

**Children's Services Council of Leon County (CSC Leon)**  
**Program Services Committee Meeting**

Thursday, April 7, 2022, 3:00 pm  
City of Tallahassee, Tallahassee Room (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)  
300 S Adams Street, Tallahassee, FL 32301

*Members of the public can view the meeting via live stream on this YouTube channel:*  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCc74A9evhLxbHlrH63-clbQ>.

**AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Approval of Agenda
- IV. General Public Comment
- V. Presentation of by QQ Research Consultants
  - A. Demonstration of Interactive Programs Dashboard
  - B. Presentation of Draft Gap Analysis
  - C. Presentation of Draft Expedited Funding Options
- VI. Committee Discussion
  - A. Prioritization for Summer 2022 Funding
  - B. Volunteer Recruitment for Evaluation Panels
- VII. Formulation of Committee Recommendations
- VIII. Next Meeting Date
- IX. Next Meeting Agenda
- X. Member Comments
- XI. Adjourn

### **Agenda Item**

Presentation by Q-Q Research Consultants

Attachments:

1. DRAFT Gap Analysis Report
2. DRAFT Expedited Funding Options

A young child with curly hair is shown in profile, looking down at a mobile toy. The background is a solid pink color with decorative elements: a pattern of small black dots in the top right corner, large faint numbers '2222' in the center, and a large blue circular graphic in the bottom left corner. A large, semi-transparent 'DRAFT' watermark is oriented diagonally across the center of the page.

**CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES  
COUNCIL OF  
LEON COUNTY**

**LEON COUNTY  
GAP ANALYSIS  
REPORT  
2022**



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**Prepared By:**



**Q-Q RESEARCH**  
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A man and a young boy are lying on their stomachs on a grassy field, smiling at the camera. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. In the top right corner, there is a pattern of small white dots. A large, light blue circle is positioned behind the word 'INTRODUCTION'. A large, diagonal 'DRAFT' watermark is visible across the center of the image. The word 'INTRODUCTION' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

# INTRODUCTION

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COUNCIL OF LEON COUNTY

The Children's Services Council of Leon County (CSC Leon) was established in 2020 to improve the lives and outcomes of local children and families.<sup>1</sup> To that end, CSC Leon aims to provide a range of programs and services that support the county's children and youth, including promoting early childhood education and literacy, healthy development, and provision of both preventative and treatment services. CSC Leon has committed to providing such services and support within **three priority areas**: (1) Success in School and Life, (2) Healthy Children, Youth, and Families, and (3) Stable and Nurturing Families and Community.

## The Children's Services Council of Leon County (CSC Leon)

*CSC Leon: Established in 2020 to improve the lives and outcomes of local children and families*



Within each priority area, CSC Leon has identified eight specific **subdomains** to invest their efforts (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> These domains encompass key areas of focus and include specific outcomes designed to demonstrate the impact of CSC Leon.

<sup>1</sup> Children's Services Council (CSC) of Leon County. (2021, November 2). About Us - Children's Services Council of Leon County. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://cscleon.org/about/>

## Figure 1 : Priority Areas and Associated Domains



### Success in School and Life

#### School Readiness

Outcome: Increase the number of children who enter kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically ready.

#### School-Age Supports

Outcome: Increase school performance and reduce juvenile crime among school-age children and youth.



### Healthy Children, Youth, and Families

#### Physical Health

Outcome: Reduce infant and maternal mortality, increase infant health, improve oral health, and improve early identification of health problems.

#### Mental Health

Outcome: Increase resiliency and reduce the number of consequences of adverse childhood events.



### Stable and Nurturing Families and Community

#### Youth Development

Outcome: Enhance youth development through developing occupational skills, career pathways, and economic opportunities.

#### Housing Stability for Family and Children

Outcome: Reducing risk and experiences of homelessness.

#### Food Stability for Family and Children

Outcome: Reduce the consequences of food insecurity.

#### Enhanced Caregivers

Outcome: Increase enhanced caregivers' response to the needs of at-risk youth.

All elements together guide CSC Leon toward achieving their ultimate goal: *To ensure that all children and youth in Leon County are socially, emotionally, and physically healthy and can reach their full potential.*



# CURRENT REPORT

To begin working toward this goal, CSC Leon contracted with Q-Q Research Consultants (Q-Q Research) to help identify (1) children's services currently available, (2) barriers preventing these programs from fully meeting the needs of children in Leon County, (3) gaps that exist within current programming, and (4) outcomes that should be tracked by programs and services.

As part of this work, Q-Q Research conducted a Gap Analysis. A Gap Analysis is a comprehensive approach that incorporates a variety of data sources to identify the difference between the current and desired community conditions.<sup>2</sup> As part of the Leon County Gap Analysis, Q-Q Research was tasked with first identifying both the present-day needs of local children, youth, and families and the quality and availability of local programs and services designed to address such needs in all eight youth development domains. Once areas of need were identified, Q-Q Research generated data-driven recommendations designed to guide Leon County toward reaching its desired community conditions for children, youth, and families.

The present report serves as an in-depth overview of the recent Gap Analysis and aims to address the following key objectives for all eight of CSC Leon's youth development domains:

## Gap Analysis Overview - Key Objectives



Identify and quantify the conditions, needs, and assets of the community.



Analyze the access and delivery of resources to local children, youth, and families.



Provide findings that will allow CSC Leon to develop priorities and strategies to address identified needs and gaps while utilizing and mobilizing existing resources.

<sup>2</sup> Smartsheet. (n.d.). The Complete Guide to Gap Analysis. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://www.smartsheet.com/gap-analysis-method-examples>

# Gap Analysis Report Structure

The report is organized into three principal sections: Methodological Approach, Major Findings, and Conclusion. The Methodological Approach contains key procedural details about data collection and data analyses, as well as limitations of the Gap Analysis. Major Findings presents the findings of the Gap Analysis organized into eight primary domains to reflect the youth development domains created by CSC Leon: (1) School Readiness, (2) School-Age Supports, (3) Physical Health, (4) Mental Health, (5) Youth Development, (6) Food Stability and Family for Children, (7) Housing Stability for Family and Children, and (8) Enhanced Caregivers. Each domain contains information from four data sources that speak to both strengths and areas of need for children, youth, and families in Leon County, FL:

1

**Secondary Data Sources:** Databases for selected indicators at the county, state, and national levels that provide background information and benchmarking to assess the impact of CSC Leon (e.g., population estimates, demographic components of change).

2

**Community Needs Assessment Survey (CNAS):** County-wide survey assessing areas of need for children, youth, and families within CSC Leon's eight youth development domains.

3

**Provider Survey (PS):** County-wide survey designed to capture information about local organizations serving children, youth, and families in Leon County, Florida.

4

**Community Interviews and Focus Groups:** A series of structured conversations designed to provide select groups with an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences about areas of need for children, youth, and families in Leon County, Florida.

Each domain section ends with Key Points & Recommendations that summarize central themes and help the reader understand potential applications of the data. The final section is the Conclusion, which contains general recommendations for CSC Leon to consider.

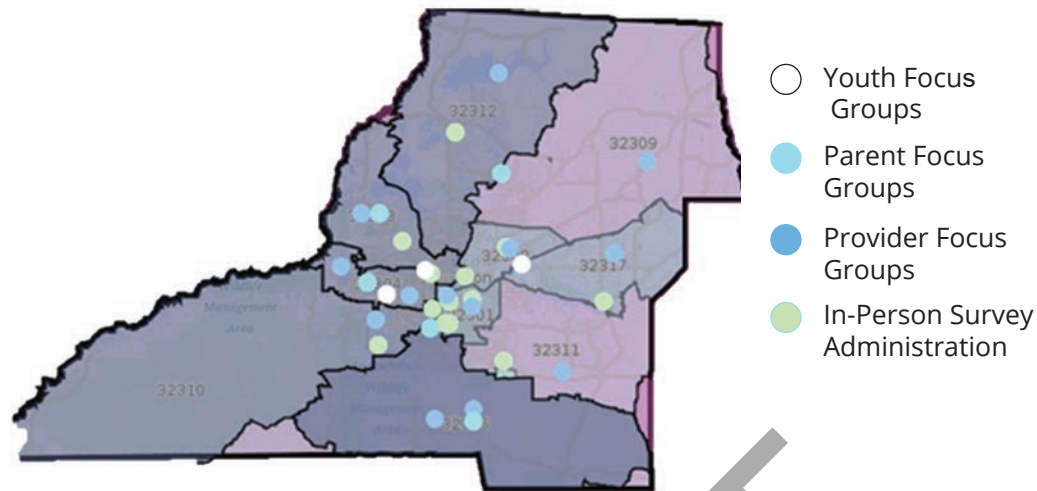


# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

DRAFT



**Figure 2**



**Note.** Shaded areas correspond with the zip codes in which survey participants indicated residing. Dark purple shading represents zip codes in which both PS and CNAS respondents indicated residing. In contrast, magenta shading represents only areas where CNAS respondents indicated residing (see Appendix A, Table 14).

The dots represent areas where focus groups and in-person survey administration took place.

It is important to note that provider focus groups were held virtually, but the zip codes indicated by those who participated are included to demonstrate the county-specific areas represented in the data through these sessions.

To meet the key objectives of this Gap Analysis, a comprehensive mixed-methods design was adopted using both quantitative and qualitative data from primary and secondary sources (see Appendix A for term definitions). Quantitative data was captured from the Community Needs Assessment Survey (CNAS) and the Provider Survey (PS). In addition to this, a series of secondary data sources were analyzed to leverage existing information to inform the current conditions of Leon County. Qualitative data was obtained from both parent and youth focus groups, as well as provider interviews that focused on CSC Leon's eight youth development domains. Across all surveys and focus groups, a total of over 100 unique community-based organizations (CBOs) and over 850 community members shared their perceptions about the needs of children, youth, and families in Leon County, Florida. Areas of Leon County reached through the various forms of data collection can be found in Figure 2. All data points were triangulated to inform community strengths and areas of need for the children, youth, and families of Leon County. The procedures and methodology employed for data collection using each assessment method are described in the sections that follow.

# QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGIES

## Community Needs Assessment Survey (CNAS):

A majority of the quantitative data in this report comes from the CNAS. The CNAS was developed by Q-Q Research in consultation with the CSC Leon Staff to identify community strengths and assets in Leon County and to better understand how to support residents as it relates to Success in School and Life (i.e., school readiness, school-age supports), Healthy Children, Youth, and Families (i.e., physical health, mental health), and Stable and Nurturing Families and Community (i.e., youth development, food stability, housing stability, and enhanced caregivers).



## What is CNAS?

The CNAS was developed by Q-Q Research in consultation with the CSC Leon Staff to identify community strengths and assets in Leon County and to better understand how to support residents.

**Measures:** The approved CNAS contained a variety of structured and open-ended questions designed to quantify residents' attitudes and perceptions regarding the accessibility, availability, and quality of supports and services for the three priority areas of CSC Leon.

Structured items contained statements assessing two elements:

1. Agreement with a range of statements regarding the existence of needs and services in their neighborhood related to the priority areas specified above.



2. Satisfaction with existing supports and services within their neighborhood.





In addition to the structured items, participants received open-ended items. These items provided participants with the opportunity to identify three important issues that should be addressed to support local children, youth, and families and to provide any specific programs that should be considered to alleviate such challenges. After all structured and open-ended items, the survey finished with a series of demographic questions (see Data Analysis section below).

**CNAS Participants and Procedures:** The final approved CNAS was made available to Leon County residents through a secure online platform (i.e., Qualtrics) from December of 2021 to March of 2022. Anyone who was 18 years or older and resided in Leon County for any duration of the year, was welcome to participate in this survey.



To ensure responses were representative of Leon County, Q-Q Research consulted with CSC Leon staff to develop a comprehensive list of partners and community locations in each zip code for survey distribution. The survey was advertised by CSC Leon, and several additional community entities, including United Partners for Human Services (UPHS) and We Are All We Need. Q-Q Research also partnered with community members to conduct in-person survey administration in various locations. Additionally, Q-Q Research personally visited community locations in Leon County and administered the CNAS in-person to residents. Through in-person

outreach, 19 locations across nine zip codes were reached (see Figure 2). In-person survey administration was possible through electronic tablets and cellular devices provided by the research team. This approach was included to ensure community members who may have limited access to technology or varying ability levels received the opportunity to have their voices heard. As a result of all efforts, 555 community members completed the survey across a total of 20 zip codes in the county.

## Secondary Data

Q-Q Research conducted a review of the existing body of research and databases to guarantee a more robust and comprehensive analysis of the current needs for children, youth, and families in Leon County. Because of CSC Leon's recent establishment, secondary research methods were primarily consulted. Secondary sources included, but were not limited to, the U.S. Census, Florida Health Charts, Florida Department of Education. Data was incorporated in the analysis if the source met all of the following selection criteria:



- They included primary data collected from original sources within Leon County, or they included secondary data specific to Leon County.
- The data was collected in 2018 or later, except in some cases where longitudinal data spanned back to 2010 to examine trends.
- The methods of data collection were discussed.
- The research and/or database included at least one of the eight youth development domains examined in the current Gap Analysis.

## QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

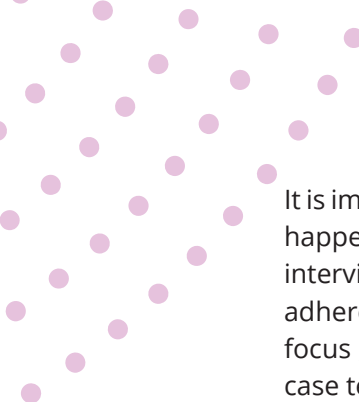
### Provider Interviews and Community Focus Groups

Q-Q Research led a total of 10 provider interviews, eight focus group sessions for parents, and four focus group sessions for youth to explore themes related to community needs and assets among the prioritized populations. Parent and youth focus groups will be referred to collectively as “community focus groups” for the remainder of the report.



Both community focus groups and provider interviews pertained to CSC Leon’s eight subdomains and were informed by the CNAS. However, each provider interview targeted a specific subdomain, whereas the community focus groups provided more general questions to observe if any of the eight domains emerged. Additionally, community focus groups consisted of smaller sessions that engaged local parents and youth from across the county, whereas provider interviews consisted of CBOs who were selected if they provided services to children and families within a given domain. CBOs were identified and engaged to participate based on the service area of focus. Parent and youth participants were recruited by a variety of community influencers who volunteered to support in identifying and engaging residents for participation.





It is important to note that the provider interview and community focus group sessions happened to be scheduled during a large spike in COVID-19 cases. As a result, provider interview sessions were moved from in-person to a virtual platform (i.e., Zoom) to adhere to CDC guidelines. During this time, CSC Leon postponed parent and youth focus groups to a later date to allow for both in-person and virtual administration in case technology access was a challenge for any community members. Locations of all focus groups can be found in Figure 2. Ultimately, a total of 61 parents and 32 youth participated, and 84 CBO members across 74 CBOs participated. Once conducted, the focus groups and provider interviews were manually transcribed by members of the Q-Q team.

**Provider Survey (PS):** Q-Q Research developed the Provider Survey (PS) in partnership with CSC Leon and in consultation with local CBOs to capture information for a variety of deliverables to fulfill the key outcomes for CSC Leon. Databases from UPHS, 211 Big Bend, and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) were utilized to identify local CBOs who should receive the PS. After reviewing all three databases, the PS was sent to 729 CBOs serving individuals in Leon County, FL. The PS was made available to CBOs on December 23, 2021. As of March, 2022, approximately 7% of the CBOs completed the survey (n = 49). In order to maximize the survey's reach, individual phone calls were made to providers who had not yet responded to the provider survey.

Items in the PS requested broad organization-level information, as well as information related to specific programs provided by the organization serving children, youth, and families. For the purpose of the Gap Analysis, two open-ended items from the Provider Survey were used. These items mirrored the open-ended items in the CNAS:

- "In general, what are the THREE most important issues that should be addressed in our community to improve the lives of children, youth, and families that your organization serves?"
- "Please indicate programs or services that are needed by the population you serve, but are not currently available."



## What is the PS?

The PS was developed in consultation with local CBOs to capture information for a variety of deliverables to fulfill the key outcomes for CSC Leon. Approximately 7% of the CBOs completed the survey in Leon County, FL.

# DATA ANALYSES

Most of the data presented in this gap analysis are presented at the Leon County level. However, some data are disaggregated by zip code, race, ethnicity, disability status, and economic status if available. When possible, brief summaries that address the community priorities of unique populations and neighborhoods have been included. The current Gap Analysis looks at the needs and priorities of children, youth, and families by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status to determine if certain groups are at an advantage or risk, or have better or worse access to resources, etc. Such an analysis is essential for prioritizing the provision of assistance efforts aimed at reducing and eliminating disparities among particular subgroup populations.



**Quantitative Analyses:** Quantitative survey data were analyzed using the R statistical software package.<sup>3</sup> Frequencies and percentages were calculated for all Likert Scales and demographic items. Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to evaluate associations between demographic factors, including age, sex, race, income, and survey responses



**Qualitative Analyses:** Open-ended survey items were analyzed using an inductive approach to identify key themes. Both focus group and provider interview transcriptions were analyzed for theme identification related to the subdomains selected by CSC Leon: 1) School Readiness, (2) School-Age Supports, (3) Physical Health, (4) Mental Health, (5) Youth Development, (6) Food Stability and Family for Children, (7) Housing Stability for Family and Children, and (8) Enhanced Caregivers.



**Secondary Data Analysis:** The research team reviewed and compiled secondary data from existing databases. Select indicators were analyzed for trends to augment and provide context to survey and focus group data.

<sup>3</sup> R Core Team (2018). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. Retrieved March 28, 2022 from <https://www.R-project.org/>.



# KEY METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

While a variety of data sources and methods were employed to inform the Gap Analysis, three key elements were consistently prioritized throughout each step of the process:



**Taking a community-based, participatory approach in all areas of work with CSC Leon to foster a trusting and effective collaborative relationship with both CSC Leon and the Leon County community.**

This approach was implemented by:

- Centering community voices in identifying areas of need for children, youth, and families through a variety of data collection approaches (i.e., CNAS, Focus Groups).
- Partnering with local CBOs, community influencers, and other community entities to identify and engage residents in all parts of the process to elevate the voices of community members and foster a sense of trust in the process.
- Maintaining close collaboration and communication with CSC Leon Board and Staff, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and parents/guardians in Leon County throughout all aspects of the scope of work.
- Providing CSC Leon Board and Staff with a review of all deliverables prior to completion, with welcomed community input at broadcasted Governing Council meetings.



**Devoting time to gain an in-depth understanding of the needs of children and families in Leon County to ensure all voices and viewpoints are taken into consideration.**

This approach was implemented by:

- Taking time to have meaningful conversations with CBOs parents, youth, and CSC Leon Board and Staff.
- Using a range of data collection strategies to identify and understand needs from a variety of perspectives.
- Pinpointing gaps by integrating several data sources during data analyses.



Being intentional about interacting and conducting research with the community through the lens of diversity, equity, and cultural sensitivity.

This approach was implemented by:

- Consulting members who work in or belong to historically underrepresented and/or disenfranchised groups to develop relevant survey items. To illustrate, two members of the LGBTQIA+ community helped to develop the gender item in the CNAS and PS survey. Additionally, CBOs working with special needs children assisted in developing an item asking about the types of special needs served by organizations in the PS.
- Providing focus groups in both English and Spanish to ensure all voices had an opportunity to be heard.
- Conducting in-person survey administration for members who may have varying access to technology and/or ability levels.





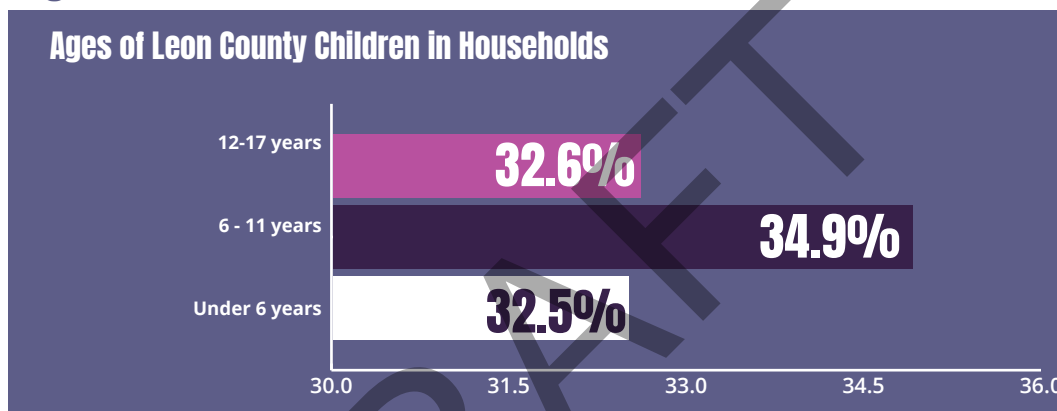
# FINDINGS



# PICTURING CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES IN LEON COUNTY

In 2019, Leon County, FL was home to approximately 54,000 children under the age of 18 (see Figure 3).<sup>4,5</sup> While many of these children identified as White (52.0%) non-Hispanic/Latinx (46.3%), diversity is present within their demographics. When it comes to race, 36.5% identified as Black or African American, followed by 6.3% as two or more races, 3.7% as Asian, 1.3% as other, and less than 1% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.<sup>3</sup> Among all groups, 7.3% identified as Hispanic/Latinx.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 3**



In addition to their diverse demographics, children in Leon County, FL also have diverse living experiences. Among Leon County children, 89.8% lived with at least one parent (i.e., biological, step, or adopted), 6.2% with grandparents, 2.4% with other relatives, and 1.5% with foster families or other non-relatives.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, 80.3% of households with children were at or above poverty level and 56.1% were living in homes owned by their family.<sup>3</sup>

Among school-aged children, 15.8% were identified as having some form of a disability.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, 40.6% qualified for free or reduced lunch, indicating a lower socioeconomic status, and 2.8% were identified as English Language Learners (ELL).<sup>3,6</sup>

While these factors merely provide a high-level snapshot in time, they are important to consider when understanding the scope of needs for children, youth, and families in Leon County.

<sup>4</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2019). Children Characteristics. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Children&g=0500000US12073&tid=ACST5Y2019.S0901>

<sup>5</sup> While CSC Leon serves children up until the age of 18, data was only available by the census for children under 18 years of age.

