

HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA

Youth Connection Center (YCC) Community Engagement 2023

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Executive Summary

The Youth Connection Center (YCC) is supported by a partnership between Hennepin County, the city of Minneapolis, and Minneapolis Public Schools. The YCC is a 24/7 safe and supervised space for youth ages 10 through 17 who have been picked up by Hennepin County law enforcement for a variety of offences or safety issues or are referred from schools or Hennepin County service providers. Youth are screened for strengths and risk factors, connected to resources, returned to school or home, and given follow-up services when appropriate (including case stabilization or case management). The YCC is evaluating their services and considering a change to programming due to a decrease in the number of youth served in the last several years.

During the 2023 YCC Community Engagement Sessions, the YCC small group members and partners held community sessions with youth, parents, and professionals. There were 63 community members (including those from the professional session) who engaged in the community engagement sessions. This includes in-person and virtual participants.

The themes from the Community Engagement sessions were:

- Lack of Awareness of the YCC and/or YCC Services
- Mentorship/role models for youth
- Early Intervention and prevention
- Mental health system barriers and solutions including increased need for mental health support barriers to care, solutions and YCC role in addressing mental health
- Teaching youth the impact of criminal behavior and supporting parents
- Alternative programs and activities
- Addressing racism, education and support
- Wrap around services

Based on these themes, the YCC Project Team determined suggested recommendations for changes to the YCC model. The Project Team recommends increased promotion of YCC services to increase awareness of the YCC. The Project Team also recommends a wrap around approach or model which would increase collaboration between the YCC and other services. Additionally, the Project Team recommended a model that may include mentorship services as well as learning and education programs which may be through the YCC or in partnership with other community organizations. The fourth recommendation was creating new processes for addressing mental illness and chemical dependency which would involve increasing access

to these services for youth. These were the top four recommendations from the Project Team, with changing location of the YCC and addressing racism also being mentioned.

Some limitations to the Project Team's community engagement include that engagement only occurred at the consult level based on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. Additionally, the team had limited time to conduct sessions and limited financial resources. There was limited feedback from the Native American community as the project team was unable to partner with a community organization that serves this community. The project team also noted that some of the ideas presented by the community are already a part of the current YCC model.

The Project Team thanks our community partners, staff, and all community participants who made these engagement sessions possible.

Background

The Youth Connection Center (YCC) is supported by a partnership between Hennepin County, the city of Minneapolis, and Minneapolis Public Schools. The YCC is a 24/7 safe and supervised space for youth ages 10 through 17 who have been picked up by Hennepin County law enforcement for a variety of offences or safety issues or are referred from schools or Hennepin County service providers. Youth are screened for strengths and risk factors, connected to resources, returned to school or home, and given follow-up services when appropriate (including case stabilization or case management). The YCC is evaluating their services and considering a change to programming due to a decrease in the number of youth served in the last several years.

Before deciding on how to expand services, two new referral pathways were developed in 2022 with the goal of increasing the number of community members served. A proposal to the Joint Powers Board recommended the following approach to determine how to use the additional funding:

1. Access: Develop and implement a plan early in 2022 to expand access to services in the third quarter of 2022.

Two new referral pathways were developed:

- a. Referring youth from the County Attorney's Office via a "Pre-diversion" referral process.
- b. Use of the YCC as a resource for youth referred to Hennepin County's Absenting youth program for youth at risk of homelessness.

2. Services: Following the expansion of access, the YCC workgroup used the remainder of 2022 and 2023 to gather data while also engaging the community to develop a plan to expand programs or services using the additional funds.

In looking at the utilization data from 2022, the YCC workgroup found that while the new referral pathways expanded the ways that youth could access the YCC, there had been little increase in use of the YCC. This lack of use made it challenging to learn about the needs of youth in the community.

In fall 2022, the YCC workgroup decided to focus on community engagement to learn more about community needs. By gaining a better understanding of community needs, the YCC hoped to consider how additional funds could be used to expand services. The YCC workgroup requested help from the Hennepin County Human Service's Internal Services. Two assigned Project Managers from Internal Services formed a community engagement subgroup to create a plan, engage the community, and submit the results of that Engagement to the YCC Work Group and Board. The YCC hopes to use the community engagement information to increase use of the YCC.

