like keep kids off the street, stuff like that.”</i></p> <p><i>“I want somewhere where I can feel safe....I want somewhere where everybody’s gonna accept me for who I am and not just look at me for, she has an accent, she’s from that place. I want them to see me for who I am and not from where I’m from or how I’m different. I just want them to see me for me.”</i></p>

<p><b>School and extracurricular programs</b></p>	<p><b>43%</b></p>	<p>The potential to create and offer <b>more clubs to cultivate hobbies</b>, programs to encourage self-development, <b>classes to build life skills</b>, and <b>sports activities to foster social emotional learning</b> was very appealing to youth participants. They emphasized that it was important that the programs be <b>fun and foster connection</b> with others.</p>	<p><i>"I feel like afterschool programs, like, [name] said, she said, not all kids like school but at least, if they know that they could go to basketball practice once the school day is out, they'll give them a motivation or a reason to come to school and to do their schoolwork and do good so that they can stay on their basketball team."</i></p> <p><i>"A lot more programs and stuff but more specifically free programs because the poverty in Philadelphia is like really high and so a lot of people can't afford a lot of things. And so I would say a lot more free programs that people can join because I've noticed that when youth aren't a part of a program or a job or just like not doing anything with themselves, they more so get in a lot more violence and more drama, gun violence and all that type stuff that they could avoid. But since they're not a part of anything they're more so to be in it. And so if there's more free programs for them to join they have more opportunities to find something that they like to do or something that like interests them or something like makes them happy to do."</i></p> <p><i>"Youth in developmental workshops, getting your own sense of identity, just to know that there are things out there, putting youth on different podcasts, different things like that... to just see what out's there in the world."</i></p>
<p><b>Supportive adults</b></p>	<p><b>33%</b></p>	<p>As raised in responses to an earlier question, the importance of supportive adults in youths' lives cannot be overstated. Again, participants expressed a strong desire for <b>strong community leaders, community volunteers, positive role models, and mentors to help keep them "safe and off the streets."</b> In addition to "teachers who care" (ideally hired from the community), youth offered an idea for building connections with police in schools, as well as thoughts around providing training to adults working with youth on social emotional learning. In addition, one group discussed educating parents on conversations about race and gender.</p>	<p><i>"I guess like in my school community, like once I talked to one of my counselors, it took me a long time. It was like after I went through a really hard time, I didn't talk to her during that hard time. But then it was like after with college applications, which I'm doing right now. And then I started talking to her about problems that I had in the past, and then she was - it was like really helpful and she really made me feel a lot better. And so, I guess, just like counselors in schools, like in school communities work really well."</i></p> <p><i>"Definitely partnering up with schools and being more vocal about females...about our body parts, menstrual cycles, what can we take including herbal things, that could be brought into health. Having the nurses not be in the nurse office and to come check. 'Cause I'm pretty sure there's a lot of students that I knew I grew up would not just really care about themselves because they were suffering from depression from home and their parents didn't check up on them.... So I feel like...the way that you take care of yourself root from childhood."</i></p>

<p><b>Health care access and affordability</b></p>	<p><b>30%</b></p>	<p>Consistent with responses to earlier questions, youth shared the need for <b>financial and navigational supports</b> when seeking to access health care. The need for <b>more affordable and accessible health care facilities</b>, such as neighborhood clinics, was emphasized. The <b>qualities of health care providers</b> are also important – increasing representation of people of color and diverse gender identities, as well as hiring/training providers who are committed to providing equitable care, was suggested by participants.</p>	<p><i>“Uniformly having providers accessible especially those who are people of color, and/or Queer.”</i></p>
<p><b>Support systems and resources</b></p>	<p><b>23%</b></p>	<p>From a general perspective, youth are in need of support systems that are <b>integrated and help them connect to needed resources</b>. Similar to health care, youth need help finding out about available resources for other needs and ultimately connecting with them. This was particularly noted for immigrant communities who may be contending with language barriers and fear/anxiety related to asking for help. Some suggested <b>school-based support systems</b>, while others discussed <b>community-based systems that seek to ensure services provided are widely known, accessible, and effective</b>. Some youth suggested culturally relevant <b>public education and awareness campaigns</b> to spread the word about these systems and resources.</p>	<p><i>“For me, I guess like if I could design my own community, I would put in like a lot of support systems, and just build like a friendly environment where everyone can depend on each other, and just help each other out.”</i></p> <p><i>“The youth don’t want the resources that are provided...the youth need more help. They need people to actually go to them with the resources.”</i></p> <p><i>“Resources on different types of topics. So like family issues, on an individual basis as well relationships, how to form integral, intimate, intentional relationships.... You want to have a joyful road in life. You don’t want to just do anything just for the sake of doing it. I think resources, education, self-development are things that our communities could use.”</i></p>
<p><b>Environment</b></p>	<p><b>20%</b></p>	<p>Suggestions for improving local environments included community <b>clean ups</b>, planting <b>more trees and more plant life</b>, putting up more <b>murals</b>, providing more <b>garbage cans</b>, and preventing <b>illegal dumping</b>.</p>	<p><i>“I would say... getting together and cleaning yards around the neighborhood because seeing trash every day because it doesn’t bring a good image in your mind.”</i></p> <p><i>“Why do you have to clean up a neighborhood just to kick people out? Why can’t all people be allowed to live in their neighborhood? A clean equitable neighborhood, so that they don’t have to go to a white neighborhood to get good produce.”</i></p>