<sup>6</sup> Florida Department of Education (2020). Student Enrollment – Leon County. Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <https://edstats.fldoe.org/>

## Leon County Demographics



**52%**

Children identified  
as White



**7.3%**

Children identified  
as Hispanic-Latinx



**36.5%**

Children identified  
as Black or African  
American



**80.3%**

of households with  
children were above  
poverty

## PRIORITY DOMAIN FINDINGS

The following sections outline findings related to each of CSC Leon's youth development domains. As a reminder, findings include data from primary sources (i.e., community member focus groups, provider interviews, community needs assessment survey, and provider survey) and secondary sources (e.g., Florida Department of Education).

### SUCCESS IN SCHOOL LIFE

#### School Readiness

School readiness refers to aspects of cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development that are needed to enter kindergarten ready to learn and thrive. Aspects of school readiness are strong predictors of later academic success, including for children of lower-income backgrounds.<sup>7, 8</sup> Thus, readiness for school lays a foundation for early learning that in turn supports later school success. In this section, we explore the state of school readiness and related preschool programming in Leon County.

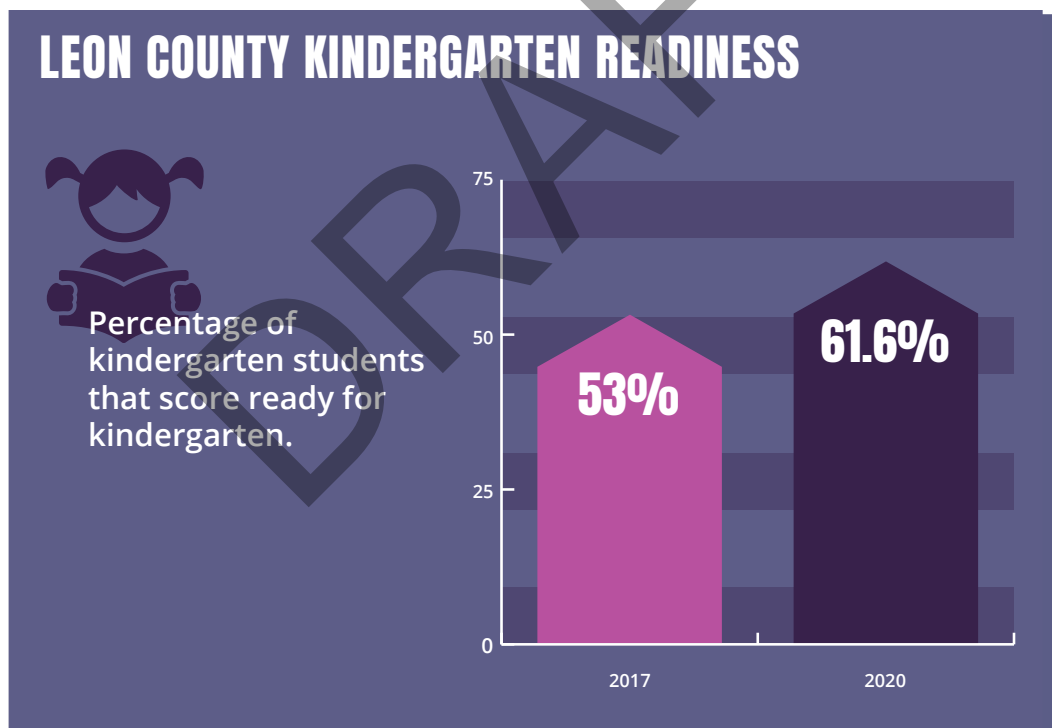
<sup>7</sup> Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P., ... & Japel, C. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental psychology*, 43(6), 1428

<sup>8</sup> Hair, E., Halle, T., Terry-Humen, E., Lavelle, B., & Calkins, J. (2006). Children's school readiness in the ECLS-K: Predictions to academic, health, and social outcomes in first grade. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(4), 431-454.

## Strengths

The State of Florida makes voluntary prekindergarten programming available free of charge for all 3- to 4-year-olds.<sup>9</sup> In the period from 2017 to 2019, about 52% of preschool-aged children across the state of Florida were participating in such programs, compared to 48% of children nationwide.<sup>10</sup> Thus, as one of the first states making such programs freely available for all, the State was ahead of the country in preschool participation rates.

In Leon County, there were 2,875 enrollments in school readiness programs in the academic year 2019-20.<sup>11</sup> In the same time period, 6,215 children aged 0 to 5 fell below 150% of the federal poverty level. Thus, the proportion of children served to young children most at need economically was 46%, which represents one of the highest among Florida counties. In addition, county-level enrollment in school readiness programs increased from 2,586 in the 2013-14 school year to 3,195 in the 2018-19 school year, although this trend reversed in 2019-20, coinciding with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, publicly available figures point to increasing participation, although with a setback apparently triggered by the ongoing pandemic.



<sup>9</sup> Division of Early Learning. (2021). Voluntary Prekindergarten. Florida Department of Education. Tallahassee: FL. Retrieved on March 8th, 2022 from: <http://www.floridaeearlylearning.com/vpk>

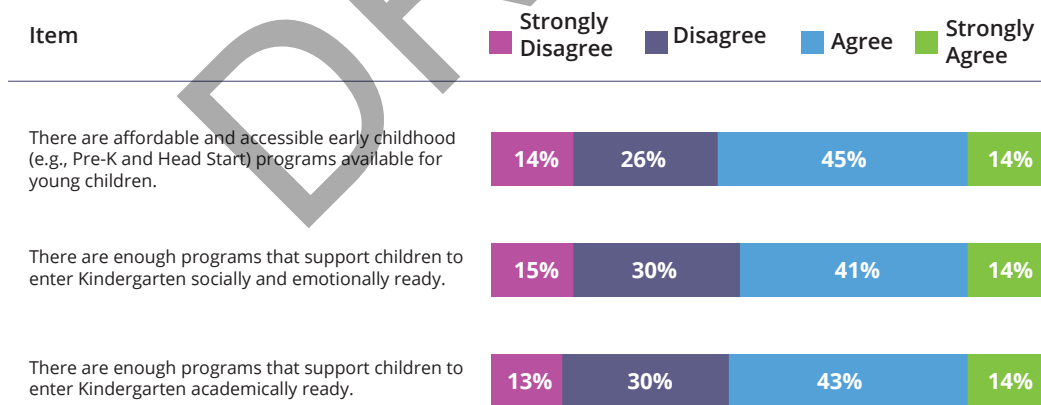
<sup>10</sup> Annie E Casey Foundation. (2021). 2021 Kids Count Data Book Interactive. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: <https://www.aecf.org/interactive/databook?d=ed&l=12>

<sup>11</sup> Office of Early Learning. (nd). Annual Report. Retrieved from January 6th, 2022 from: [http://www.floridaeearlylearning.com/Content/Uploads/floridaeearlylearning.com/files/2019-20%20OEL%20Annual%20Report%20FINAL%2012-29-30-GA\(1\).pdf](http://www.floridaeearlylearning.com/Content/Uploads/floridaeearlylearning.com/files/2019-20%20OEL%20Annual%20Report%20FINAL%2012-29-30-GA(1).pdf)

The State of Florida tracks kindergarten readiness with the Early Star Literacy Assessment<sup>12</sup>, where a score of at least 500 is considered ready for school. As of fall 2020, 56.9% of entering kindergarten students across the state of Florida scored ready for kindergarten. Within Leon County, a slightly higher proportion scored ready for kindergarten, at 61.6%, and this was up from 53.0% in the fall of 2017.<sup>13</sup> While these numbers point to improvements over time and a level of readiness that is higher than that of the state, they also show that there are opportunities for ongoing improvement, particularly given the important role of school readiness in later school adjustment and academic success.

Relatively favorable views regarding availability of preschool were also reflected in community survey results. A majority (59%) of community survey respondents in Leon County felt that preschool programs were affordable and accessible (45% agree and 14% strongly agree). A roughly similar breakdown was observed in attitudes toward whether there are a sufficient number of programs to help children enter kindergarten both *academically* (43% agree and 14% strongly disagree) and *socially/emotionally* ready (41% agree and 14% strongly agree). In other words, a majority of respondents agreed that there were sufficient early childhood programs that meet these goals. Worth noting is that these attitudes did not differ significantly between race, income, or zip code groups, suggesting relatively encompassing positive views toward the availability and quality of preschool programs.

## Response to Items Related to Early Childhood and Education Services



NOTE: Proportions are based on all respondents. Since some respondents chose not to answer some items, proportions may not sum to 100%

<sup>12</sup> Renaissance Learning. (2019). Star Assessments for Early Literacy: Technical Manual. Wisconsin Rapids, WI. Retrieved on March 8th, 2022 from: <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/Content/Uploads/floridaearlylearning.com/files/StarAssessmentsforEarlyLiteracy-TechnicalManual.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Florida Department of Education. (nd). FLKRS Statewide Results. Retrieved on January 6th, 2021 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/flkrs/flkrs-sw-results.shtml>

## Gaps and Opportunities

Although a majority of community survey respondents indicated that preschool programs were affordable and accessible, this still left over 40% disagreeing. Similarly, although a majority felt that there were sufficient preschool programs preparing children academically and socially/emotionally for kindergarten, more than 40% found that the number of such programs was insufficient. Given the growing consensus that early childhood programs are critical for ensuring that children enter kindergarten socially, emotionally, and academically ready to learn, responses point to potential opportunities for improvement in quantity, accessibility, and affordability of quality early childhood programs.



Findings from focus groups offered some perspective to contextualize this finding. Providers discussed the need for affordable and accessible early learning opportunities as well as quality, comprehensive childcare. They also discussed a need for investment in teachers, their training, and professional development. Providers also cited that access to early learning should include ensuring that parents are aware of programming and its value, along with making sure enrollment processes are easily navigated. The significance of parent and family engagement was also referenced by youth, parents, and providers. Parent education, including as related to their role in their child's school readiness and academic performance was frequently mentioned during focus groups. Participants recommended parent outreach and support as well as family case management. These observations point to some potential approaches that might continue to improve access and quality in school readiness programs.

***“Affordable and accessible high quality early learning is a necessity for children and families in Leon County.”***

***Community Forum Provider***

In addition to parent outreach and engagement, providers also recommended a place-based approach through “pop-up preschools,” “specialized neighborhood-focused services,” and “blended child and parent education.” In addition, providers echoed the benefits of social-emotional learning and trauma-informed care - “we need to spend more time on wrapping services around kids and their families.” The issue of trauma is one that resurfaces in the section below on mental health.

**“Address emotional health early in children so it does not surface later.”**

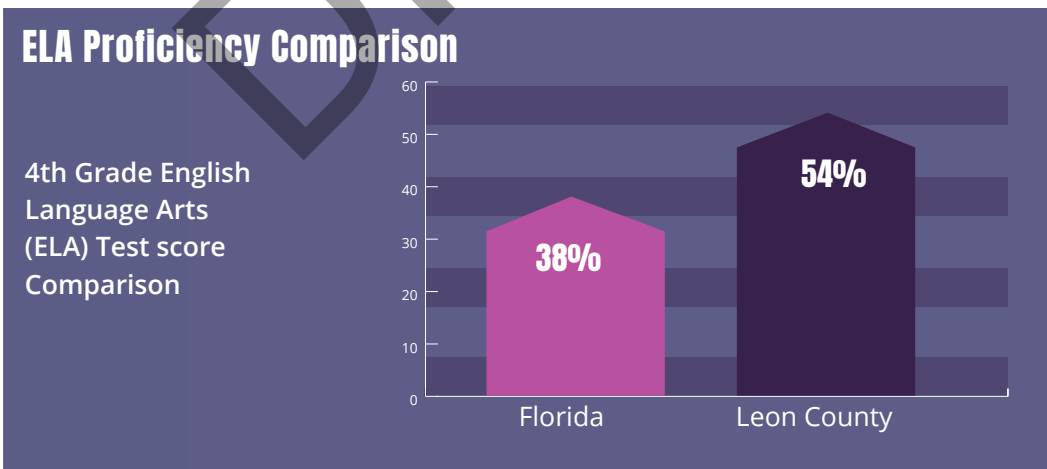
**Community Forum Provider**

## School Age Supports

School age supports refers to the broad set of programs and services that promote the success of students in Leon County. This includes both quality education programming and also out-of-school learning supports such as afterschool activities, tutoring, and programs that develop the various skills needed for school success. In this section we explore the state of school age supports in Leon County and describe community perceptions as to strengths and opportunities for improvement.

### Strengths

Several indicators suggest that Leon County students are, on average, on par with or surpassing students at the state level in terms of school achievement. Particularly of interest are results from state assessments.<sup>14</sup> For example, English Language Arts (ELA) test scores at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> grade are a strong predictor of later academic success, underscoring the importance of supporting reading skills development in the early grades. Across Florida, 58% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders in spring 2019 were found proficient in ELA on state assessments, as compared to 57% in Leon County. 52% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders in Florida were found proficient in ELA as of 2021, as compared to 54% in Leon County, suggesting a noticeable drop corresponding to the COVID-19 pandemic. That said, 4th grade ELA assessment results suggest that, overall, students in Leon County are performing roughly on par with students at the state level.



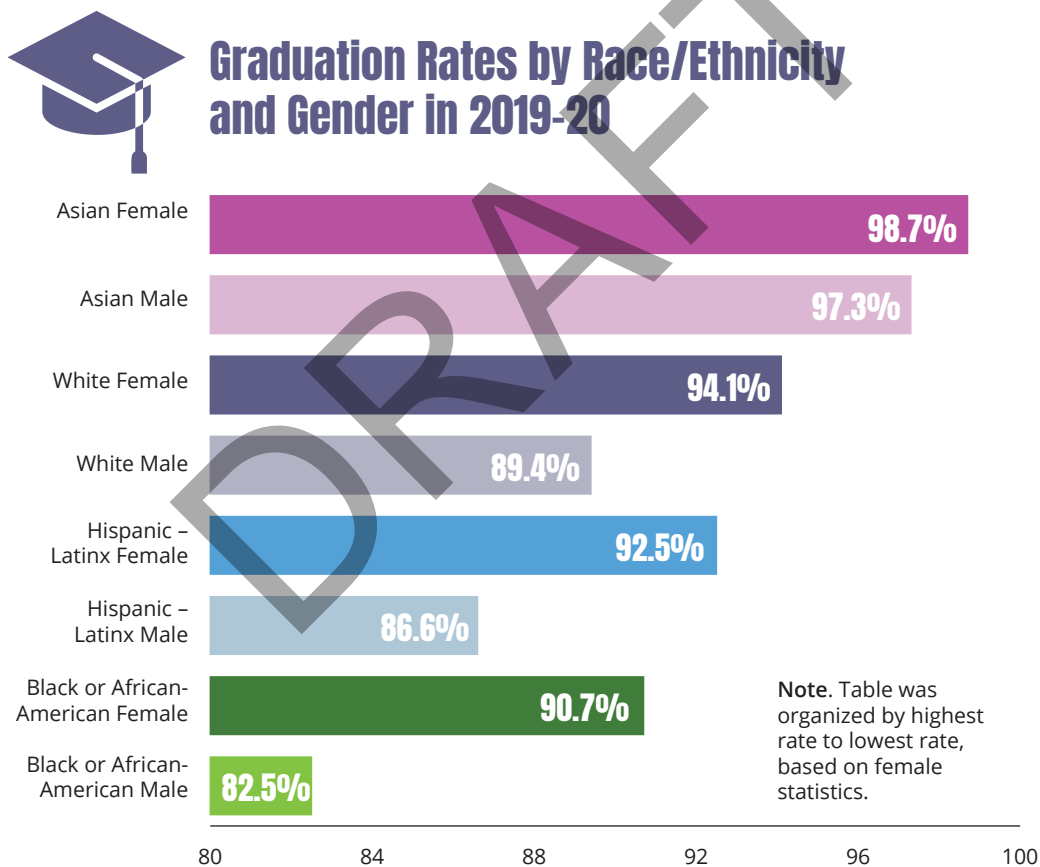
<sup>14</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2019). Florida Standards Assessments. Retrieved on January 6, 2022 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/results/2021.shtml>



Another key indicator from standardized assessments is 8<sup>th</sup> grade math proficiency, which speaks to the foundational skills needed for success in high school math classes. In Leon County, 45% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students tested proficient in math in the 2019 state assessment, as compared to 46% at the state level. This suggests that Leon County students have been on track as compared to state level results. However, county level math proficiency in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade dropped substantially to 29% as of spring 2021, suggesting a noticeable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

***“Bring specialized services that are neighborhood focused to local communities.”***

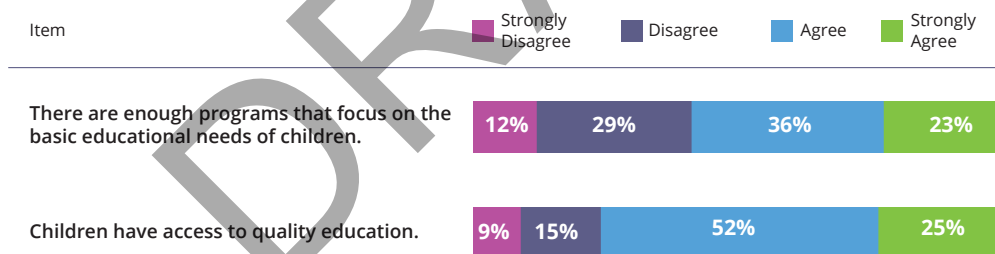
*Community Forum Provider*



On-time high school graduation is another commonly tracked indicator that is publicly available. As of 2018-19, Florida was ranked 20<sup>th</sup> in the nation for on-time high school graduation. In addition, as of the 2019-20 school year, the Leon County graduation rate was 4.4% higher than the state average. Leon County students graduated on time at a rate of 94.4% as compared to 90% at the state level.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the graduation rate has steadily increased across Florida over the past few decades. The upward trend in graduation rates is evident across racial and ethnic groups. For example, among Black or African American youth, the Florida-wide rate rose from 72.3% in 2015-16 to 86.6% in 2019-20. Among Hispanic and Latino youth, the rate rose from 79.5% to 89.5% in the same period.

In keeping with results from standardized testing, attitudes from the community survey were relatively favorable (77%) in the area of overall quality of education, with 52% of respondents agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing that children in the community have access to quality education. This finding further supports on-average education quality as a relative strength in the community. A majority (59%) of respondents also agreed that there were enough programs that focus on the basic educational needs of children (36% agree and 23% strongly agree).

## Response to Items Related to Early Childhood and Education Services

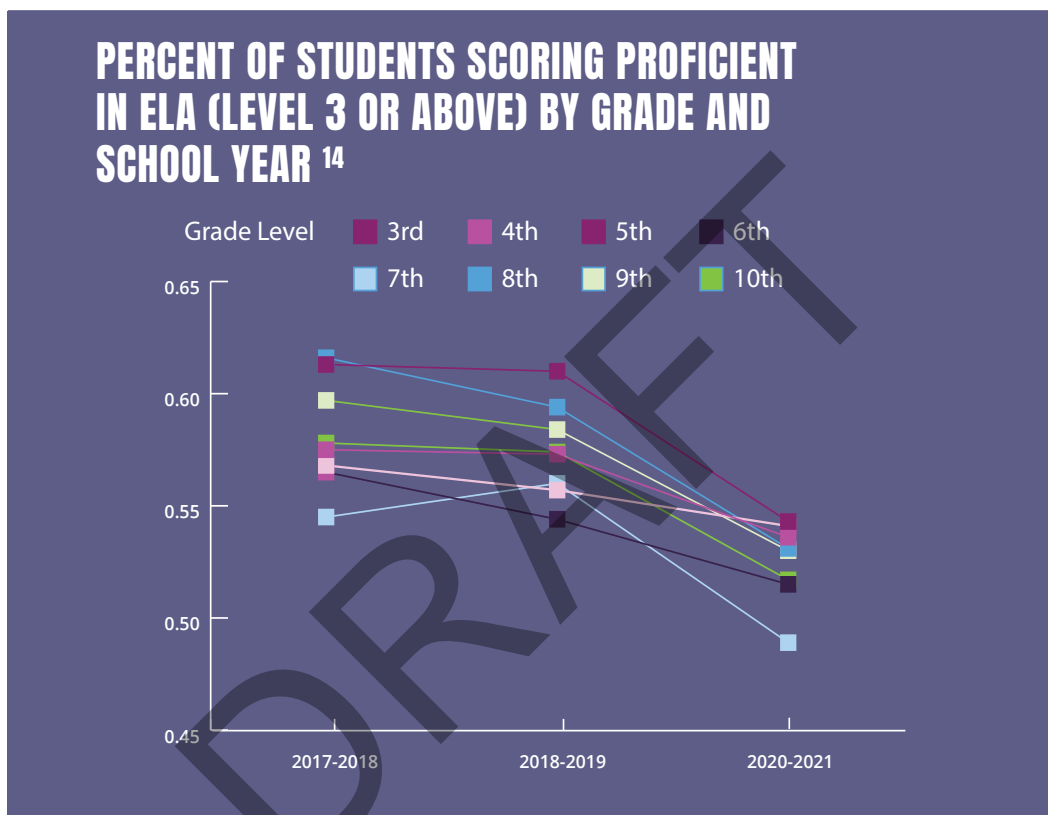


**NOTE:** Proportions are based on all respondents. Since some respondents chose not to answer some items, proportions may not sum to 100%

<sup>15</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2021). Florida's High School Cohort: 2019-20 Graduation Rate. Retrieved January 6, 2022 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7584/urlt/GradRates1920.pdf>

## Gaps and Opportunities

Despite relatively positive views as to quality of education in Leon County, several themes arose from secondary data, community surveys, and focus groups that point to opportunities for potential improvement. Most notable are the issues of achievement gaps, the negative influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance rates, after-school and summer program availability, and supports for students with disabilities and developmental delays.



In Leon County, despite that 54% of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in Leon County passed the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment in the 2020-2021 school year– a proficiency rate slightly higher than that of the state – this left 46% who were *not* found to be proficient. Thus, there remains room for improvement, particularly in light of the critical importance of early reading skills in later academic achievement. Moreover, there was substantial variability among schools in proportion testing proficient.<sup>16</sup> As of 2020-2021, there were 10 schools where less than a third of students passed the 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA assessment, and the lowest pass rate was just 16% (See Appendix A, Table 3).