Community Engagement Strategy

The Youth Connection Center (YCC) Workgroup's Community Engagement Plan focused on having conversations with the community regarding YCC services as well as community needs (with the goal of YCC services addressing identified community needs). The Community Engagement Plan was approached through an equity lens centered in justice, fairness, education, and collaboration. The conversations focused on:

1. Addressing what service or services should be expanded or added
2. Getting direction on what a new model for the YCC should include
3. Informing the community about what the YCC does.

The YCC Community Engagement small group identified three groups to engage: youth (justice and non-justice-involved), family/parents, and professionals. Considering time and resources, the small group looked at the following IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum to help determine a community engagement level.



Figure 1: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum highlights the five levels of community engagement.

Examples of community engagement methods for each spectrum level:

- **Inform:** fact sheets, websites, open houses
- **Consult:** public comment, surveys, focus groups
- **Involve:** workshops, deliberative polling
- **Collaborate:** advisory committees, consensus-building
- **Empower:** citizen juries, ballots, delegated decision

The small group decided to focus on the consult/involve levels during community engagement sessions and follow up with those groups.

Community Session Survey Results

During the YCC Community Engagement Sessions, the YCC small group members and partners held community sessions with youth, parents, and professionals. There were 63 community members (including those from the professional session) who engaged in the community engagement sessions. This includes in-person and virtual participants. The breakdown of the sessions can be viewed below.

Table 1: Description of Community sessions

Session	Session Type	Number of participants
Park Center High School – 2 sessions	Youth	6
Spanish speaking parent group	Parents	9
Be@School	Youth	1
Saturday parent group	Parents	4
Professional session	Professionals	12
Spanish speaking youth session	Youth	6
Link Youth Housing	Youth	11
RILE Link Youth	Youth	6
Somali Youth Session	Youth	8
Total		63

At the end of each session, participants were given the option to complete a close-out survey (appendix 1). All questions were voluntary. 45 individuals chose to respond to the survey, giving a 71% survey response rate among participants.

Age of participants

The average age among participants was about 27 with the youngest participant being 9 and the oldest participant being 67. In addition to participants who were 9 and 67, there were 22 participants in their teens, 8 participants in their 20s, 3 participants in their 30s, 9 participants in their 40s, and 1 participant in their 50s.

*Zip Code***Table 2: Survey respondents across zip codes**

Zip Codes	Frequency
55021, 55331, 55408, 55410, 55412, 55419, 55421, 55423, 55428, 55430, 55432, 55435, 55437, 55444, 55445, 55448	1 participant per zip code
55405	2
55409	2
55413	3
55422	3
55443	4
55407	5
55411	5
55414	5

Participants were from zip codes across the county, with 24 different zip codes. Most zip codes only had one participant who documented their location on the survey. Zip codes with more than one participant who documented their location included 55443, 55422, 55414, 55413, 55411, 55409, 55407, and 55405.

Zip codes 55408, 55411, and 55414 had the highest number of participants. All three zip codes are in Minneapolis. Zip code 55408 includes neighborhoods such as Lowry Hill East, South Uptown, and Lyndale. 55411 includes neighborhoods such as Jordan, Hawthorne, and Near – North. 55414 includes neighborhoods such as Prospect Park – East River Road, Marcy Holmes, and Como.

Race and/or ethnicity

● White	8
● Black or African American	24
● Asian	3
● Hispanic, Latin, Latinx or Spanish	14
● American Indian or Alaskan Nati...	2
● Native Hawaiian	0
● Pacific Islander	0
● Two or more races and/or ethni...	4
● Prefer not to answer	2

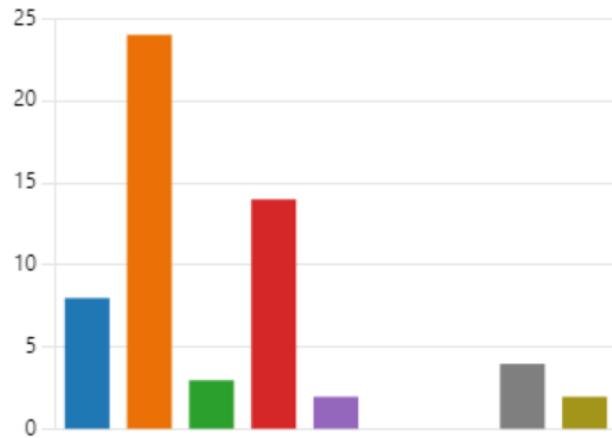


Figure 1: Race and/or ethnicity across survey respondents

Most participants who completed the survey identified as Black or African American, followed by Hispanic, Latin, Latinx or Spanish, and white. No participants identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and two participants selected “prefer not to answer.”