<p><b>Community connections and collaboration</b></p>	<p>17%</p>	<p>Participants discussed the importance of building connections and <b>trust with communities</b>, especially for the medical community. This could be achieved by working with <b>trusted messengers</b> and <b>sustaining initiatives</b> in communities (participants noted programs that end when funding ends). Youth also emphasized the need to build connections and collaboration within communities, <b>being supportive of one another and fostering diversity and equality</b>. By building stronger connections and collaborations, these youth feel that advocacy efforts would be that much more effective.</p>	<p><i>"The problems within our community are here by design. Since they are man-made, man/woman can fix them."</i></p> <p><i>"Have more activities and programs for people of different ages and different ethnicity to join. This can bring people out of their house and educate each other so there's less misunderstanding or miscommunication."</i></p> <p><i>"I would have people from different backgrounds, ethnically, race, etc. People of different ages... basically people who are different from each other... so they can all share their ideas and their beliefs and they can also like come to understandings for each other. Which is something that could help people in the real world, like meeting new people from different places, from different backgrounds, with different histories...it could help people understand those people better. I honestly feel that would make the world a little bit better so there's not so much fighting and disagreement."</i></p> <p><i>"Having that somebody that cares about you, that really want to see you grow, it helps....In the Philadelphia community, we have a lot of violence and you know, and having somebody that constantly asks you 'are you ok? Are you having a good day? If you really like the equipment, how it feels and whatnot?' It really makes me feel like somebody values my opinion and for them to value my opinion says a lot."</i></p>
<p><b>Physical activity</b></p>	<p>13%</p>	<p>Youth shared the importance of increasing access to opportunities for physical activity that are <b>safe and ideally outdoors</b>.</p>	<p><i>"I would like to see a recess in the schools. I know high schools may not do that but I really miss recess. Since I graduated from 8th grade I had recess, but 9th, 10th, I did virtual in 11th but that don't count, and now I'm in 12th and still no recess. I really miss recess. I like to go outside, get fresh air, run around. I feel like kids, even older kids like us teenagers, we still need it."</i></p>
<p><b>Youth voice</b></p>	<p>13%</p>	<p>Several groups prioritized the need for youth leadership and voice related to health improvement in their communities. They expressed wanting to be <b>taken seriously, taking a "seat at the table," "speaking out," and crossing generational divides</b> by sharing their ideas and working alongside adults to improve health.</p>	<p><i>"Our generation is very defensive...and we also feel like we know it all. But we forget that these people have lived through hard times. And they might actually have some insight in a way to help us better. In the moment you may not see it as it's gonna help me... but as a younger generation I feel like we don't know how to take things with a grain of salt...Open-minded. And this can also go for our older generation, too, to be open-minded to us. But I feel like it's a two-way street. Because I've talked to like a bunch of older people, and I have to say that it's one of the best things that I've done. When you want to get somewhere in life, when you want to do something, you look at those people who are doing what you want to do because at the end of the day, they've done it, they've done it."</i></p> <p><i>"Solutions in the community is giving your youth a voice, not only in their towns but bigger!"</i></p>

<b>Substance use</b>	<b>13%</b>	A number of groups noted the importance of programs to address <b>addiction, including increasing services provided in communities, and reducing access to substances</b> by preventing them from being sold to youth.	<i>"...all those people that are on the streets, there should be facilities like rehabs specifically for them to get back on their feet because they always go to locking them up. But in reality, it's not that you control, it's a mental illness – so we shouldn't be putting people in jail for something that they can't control like addiction."</i>
<b>Social media</b>	<b>13%</b>	Youth acknowledged the power of social media as a major form of communication in their lives. Some suggested <b>harnessing the power to spread</b> important health messages, while others suggested the need to <b>ensure that it isn't being used to spread misinformation</b> . Participants offered the idea of <b>education campaigns</b> to share the impacts of cyberbullying and trolling.	<i>"Social media is like a cup—you know, it depends on what you fill it with. You can fill it with poison, or you can fill it with water, you can fill it with juice. What are you consuming on social media? When you go on Youtube, what are you watching? What are you putting your mind, what are you using your brain for?"</i>



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