<sup>16</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2021b). Florida Standards Assessment – 2021. Retrieved January 6, 2022 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/results/2021.html>

In Leon County, 29% percent of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students passed the standardized mathematics assessment in spring of 2021. While this is roughly comparable to statewide results, this leaves 71% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders who failed to reach proficiency, again pointing to ample opportunities for improvement to ensure success in high school math and subsequent post-secondary education readiness. Again, there was substantial variability in pass rates from one Leon County school to another.<sup>17</sup> There were seven schools where less than a quarter of students passed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics assessment in 2020-21 (See Appendix A, Table 13). It is worth noting that these figures come from well into the COVID-19 pandemic, during which math proficiency rates dropped noticeably.

*"I had my oldest at one point in time, he was on the autism spectrum, but super high functioning. If you didn't know what to look for, you wouldn't know he was on the spectrum. He was at the Tallahassee Museum for their afterschool program and he had a sensory meltdown one day and that was it. That was an automatic dismissal because they just didn't know how to handle those types of meltdowns. So when you've got kids who are great kids, they just have some degree of extra need, they may not even fall into the special needs category, but just extra need, you really need to have people who understand how to pull a kid back in, how to get them re-regulated, how to have those hard conversations with caregivers and then be able to work in partnership with caregivers. The afterschool programs, they're very fast about one or two strikes and you're out."*

*Parent Focus Group from Lake Jackson*

Also of concern are disparities in assessment results across subpopulations. Among students with disabilities, for example, the proportion scoring proficient in ELA (level 3 or above) has been substantially lower than that of the overall student population.<sup>18</sup> For 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, just 26.9% of students with disabilities were found to be ELA proficient in the 2020-21 school year (See Appendix A, Table 4).

Findings from parent and provider focus groups provided further perspective on the

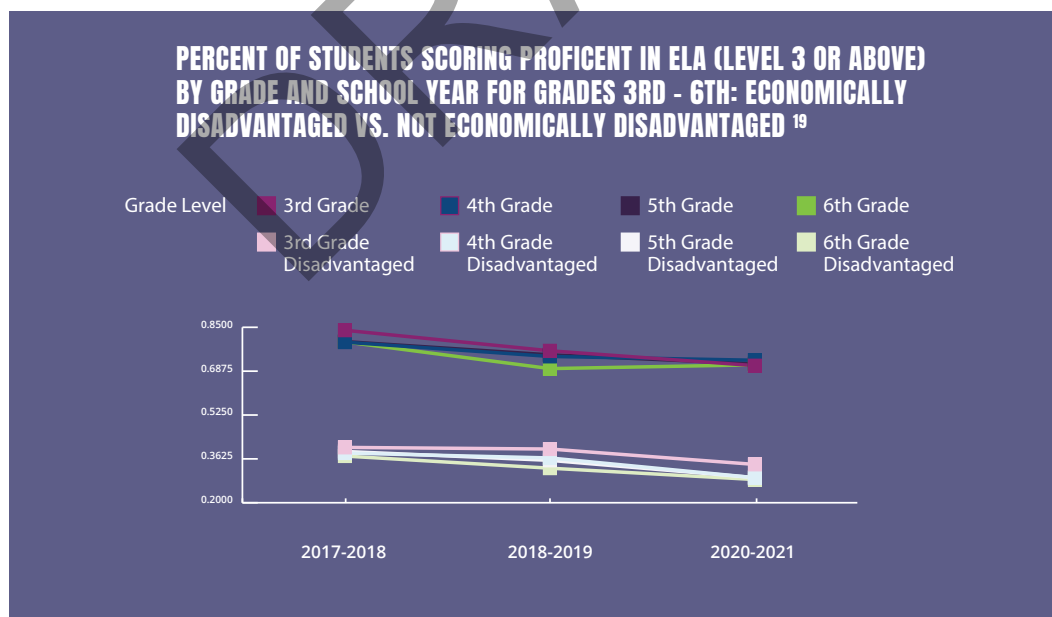
<sup>17</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2019). Florida Standards Assessments. Retrieved on January 6, 2022 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/results/2021.html>

<sup>18</sup> Florida Department of Education (n.d.). FSA English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency by Disability Status. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://edstats.fldoe.org/>

needs of students with disabilities and special needs. Parents of children with special needs as well as service providers emphasized the need for “more attention and resources for students with developmental delays.” This included timely assessment, early intervention, and affordable early learning as well as educational options and life skills development within the school system. These observations point to some potential means of addressing the achievement gap for children and youth with disabilities and/or special needs.

Also apparent across grade levels is a persistent ELA gap between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students. Economically disadvantaged students have consistently performed notably lower on ELA assessments as compared to their non-disadvantaged peers. For example, as of 2020-21, 72.8% of non-disadvantaged 4<sup>th</sup> graders tested proficient in ELA in Leon County, as compared to just 29.3% of economically disadvantaged students.<sup>19</sup> In other words, economically disadvantaged students tested proficient at a rate less than half that of their better-off peers. A similar gap is apparent across grade levels and over time. Thus, despite evidence that education quality is a relative strength in Leon County, not all students appear to be benefitting equally.

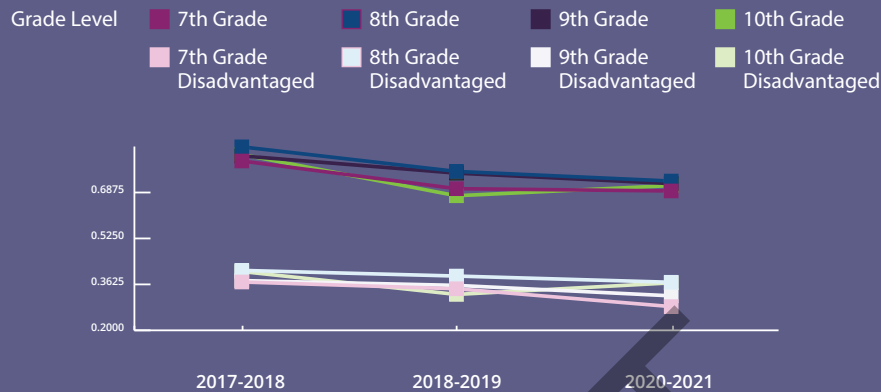
Also apparent, and likely coinciding in part with the economic gap described above, is a persistent gap in ELA scores across racial/ethnic groups.<sup>20</sup> As of 2021, over 70% of White students in Leon County tested proficient in 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA, whereas just over 54% of Hispanics and just under 30% of Black or African American students tested proficient.<sup>20</sup> Again, this observation points to opportunities to ensure that all students are able to benefit equally from a quality education in Leon County.



<sup>19</sup> Florida Department of Education (n.d.). FSA English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency by Economic Status. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://edstats.fldoe.org/>

<sup>20</sup> Florida Department of Education (n.d.). FSA English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency by Race. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://edstats.fldoe.org/>

### PERCENT OF STUDENTS SCORING PROFICIENT IN ELA (LEVEL 3 OR ABOVE) BY GRADE AND SCHOOL YEAR FOR GRADES 7TH - 9TH: ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED VS. NOT ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED <sup>19</sup>



While we noted above that on-time graduation rates have improved in Florida across racial and ethnic groups, it is worth noting that racial and ethnic gaps persist in on-time graduation as well.<sup>21</sup> As of 2019-20, the highest graduation rate, 98%, is among Asian students. White students graduated at a rate 5.1% higher than their African American peers and 2.2% higher than Hispanics and Latinos. Another apparent gap appears when considering graduation rates by gender. Across racial and ethnic groups, female students in Florida graduate at substantially higher rates than their male counterparts. For example, as of 2021, the graduation rate was 94% for White females as compared to 89.7% for White males. The same rate was 90.8% for Black or African American females as compared to 83.4% for their male counterparts.

Statistical analyses conducted for the community survey further pointed to educational disparities as a concern for the community. Across racial and ethnic groups, there was significant variability in attitudes related to access to quality education ( $p < 0.001$ ) and to sufficient programs that increase school performance ( $p < 0.001$ ). Black and African American respondents were less likely to express positive views in these areas. Respondents from lower-income families were also significantly less likely to endorse an item expressing that there are enough programs to support the basic educational needs of children ( $p < 0.001$ ). There was also significant variability across zip codes to an item expressing that children have access to quality education ( $p < 0.001$ ). Zip codes where respondents were most likely to strongly disagree with this statement included 32301 (22.5% strongly disagree), 32305 (21.7% strongly disagree), and 32304 (16.7% strongly disagree).

<sup>21</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2021). Florida's High School Cohort: 2019-20 Graduation Rate. Retrieved January 6, 2022 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7584/urlt/GradRates1920.pdf>



The emergence of COVID-19 represents another important consideration in the current context. In light of school closures and shifts to virtual learning, the pandemic may have exerted a negative influence on academic success, and findings from secondary data support this concern. Across grade levels, the percent of students scoring proficient in ELA has been fairly consistent from the 2014-15 school year through the present<sup>22</sup> However, across grades we can see that scores are lowest in the 2020-21 school year, which falls a year into the COVID-19 pandemic. This observation suggests a negative effect of the pandemic on reading development across grade levels.

*“The pandemic. And I understand that the kids will never be the same from it because they’re just living in a totally different world, but they’re so unmotivated now, the learning gap has just went backwards. And education right now isn’t very strong, that’s the key to a lot of people changing their environment, changing their surroundings, but they got to get it. And it is hard now on the teachers and you got the teacher shortage and you got all the different things.”*

*Parent Focus Group from Southside*

During focus groups, parents also spoke to challenges introduced by the pandemic. Several parents were concerned that students have experienced academic losses, are struggling to learn, and have been repeating grades due to the COVID pandemic’s impact on the school system. Parents expressed that “education right now isn’t very strong,” “both kids and teachers need to be remotivated,” “it’s been hard on teachers,” “there’s a teacher shortage,” and students “don’t have the social-emotional” supports they currently need. Parents related that “accountability is lacking in these situations,” and for some parents this included “teaching black history” without it “almost becoming criminal.” For Spanish-speaking parents, this involved teaching English. These observations suggest a need to examine and address the ways in which the pandemic shaped education quality over recent years.

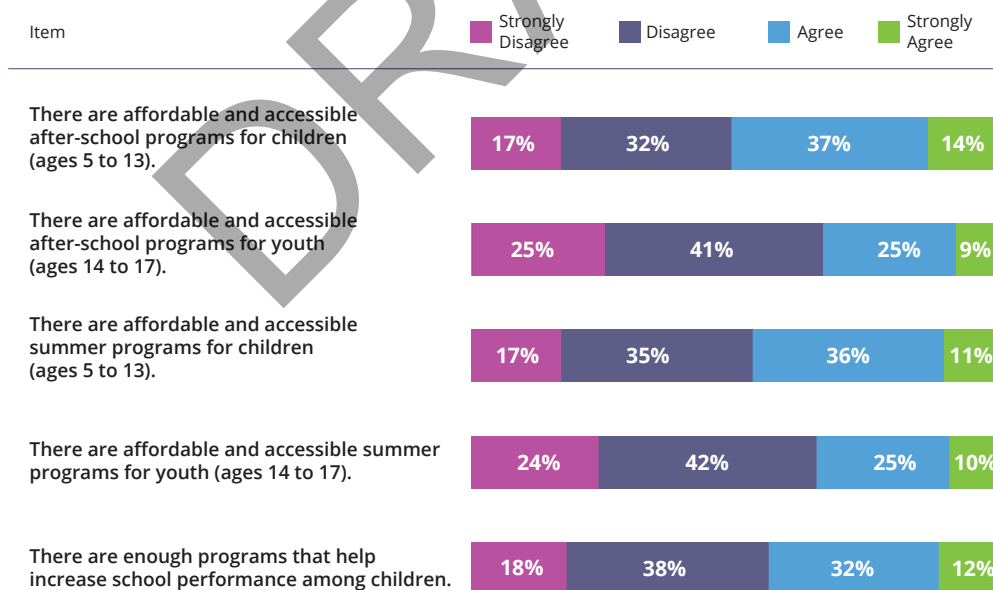
<sup>22</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2021). Results. Retrieved on January 6, 2022 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/results/>

Also available publicly are data on school attendance.<sup>23</sup> Within Leon County, in the 2019-20 school year, there was an average daily attendance of 31,090 students out of an average daily membership of 33,297, making for an average attendance rate of 93.4%. In the same year, 14.5% of students in Leon County were absent 21 or more days as compared to 9.8% of students across the state of Florida.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, 22.6% of Leon County students were absent 10% of school days or more, as compared to 16.6% statewide. Thus, the rate of absence was substantially above average for the state, although it is worth taking into consideration that this data was drawn from the year where COVID-19 became a public health concern in the spring semester.

Participation in afterschool programming represents one means of supporting the social and academic success of school-aged children. Afterschool program participation across the state of Florida increased from 17% in 2004 to 22% in 2014.<sup>25</sup> As of 2014, of those who were not participating in an afterschool program, 46% said that they would like to if it were available. In that same year, participation was highest for children in K-5 (28%) and lowest in grades 9-12 (15%). Across the state, 3% of K-5 students were

<sup>23</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2022) Archive: Data Publications and Reports. Retrieved on January 6th from: <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/archive.html>

## Response to Items Related to Early Childhood and Education Services



<sup>24</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2020). School Environmental Safety Incident Report 2019-2020. Retrieved on January 6, 2022 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/18612/urlt/sesir1920i-z.xlsx>

<sup>25</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (nd.) America after 3pm: Florida. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: [http://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/detail.html#s/FL/demand/p\\_of\\_children\\_in\\_pr ograms\\_2014](http://afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/detail.html#s/FL/demand/p_of_children_in_pr ograms_2014)

unsupervised between the hours of 3pm and 6pm. In grades 6-8, the proportion rises to 10% and reaches 28% in grades 9-12. While comparable figures are not available for Leon County specifically, it is likely that there is room for increased afterschool program participation at the local level as well.


Findings from the community survey spoke to the need for afterschool and summer programming to support student success within Leon County. Among survey questions addressing education access and quality, attitudes were least favorable in the area of affordability and accessibility of summer and after-school programs. When it comes to summer programs for youth aged 14 to 17, about 66% of respondents disagreed with a statement that such programs were affordable and accessible in their community (24% strongly disagree and 42% disagree). For summer programs targeting children and youth aged 5 to 13, 59% disagreed that such programs were affordable and accessible (17% strongly disagree and 42% disagree). Regarding after-school programs for youth aged 14 to 17, about 66% disagreed that such programs were affordable and accessible (41% disagree and 25% strongly disagree). Thus, as a whole, respondents pointed to challenges in accessing summer and after-school programs.

***“Quality out-of-school programming develops youth, strengthens their academic performance, and keeps them safe and productive.”***

***-Community Forum Provider***

During focus groups, providers also stressed the importance of afterschool and summer activities for youth that positively reinforce their development. Providers recommended programming that offers social-emotional learning, life skills building, financial literacy, mentorship, teen parent support, and nutrition. Providers also suggested interventions that increase school performance, strengthen families, and reduce juvenile crime. They reported that youth require “safe, healthy, and productive options.” In addition, parents reported that children need extra tutoring and afterschool programming that facilitate their academic achievement. Spanish-speaking parents echoed these needs along with teaching English and ensuring Spanish families were aware of available resources and supports. Thus, publicly available data, survey work, and focus group findings converge around opportunities for quality afterschool and summer programs that support healthy youth development and academic success.

Another theme that emerged from focus groups was the importance of parent engagement and involvement in student success. The significance of parent and family



engagement was referenced by youth, parents, and providers. Parent education, including as related to their role in their child's school readiness and academic performance was frequently mentioned. Participants recommended parent outreach and support as well as family case management and development. In addition, providers echoed the benefits of social-emotional learning, life skills building, and trauma-informed care - "we need to spend more time on wrapping services around kids and their families."

*"And then the kid, they don't get any help. So they fall behind. The teacher wants to help, but they have to think about the whole classroom as a whole. They can't focus on one child. So I just feel like someone, or like a center where they could provide tutoring services for those parents they can bring their kids in to get that extra help. I'm not saying it will be a lot, but I feel like it will help the kids. And maybe once they understand, they'll engage more in class because a lot of kids kind of like shut down because they don't understand what they're doing."*

*Parent Focus Group from Lake Jackson*

The majority of parents also stressed a desire for programs that improve parent and child relationships, particularly to help students academically. Parents indicated that "a lot of families are missing a bond and structure and need a program that will bring them together," and "help educate parents who may not know how to help their kids." Parents also cited better sex education in schools and resources for parents to talk with their children about this topic.

*"Services with the kids and the parents. Cause just because we have a child, that doesn't give you that bond. And I see a lot of families, they're missing bond. They're missing structure. They need a program that'll bring them together to do activities, just to get them there. Cause I know a lot of kids where I stay at, they come to my house asking for this, asking for that. They was like, "oh, you spend so much time with your children." They cry with me and they hurt me to see them not have that type of relationship they want, even though she birth them, it's like nothing's there. Something's missing. The generation now something's missing when it comes to the bond with the children and the parents. That's what I see."*

*Parent Focus Group from Southside*

Parents also discussed the need for multiple social services to meet their basic living and health necessities as these unmet conditions impede attention to student support and success. Parents articulated that a lack of stability at home leads to student difficulties, and more supports are needed for parents. Parents related a lack of knowledge regarding available resources and accessing them. They requested better family communication and supports through the school system as well as centralized service locations. Parents stated that “schools need to be community-centered” and there should be a “partnership between the school and services within the community.”

DRAFT

# HEALTHY CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

## Physical Health

Physical health is foundational for positive child and youth development. Physical health in childhood lays a foundation for learning, contributes to mental wellbeing, and predicts numerous health outcomes later in life. From prenatal care to physical activity in adolescence, this comprises a broad range of factors that span development. In this section, we survey issues related to physical health in childhood and into adolescence in Leon County.

### Strengths

Among items included in the community survey to assess perceived availability of health-related services, attitudes were most favorable in the area of prenatal and perinatal care. A majority (78) of respondents expressed that mothers in Leon County have access to quality care during delivery (56% agree and 22% strongly agree). Responses were also relatively positive in the area of prenatal care, with 74% agreeing that there is access to quality care before childbirth (52% agree and 22% strongly agree). A majority (63%) also expressed that mothers have access to quality postnatal care (46% agree and 17% strongly agree) and that the basic healthcare needs of children are met in Leon County (71%: 53% agree and 18% strongly agree). Thus, early healthcare emerged as an area where community perceptions were relatively strong.

Health insurance coverage during childhood represents another key metric in the area of physical health. As of 2019, an estimated 4.7% of children and youth under the age of 18 were without health insurance in Leon County, as compared to 7.2% across the state of Florida.<sup>26</sup> Thus, on-average health insurance coverage for children and youth represents another relative strength in the community.

### Gaps and Opportunities

Although attitudes toward quality of pre- and perinatal care emerged as a relative strength in the community survey, any sentiment of inadequate perinatal and child healthcare care is worth probing further. Despite the largely positive sentiments expressed in these areas, about 26% disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was access to quality prenatal care, about 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was access to quality care during delivery, and 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the basic healthcare needs of children are being met in Leon County.

<sup>26</sup>

Florida Health Charts. (2020). Children Ages 0-17 without Health Insurance. Retrieved on January 6th from: <https://www.flhealth-charts.gov/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalIndRateOnly.Dataviewer>



There was also significant variability by zip code in attitudes toward access to quality prenatal care ( $p < 0.001$ ). Zip codes where the highest proportion of respondents strongly disagreed that there was access to quality prenatal care were 32301 (20% strongly disagree), 32304 (16% strongly disagree), and 32305 (12% strongly disagree). Significant variability by zip codes was also observed in response to an item stating that mothers have access to quality care during delivery. In this case, zip codes where respondents were most likely to disagree were 32304 (15% strongly disagree), 32301 (15% strongly disagree), and 32305 (9% strongly disagree). Thus, despite the relatively favorable attitudes expressed in this area, there appears to be room for further improvement.

While health insurance coverage for children and youth emerged as another relative strength in the community, census data suggest substantial variability in coverage within the county.<sup>27</sup> The highest estimated levels of uninsured youth as of 2010 were in zip codes 32305 (7.33%), 32317 (6.78%), and 32312 (6.10%). Thus, while the rate of uninsured children and youth across Leon County was well below that of the state, there were pockets where the uninsured rate approaches and even exceeds the state level.

Obesity represents another key metric in the area of child and youth physical health. Just under a third (32.8%) of Florida youth aged 10 to 17 were overweight or obese as of 2019-2020.<sup>28</sup> While values are not available at the county level, obesity represents a major health challenge in Florida. In addition, youth obesity is a risk factor for further health complications later in life, making this a likely area for attention in the community. In focus groups, both parents and youth spoke to the need for more accessible opportunities to engage in health-promoting activities.