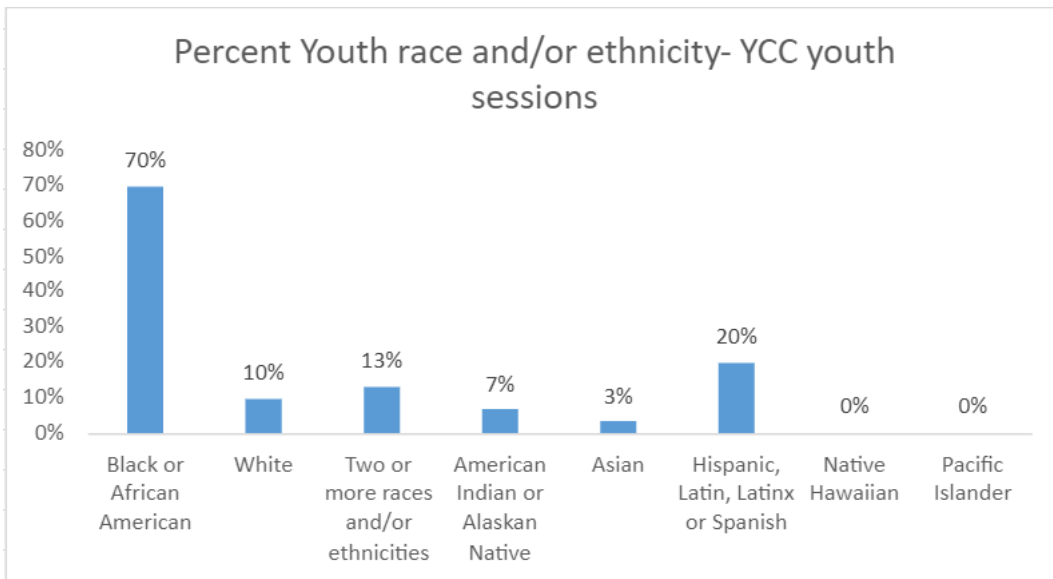


Figure 2: YCC Youth Community Sessions Close-Out Survey Race/Ethnicity

The response options to these questions were based on the race and ethnicity question asked during federal census data collection. Most of the youth who completed the survey identified as Black or African American. Participants selected multiple categories depending on their identify. 20% of youth selected that they identified as Hispanic and 13% of youth identified as two or more races. 10% of youth identified as white, 7% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 3% identified as Asian. 0% of participants identified as Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian.