*“Our kids would like to be able to do sports and stuff like that. But yeah, We can’t afford it. We’ve got five kids like we do. And then she’s got her kid and I mean there’s six kids in our house that the children [...] They’re bored and trying to get all of them signed up for something we can’t afford to do.”*

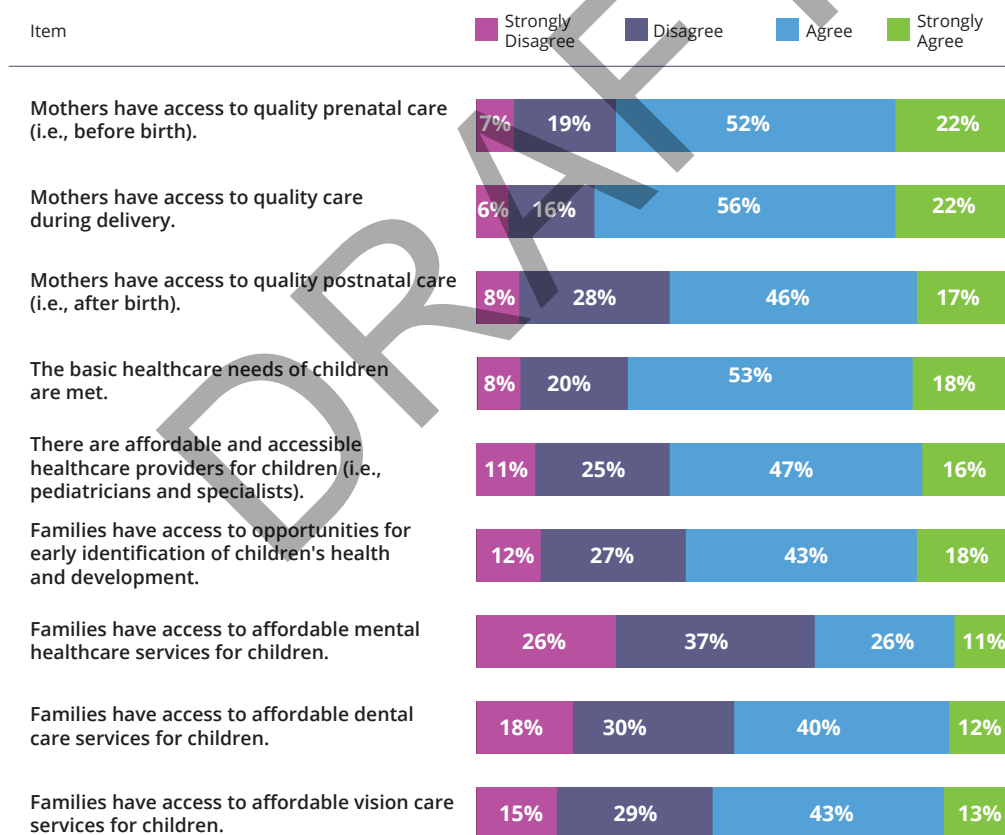
*Parent Focus Group from Southside*

<sup>27</sup> United States Census. (2021). Estimated Percent of People without Health Insurance Under 19. PolicyMap. [https://www.policymap.com/data/our-data-directory/#Census:%20Decennial%20Census%20and%20American%20Community%20Survey%20\(ACS\)](https://www.policymap.com/data/our-data-directory/#Census:%20Decennial%20Census%20and%20American%20Community%20Survey%20(ACS))


<sup>28</sup> PolicyMaps. Estimated percent of people under 19 without health insurance, between 2015-2019. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from

Youth in focus groups reported the priority of accessible and affordable physical fitness and sports programming. Youth expressed that such programming and related activities are needed for “exercising, eating right, and keeping a healthy mind” as well as for “releasing in a positive way instead of a negative way.” Youth also discussed the need for teen-focused health services and clinics, indicating the availability and accessibility of these health services would “make a big difference” in addressing their age-specific physical health concerns and needs. Similarly, parents reinforced the need for extracurricular activities and sports for their children. They noted many out-of-school activities are not geographically accessible and existing programming is not affordable. Parents related “our kids would like to be able to do sports and stuff like that” and “afterschool program is key,” but it is something they “can’t afford to do.”

## Response to Items Related to Health Services



NOTE: Proportions are based on all respondents. Since some respondents chose not to answer some items, proportions may not sum to 100%



Community survey respondents also pointed to a need for improved auxiliary health services such as vision and dental care. For example, 44% disagreed or strongly disagreed with a statement that there is access to affordable vision care for children, and 48% found that there was inadequate access to affordable dental care. This concern also arose during focus groups with parents in the community, where parents articulated the importance of access to affordable healthcare including dental and vision services. Parents with special needs children conveyed difficulty with access to healthcare for their children as well as with trying to navigate healthcare and specialized services through the school system. These parents found that certain services, particularly specialty and dental care, are not available in Tallahassee. They also noted the lack of healthcare affordability with some reporting high copays.

Parents discussed local community health programs and health education initiatives in schools that were present when they were children but are not today. They stated, “there used to be actual community health programs within communities” and “there needs to be community health, both physical and mental health, with the community.” Spanish-speaking parents also emphasized the value of health education and supports as well as healthcare resources and insurance assistance.

*“When I say community health, I’m talking and holistically. If we haven’t learned anything in the last two years, we have learned the importance of community health with COVID, which means there used to be when I was a little girl, there used to be actually community health programs within my community I grew up in. They would have flyers and stuff in the schools of different things that was going on. I think one of the things COVID has taught us is there needs to be community health, both for physical and mental health within the community.”*

*Parent Focus Group from Westside*

When discussing physical health, providers described multiple factors associated with healthcare access. These factors included knowledge of available services and resources, health literacy, service navigation, physical proximity, cultural competence, affordability, and provider availability. Providers articulated the need for early identification of health problems and health promotion strategies. Providers also recommended “a nurse in every school” and “home-based health visits.” Providers indicated particular interest in increasing infant health and reducing infant mortality. Providers noted a lack of pediatricians along with the importance of pre-natal care and women’s health. Providers also stressed the value of improving oral health and the availability of dental specialists.

# Mental Health

## Strengths

Multiple sources converged around child and youth mental health as an area of concern in the community. Among the indicators publicly available in the area of mental health, a strong point emerged in estimated hospitalization rates for non-fatal self-harm.<sup>29</sup> Among youth aged 12 to 18, the rate was 38.8 per 100,000 in Leon County as compared to 70.9 per 100,00 statewide. These figures, however, should be considered in junction with other statistics pointing to mental health as an area warranting attention.

## Gaps and Opportunities

In the community survey, mental health services emerged as a key concern in the community. More specifically, among the items addressing perceptions regarding health-related services, attitudes were most negative in the area of access and affordability of mental health services for children. Twenty-six percent (26%) strongly disagreed and 37% disagreed with a statement that such services are affordable and accessible in Leon County. Attitudes were also particularly negative in response to an item stating that there are enough service(s) to enhance caregiver capacity to meet emotional and behavioral needs of neglected and abused children and youth. Twenty-six percent (26%) strongly disagreed and 43% disagreed with this item. This appears to be aligned with the finding of relatively negative attitudes regarding the availability of mental health services for children.

Findings from focus groups further supported mental health as a critical concern in the community. Youth, for example, discussed prioritizing mental health. Of particular interest among youth was anger and trauma management. Youth indicated many of their peers have “a lot of anger built up, and don’t know how to control it.” Others described the effects of generational, family, and sexual trauma as well as the negative impact of the COVID pandemic. Youth voiced that “some just need an outlet.” To address emotional distress, youth suggested spreading awareness of the benefits of mindfulness. They also reported interest in nature programs and pet therapy.

<sup>29</sup> Florida Health Charts. (nd). Non-Fatal Hospitalizations for Self-Harm Injuries Ages 12-18. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalIndNoGrp.Dataviewer&cid=0539>

Parents also raised concerns about mental health during focus groups, indicating that youth are experiencing bullying, sexual harassment, and trauma. They also noted that mental health issues in children are impacting academic achievement. Parents recommended services that facilitate social-emotional learning, “helping [youth] build capacity and know how to self-regulate.” They also related that helplessness in children can extend to hopelessness in parents. Providers acknowledged the interruptions to youth learning, academic gains, and social skills as a result of the COVID pandemic. Providers reported negative mental health consequences for youth and families. Providers indicated the need for increased community awareness regarding services and resources as well as the value of wraparound child and family supports.

*“The first thing that comes to my mind is mental health. A lot of my peers and a lot of people at my school who I may not know, struggle with mental health...especially for people my age, because I tend to like notice that like with people, my age, who struggle with mental health, they're not really taken as serious as it should be. Like, they either don't have the resources to get help, or they fear of getting help because of, you know, getting back to their parents or being judged or...like the guidance counselors don't really help as much at school. Like you go to them for support because you want, you know, a listen ear, but yet their first reaction is always call parents...so teens don't feel heard as much when it comes to mental health.”*

#### **Youth Focus Group from Governor’s Charter**

Publicly available data further point to mental health as an area of concern for Leon County. Youth suicide rates are one publicly available indicator speaking to issues in the area of mental health. Among youth under the age of 19, the number of deaths by suicide has trended upward in the state of Florida, from 1.7 per 100,000 in 2001 to 2.6 in 2020.<sup>30</sup> For Leon County, the rate was the same in 2001 as that of the state, but reached 5.9 in 2020, nearly double the statewide rate. Notably, there was a marked increase from 2019 to 2020, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests that mental health, and suicidality in particular, may be an area worthy of further attention in Leon County, particularly in light of social changes driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>30</sup> Florida Health Charts. (2021). Suicide Deaths. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Death.Dataviewer>

**“There have been academic losses and gaps along with emotional distress in youth as a result of COVID.”**

**Community Forum Provider**

Also available are estimates of how many youths in the county experienced serious emotional disturbances that are severe enough to result in substantial or extreme functional impairment.<sup>31</sup> Between 2011 and 2019, the estimated number of youths aged 9 to 17 with a serious emotional disturbance in Leon County was steady at around 2,400- 2,500. Coinciding with the onset of the COVID-19, however, this estimate jumped to 3,149 in 2019 and 3,182 in 2020. This again points to a likely negative effect resulting from the pandemic.

Findings from focus groups provide some further perspective on child and youth mental health in the community. During parent focus groups, access to mental health care for the child, parent, and family was frequently mentioned. Parents, for example, reported the need for better access to mental health and behavioral health services. This was especially stressed by parents of children with special needs who cited issues navigating services. Parents emphasized early intervention; the importance of strong support systems for children, their parents, and families; and access to crisis prevention and intervention. Spanish-speaking parents reinforced their need for child and family counseling that is accessible and affordable. Parents stated, “you can’t wait three months when you need help quickly.” Parents discussed availability of information and resources as well as “household socioeconomics not being a determining factor in the child’s education and support.”

**“Yeah. Our problem is that she is not quite four, and there’s no one anywhere near here that sees anyone quite that young. Okay. And [inaudible 00:01:55] has a two, no three months wait, it’s like a two year wait list or at least a year for the ADHD, and the psychiatrist is like two years.”**

**Parent Focus Group from Southside**

<sup>31</sup>

Florida Health Charts. (2021). Estimated Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Youth 9-17. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalIndNoGrpCounts.Dataviewer>

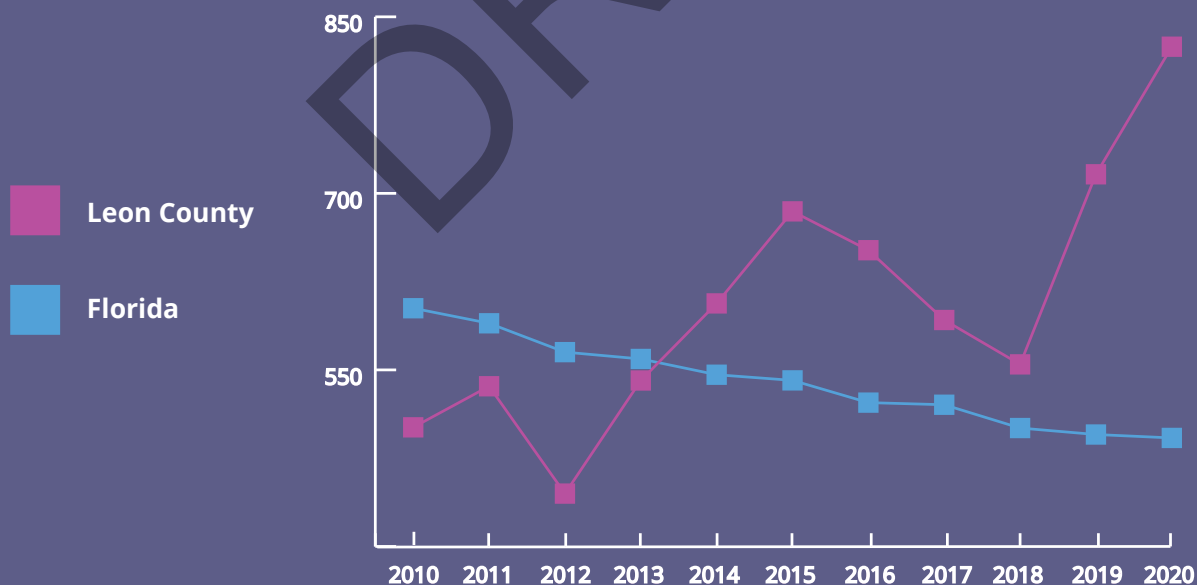


Also emerging from focus groups, providers discussed the need for mental health services that increase resilience and reduce the consequences of adverse childhood experiences. Providers recommended school-based mental health services including starting in pre-kindergarten settings. Providers suggested social-emotional programs, peer counseling initiatives, wraparound interventions, and specialized LGBTQ supports. Providers emphasized “mental health education that starts in schools” and “minimizes stigma associated with seeking mental health supports.” Providers also indicated a need for early childhood mental health and trauma-informed care competency building among practitioners.

***“Break the silence associated with mental health and assist youth and families to build protective factors rather than require high end services at some later date.”***

***Community Forum Provider***

## Domestic Violence Rate per 100,000 by Year

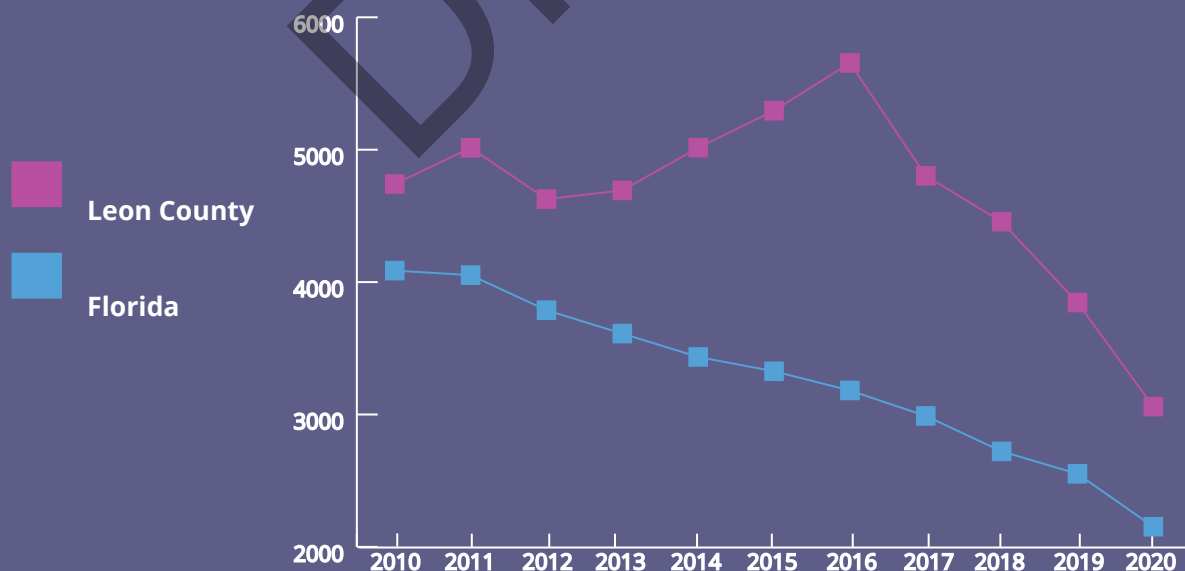


Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are considered a key contributor to mental health challenges in children, adolescents, and adults. Reducing the number and severity of such experiences, together with reducing their influence, represents a potential preventative approach to addressing challenges in the area of child and youth mental health. For this reason, we also explored the prevalence of family and community stressors that are understood to be detrimental for mental wellbeing.

In 2020, the rate total domestic violence offenses in Leon County was 824.6 out of 100,000 in Leon County during 2020, as compared to 492.2 out of 100,000 statewide.<sup>32</sup> Florida Health defines domestic violence as “any criminal homicide, manslaughter, rape, fondling, aggravated assault, aggravated stalking, simple assault, threat/intimidation, or simple stalking of one family or household member by another family or household member.” They further define the terms family and household member as “spouses, former spouses, parents, children, siblings, other family members, cohabitants, and persons who are parents of a child in common regardless of whether they have been married.” The domestic violence rate for Leon County is substantially higher than that of the state. In addition, the rate in Leon County has risen from 501.2 per 100,000 in 2010, at which point the domestic rate was well below the state value of 602.4 per 100,000. The apparent increase in domestic violence within the county is thus of concern to the mental well-being of children and youth.

<sup>32</sup> Florida Health Charts. (nd). Total Domestic Violence Cases. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalIndNoGrp.Dataviewer>

## Crime Index Rate per 100,00 by Year



Crime in the community also reflects stressors that may interfere with the mental wellbeing of children and youth. The total index crime rate per 100,000 was 3,059.6 in Leon County for the year 2020 as compared to 2,152 per year statewide.<sup>33</sup> While this crime rate is down in Leon County over the past decade, it remains substantially higher than the statewide rate. The school environment is another factor linked to youth mental health. In the 2019-2020 school year, there were a total of 612 reported school safety incidents in Leon County schools.<sup>34</sup> The most commonly cited incidents were drug use or possession (148 cases, excluding alcohol), fighting (118 cases), threat or intimidation (77 cases), and physical attack (37 cases). While these numbers cannot be compared directly to figures from the state level, they suggest some behavioral issues that arise in the school environment. Community violence was also a top concern for parents in 33024. Although only one zip code strongly emphasized the prevalence of violence in their community, it is still an important finding as this speaks to a direct need for safety and security. According to decades of research, feeling safe and secure is essential for individuals to achieve one's full potential.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, feeling unsafe and insecure is a strong barrier that may limit children in certain areas of Leon County from having the opportunity to excel. This, compounded with the prevalence of crime and school violence in the county could be detrimental to youth and should be taken into consideration county-wide.



Figure 3. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Florida Department of Law Enforcement (2010-2020). Crime in Florida, 2010-2020 Florida Uniform Crime Report. Tallahassee, FL: FLDE. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/Data-Statistics/UCR-Offense-Data>

<sup>34</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2021). School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) System - District and State Data. Retrieved on January 6, 2022 from: <https://www.fldoe.org/safe-schools/discipline-data.html>

<sup>35</sup> Block M. (2011) Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In: Goldstein S., Naglieri J.A. (eds) Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development. Springer, Boston, MA. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79061-9\\_1720](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79061-9_1720)

# STABLE AND NURTURING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

## Youth Development

Youth development is defined for this assessment as the building of occupational skills, expanding of career pathways, and increasing of economic opportunities for youth in the community. This can further comprise opportunities to learn such skills and gain exposure to opportunities, such as volunteer work and other activities that develop skills and self-concept.

### Strengths

Publicly available data to address youth development are limited, although several strong education indicators noted above suggest strong fundamentals in setting youth up for productive futures. In particular, relatively strong data on the quality of public education (e.g., assessment results and standardized assessments) give some perspective on the state of youth development in Leon County. However, youth development is broader than, and distinct from, educational attainment. It encompasses aspects such as awareness of career pathways, fostering of life skills, and promotion of financial literacy – all of which are crucial for youth as they move into young adulthood.

Another publicly available indicator related to school success and youth development is the percent of teenagers who are both not in school and not working. Of teenagers aged 16-19 in Leon County, 3.3% were not enrolled in school and not working in 2014-2018).<sup>36</sup> This value is substantially lower than the state average, an observation that holds when considering Black/African American, White, or Hispanic students separately. Black or African American students aged 16-19 were most likely to be not enrolled or working in Leon County, at 5.2%.

*“Personally I’m a senior, so next year I’m trying to go to college for journalism. So I feel a lot of more writing kind of not really camps, but just you know, more journalism based things. Because I think I know a lot of people try to do journalism in college, things of that nature in STEM programs.”*

*Youth Focus Group from Westside*

<sup>36</sup>

Well Being in the Nation Network. (nd). Education in Leon County, Florida. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: <https://www.winmeasures.org/statistics/winmeasures/florida/leon-county-education>

## Gaps

While publicly available data and community survey findings provide some reason for optimism regarding the state of education in Leon County, qualitative work points to opportunities for improvement. During focus groups, youth primarily expressed the necessity for and interest in engaging in programming that prepared them for college and careers as well as education in financial management. Youth indicated that “college tours help a lot” along with classes that provide “an advantage” to all students in college and job readiness. Youth reflected on the importance of having access to comprehensive financial management programs. They stated a “need for financial literacy but making it fun.” Youth also discussed interest in dual enrollment and mentorship initiatives. Youth felt others “who’ve been in their shoes and overcame struggles” can promote an attitude of “I can do it, too.” Youth described out-of-school programming, including through electronic formats, that they find to be “competitive fun.”

*“So there are a lot of these kids that are either completely overwhelmed by responsibility or have no clue how to...and it’s terrifying. We kind of shove kids out in the world and go here you are, you’re an adult, but they have no idea what to do anymore because we’re not teaching them.” “I think somebody said something about the resources for the older kids and not having life skills. We have to remember that a lot of these kids in middle and high school are literally raising their parents like real life.”*

*Parent Focus Group from Southside*

The majority of parents reinforced the youth’s perspective. Parents largely articulated concern that students were not taught life skills in school curricula. Without this education, parents reported “kids are completely overwhelmed by responsibility.” Parents emphasized the value of “financial literacy and economic stability” as well as “college, career, and workforce ready” training. Parents, including Spanish-speaking parents, also noted the worthiness of out-of-school programming. Parents would like to see enhancements to incentive initiatives such as work-study programs. Parents with special needs children stressed the importance of specialized academic, behavioral health, and life skills interventions to support their children. Spanish-speaking parents reinforced the need for academic guidance; mentorship initiatives; and expanded occupational skills, career, and economic pathways.

Responses to the community survey also pointed to opportunities for improved youth development programming. For example, 58% disagreed or strongly disagreed (17% strongly disagreed, 41% disagreed) that there are enough services to build occupational skills for youth in Leon County. Similarly, 60% disagreed or strongly disagreed (16% strongly disagreed, 44% disagreed) that there are enough services that expand career pathways for youth.

Family engagement represents another opportunity area that emerged from focus groups. Youth related the desire to have programs that facilitate familial bonds, helping connect parents and their children, and teaching parents how to help students with their homework. Youth noted “some parents need a little more education on how to guide their children” because “some troubles are stemming from the home.”

*“It’s a question of services working together better and more concerted efforts talking to each other, because Tallahassee doesn’t have a lack of services, but a lack of coordination of services oftentimes, although I guess for early childhood, there’s definitely a lack of access as well.”*

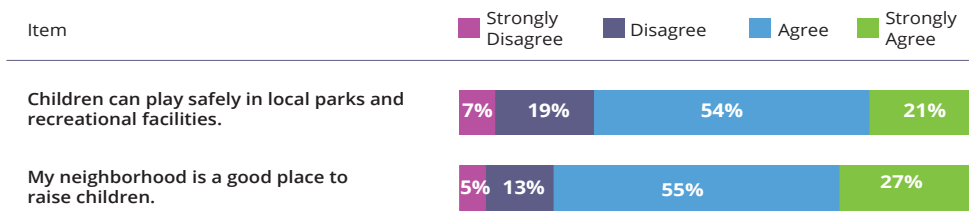
*-Quote from Parent Focus Group at Heritage Trails*

Both parents and youth also discussed systemic barriers that inhibit their skill-building, well-being, and success. For example, there were mentions of poor coordination among those who serve children, inability to reach the most at-risk individuals and families, and requirements that hinder holistic support (e.g., income requirements).

Some youth felt that conditions in public parks and recreation spaces needed improvement. Youth spoke about community support for arts programs and volunteerism. Youth reported that “kids feel as though there’s nothing for them.” Youth indicated that those who remain idle, at home, on their phones, and/or on social media are being negatively influenced. Furthermore, youth reported these youth represent themselves inaccurately and/or poorly on social media “for a name or likes” which is counterproductive to their healthy development.



## Response to Items Related to Housing, Family Support, and Youth Development



NOTE: Proportions are based on all respondents. Since some respondents chose not to answer some items, proportions may not sum to 100%

Parents discussed their concerns for safety within the community. They indicated families “put their kids on electronics because of fear of what’s outside.” Similar to youth, parents emphasized the lack of support and resources for adequate park and recreation spaces. . In a focus group in Woodville (i.e., zip codes 32305; 32362), parents noted youth are “getting into mischief because there’s really nothing” and “children don’t have much opportunity to interact in positive ways.” In another focus group located on the West Side of Leon County, parents expressed the desire to end the “school-to-prison pipeline.” In addition, parents expressed distress regarding human and sex trafficking victimization and the related need for family education.

“And unfortunately, right now we have a huge human trafficking population with us as well. And so we’re facing a lot of those things now to where all of our kids have to do a human trafficking training once a month, where they literally sit as a family at the dinner table and discuss for 10, 15 minutes at the least what human trafficking looks like and what are those signs, because we’ve had quite a few kids come in who are victims of that and/or being involved in that while they’re here with us unfortunately. So that’s another issue.”

Quote from Youth Focus Group at Heritage Trails:

Providers described quality childcare, out-of-school programming, and social-emotional learning as critical factors in healthy youth development. Providers cited literacy, life skills training (including financial literacy), and counseling supports (including peer-to-peer approaches) as components of youth progress and success. Providers offered a connection between youth development and families having basic necessities (food, housing, healthcare, etc.). Moreover, providers noted the intersection between poverty and the pipeline to prison.

From a systemic standpoint, providers recommended a full assessment of existing youth development programming to determine current capacity, evidence-based approaches, fidelity, cultural relevance, outputs, outcomes, and impact. Providers recommended ensuring programs are placed in the right areas, aligned with the greatest need, and leveraged collectively. Providers stressed the benefits of prevention and early intervention.

## Food Stability

Food stability can be defined as reliable access to sufficient nutritious food to promote healthy development. This includes access to food in the community, both in terms of financial and geographical accessibility. Also relevant are programs that support nutrition for families that are struggling financially or in crisis. Food security further includes ensuring that children and youth have access to healthy foods at school and during time away from home. This section reviews the state of food security in Leon County.

### Strengths

For the community survey, a majority (68%) of respondents agreed that the basic food needs of children in Leon County are being met (50% agree and 18% strongly agree), that school-age children have access to free and nutritious meals during the summer (60%: 44% agree and 16% strongly agree), and that they have access to free and nutritious meals during school breaks (53%: 37% agree and 16% strongly agree). Together, responses to these questions indicate overall positive views toward food stability in the community.

## Gaps

As of 2019, 17.6% of children and youth in Leon County experienced food insecurity<sup>37</sup> and this is slightly higher than the statewide value of 17.1%. Within the county, half of those experiencing food insecurity were ineligible for federal nutrition programs, as their family incomes were above 185% of the poverty level. The other half were eligible for these programs, as household income fell below that threshold.

Adding perspective to publicly available data, the availability of healthy food for children and youth was an area of concern that emerged in the community survey was. Forty percent (40%) of respondents expressed that children did not consistently have access to free and nutritious meals during the summer. Similarly, about 47% of respondents felt that children do not have reliable access to free and nutritious meals during school breaks. The discrepancy of about 7 percentage points may suggest that summer programs are offering valuable food services for some community members that are less available during winter and other school breaks. It is also worth noting that nearly a third of respondents expressed that the basic food needs of children are not being met.

With regard to food stability, youth shared during focus groups that there are “a lot of kids that don’t get fed at home.” Youth indicated these children really need the food and nutrition provided at school as “they take food home because they probably can’t eat at home.” Youth related that food security affects education and academic achievement. Parents expressed that they need better communication regarding food security resources and access to healthier food options. Parents stated that regular up-to-date information about food banks would be helpful. Parents requested their children receive less processed foods at school. Parents stated that they would prefer for their children and families to have access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and meat products. Parents suggested community gardens.

*“I would say kids like the lower class, kids who don’t have it all or can’t buy new clothes or can’t buy new shoes. Because there’s a lot of kids like that at my school, and especially if they don’t get fed at home, they really go to lunch because they really need it. They take food home because they probably can’t eat at home.”*

*Youth Focus Group from Governor’s Charter*

<sup>37</sup>

Feeding America. (2020). Child Food Insecurity in Florida Before COVID-19. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2019/child/florida>

Providers discussed how food insecurity is a symptom of larger household and economic stability conditions, such as housing costs, livable wages, and poverty. Providers stated that food security services have a dual role to ensure children get nutrition in school and parents receive food supports in the community. Providers indicated that there should be normalized and streamlined processes to food access. Providers emphasized that distribution of food should include assessment of family need, connection to required resources, case management, life skills training, and partnership with other human service agencies. Providers suggested flexible funding and policies as well as innovative approaches, such as neighborhood-focused programming, cost-share grocery stores, evening and weekend hours, whole family interventions, and allowing families to choose what they need.

**“There are root causes to food insecurity, beyond access to nutritious food, that need to be resolved to ensure food security.”**

**Focus Group Provider**

## **Housing Stability**

A safe and stable home serves as a fundamental support for positive child and youth development. Housing costs have increased across the country over recent years in a way that has not tracked with wage increases. At the same time, homelessness rates have increased nationwide. Financial pressures have rendered it difficult for some lower income families to maintain a safe and stable home. Moreover, financial pressures related to housing can potentially detract from families' ability to pay for other key needs such as healthcare and nutritious food. We review in this section the state of housing in Leon County.

### **Strengths**

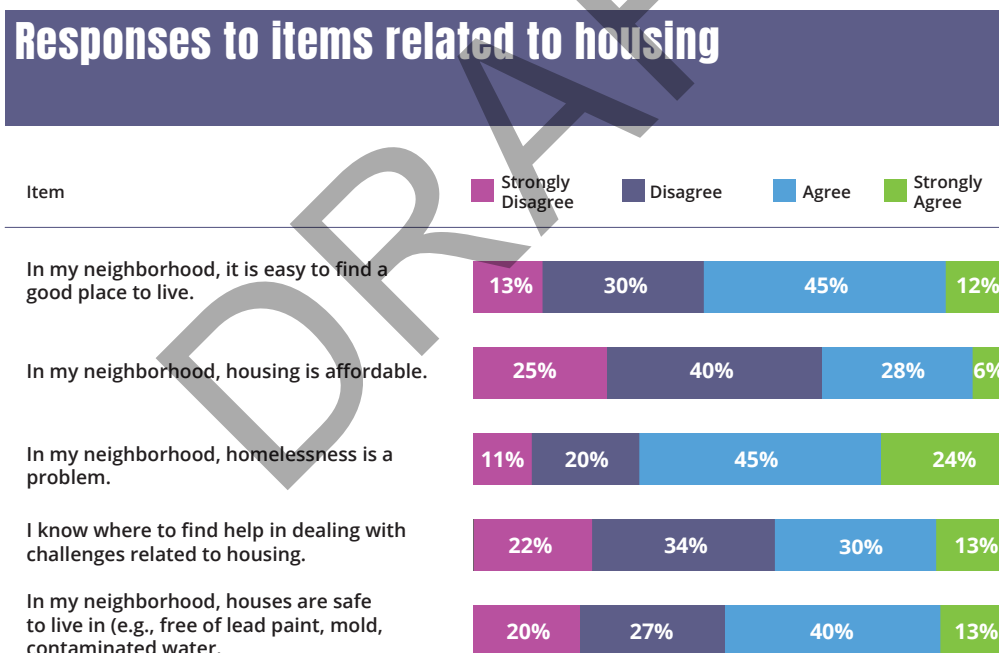
In the community survey, areas of relative strength in participant responses were quality of housing, the area being a good environment for raising children, ability for children to play in safe parks and recreational facilities, and whether the basic housing needs of children are being met. Together, responses to these items suggest relatively favorable attitudes toward key aspects of quality of life for children and youth. For example, a majority of respondents also expressed that the basic housing needs of children are being met (50% agree and 21% strongly agree) and that the neighborhood where they live is a good place to raise children (55% agree and 27% strongly agree).

## Gaps

As of 2020, 22% of children and youth aged 18 and under in Leon County were living in poverty, as compared to 17.2% across the state of Florida.<sup>38</sup> In both the county and state, this has decreased slightly over the past decade; In 2010, 25% of children and youth in Leon County under 19 were living in poverty, compared to 23.6% in the state. Despite the decrease in child and youth poverty, it is worth noting that the rate in the county remains higher than the rate across Florida. Within the Leon County School District, as of 2020, 20.1% of children and youth aged 5 to 17 were living in poverty.<sup>39</sup> Again, this is down slightly over the past decade, with 21.2% living in poverty in 2010.

While poverty rates have decreased at both the county and state level, this fails to account for the experience of individuals and families who earn more than the federal poverty level but who struggle to make ends meet. Asset limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE) families are those who are working but whose income is insufficient in light of increasing cost of living. Such families face difficult choices when deciding how to allocate the limited resources they have available. As of 2018, an estimated 33% of households across Florida were ALICE as compared to 30% of households in

**TABLE 7. RESPONSES TO ITEMS RELATED TO HOUSING**



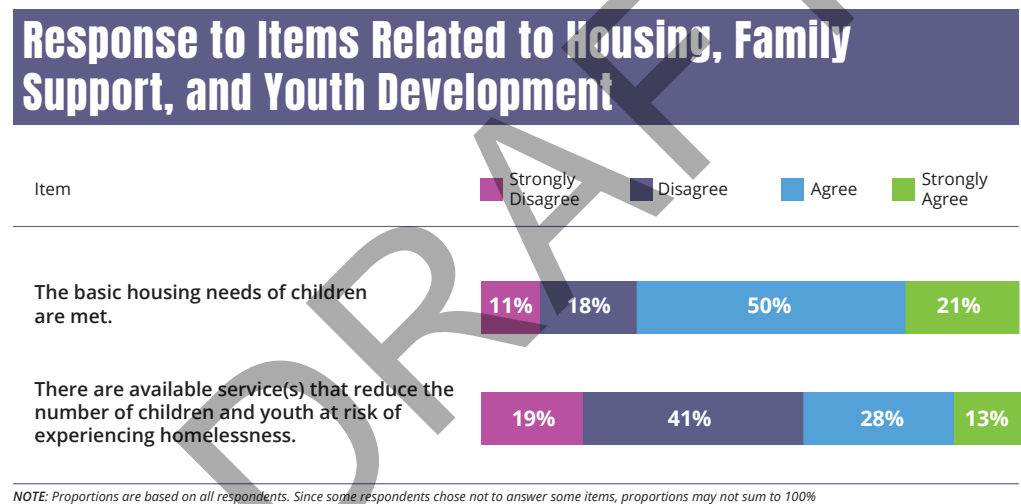
NOTE: Proportions are based on all respondents. Since some respondents chose not to answer some items, proportions may not sum to 100%

<sup>38</sup> Office of Economic and Demographic Research. (2021). Leon County, Florida Legislature: Tallahassee, FL. Retrieved on January 6th 2021 from: <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/area-profiles/county/leon.pdf>  
<sup>39</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2021). Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. Retrieved on January 6th from: [https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/saiper/#/?map\\_geoSelector=u18\\_s&s\\_state=&s\\_year=2019,2018,2017,2016,2015,2014,2013,2012,2011,2010,2009&s\\_county=&s\\_measures=u18\\_snc&map\\_yearSelector=2010](https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/saiper/#/?map_geoSelector=u18_s&s_state=&s_year=2019,2018,2017,2016,2015,2014,2013,2012,2011,2010,2009&s_county=&s_measures=u18_snc&map_yearSelector=2010)

Leon County.<sup>40</sup> Although the rate is slightly lower at the county level, it still represents nearly a third of all households. When examining only households with children in Leon County, an estimated 19% of households were ALICE in 2018, or roughly one in five families.<sup>24</sup> A further 20% of households with children were living in poverty.

Another key metric related to housing stability is homelessness. As of 2018, there was an estimated 909 homeless people in Leon County.<sup>41</sup> Estimates of homelessness were up substantially over the past decade in Leon County, although appear to have decreased since 2019.<sup>42</sup> While figures for children and youth affected by homelessness are not available at the county level, the increase can be expected to impact them to some degree.

Despite relatively positive overall views regarding housing, results of the community indicated significant variability in attitudes related to housing and the community. In particular, respondents from lower income brackets were significantly less likely to agree that the basic housing needs of children are being met ( $p < 0.001$ ).



In focus groups, parents reported a lack of affordable and stable housing, particularly

<sup>40</sup> United Way. (2022) United for ALICE: Florida Statewide Overview. Retrieved on March 7th from: <https://www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/florida>

<sup>41</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2021). 2020 AHAR: Part 1 – PIT Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S. Retrieved on January 6th from <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/ahar/#2020-reports>

<sup>42</sup> Florida Health Charts. (nd). Homeless Estimate. Retrieved on January 6th, 2022 from: <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalIndNoGrpCounts.Dataviewer>



for minority and marginalized populations. Parents stated, “there are definitely affordable housing problems in Tallahassee, finding quality safe housing that is affordable.” Due to affordability, parents indicated that they are living in residences that are smaller than their families’ needs, (i.e., “not having enough bed space for children to sleep”). Parents expressed the need for awareness of programs that help first-time homebuyers and access to credit counseling and homeownership supports. Spanish-speaking parents related limited accessibility to housing as “there is not an agency to assist Hispanic people.”

Providers noted a lack of available safe affordable housing and the prevalence of family poverty. Providers related the need for housing at low-income levels. Providers stated, “household wages are not enough for area rents.” Providers indicated families require long-term subsidies, financial education, and wraparound services to ensure housing stability. Providers discussed youth and family risk factors in public housing communities.

**“No, I think that there are definitely affordable housing problems in Tallahassee, and especially finding quality safe housing that is affordable. And that’s part of what you’re seeing about these lateral school jumps is in many cases, the reflection of the housing problem that we have for families as well.”**

**Parent Focus Group from Heritage Trail**

Providers indicated a need for flexible funding and additional housing options to prevent homelessness. They suggested transition to independent living supports for youth, and also cited housing first and permanent supportive housing models. Providers articulated “long-term housing supports are required to get families to self-sufficiency.” They also stressed leadership and a community-wide approach, that includes employers, to improve housing stability. Providers recommended learning from other communities’ successes. These recommendations are especially important, considering that funding for homeless initiatives have recently been reduced in the county.

**Greater community care and support are needed to address affordable housing issues. Leaderships, intolerance, and action need to take place at the community level.”**

**Community Forum Provider**

With respect to housing stability, youth discussed homeless experiences associated with distressful family relationships and generational family histories. It was noted that “LGBTQ youth are experiencing homelessness, and transgender individuals are not well accepted.” Youth spoke about the high cost of housing and lack of affordable housing. Youth shared problems with living in housing that is in disrepair and substandard, including because their families do not have the money to maintain the home or because landlords and property management companies are unresponsive.

## Enhanced Caregivers

Positive youth development requires engaged caregivers who are able to support the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children and youth. This is true for parents and for foster caregivers alike. Strong bonds between children and caregivers are shown to predict many positive outcomes, including school success and later wellbeing.<sup>43, 44</sup> Enhanced caregiving includes a range of parenting skills and engagement in schoolwork, among others. Programs and services that help caregivers in these areas can potentially support child wellbeing and success. In this section we review the state of programs and services to enhance caregiving in the community.

### Strengths

Single parents may face unique economic challenges and strains. In light of this, one metric of interest to enhancement of caregivers is the number of marriage dissolutions in the community. Across the state of Florida, in the year 2020, there were a total of 64,117 marriage dissolutions.<sup>45</sup> Of those, 20,356 (31.7%) involved families with at least one minor child. The total annual number of marriage dissolutions across the state has decreased over recent years from 83,342 in 2010, when 31,602 (37.9%) involved families with at least one child. The total number of marriage dissolutions has also decreased in Leon County in a way that tracks trends at the state level. In 2020, there were 615 dissolutions in Leon County, down from 911 in 2010.

### Gaps and Opportunities

As noted above, single parents may face additional challenges in caregiving. An estimated 16.16% of all families in Leon County were single-headed families with children during the 2015-2019 period, and this was down marginally from 16.73%

<sup>43</sup> Parker, F. L., Boak, A. Y., Griffin, K. W., Ripple, C., & Peay, L. (1999). Parent-child relationship, home learning environment, and school readiness. *School Psychology Review*, 28(3), 413-425.

<sup>44</sup> Stafford, M., Kuh, D. L., Gale, C. R., Mishra, G., & Richards, M. (2016). Parent-child relationships and offspring's positive mental well-being from adolescence to early older age. *The journal of positive psychology*, 11(3), 326-337.

<sup>45</sup> Florida Health Charts. (2021). Marriage Dissolution County Query System. Retrieved on January 6, 2022 from: [https://www.flhealth-charts.gov/FLQUERY\\_New/Dissolution/Count](https://www.flhealth-charts.gov/FLQUERY_New/Dissolution/Count)

in 2010-2014.<sup>46</sup> The percent of single-headed families with children in Leon County has been slightly higher than that for the entire state, where an estimated 13.02% of families were single-headed with children in 2015-2019. Within the county, there is substantial variability from one zip code region to another. The highest rates of families that are single-headed with children in 2015-2019 were in zip codes 32304 (31.27%), 32305 (29.89%), 32301 (25.02%), and 32310 (22.26%).

Abuse can be defined as “any willful act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child’s physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired.”<sup>47</sup> The rate of child abuse has declined over the past decade in both Leon County and at the state level. In the year 2020, the rate of children aged 5 to 11 in Leon County who experience child abuse was 607.1 per 100,000, which was slightly higher than the statewide rate of 583.9 per 100,000. This represents a reversal from prior years, where the Florida abuse rate was higher than that of Leon County. The abuse rate was measured as unduplicated cases of at least one verified maltreatment.

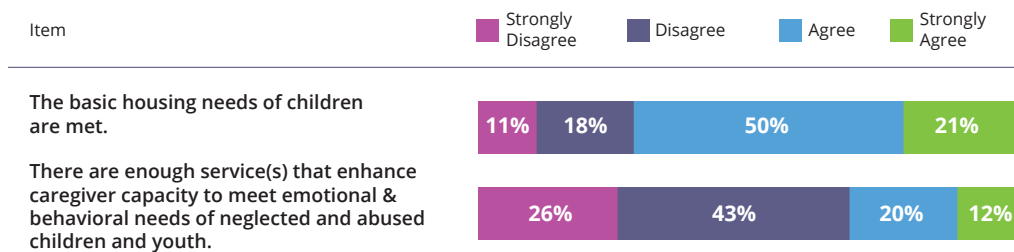
As of 2020, 602.8 out of 100,000 children and youth under the age of 18 were in foster care in Leon County.<sup>28</sup> This is slightly higher than the statewide foster care rate of 549.2 out of 100,000. Within the county, this rate is up substantially over recent years, with a particularly notable uptick from 2019 (427.6 out of 100,000) to 2020. The percent of children and youth in foster care varies substantially from one zip code to another.<sup>48</sup> The highest percent is found in the zip codes 32311 (3.49%) and 32316 (3.44%) whereas the rate is below 2% in all other zip codes. During focus groups, providers referenced challenges associated with youth aging out of foster care. Providers found that transitional youth require supportive housing, life coaching, and mentoring. They expressed that “the community is uninformed regarding the challenges and needs of youth transitioning out of the foster care system.” In addition, most respondents to the community survey disagreed with a statement that there are enough services that support youth transitioning out of the child welfare system (25% strongly disagree and 43% disagree).

<sup>46</sup> United States Census. (2020). Estimated Percent of All Children that Are Single-Headed with Children. Policy Map. [https://www.policymap.com/data/our-data-directory/#Census:%20Decennial%20Census%20and%20American%20Community%20Survey%20\(ACS\)](https://www.policymap.com/data/our-data-directory/#Census:%20Decennial%20Census%20and%20American%20Community%20Survey%20(ACS))

<sup>47</sup> Florida Health Charts – Department of Children and Families. (2021). Children Under 18 in Foster Care. Retrieved on January 6th from: <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalIndNoGrp.Dataviewer>

<sup>48</sup> PolicyMaps. `<iframe src="https://www.policymap.com/newmaps#/embed/7426/4f389b3c418fab55702300b87a14a8c9" name="policymap-embedded-map" scrolling="no" marginheight="0" marginwidth="0" frameborder="0" style="border:0" width="768" height="532"></iframe>`

## Response to Items Related to Housing, Family Support, and Youth Development



NOTE: Proportions are based on all respondents. Since some respondents chose not to answer some items, proportions may not sum to 100%

On the community survey, attitudes were particularly negative in response to an item stating that there are enough service(s) to enhance caregiver capacity to meet emotional & behavioral needs of neglected and abused children and youth. 26% strongly disagreed and 43% disagreed with this item. This appears to be aligned with the finding of relatively negative attitudes regarding the availability of mental health services for children, and points to a need for more programs to support caregivers of children dealing with adversity.

With regard to enhanced caregivers, parents described their need for day and respite care. Parents reported that they lacked affordable childcare. Parents expressed “childcare can be even more expensive than housing” and “it’s frustrating to talk about quality early childhood education when you can’t afford it.” Parents of special needs children indicated they have few childcare options. These parents stated their children “were out of daycare because they couldn’t communicate with some of the teachers” and “ended up not going to school until age five.”

**The burdens of caregiving are intensified when caregivers lack information, resources, and a reliable support network.”**

**Community Forum Provider**

Providers reported the need for respite care, caregiver education, peer support, and financial assistance. Providers discussed minimal funding and supports for caregivers, particularly grandparents raising grandchildren. Providers shared caregivers' struggles with navigating services, qualifying for assistance, and becoming socially isolated. Providers stressed the necessity of facilitating connections, services, and supports at the community and neighborhood levels and involving faith-based institutions.