YCC Youth Served - Demographics

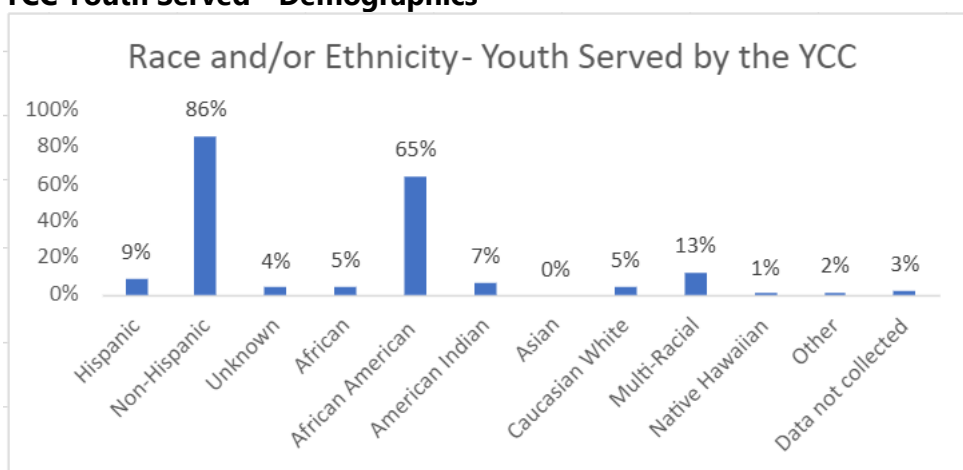


Figure 3: YCC Youth Served from January 2022-June 2023 Race and/or Ethnicity

The YCC surveyed youth using services from January 2022-June 2023. Two questions were asked, one about ethnicity (Hispanic, non-Hispanic, or unknown) and one about race and ethnicity. The two question responses were combined in the above graph for the purpose of data visualization and comparison. 86% of youth served identified as non-Hispanic and 9% of youth identified as Hispanic. 65% of youth identified as African American followed by 13% identifying as multi-racial. 7% of youth served identified as American Indian, 5% as African, 5% as Caucasian White, and 4% as unknown. 3% of youth served data was not collected or the client refused. 2% of youth served identified as other, 1% identified as native Hawaiian or other pacific islander, and 0% identified as Asian/SE Asian/pacific islander.

Comparison of close-out survey data vs. YCC Youth Served

When comparing youth close-out survey data to YCC youth served data, most participants in both datasets identified their race as African American. A higher percentage of youth close-out survey participants identified as Hispanic. 13% of youth close-out survey participants

identified as two or more races and/or ethnicities and 13% of YCC youth served identified as multi-racial.

Gender

● Female	32
● Male	8
● Non-binary, genderqueer, third ...	0
● Prefer not to say	1



Figure 4: Gender across survey respondents

Most participants who completed the survey identified as female.

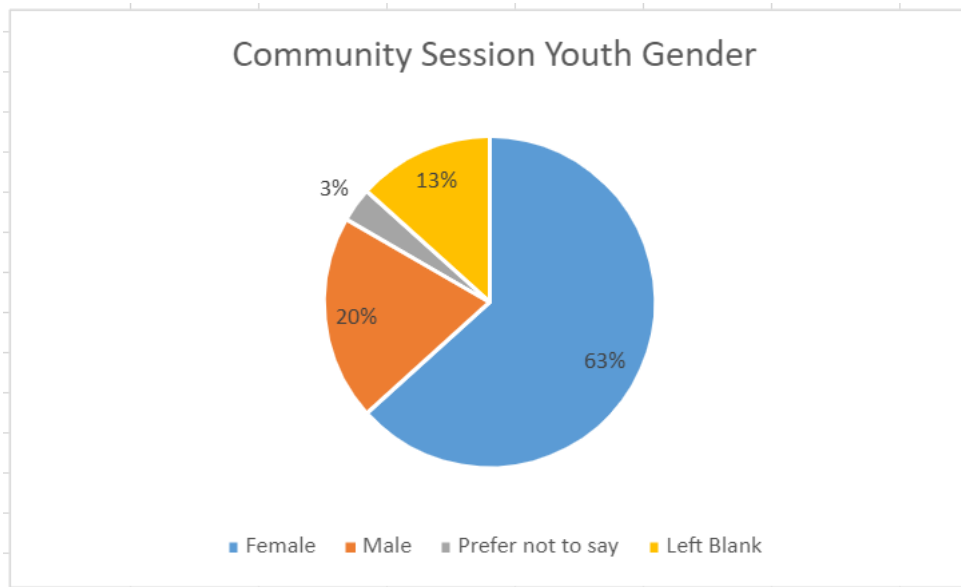


Figure 5: Youth Gender selected in close-out survey results

63% of youth identified as Female in the close-out survey results, 20% identified as male, 13% left this question blank, and 3% selected prefer not to say.