*And often, childcare is even more expensive than housing, so that if you have young children and you need childcare, and you're trying to figure out housing, it doubles it. And it just drives me crazy to try to talk to parents about what is quality early childhood education, because most of them couldn't afford it, even if we had enough of it. They can't afford it anyway. And so how frustrating to know, let me tell all the great things your child should have. Oh, but you can't access it and you can't afford it. So now you're putting in crappy childcare and I've told you what a terrible parent you are because you don't care about [inaudible]... It's very frustrating that there's not enough of it and you can afford it."*

*Parent Focus Group from Heritage Trail*

# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS





Analyses of data from publicly available sources, the community survey, and stakeholder focus groups converged on several overarching themes. For example, mental health emerged as an area of concern for the community, for children, youth overall, and those at risk of abuse or neglect. Across multiple subdomains, analyses also pointed to opportunities to ensure that parents are aware of the resources available to them and to encourage parent engagement and promote positive parent-child relationships. Moreover, while education indicators paint a relatively positive picture for Leon County, there exist opportunities for improvement to address socioeconomic and racial-ethnic disparities. A need for opportunities for after-school and summer programming also emerged. Notably, such programs can, in turn, speak to other opportunity areas that include physical and mental health, life skills development, food stability, and educational equity. It was also clear that the rising cost of living has placed strain on Leon County families, and programs may be able to step in and provide valuable supports for families while promoting positive outcomes in education and health. Following are more detailed recommendations for addressing the gaps that emerged in the analyses.

## RECOMMENDATION 1: FOCUS ON CLOSING GAPS THROUGH AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER PROGRAMMING

Both qualitative and survey data indicated a need for more quality summer and afterschool programming in Leon County. This aligns with research conducted by the Afterschool Alliance indicating that for every child enrolled in an afterschool program, three more are waiting for a spot.<sup>49</sup> This need is highlighted amongst children from low-income families, for whom cost, and access are reported as significant barriers to participation in summer and afterschool programs.

Afterschool and summer programs offer a unique opportunity to fulfill community needs, including addressing other gaps noted in this report. The Afterschool Alliance report also found that families noted multiple benefits these programs had on their children, including increased access to academic supports such as tutoring and mentoring, reduced likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors such as drug use, increased interest in school and learning, increased physical activity, improved life skills such as teamwork and communication, increased access to healthy food choices, as well as providing a safe and supervised space for children which can help working parents maintain employment.

Afterschool and summer programs are an opportunity to provide academic supports

<sup>49</sup> Afterschool Alliance (2020). America after 3PM: Demand grows, opportunity shrinks. Retrieved from <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2020/AA3PM-National-Report.pdf>

such as tutoring and mentorships, as well as enrichment activities such as youth development, health and nutrition, financial literacy, drug and violence prevention, exposure to the arts and music, and physical fitness and overall wellness. Additionally, these programs can serve to support adult family members and encourage parental involvement and engagement in their child's education, another gap noted in the qualitative data. Because afterschool and summer programming are an important component of fostering academic success, CSC Leon could consider strategies to expand and improve the quality of programs offered in the community. For example, funding for such programs could target provider capacity building and curriculum acquisition to provide children and youth with evidence-based and/or promising educational practices. Additionally, providers could also be supported in expanding their services to provide weekend care. Moreover, funding within this area could be used to hire students as staff members through programs, such as AmeriCorps, which would help fulfill CSC Leon's desired outcome within the Youth Development domain (e.g., build occupational skills, expand career pathways, and increase economic opportunities for youth). This would also support youth leadership, which was mentioned as a need in the community.

Due to the flexible structure of afterschool and summer programs, providers can customize program offerings to best address the needs of their immediate community. Additionally, funders can also customize funding requirements to ensure that programs include elements that have been identified as needs for their unique community. For example, those applying for funding from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative in Florida are required to provide:

- Tutoring and academic enrichment opportunities,
- Access to diverse activities targeting personal enrichment areas such as youth development, nutrition and health education, drug and violence prevention, physical fitness, and/or financial literacy, as well as
- Providing resources and opportunities for adult family members to improve engagement with their children.<sup>50</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION 2: FOSTER COLLABORATION AMONG PROVIDERS AND THE COMMUNITY

Data findings indicate that there are community service providers in Leon County working in all CSC Leon priority domains and subdomains. However, limited resources, lack of coordinated effort, among other factors, has resulted in providers working in silo. Leon County would benefit from a multisectoral collaboration approach within each priority subdomain to serve children, youth, and families. A multisector collaboration is a partnership in which government, non-profit, private, and public organizations, community groups, and individual community members come together to solve problems that affect the whole community. Elements of this approach can be found in the extensive literature on community-wide collaboration models (e.g., Community Coalition Action Theory, Collective Impact). Implementing a multisectoral collaboration approach allows stakeholders to jointly address the needs of children, youth, and families from diverse perspectives towards a shared goal. In collaboration with community stakeholders, CSC Leon can establish Strategic Steering Committees encompassing non-profit, private, and public organizations, community groups, funding partners, and individual community members working together within a subdomain (e.g., school readiness, youth development, housing). This approach fosters shared accountability towards the improvement of conditions for children, youth, and families in Leon County, leverages varying expertise, and promotes information sharing. Thus, successes, challenges and societal problems are not the sole responsibility of CSC Leon, but the responsibility of the Leon County strategic steering committee partners as a whole.

Implementing a multisectoral approach successfully, requires structure. Establishing a mission, vision, theory of change, goals, and targets for each Strategic Steering Committee will foster a strong foundation for coordinated and intentional collaboration towards a shared goal. Each steering committee can be led by a Chair or Co-Chairs, coordinator, and secretary. The steering committees would identify the needs with the domain and establish goals and targets. A theory of change would also be developed as a roadmap outlining how the steering committee theorizes the implemented strategies will lead to the goals and targets. Each Strategic Steering Committee can report out on the progress towards meeting its goals and targets at regularly scheduled (e.g., quarterly, monthly) Leon County Steering Committee meetings. If similarly described committees already exist, it may be a matter of reviewing the mission and vision of said committees to ensure that they are in alignment with the goals of the proposed Strategic Steering Committees.

There are some common pitfalls to multisectoral partnerships that should be noted and planned for.

## Shared Vision Towards a Common Goal

It is critical that each Strategic Steering Committee identify and agree on an ultimate “pie in the sky” goal and strategy for which the committee will work towards. Not knowing where you headed will decrease the likelihood that you will get there. Lacking a clear shared vision and ultimate goal, partnerships of eventually falling apart.

## Get The Right People to The Table

The Strategic Steering Committee should not only consider the obvious actors to be a part of the committees, namely non-profit service providers, but should include members of private organizations (e.g., business community), local funding partners, and community groups. Steering Committees should aim towards equitable collaboration in which ethnic and racial diversity is achieved, participation of those with lived experiences (e.g., parents, youth), participation over large geographic areas while implementing activities in prioritized communities, and recruiting leaders, especially those from the community<sup>51</sup>. Often, members of the community affected by many of the issues the committees are targeting are often a forgotten member of partnerships.

## Build Trusts Among Partners

Trust is often perceived as a necessary precondition for successful collaboration. In order for partners to feel safe sharing information, sharing their strengths and areas in need of capacity building, there needs to be trust. Trusts among partner is gained in time and begins in the early stages of collaboration. Therefore, it is important that the Strategic Steering Committees be grounded on open and honest communication, transparency, and trust.

## Build Capacity Among Partners

Building the steering committees’ capacity to work together to address complex social problems will be necessary for successful collaboration. There are too many instances community committees are stagnant with no clear goals. Building the steering committees’ capacities around collaborative leadership, democratic governance, data sharing and analysis, community engagement, and decision-making will be critical to ensure effective collaboration<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Butterfoss, F. D., Lachance, L. L., & Orians, C. E. (2006). Building allies coalitions: Why formation matters. *Health Promotion Practice*, 7(2\_suppl), 235-335.

<sup>52</sup> Wolff, T. (2016). Ten places where collective impact gets it wrong. *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, 7(1), 1-13.

## RECOMMENDATION 3: PROVIDE STRATEGIC CAPACITY BUILDING TO PROVIDERS

Since its inception, CSC Leon has been intentional about establishing guidelines and requirements that will lead to high quality care and services for the community. Because providers will be the vehicles to provide such services to the community, it is important to ensure that they are adequately prepared. To do so, CSC Leon may want to implement a Monitoring and Evaluation aspect for funded programs to identify and meet their capacity needs. As part of this process, providers could undergo an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA). An OCA is an assessment tool used by funders to identify the capacity needs of participating providers. This tool assesses for components that an organization would need to successfully function. Through an OCA, CSC Leon can understand the areas in which they can support providers and develop a strategic capacity building approach accordingly.

Beyond specified needs, it is also important to build capacity in areas that will be required with funding. For example, providers may need support with data collection and reporting for key outcomes and measures. CSC Leon could provide services, such as workshops and ongoing technical assistance, to ensure that providers are reliably and accurately capturing data that will not only speak to the success of the program, but the overall impact of CSC Leon. Other CSC's have established capacity building committees to lead these activities, which aligns with the recommendation to create strategic steering committees (as seen in Recommendation 2 ).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Children's Services Council (CSC) of Broward County. (n.d.). Agency capacity building. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://www.cscbroward.org/committee/agency-capacity-building>

# RECOMMENDATION 4: TARGET INEQUITY THROUGH ACCESS

Both survey and qualitative findings emphasized a need for improved access to several services, including health care services (e.g., dental and vision in particular), healthy meals during summer and school breaks, and extra-curricular activities. While there are over 1,000 providers serving children, youth, and families in Leon County, there may be barriers related to access that extend beyond a provider's reach, such as community members living in geographically isolated areas, having a shortage of programs or services in a community, or individuals not having access to transportation or money to receive such services. Barriers to access, such as these, can perpetuate the presence of inequities in the community and limit the effected community members from achieving their true potential.<sup>54</sup>

To enhance access to services and promote equity across Leon County, CSC Leon may consider the following:

## 1. Implementing Mobile and/or Home-Based Services

Mobile and Home-Based resources are an excellent way to reduce barriers to access that often prevent individuals from receiving resources and experiencing improved health outcomes. To circumvent barriers and increase access to needed resources, CSC Leon could consider services that meet the community where they are at.

To illustrate, there were several references of inadequate access to dental care by both survey and focus group participants. Mentioned barriers to dental care access included the cost, quality, and availability of dental specialists. Therefore, CSC Leon could create a program like the Martin County Preventive Dental Program: Providing preventive oral health care and education by a certified oral hygienist to children at early learning centers. A program such as this would eliminate the concerns around cost and allow for quality dental care to reach a wider demographic. Additionally, this may prevent the development of more significant dental issues that require a dental specialist.

<sup>54</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Health and Medicine Division; Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice; Committee on Community-Based Solutions to Promote Health Equity in the United States; Baciu A, Negussie Y, Geller A, et al., editors. Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2017 Jan 11. 3, The Root Causes of Health Inequity. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK425845/>

Respondents also made several references to inadequate access to healthy meals for children, specifically during school and summer breaks. Given that the need for improved access to healthy and nutritious meals were mentioned as needed during times when children are not in school (i.e., school breaks, summer), services targeting this need should also be in operation. Examples of successful programs and collaborations include:

- Mobile feeding programs
- Mobile pantries
- Programs that deliver healthy and nutritious meals to children and their families during school breaks and summer

CSC Leon could also consider combining mobile resources to provide extra-curricular activities in safe public spaces, such as parks or recreation centers. For example, a program that delivers healthy nutritious meals to children could be paired with a physical activity program that encourages children, youth, and families to get active. This, in turn, could address a variety of needs and promote the health and wellness of all children, youth, and families in Leon County (e.g., improve rates of obesity, provide healthy meals, and improve parental health literacy).

In addition to mobile resources, CSC Leon could also address a variety of needs through home-based services. Programs, such as the Healthy Start Home Visiting Program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, are found to be extremely successful in improving health outcomes for local children and families. In addition to its effectiveness, this approach is also important to consider as respondents specifically mentioned a need for home health visits. To address this, CSC Leon could adapt a program like the one mentioned to address the identified needs of local children, youth, and families, including early mental health intervention, life skill education, and services to enhance caregiver's capacity to meet the emotional and behavioral needs of their children.

## 2. Creating Neighborhood Hubs

Another way to improve access is by providing permanent locations, or Neighborhood Hubs, for programs and services within areas of need for local children, youth, and families. To do this, CSC Leon could model a program, like the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach's BRIDGES. BRIDGES refer to 10 local hubs strategically placed in the community to support parents with young children. Each hub is supported by a local non-profit and provides services, such as capacity-building workshops, parent and child activities, and other forms of parental support. CSC Leon could adapt this program to support families with children of a variety of ages that tailored to meet the needs of the community. These hubs could also be strategically placed to reach all areas of the County and serve as a space to bring local partners together to leverage resources, as mentioned in Recommendation 2. Beyond access, this also addresses the recommendation made by providers to create specialized neighborhood-focused services.



### 3. Create a Systems of Care Approach

Because there are numerous partners providing services in Leon County, FL, CSC Leon could invest resources in developing a “System of Care Approach”. A Systems of Care Approach combines a broad range of services and supports across providers that meet specific guidelines into one integrated system. Guidelines often include being culturally competent, community-based, and community-guided.<sup>55, 56</sup> Through this interagency collaboration, children, youth, and families would be referred to the most appropriate services that meet the identified needs by an entry agency. This would allow community members to circumvent many of the challenges that limit access and be collectively impacted by CSC Leon and all associated providers (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008). While this approach was initially founded to address mental health needs, it has expanded to a variety of sectors. Other Children’s Services Councils have also adopted this approach and use it to ensure all families in need have access to the resources present in the community.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, this could be a promising approach for CSC Leon to make a concerted effort to assure no families “fall through the cracks.”<sup>43</sup>

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- <sup>55</sup> Stroul, B., Blau, G., & Friedman, R. (2010). Updating the system of care concept and philosophy. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, National Technical Assistance Center for Children’s Mental Health. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from [https://gucchd.georgetown.edu/products/Toolkit\\_SOC\\_Resource1.pdf](https://gucchd.georgetown.edu/products/Toolkit_SOC_Resource1.pdf)
- <sup>56</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2008, February). Systems of Care. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/soc.pdf>
- <sup>57</sup> Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach. (n.d.). How We Work Together. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.cscpb.org/direct-overview>

## RECOMMENDATION 5: BRING AWARENESS TO CURRENT RESOURCES

Focus group participants shared that although Leon County is comprised of an abundance of service providers, many residents remain unaware of the resources available. Participants also shared that many service providers are unaware of the programs and services offered by other providers. As such, there is a missed opportunity to create partnerships and leverage resources among services providers. Therefore, it is important to bring awareness to the current resources being offered in the county to unite providers and increase the number of community members receiving high-quality services.

### Awareness Campaigns

Targeted awareness campaigns are an effective way to bring awareness to issues within the community and increase residents' knowledge of the services and programs available to combat them. Awareness campaigns also present an opportunity to fund partnerships for collaboration among non-traditional service providers (e.g., marketing companies) and service providers from different domains.

To illustrate, as previously described, findings from the focus groups and survey show that food insecurity is at a slightly higher rate for Leon County than the rest of Florida. Furthermore, there is a need for improved access to healthy and nutritious meals during schools breaks and the summer. To address this issue, a CSC funded partnership between service providers and marketing firms could be formed to create an awareness campaign that strives to educate families on the healthy and nutritious food options available to children outside of school. To inform the marketing campaign, providers who offer free healthy and nutritious meals to families and their children could partner with afterschool providers who may have access to low-income populations in need of such services. Another example of an awareness campaign that seeks to combat food insecurity is disseminating WIC marketing materials to medical providers in low-income zones.

### Searchable Database

Another method that has been successful in bringing awareness to resources in other states (i.e., Oregon, Texas) is the development and marketing of searchable databases where community members can find information about available resources and services. It is also recommended that a toll-free number be provided for individuals without internet access. A searchable database may also be a helpful tool for service providers who are looking to establish partnerships with other providers in the county.

# RECOMMENDATION 6: PRIORITIZE PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Prevention and early intervention are essential approaches to ensure that needs are not only addressed, but are also lessened in severity, frequency, and duration. The following section provides recommended approaches for prevention and early intervention in the Youth Development Domains where needs were noted.

## School Readiness

As previously mentioned, school readiness is a strong predictor of later academic success.<sup>58,59</sup> Although the children scoring as ready for kindergarten is slightly higher in Leon County (61.6%) in comparison to the state of Florida (56.9%), findings demonstrate that there is still room for improvement in fostering school readiness. While there do appear to be programs that address school readiness, parents and providers agree that there needs to be more accessible and affordable opportunities that better prepare children academically and socially/emotionally for kindergarten.

Research provides support for the following recommendations as it relates to school readiness:

- Implement a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)<sup>1</sup> to guide standards and supports for early learning settings to ultimately increase access to high-quality early learning.
- Implement a System of Care Approach (as mentioned in Recommendation 3) in which CSC Leon funds agencies to provide services collaboratively.<sup>48</sup> Families who receives services for the children from ages 0-3 are then connected to services from providers in the system of care when their child turns 4 years old. Similarly, families who receives services for the children from ages 4-11 are then connected to services from providers in the system of care when their child turns 12 years old.
- Build the capacity of early childhood teachers and staff in Leon County by providing educational grants or scholarships for professional development trainings including college credit-earning courses and continuing education unit through partnerships with Tallahassee Community College, Florida A & M University, and Florida State University.
- Bring awareness to programs that provides education-based salary supplements and encourages continued education among early childhood educators in Leon County, FL (e.g., WAGE\$, TEACH).

<sup>58</sup> Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P., ... & Japel, C. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental psychology*, 43(6), 1428.

<sup>59</sup> Hair, E., Halle, T., Terry-Humen, E., Lavelle, B., & Calkins, J. (2006). Children's school readiness in the ECLS-K: Predictions to academic, health, and social outcomes in first grade. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(4), 431-454.

- Develop an early childhood data system linked to the K-12 system to track children and the educator workforce and guide decisions about investments and supports.

Additional recommendations for school readiness was provided by Leon County service providers:

- Raising awareness of existing programming among parents
- Creating easily navigable enrollment processes
- Offering services to increase parent and family involvement
- Promoting parent engagement through education on topics such as their role in their child's school readiness and academic performance
- Providing parent outreach and support services, including family case management
- Utilizing a place-based approach to programming through pop-up preschools, specialized neighborhood-focused services (as mentioned in Recommendation 3), and blended child and parent education
- Integrating wrap-around services in programming, such as social emotional learning and trauma-informed care

Given the strong role that school readiness plays in fostering students' future academic success, solutions such as these will assist CSC Leon in ensuring children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## Food Insecurity

As described in the findings section, the estimated rate of food insecurity is slightly higher in Leon County than for the state. In order to avoid hunger, it is important to ensure that community members have knowledge of and assistance in accessing federally funded programs, such as:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Special Supplemental Nutritional for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Commodity Supplemental Food Programs
- Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Program
- Summer Food Service Program

Having said this, about half of individuals who are experiencing food insecurity in Leon County are not eligible for federal food or nutrition programs. Therefore, it is also critical that non-federally funded services and programs operate within the community. Examples of such services include food pantries, food drives in which community members, service providers, and organizations collaborate to collect and distribute nonperishable food items to families in need, and programs that provide monthly financial support to childcare providers for serving nutritious meals.

## Physical Health

While findings indicate the overall health of Leon County children, youth, and families seems to be heading in a positive direction, it is important to prioritize prevention and early intervention strategies so that the community may continue on this trajectory. Promoting prevention and early intervention health behaviors in youth, such as healthy eating, positive mental health, or moderate physical activity, can foster better health outcomes in childhood and lower risk of chronic disease in adulthood.<sup>60,61</sup> Therefore, it is important to consider prevention and early intervention tactics to give children, youth, and families the best opportunity to reach their full health potential.

To start, the State of Florida has an obesity rate for children ages 10 to 17 that is 0.7% higher than the Country (32.1% ).<sup>62</sup> Obesity as a child is associated with several adverse health outcomes in adulthood, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer .<sup>63</sup> Therefore, CSC Leon may want to consider developing prevention and early intervention programs that target obesity and contribute to healthier futures. For example, CSC Leon could implement a program like the Bright Bodies Weight Management Program for Children: A weight management program for children between the ages of 6 to 17 that aims to prevent and address childhood obesity by offering opportunities for physical activity, nutrition education, behavior modification, and parental education to foster supportive health habits .<sup>64</sup> This program was found to be successful in not only decreasing children's weight and improving insulin levels during the program, but also in sustaining these changes for 12 months following the program.<sup>35</sup> An approach such as this meets the request by providers "for early identification of health problems and health promotion strategies", as well as the community's request for more programming regarding "exercising and eating right" and general health education.

<sup>60</sup> American Psychological Association. (2016). Childhood obesity disparities: Influential factors and intervention strategies. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2016/06/childhood-obesity#:~:text=Childhood%20obesity%20is%20also%20linked,Farmer%20%26%20McCargar%2C%202012>.

<sup>61</sup> Bergeron, A. (2019, August 19). Childhood Obesity. Children's Services Council (CSC) of Broward County. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://www.cscbroward.org/news/childhood-obesity>

<sup>62</sup> United Health Foundation. (n.d.). Overweight or Obesity - Youth. America's Health Rankings. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from [https://www.america'shealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/youth\\_overweight/state/FL](https://www.america'shealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/youth_overweight/state/FL)

<sup>63</sup> Llewellyn, A., Simmonds, M., Owen, C. G., & Woolacat, N. (2016, January). Childhood obesity as a predictor of morbidity in adulthood: A systematic review and meta-analysis. PubMed.gov. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26440472/>

<sup>64</sup> Bright Bodies. (n.d.). Weight Management Program for Children. Brightbodies.org. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <http://www.brightbodies.org/education-media.html>

## Mental Health and Suicide

As stated in the Findings section, the overall suicide rate in Florida declined significantly from 16.1 in 2019 to 14.4 in 2020. While the state of Florida saw a decline in suicide rates, Leon County saw an increase from 11.1 in 2019 to 13.6 in 2020. For ages 10-21, the suicide rate in Leon County increased nearly tripled from 5.0 in 2019 to 13.2 in 2020. When examining suicide rates among this age group by gender, suicide rates among males increased from 10.4 in 2019 to 24.3 in 2020 as compared to females, 0 in 2019 to 3.1 in 2020. When examining suicide rates among this age group by race in 2020, suicide rates were 20.5 for White people and 3.8 for Black people and others. A systematic review of evidenced-based interventions for suicide prevention was conducted by Mann, Michel, and Auerbach (2021). Mann et al. reviewed 97 articles published between 2009 and 2019. The published articles were randomized controlled trials with suicidal behavior or ideation as primary outcomes or epidemiological studies of limiting access to lethal means, using educational approaches, and the impact of antidepressant treatment.<sup>65</sup>

Based on findings, authors recommended suicide prevention efforts that focus on the following strategies:

### Training primary care physicians and nurses to better screen and treat depression

Doctors and nurses see 45% of future suicide decedents in the 30 days prior to suicide, and 77% within 12 months of suicide, about double the rate of mental health professionals.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, training doctors and nurses in primary care and other nonpsychiatric care settings to better screen and treat depression was identified as an evidenced-based intervention. Training primary care providers at the state and local levels in screening and treating depression, lowered suicide rates, nonfatal suicide attempts, and suicidal thoughts. Programs that included depression screening and treatment referral lowered suicide rates compared to programs in similar geographic areas that did not include screening and referral.