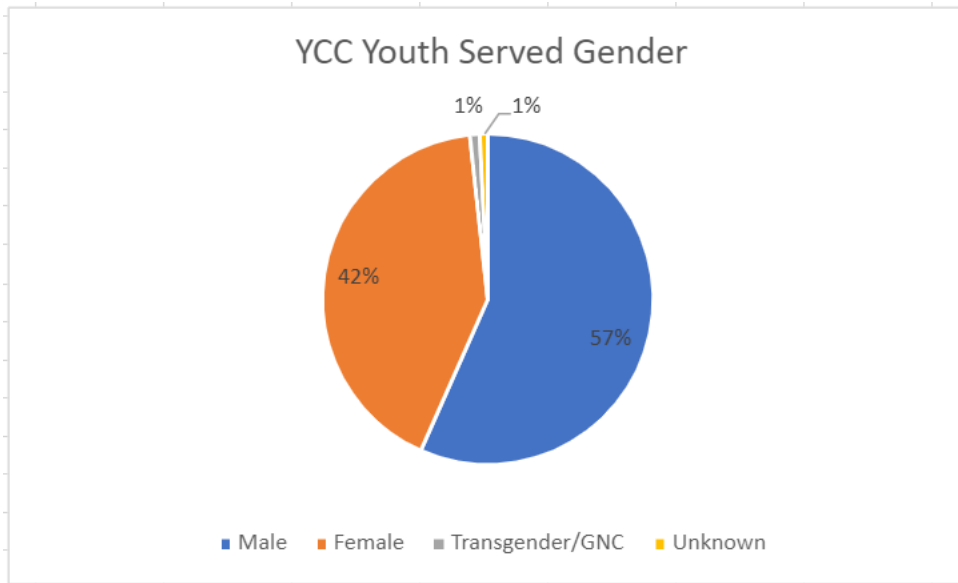


Figure 6: YCC Youth Served Gender (January 2022 – June 2023)

57% of youth served by the YCC identified as male, 42% identified as female, 1% identified as Transgender/GNC, and 1% identified as unknown.

Gender comparison

63% youth identified as female in the close-out survey while 57% youth served by the YCC identified as male. It is important to note that not all youth answered the close-out survey and some preferred not to answer this question.

Community session type

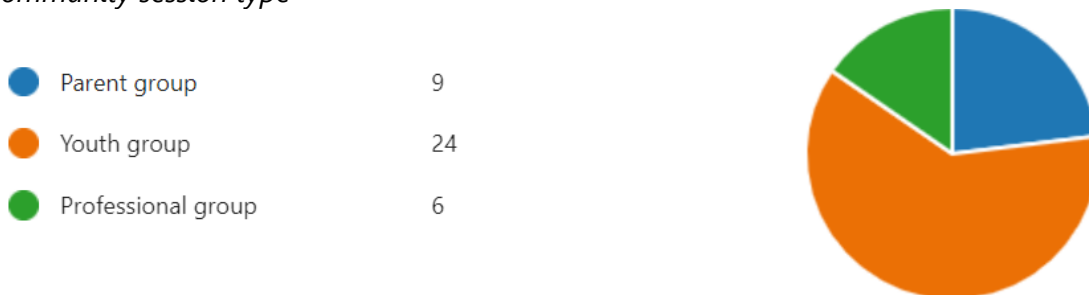


Figure 7 Community session type across survey respondents

The largest number of participants who completed the survey were from the Youth sessions. Seven out of ten of the sessions were youth sessions.

Session rating

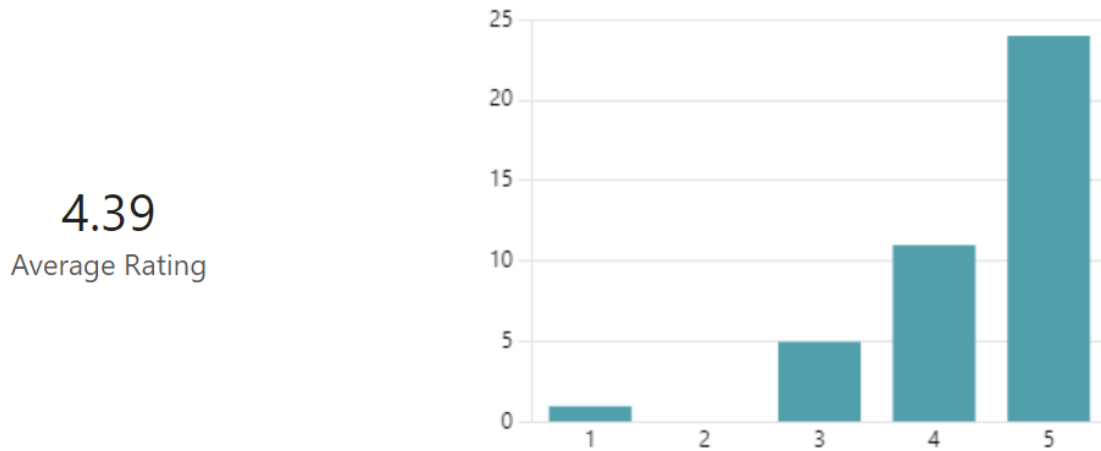


Figure 8: Session rating across survey respondents from close-out survey

On a scale of 1-5 with 5 meaning the session went extremely well and 1 meaning the session did not go well, 35 respondents or 78% thought the session went well (4 or above). 5 respondents ranked the session as a 3 and 1 respondent ranked the session as a 1.