<sup>65</sup> Mann JJ, Michel CA, Auerbach RP. Improving Suicide Prevention Through Evidence-Based Strategies: A Systematic Review. *Am J Psychiatry*. 2021 Jul;178(7):611-624. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.2020.20060864. Epub 2021 Feb 18. PMID: 33596680.

<sup>66</sup> Luoma JB, Martin CE, Pearson JL. Contact with mental health and primary care providers before suicide: a review of the evidence. *Am J Psychiatry* 2002; 159:909-916

## Educating High School Students About Mental Health and Evaluating Extension of this Approach to College Students

Two studies conducted in high schools found that educating youth, specifically high school students on depression and suicide prevented suicide attempts.<sup>67,68</sup> Among these two studies, one reported that educating youth was more effective than teacher/gatekeeper training.<sup>40</sup>

## Pre-discharge education, follow-up contacts, and outreach for psychiatric patients discharged who experienced a suicidal crisis

The suicide rate for the first week after discharge for patients with identified suicide risk history is 300 times higher than the general population's.<sup>69</sup> and is greatest in the first few days after discharge.<sup>70</sup> Contact and/or active outreach following a suicide attempt or suicidal ideation crisis is recommended as an evidenced-based intervention.

Additional evidenced-based strategies noted were means restriction, which targets the most lethal methods.<sup>71,72</sup>

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), in collaboration with experts from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), have created a Blueprint for Youth Suicide Prevention which aims to support pediatric health clinicians in identifying strategies and partnerships to support children and teens at risk for suicide.

The Blueprint offers the following recommendations to national leaders:

- Build the evidence base to address disparities in youth suicide prevention;
- Increase payment and insurance coverage for mental/behavioral health and suicide prevention services;
- Increase access to affordable, effective mental health care for all youth;
- Address lethal means access to reduce suicide risk among youth, such as the presence of firearms in a home;
- Build the mental and behavioral health workforce;
- Foster healthy mental development in children and adolescents;

<sup>67</sup> Wasserman D, Hoven CW, Wasserman C, et al: School-based suicide prevention programmes: the SEYLE cluster-randomised, controlled trial. *Lancet* 2015; 385:1536–1544 30.

<sup>68</sup> Aseltine RH Jr, James A, Schilling EA, et al: Evaluating the SOS suicide prevention program: a replication and extension. *BMC Public Health* 2007; 7:161

<sup>69</sup> Chung, D. T., Hadzi-Pavlovic, D., Wang, M., Swaraj, S., Olsson, M., & Large, M. (2019). Meta-analysis of suicide rates in the first week and the first month after psychiatric hospitalisation. *BMJ Open*, 9(3), e023883. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-023883>

<sup>70</sup> Riblet, N., Shiner, B., Watts, B. V., Mills, P., Rusch, B., & Hemphill, R. R. (2017). Death by suicide within 1 week of hospital discharge: A retrospective study of root cause analysis reports. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 205(6), 436–442.

<sup>71</sup> Daigle MS: Suicide prevention through means restriction: assessing the risk of substitution: a critical review and synthesis. *Accid Anal Prev* 2005; 37:625–632

<sup>72</sup> Yip PS, Caine E, Yousuf S, et al: Means restriction for suicide prevention. *Lancet* 2012; 379:2393–2399



- Address disparities in suicide risk via education and policy change;
- Support children and adolescents in crisis;
- Build clinical-community partnerships to better identify youth at risk for suicide and provide the supports they need.
- Pediatricians are well-poised to speak out against stigma, raise awareness, and educate patients and families about mental health and suicide prevention. Within their practices, they are encouraged to screen all patients ages 12 and older for mental health concerns and suicide risk. Most young people keep suicidal thoughts to themselves and do not bring up the topic on their own. Screening can help open the door for an honest conversation about suicide risk.

CSC Leon could consider all of the aforementioned recommendations but should include the role of race and gender in their approach given that findings indicate higher rates of suicide for White males.

## Mental Health & Community Violence

To further address the mental health of children, youth, and families in Leon County, the CSC may want to consider prevention and early intervention programming targeting community violence. As mentioned in the findings, the total index crime rates in Leon County were higher than Florida by 907.6 and domestic violence was higher by 332.4 per 100,000. Additionally, local parents in zip code 32304 (i.e., Frenchtown, FL) continuously emphasized violence within the community that has contributed to feeling unsafe and unable to allow children to leave the house. For example, one participant stated:

"I feel there ain't enough safety zones. I don't feel safe. I'm always worrying about my kids. I don't let them outside if I'm not out here watching them. There's a lot of kids that be unattended, not watched. I don't feel safe. I worry about my kids all the time. Kids killing kids, kids killing adults. I'm scared for my life. I ain't even going to lie. I don't. And my kids, they're boys. They're getting older. I can't keep them locked up in the house. But that's what I do for safety. I don't trust it. And I don't like it."

This aligns with the most frequently reported school incidents in Leon County shared in the findings section (e.g., fighting and physical attack). This type of violence can be traumatizing for youth, often contributing to adverse mental, physical, emotional, and academic outcomes.<sup>73</sup> While violence may not be as frequent in every household or area of Leon County, it is important to prevent such acts and intervene early if or when it does occur.

According to the CDC, preventing youth violence starts by enhancing protective factors and minimizing risk factors.<sup>74</sup> Some listed prevention approaches designed to support protective factors are listed in table 10 below:

**Table 10. Approaches to Addressing Community Violence with Youth**

Protective Factors that Reduce Risk for Adverse Outcomes Among Youth	Proposed Approach
Promote family environments that support healthy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide early childhood home visitation</li> <li>• Promote effective parenting skills to prevent and intervene with community violence</li> </ul>
Connect youth to caring adults and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring programs</li> <li>• After-school programs</li> </ul>
Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treatment to lessen the harms of violence exposures</li> <li>• Treatment to prevent problem behavior and further involvement in violence</li> <li>• Hospital-community partnership</li> </ul>

<sup>73</sup> Cooley-Strickland, M., Quille, T. J., Griffin, R. S., Stuart, E. A., Bradshaw, C. P., & Furr-Holden, D. (2009). Community violence and youth: affect, behavior, substance use, and academics. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 12(2), 127–156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-009-0051-6>

<sup>74</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, September 2). Youth Violence Resources. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/resources.html>

A program, like the CDC's Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE), may provide CSC Leon with a strong framework for early intervention and prevention within this area. STRYVE is a national initiative designed to "prevent youth violence before it starts" by: (1) strengthening youth's capacity to resist violence, (2) cultivating positive relationships between youth and adults, (3) encouraging safer, connected communities that thrive and not just try to survive, and (4) working to transform societal norms that promote violence.<sup>75,76</sup> STRYVE was informed by decades of research that has allowed this program to successfully prevent and address community violence among children, youth, and families in areas such as Salinas California, Houston Texas, Portland Oregon, and Boston Massachusetts.<sup>77</sup> CSC Leon could build on this model by including a mentoring program component within their existing youth development programs, specifically for programs within areas where community violence is prevalent. Qualitative data findings indicate that community violence impacts males at a higher rate than females.

## Housing

The child/youth poverty rate is slightly higher in Leon County when compared to the rest of Florida. Furthermore, housing costs have risen and there is an increase in homelessness. . Additionally, funding for the only emergency shelter in Leon County was significantly reduced this year (2022). All of these factors combined may contribute to more challenges related to housing needs and exacerbate present resources to support local children, youth, and families when facing homelessness. Therefore, CSC Leon may want to focus on preventing or immediately addressing homelessness to ensure that current programs and services are not over exhausted and all individuals have their basic needs met to reach their full potential.

To address the immediate needs of children and their families that find themselves homeless, short-term emergency services are necessary, such as vouchers or stipends for rent/housing and utilities. Examples of other programs and services include independent and affordable housing, transitional housing and services, and homeless shelters.

Research also shows that strong Continuums of Care provide children and families with access to housing services in a timely manner. When adequately organized, sufficient housing options can increase housing stability more quickly and shelter families from chronic homelessness. Additionally, a "coordinated approach as intended with the Federal Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH Act of 2009), when modeled at the community level, decreases family stressors and

<sup>75</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/stryve\\_2\\_pager-final\\_2012-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/stryve_2_pager-final_2012-a.pdf)

<sup>76</sup> : David-Ferdon C, Simon TR. Striving To Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRYVE): The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's national initiative to prevent youth violence foundational resource. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2012.

<sup>77</sup> STRYVE. (2019). Evidence-Based Practices: STRYVE. Retrieved March 24, 2022, from <https://www.showmeboone.com/community-services/collective-impact/posts/evidence-based-practices-stryve.asp#>

increases the likelihood families can be permanently housed. It may also alleviate the portion of children who are separated from families and admitted to child welfare due to lack of adequate housing."<sup>78</sup>

In addition to such services, it is important to invest in programs that *prevent* homelessness among children and their families. Research shows that two principal factors related to the economic insecurity and housing of families are unemployment and housing foreclosures.<sup>79</sup> To prevent homelessness among children and their families, programs centered around financial prosperity could be offered to parents. Examples include free tax income preparation to maximize tax credits, job placement assistance and coaching, referrals to navigate human services systems, and resources to fill educational gaps, acquire certifications, and meet requirements for full-time employment. Programs on financial literacy could also be offered to youth, such as building credit, budgeting, saving and investing.

Another prevention strategy is to identify youth who are at risk of entering, in, or transitioning out of the child welfare system or experiencing homelessness. Once identified, youth receive an individualized plan to foster their academic and life-skills success. Youth may also receive referrals to support services, such as legal advocacy, academic support, health, and housing. To build upon this, CSC Leon might consider allocating some of the emergency relief funds (e.g., natural disaster funds) toward diversion funding. This funding may be used for things, such as temporary housing or supporting individuals with utility or housing-related bills that would otherwise lead to homelessness if not paid. Diversion funding may help keep individuals from becoming homeless, thus reducing those in need of homelessness support services that may not be present in the community.

<sup>78</sup> De Masi, M. (2011). A Research Brief on Child Wellbeing. Council on Children & Families. <https://www.ccf.ny.gov/files/8613/8255/3099/HousingBrief.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> Rog, D.J., McCombs-Thornton, K.L., Gilbert-Mongelli, A.M., Brito, M.C., & Holupka, C.S. (1995). Implementation of the homeless families program: 2. Characteristics, strengths and needs of participant families. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 65, 514-527

## RECOMMENDATION 7: LEVERAGE EXPERTS TO ADDRESS SYSTEMIC ISSUES IMPACTING CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES IN LEON COUNTY

Findings indicate that disparities exist by socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity in Leon County on a number of child outcomes. A plethora of research has shown that the environments in which children are born, live, learn, play, and age affect a wide range of child health, functioning, developmental trajectories, outcomes and risks. For children and youth, the determinants of health disparities include exposure to poverty, unsafe and unstable homes, community violence, unequal access to health care, poor environmental conditions, and educational inequities. Research evidence indicates that addressing the determinants of early childhood development has the most-effective impact on health equity. Addressing the determinants of early childhood development requires tackling structural, systematic, and social issues. Although challenging, addressing these issues at the core are most likely to have a substantial impact on addressing disparities within Leon County.

Recognizing that many of the issues present in both Leon County and the United States as a nation are systemic, it could be beneficial to leverage subject-matter experts to address such matters (e.g., experts in disproportionate minority contact, ALICE families). For example, this can be done through appointing subject matter experts on strategic planning committees to inform the work through a global lens (see Recommendation 2). Often, systemic issues are addressed through policies, systems, and environmental changes (PSEs). Such changes can create a wider impact as they aim to target the system as a whole, rather than individual factors managed with short-term changes. Thus, it is important to invite people to the table who can guide the desired impact CSC Leon hopes to see for all children, youth, and families from a culturally competent, inclusive approach.

## RECOMMENDATION 8: CREATE A CSC LEON YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL TO ELEVATE YOUTH VOICES

Survey and focus group findings both demonstrated a desire for more occupational opportunities for youth, as well as programming that ensured youth were college and career ready. Additionally, parents also discussed the disparities between those who are aware of resources and those who are not. During this exchange, parents recommended engaging youth to communicate about the resources in the community across all types of backgrounds (e.g., school types, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses).

*"It's the simple fact that people who are economically challenged, it doesn't matter regardless of their ethnicity or skin color, they find out very little about what's going on in this community. It is shocking when you say, 'You didn't know they had that program?' They were like, 'No, never heard of it.' They never knew they had it. Well, it's been going on for years and they've been a part of the community for years. The messaging to people who have resources within this community, and that is not only economic resources, but a lot of other resources in there, that population knows more about programs that they may not take a part of, but the people who really need it in this community have no idea what's going on. And that's sad to say, but if you divide this community into quadrants, north, south, east, and west, people who live in the western and the southern part of Leon County for some reason, I have no idea why they have less and they get less information."*

*"Why don't we engage those very youth we're trying to engage, pay them to go door to door, to communicate what's available in this community [...] And it crosses those racial boundaries because we're going to have all colors of children go into all colors of people's houses. And it's the longest conversation at the table."*

Beyond this, CSC Leon has also been intentional about ensuring youth voices were centered during the strategic planning process through focus groups and community forums. To address these gaps and continue elevating youth voices in the community, CSC Leon may consider incorporating a CSC Leon Youth Advisory Council. A Youth Advisory Council tends to engage young people from certain backgrounds to advise on issues that directly affect children and youth, while building up skills needed for

success (e.g., leadership, civic engagement )<sup>80</sup>. For CSC Leon, a youth advisory council could support the efforts of CSC Leon and elevate the voices of those living in the community during the process. As members of this council, youth from all different backgrounds and county locations could serve to inform and support the approach taken by CSC Leon by:

1. Having important conversations about children and youth related issues within their homes, schools, and neighborhoods.
2. Providing important insight to CSC Leon stakeholders about proposed efforts (e.g., impact of campaign messaging on youth, important partnerships to consider for activities, popular areas of the community that may increase youth participation).
3. Reducing barriers that limit awareness of resources by promoting CSC Leon efforts to friends, families, and other peers.

Additionally, youth could benefit from participation by:

4. Engaging in a leadership role that provides hands-on experience and training for future endeavors.
5. Gaining experience within industries partnering with CSC Leon (e.g., non-profits, education sectors) by participating in activities and services that not only prepare them to be successful on their future career pathways, but also serve the community,
6. Receiving financial support. Other entities who have incorporated a Youth Advisory Council have provided scholarships for youth participation .<sup>81</sup> CSC Leon may consider having youth from across the county apply to serve and receive a financial award that could support those accepted in specific youth development domains designed to promote future success. In addition to financial support, this approach would also allow youth to prepare the skills they may need for other application processes, such as college or job applications. Having an application process would also allow CSC Leon to ensure members from all backgrounds and regions of the community are included at the table.

Ultimately, centering the voices of local youth through an approach such as this is vital to consider as it not only ensures that CSC Leon is providing the best possible support to Leon County children and families, but that they are doing so in a way that is appealing to those they are trying to serve.

<sup>80</sup> Youth Power. (2020). Youth Advisory Councils: Eight steps to consider before you engage. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from <https://www.youthpower.org/resources/youth-advisory-councils-eight-steps-consider-you-engage>

<sup>81</sup> City of Miramar Youth Advisory Council. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2022, from <https://www.miramarfl.gov/1941/Youth-Advisory-Council>



## RECOMMENDATION 9: BRING AWARENESS TO CSC LEON'S PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

During the process of conducting in-person outreach, focus groups, and survey administration, several members of the community were seemingly unclear regarding CSC's Leon's presence in the community. To ensure that residents are aware of CSC's Leon's function and the resources it provides, CSC Leon may want to develop an awareness campaign that permeates throughout the community to foster public awareness and trust of the independent public entity. Such elements may include:

- The mission and vision of CSC Leon
- Explanations of all three of CSC's prioritized areas and associated youth development domains
- Strategic plan for community impact, including the desired outcomes and steps to assess progress on such changes
- Advertisements for CSC Leon's efforts in the community, such as local events, workshops, and other newly funded programs

Raising awareness about CSC Leon using this approach is a great way to ensure the community is not only conscious of and engaged with the resources available to them, but also aware of the ways in which CSC Leon is holding itself accountable.

To execute this campaign, CSC Leon could hire a local public relation (PR) or marketing firm because they would provide services that enhance the impact of this approach. Services offered by these firms often include:<sup>82</sup>

- Campaign branding
- Core marketing materials that are professionally designed
- Targeted distribution plan for campaign materials
- Data tracking to monitor campaign reach and impact

Beyond a PR or marketing firm, it is also vital that CSC Leon involve local partners in these efforts. Partners, like service providers and active community members, could bring an important perspective and voice to a campaign such as this. For example, local providers could serve as spokespeople for the campaign, leveraging trust and credibility to community members within their network. They could also boost the campaign to local children, youth, and family members within their reach to ensure that more community members become aware of CSC Leon's vision, goals, and actions. This is an extra step that ensures CSC Leon is engaging local champions to raise awareness about its presence in the community.

<sup>82</sup> Mad Group Consulting Inc. (2019). The role and function of marketing firms: How they help your business. Retrieved March 31, 2022, from <https://www.marketingandadvertisingdesigngroup.com/the-role-and-function-of-marketing-firms-how-they-help-your-business/#:~:text=Along%20the%20way%2C%20the%20firm,drive%20more%20traffic%20your%20way.>



# APPENDIX: TABLES AND FIGURES

**TABLE 1:**

## Response to Items Related to Early Childhood and Education Services

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
There are enough programs that focus on the basic educational needs of children.	0.12	0.29	0.36	0.23
Children have access to quality education.	0.09	0.15	0.52	0.25
There are affordable and accessible after-school programs for children (ages 5 to 13).	0.17	0.32	0.37	0.14
There are affordable and accessible after-school programs for youth (ages 14 to 17).	0.25	0.41	0.25	0.09
There are affordable and accessible summer programs for children (ages 5 to 13).	0.17	0.35	0.36	0.11
There are affordable and accessible summer programs for youth (ages 14 to 17).	0.24	0.42	0.25	0.10
There are enough programs that help increase school performance among children.	0.18	0.38	0.32	0.12
There are affordable and accessible early childhood (e.g., Pre-K and Head Start) programs available for young children.	0.14	0.26	0.45	0.14
There are enough programs that support children to enter Kindergarten socially and emotionally ready.	0.15	0.30	0.41	0.14
There are enough programs that support children to enter Kindergarten academically ready.	0.13	0.30	0.43	0.14

NOTE: Proportions are based on all respondents. Since some respondents chose not to answer some items, proportions may not sum to 100%

**Table 2:**

## Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender in 2019-20

White Female	White Male	Black or African American Female	Black or African American Male	Hispanic – Latino Female	Hispanic – Latino Male	Asian Female	Asian Male
94.1%	89.4%	90.7%	82.5%	92.5%	86.6%	98.7%	97.3%

**Table 3:**

## Percent of Students Scoring Proficient in ELA (Level 3 or Above) by Grade and School Year: All <sup>14</sup>

Grade Level	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21
3	63.00%	61.30%	61.80%	61.30%	61.00%	54.30%
4	57.90%	60.40%	58.80%	57.50%	57.30%	53.60%
5	57.10%	57.10%	60.90%	56.80%	55.70%	54.10%
6	56.50%	54.00%	54.20%	56.50%	54.40%	51.50%
7	53.90%	54.20%	53.30%	54.50%	56.00%	48.90%
8	59.70%	59.90%	59.40%	61.60%	59.40%	53.10%
9	58.80%	57.90%	56.40%	59.70%	58.40%	53.00%
10	55.20%	53.90%	57.10%	57.80%	57.40%	51.70%

**Table 4:**

## Percent of Students Scoring Proficient in ELA (Level 3 or Above) by Grade and School Year: Students with Disabilities <sup>18</sup>

Grade Level	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21
3	31.20%	34.30%	38.80%	38.10%	34.10%	29.00%
4	26.20%	28.40%	27.50%	31.70%	28.90%	26.90%
5	20.70%	17.40%	23.60%	24.90%	25.10%	21.90%
6	19.70%	15.60%	15.80%	20.80%	20.30%	21.00%
7	20.60%	17.40%	14.70%	15.70%	18.80%	18.10%
8	19.60%	24.50%	19.70%	20.90%	17.40%	17.00%
9	19.50%	17.50%	22.20%	17.60%	20.00%	13.90%
10	15.70%	16.90%	19.90%	19.90%	16.70%	13.30%

**Table 5:**

# Percent of Students Scoring Proficient in ELA (Level 3 or Above) by Grade and School Year: Economically Disadvantaged vs. Not Economically Disadvantaged<sup>19</sup>

Grade Level		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21
3	Disadv.	36.10%	36.50%	39.70%	40.50%	39.90%	34.20%
3	Not	73.50%	74.40%	77.40%	83.90%	76.30%	70.80%
4	Disadv.	40.40%	36.90%	40.20%	38.40%	36.60%	29.30%
4	Not	76.00%	69.50%	75.00%	79.50%	74.20%	72.80%
5	Disadv.	36.50%	35.00%	37.50%	39.00%	35.70%	29.30%
5	Not	74.50%	73.70%	75.50%	79.70%	74.80%	71.50%
6	Disadv.	31.90%	33.00%	32.50%	37.30%	32.80%	28.60%
6	Not	72.50%	74.40%	76.00%	79.60%	69.70%	71.10%
7	Disadv.	32.20%	31.00%	33.70%	37.10%	34.70%	28.40%
7	Not	75.30%	68.60%	76.60%	79.90%	70.10%	69.30%
8	Disadv.	39.40%	36.30%	35.20%	41.20%	39.20%	37.00%
8	Not	78.20%	73.10%	73.00%	84.90%	76.20%	72.80%
9	Disadv.	36.90%	33.70%	34.00%	37.60%	35.90%	32.20%
9	Not	77.10%	73.80%	77.40%	81.70%	75.60%	71.90%
10	Disadv.	33.40%	31.50%	37.80%	40.80%	32.70%	36.80%
10	Not	73.50%	72.90%	70.70%	82.20%	67.60%	71.20%

**Table 6:**

## Percent of Third Grade Students Scoring Proficient in ELA by Race/Ethnicity<sup>20</sup>

Race/ Ethnicity	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21
1-White	69.90%	74.00%	77.60%	75.10%	77.20%	70.10%
2-Hisp.	56.30%	59.00%	52.60%	57.60%	54.70%	54.10%
3-Black	30.80%	27.70%	31.00%	30.10%	31.80%	29.40%

**Table 7:**

## Response to Items Related to Health Services and Food Security

Item	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Mothers have access to quality prenatal care (i.e., before birth).	0.07	0.19	0.52	0.22
Mothers have access to quality care during delivery.	0.06	0.16	0.56	0.22
Mothers have access to quality postnatal care (i.e., after birth).	0.08	0.28	0.46	0.17
The basic healthcare needs of children are met.	0.08	0.20	0.53	0.18
There are affordable and accessible healthcare providers for children (i.e., pediatricians and specialists).	0.11	0.25	0.47	0.16
Families have access to opportunities for early identification of children's health and development.	0.12	0.27	0.43	0.18
Families have access to affordable mental healthcare services for children.	0.26	0.37	0.26	0.11
Families have access to affordable dental care services for children.	0.18	0.30	0.40	0.12
Families have access to affordable vision care services for children.	0.15	0.29	0.43	0.13
The basic food needs of children are met.	0.09	0.23	0.50	0.18
School-age children have easy access to free and nutritious meals in the summer.	0.10	0.30	0.44	0.16

NOTE: Proportions are based on all respondents. Since some respondents chose not to answer some items, proportions may not sum to 100%.

**Table 8:****Domestic Violence Rate per 100,000 by Year**

Year	Leon County	Florida
2020	824.6	492.2
2019	716.2	495.1
2018	554.7	500.6
2017	592.4	520.4
2016	651.7	522.2
2015	684.7	541.1
2014	606.5	545.9
2013	541	559.3
2012	444.9	565.1
2011	536.1	589.6
2010	501.2	602.4

**Table 9:****Total Index Crime Rate per 100,000 by Year**

Year	Leon County	Florida
2020	3,059.60	2,152.30
2019	3,845.50	2,552.40
2018	4,455.90	2,721.40
2017	4,802.40	2,989.20
2016	5,655.40	3,181.40
2015	5,294.60	3,326.50
2014	5,015.40	3,434.70
2013	4,692.60	3,611.20
2012	4,626.70	3,787.60
2011	5,014.20	4,052.60
2010	4,740.70	4,086.90



**Table 10:**

## Response to Items Related to Housing, Family Support, and Youth Development

Item	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Children can play safely in local parks and recreational facilities.	0.07	0.19	0.54	0.21
The basic housing needs of children are met.	0.11	0.18	0.50	0.21
There are enough services to support foster parents.	0.18	0.36	0.32	0.14
My neighborhood is a good place to raise children.	0.05	0.13	0.55	0.27
There are enough service(s) that build occupational skills for youth.	0.17	0.41	0.30	0.12
There are enough service(s) that expand career pathways for youth.	0.16	0.44	0.28	0.12
There are available service(s) that reduce the number of children and youth at risk of experiencing homelessness.	0.19	0.41	0.28	0.13
There are enough service(s) that support youth transitioning out of the child welfare system.	0.25	0.43	0.20	0.13
There are enough service(s) that enhance caregiver capacity to meet emotional & behavioral needs of neglected and abused children and youth.	0.26	0.43	0.20	0.12

**Table 11:**

## Responses to items related to housing

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
In my neighborhood, it is easy to find a good place to live.	0.13	0.30	0.45	0.12
In my neighborhood, housing is affordable.	0.25	0.40	0.28	0.06
In my neighborhood, homelessness is a problem.	0.11	0.20	0.45	0.24
I know where to find help in dealing with challenges related to housing.	0.22	0.34	0.30	0.13
In my neighborhood, houses are safe to live in (e.g., free of lead paint, mold, contaminated water).	0.20	0.27	0.40	0.13

**Table 12:**

## Schools Where Less than a Third of Students Passed the State 4th Grade ELA Assessment in 2020 - 2021

John G Riley Elementary	(16% passed)
Frank Hartsfield Elementary	(17% passed)
Governor's Charter School	(19% passed)
Bond Elementary	(20% passed)
Woodville School	(24% passed)
Ruediger Elementary	(26% passed)
Astoria Park Elementary	(29% passed)
Sabal Palm Elementary	(31% passed)
Fort Braden School	(32% passed)
Pineview Elementary	(33% passed)

**Table 13:**

## Schools where less than a third of students passed the 8th grade mathematics assessment in 2020-21

Elizabeth Cobb Middle School	(9% passing)
Griffin Middle School	(9% passing)
Florida A&M University Research School	(10% passing)
R. Frank Nims Middle School	(11% passing)
Woodville School	(19% passing)
Tallahassee School of Math and Sciences	(21% passing)
Governor's Charter School	(24% passing)

Table 14:

## Percentage of PS and CNAS Respondents from Zip Code

Zip Code	Percentage of PS and CNAS Respondents
32301	11.7%
32302	0.5%
32303	18.0%
32304	8.9%
32305	4.7%
32306	0.3%
32307	0.3%
32308	7.7%
32309	11.4%
32310	7.6%
32311	6.0%
32312	12.6%
32314	0.3%
32315	0.2%
32317	7.2%
32318	0.2%
32327	0.3%
32333	0.2%
32343	0.3%
32344	0.7%
32351	0.5%
32352	0.2%
Other	0.2%
	100%

## CSC Leon Funding Options A

### Narrative

Based on the findings identified in the Gap Analysis Report, through information gathered from secondary data sources, the community survey, community engagement activities as well as the Comprehensive Programs Inventory and Informative Programs Inventory, the following report provides recommendations by Q-Q Research for CSC Leon's expedited priority investments. The programs/initiatives funded through the expedited priority investments are meant to address community needs in the short-term while the longer-term community investment process is developed and finalized. The awards for Funding Options A will run from June 1, 2022, through September 30, 2022, and will generate immediate, positive impacts on priority areas throughout Leon County.

The Gap Analysis Report identified a variety of community needs and recommendations for ways in which CSC Leon can play a key role in addressing those needs. Recognizing that there are 1) limited funds for the initial expedited investments, and 2) limited time to implement a comprehensive solicitation process, it is the recommendation of Q-Q Research that CSC Leon focus on expanding and increasing participation of children and families in existing high-quality programs that address the gaps identified in the Gap Analysis Report. The recommended expedited investments focus on the key findings and recommendations and include:

1. Increased and accessible mental health services for children and families; increased awareness of available resources in the community
2. Addressing disparities by socioeconomic level, race and ethnicity, and ability across all indicators and domains
3. Increased participation in summer programs that include academic support, social-emotional learning, health and wellness, and parent engagement
4. Increased awareness and enrollment in public benefits to assist with food insecurity, housing stability and access to health insurance
5. Increased access to oral health and vision care
6. Increased opportunities for parent education and parental support

Additionally, there are recommended investments that cut across all domains which include a public relations campaign to bring awareness to CSC Leon's presence in the community and the existing resources available to children and families, capacity building for service providers, emergency funds for natural disasters and family stabilization, and reserves for the first quarter allocation of the longer-term community investments. Below is a description of the expedited funding recommendations for each domain as well as the key outcomes aligned to the investments and the process for soliciting the recommended services.

## Success in School Life

In order to address the key gaps identified in the Success in School Life domain, which include increasing summer and afterschool programming, social-emotional learning opportunities and academic supports, it would be most impactful, in the short-term, for CSC Leon to make investments in existing high-quality summer programs that have the capacity to increase participation, have demonstrated impact and provide key program components that meet the identified needs. Additionally, in an effort to address the disparities in access to quality programs and in academic success by socioeconomic level, race and ethnicity and ability, it is recommended that programs serving in priority zip codes and/or serving vulnerable populations be prioritized for funding. Investing in high quality summer programming in both early childhood and school-age children aligns with Recommendation 1 (Focus on Closing Gaps Through Afterschool & Summer Programming) and Recommendation 5 (Prioritize Prevention and Early Intervention) of the Gap Analysis Report and will allow for short-term impact by supporting both key outcomes for the Success in School Life domain – 1) Increasing the number of children who enter kindergarten socially, emotionally and academically ready, and 2) Increasing school performance and reduce juvenile crime among school-age children and youth. The table below outlines the approach to funding for the expedited investments in the Success in School Life domain.

## Success in School Life

Subdomain	Identified Gaps	Proposed Short-term Investment	Population (Universal/Targeted)	Programmatic Requirements	Estimated Cost	Procurement Process
School readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordability of early learning programs</li> <li>Availability of early learning programs</li> <li>Awareness of existing early learning programs</li> </ul>	Child scholarship slot payments to expand participation in summer early learning programs	Prioritize funding for programs serving in target zip codes and/or serve vulnerable populations (CWD, economically disadvantaged, ELL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing high-quality, evidence-based school readiness and VPK program</li> <li>Capacity for additional slots</li> <li>Social-emotional learning</li> <li>Health and wellness                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthy meals</li> <li>Nutrition education</li> <li>Physical activity</li> </ul> </li> <li>Parent engagement and education</li> </ul>	TBD	<p>Simplified RFP process for existing school readiness and VPK programs offering summer services.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Procurement waiver to fund ELC Big Bend to distribute child scholarship slot payments to early learning providers</p>

## School-age supports

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English Language Arts proficiency</li><li>• Mathematics proficiency</li><li>• Disparities in education and proficiency across subpopulations (CWD, economically disadvantaged, ELL)</li><li>• Services for children with disabilities</li><li>• Social-emotional supports for children</li><li>• Affordable and accessible afterschool and summer programming</li><li>• Parent engagement and education</li></ul>	Additional slots for existing summer camp programs	Prioritize funding for programs serving in target zip codes and/or serve vulnerable populations (CWD, economically disadvantaged, ELL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Existing high-quality summer program</li><li>• Capacity for additional slots</li><li>• Social-emotional learning</li><li>• Academic support/enrichment</li><li>• Life Skills</li><li>• Enrichment</li><li>• Health and wellness<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Healthy meals</li><li>○ Nutrition education</li><li>○ Physical activity</li></ul></li><li>• Parent engagement and education</li></ul>	TBD	Simplified RFP process for existing service providers offering summer programming for school-age children.
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## Healthy Children, Youth & Families

The key gaps identified in the Healthy Children, Youth & Families domain primarily stem around access to affordable health care and services (physical and mental health), obesity, lack of physical fitness and sports programming for youth, auxiliary health services such as vision and dental care, trauma-informed care and programming, and awareness of mental health services available in the community. These gaps and challenges are especially present in the priority zip codes. In order to address the gaps identified in the short-term, it is recommended that CSC Leon focus on three investment areas – 1) Benefits awareness and enrollment, 2) Mobile health units offering pediatric, vision and oral health services, and 3) Mental health specialists in summer programs. Funding organizations that are trusted in the community and are keenly aware of the public benefits available to families to increase enrollment in public benefits can help close the gap of affordable health care, food insecurity and stable housing. Additionally, there are existing mobile health units serving Leon County that focus on pediatric, vision and oral health. In order to expand these services to more children in the community, it is recommended that CSC Leon invest in expanding the reach of existing units to rotate through the summer programs funded in Success in School Life domain. Lastly, the need for mental health services was identified as a key concern in the community. There is an opportunity to invest in this area in alignment with the Success in School Life domain investments by funding mental health specialists in the school readiness and summer programs identified for funding in that domain. These recommended investments align with Recommendation 4 (Target Inequity Through Access), Recommendation 5 (Bring Awareness to Current Resources) and Recommendation 6 (Prioritize Prevention and Early Intervention) of the Gap Analysis Report and will allow for short-term impact by supporting the outcomes in the Healthy Children, Youth & Families domain. The table below outlines the approach to funding for the expedited investments in the Healthy Children, Youth & Families domain.

## Healthy Children, Youth & Families

Subdomain	Identified Gaps	Proposed Short-term Investment	Population (Universal/Targeted)	Programmatic Requirements	Estimated Cost	Procurement Process
Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disparities in uninsured children by zip code</li> <li>Affordable and accessible programs for youth fitness activities and sports</li> <li>Affordable and accessible vision and oral health services</li> <li>Limited health education</li> <li>Awareness of available health services in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits Awareness &amp; Enrollment Support</li> <li>Mobile Health Units                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pediatric</li> <li>Vision</li> <li>Oral Health</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits Awareness &amp; Enrollment – target zip codes</li> <li>Mobile Health Units – prioritize locations in target zip codes and/or vulnerable populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits Awareness &amp; Enrollment Support:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public benefits outreach and awareness</li> <li>One-to-one enrollment support</li> </ul> </li> <li>Mobile Health Units                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand capacity of existing units</li> <li>Provide screening and health services</li> <li>Rotate throughout summer camp programs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Benefits Enrollment - \$90,000 (\$10K/month/provider – 3 providers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits Awareness &amp; Enrollment - Simplified RFP process for existing community-based providers linking families to public benefits.</li> <li>Mobile Health Units - Simplified RFP process for existing mobile health units or sole source contract if limited number of units available.</li> </ul>

<b>Mental Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key concern in the community</li> <li>• Affordable and accessible mental health services</li> <li>• Caregiver capacity and support to meet emotional needs of children</li> <li>• Anger and trauma management support</li> <li>• Social-emotional learning opportunities</li> <li>• Awareness of existing mental health services and resources</li> </ul>	Mental Health Specialists in Summer Programs	Universal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assigned to funded summer camp programs</li> <li>• Implement universal awareness campaigns</li> <li>• Provide training for staff</li> <li>• Provide mental health support for children and youth</li> </ul>	TBD	Include in RFP for expanded summer programming in the Success in School Life domain.
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## Stable & Nurturing Families & Community

The Stable & Nurturing Families & Community domain has three subdomains that are overarching and impact all other domains – Youth Development, Food & Housing Stability and Enhanced Caregivers. The gaps identified focus on poor care coordination amongst providers, families experiencing poverty and lacking basic needs such as food security and stable housing, a need for caregiver programming and support (including mental health services), access to youth enrichment programs focused on college and career readiness, and the need for a database where information about available programs and resources is easily accessible to families. Many of these gaps and needs require long-term solutions and a systems-change approach. However, there are some short-term opportunities to begin addressing the identified gaps. For Youth Development, similarly to the Success in Schools domain, it is recommended that CSC Leon make investments in existing high-quality summer youth enrichment programs that have the capacity to increase participation, have demonstrated impact and provide key programmatic components in the areas of life skills development and college and career readiness. The Food Security and Housing Stability subdomain is a complex issue that requires a collective impact approach. As stated in Recommendation 2 (Foster Collaboration Among Providers and Community) of the Gap Analysis Report, there is an opportunity to take a multisectoral collaboration approach to this issue as it has a significant effect on all other domains. In this initial phase of the process, it is recommended that CSC Leon engage a consultant to serve as a “Lead Facilitator” whose role is to engage the right partners, establish a governance structure for the group, lead the partners in a strategic planning process that includes the theory of change and action items to address the issue of poverty, food security and stable housing in Leon County. Lastly, parents, caregivers, youth and providers have identified the need for caregiver support, access to information about existing services and resources and the growing need for family mental health services. To address these needs in the short-term, the recommendation is for CSC Leon to focus on three investment areas – 1) expand existing high-quality parenting/caregiver support programs; 2) identify and invest in a database for families to easily access services in the community; and 3) expand or increase access to existing family mental health services providers. These recommended investments align with Recommendation 2 (Foster Collaboration Among Providers and the Community), Recommendation 5 (Bring Awareness to Current Resources) and Recommendation 7 (Leverage Experts to Address Systemic Issues Impacting Children, Youth and Families in Leon County) of the Gap Analysis Report and will allow for short-term impact by supporting the outcomes in the Stable & Nurturing Families & Community domain. The table below outlines the approach to funding for the expedited investments in the Stable & Nurturing Families & Community domain.

## Stable & Nurturing Families & Community

Subdomain	Identified Gaps	Proposed Short-term Investment	Population	Programmatic Requirements	Estimated Cost	Procurement Process
<b>Youth Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of engaging programs for youth</li> <li>College and career readiness programs</li> <li>Life skills curricula</li> <li>Targeted program for vulnerable populations</li> <li>Family engagement and education</li> <li>Lack of care coordination amongst providers</li> </ul>	Additional slots for existing summer youth enrichment programs	Prioritize funding for programs serving in target zip codes and/or serving vulnerable populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing high-quality youth enrichment program currently providing summer services or with the ability to expand to summer</li> <li>Capacity for additional slots</li> <li>Social-emotional learning</li> <li>Academic enrichment</li> <li>Life Skills – college/career readiness, financial literacy</li> <li>Enrichment</li> <li>Health and wellness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthy meals</li> <li>Nutrition education</li> <li>Physical activity</li> </ul> </li> <li>Parent engagement and education</li> </ul>	TBD	Simplified RFP process for existing service providers offering youth summer enrichment programming for youth.
<b>Food &amp; Housing Stability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of healthy food</li> <li>High poverty and ALICE rates</li> <li>Lack of affordable and safe housing</li> <li>LGBTQ youth homelessness</li> </ul>	Launch Collective Impact/ Multisector Collaboration focused on the Food & Housing Stability subdomain	Target zip codes and vulnerable populations	Funding for a lead facilitator to engage partners, identify collective impact model/approach and launch steering committee to address the issue of food, housing stability and community violence	\$24,000	RFQ

## Enhanced Caregivers

- Increase in child abuse as a result of the pandemic
- Disparities in number of children in foster care by zip code
- Lack of services for youth transitioning out of dependency care
- Support for caregivers in meeting emotional and behavioral needs of vulnerable children
- Mental health services for children and families
- Navigating available services

- Additional support for existing parenting programs
- Identify and invest in appropriate database/system for available services/resources
- Expand or increase access to family mental health services

Universal and targeted

- Parenting Programs:
  - Existing high-parenting program
  - Caregiver education
  - Peer support
  - Accessing resources
- Database:
  - Analysis of available database/ systems for families to access services and resources
  - Identification of database
  - Configuration of database to meet the needs of the community
- Family Mental Health Services:
  - Existing family mental health support program
  - Capacity for additional families
  - Partnerships with community providers for referrals
  - Effective referral process

TBD

- Parenting Programs - Simplified RFP process for existing service providers offering parenting programs and caregiver support.
- Database – TBD
- Family Mental Health Services - Simplified RFP process for existing service providers offering family mental health services.

## General Supports & Operational Needs

In addition to the priority investment recommendations for each domain, gaps and community needs were identified that cut across all domains and/or are operational in nature. A common theme heard throughout the process and a priority of CSC Leon's Governing Council, is the need for a public relations and community engagement campaign to both raise awareness of existing community services and resources and bring awareness to CSC Leon's presence in the community. To address this need in the short-term, it is recommended that CSC Leon to fund a partnerships that includes a public relations or marketing firm and local partners to engage community members and tell the story of CSC Leon ensuring residents are aware of CSC's Leon's function and the resources it provides. The need for provider capacity building was also identified as a gap and has been a priority of CSC Leon since its inception. As such, it is recommended that CSC Leon identify an individual or organization to provide strategic capacity building to service providers to ensure that funded organizations are adequately prepared to manage CSC Leon funds, provide the quality services procured by the CSC and have the capacity to implement data and evaluation protocols to track and measure their impact. These recommended investments align with Recommendation 3 (Provide Strategic Capacity Building to Providers) and Recommendation 5 (Bring Awareness to Current Resources) of the Gap Analysis Report. Additionally, it is recommended that CSC Leon reserve funds for emergency situations which may include the purchase of items necessary for the continuation of the CSC's operations during an emergency; the release of emergency funding to the Leon County community; and providing emergency funding to providers that suffer substantial damage or loss, which prohibits an organization from operating and/or delivering funded services. Emergency occurrences can be natural disasters or technological situations which disrupt the social and economic systems in the community. These may include hurricanes, tornadoes, fires and flooding, etc. Emergency funding should also be used to provide flexible funding for providers to support family stabilization. As mentioned in the Gap Analysis Report, 30% of Leon County households are ALICE. Emergency funding to stabilize families to prevent them from living in poverty. Lastly, in order to prepare for the longer-term funding cycle in the Fall of 2022, it is recommended that CSC Leon reserve adequate funds for the first quarter allocation of the Fall funding cycle. The table below outlines the approach to funding for the expedited investments in these areas.



Investment Area	Proposed Short-term Investment	Population	Requirements	Estimated Cost	Procurement Process
<b>PR campaign</b>	Engage a PR or marketing firm to collaborate with local partners to launch a campaign and raise awareness of existing community services and CSC Leon's presence in the community.	Universal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established firm with knowledge of the community and strong local partnerships</li> <li>Experience with developing and leading campaigns inclusive of branding, developing and strategic distribution of marketing materials and monitoring and tracking campaign reach</li> </ul>	\$15,000	RFQ
<b>Capacity Building for Providers</b>	Identify a provider to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for capacity building services for CSC Leon funded providers	Universal	Individual or organization with expertise on provider capacity building and established relationships with service providers.	\$50,000	RFQ
<b>Emergency Funds</b>	Allocate funds for emergencies that may arise, such as natural disasters and family stabilization.			TBD	N/A
<b>Reserves</b>	Q1 allocation for Fall grant cycle	N/A		\$1.45M	N/A

## Proposed Timeline

In order to execute on these short-term, priority investments, the following timeline is recommended for the expedited competitive solicitation process:

Step	Date Range
Approval of options A investment recommendations and solicitation release by Governing Council	April 21
Develop solicitation content and questions	April 8 – 22
Identify system/process for applications	April 8 – 22
Launch communications and outreach plan	April 25
Release solicitation	May 2
Bidders' conference or video	May 3
Application Q&A timeframe	May 2 – 11
Applications due	May 13
Recruit and assign reviewers	May 2 – 13
Review period	May 16 – 17
Internal review of application scores	May 18
Funding decisions made and announced	May 18
Recommendations presented to Governing Council for approval	May 19
Begin contracting process	May 20
Begin services	June 1