Interest in the YCC

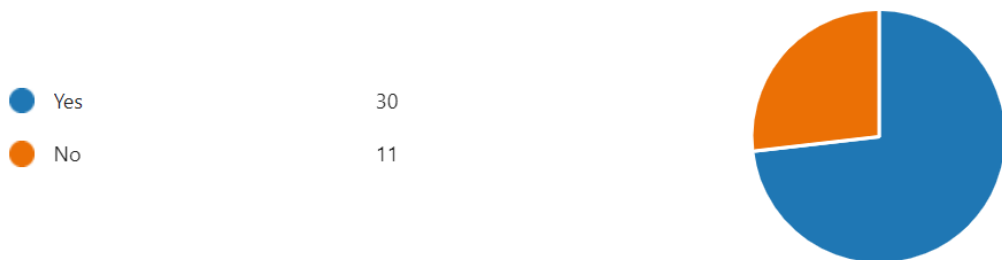


Figure 9: Interest in the YCC from close-out survey

30 of 41 respondents were interested in more information on the YCC and what the YCC does.

Open responses

Survey respondents had the opportunity to share any other feedback through open ended response at the end of the survey. Some survey respondents asked for an additional session to learn more about the YCC. Another respondent shared "please hire people who care, who want to change the world." An additional idea that was shared was the importance of working with social workers who are embedded in police departments.

Theme Results

The Community Engagement session information was compiled and analyzed by the Project Managers. After the high-level themes were determined, this information was presented to the subcommittee to get their reaction and gather additional feedback. The below themes were also shared with the larger YCC advisory group prior to compiling this report.

Lack of awareness of the YCC and/or YCC services

All the listening sessions were asked a 3-part question: "Were you aware of the YCC before this meeting? What were your ideas about it? Would these ideas lead you to use these services?" Most participants in 7 of the 10 groups had not heard of the YCC. Of the 3 groups who had heard of the YCC, two of those groups were youth advisory board members for The Link, which staffs the YCC. The only other group that had participants who had heard of the YCC were some of the members in the professional group. There were some noted comments in all three populations that a lack of knowledge of the YCC points to the need for more marketing.

Participants share options for increasing awareness of the YCC. One idea from the Spanish speaking parent session was to share YCC resources with the schools so parents could be more aware of the YCC. The youth sessions discussed how social media can be used to raise awareness about youth services using various means on the internet mentioning social media platforms, specifically Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Snapchat. Families could use support systems from the YCC to learn about services like therapists and social workers. Sometimes family members must go in-person to learn more about services since websites are not clear. Families and youth could also learn information from fliers at stores and schools. The professional session shared families do not have a strong network for learning about and accessing services for youth. Information needs to be shared more widely with apartment buildings, school social workers, and parks and recreation.

Mentorship/role models for youth

One of the most frequent themes in the community sessions was that youth need a mentor/role model to prevent youth from engaging and staying engaged in crime. This theme was seen in the youth, parent, and professional data. Mentorship was mentioned as a common response to questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 10 (see appendix A for questions).

Youth commented that they benefit from being connected to a mentor who looks like them and have shared life experience. Two quotes that were shared by participants include “You can see someone who looks like you who made it” and “I feel safest when I am around my people.” The community sessions highlighted the importance of mentors looking like youth because this helps create a more comfortable space for youth to relate to their mentors. Mentors can teach youth about the impact of engaging in crime. Mentors can also teach youth about others involved in the justice system. Community members mentioned these educational opportunities for youth to divert youth from crime.

Mentors can help youth stay connected to their community and hobbies. Additionally, mentors are part of a larger support system that is important to help youth stay out of crime. This support system may include family members, social workers, and friends.

In the professional session, it was mentioned that mentors could be youth, creating a youth supporting youth model. Mentors were seen as a larger part of a support system for youth. Case managers or social workers were mentioned as individuals who could also serve a mentorship role. Youth mentioned that these types of mentors can reach out to youth when mentors do not hear from them. Additionally, case managers can serve a broader role by helping connect families to emotional support and connect youth to hobbies. Staff, like mentors in general, should have similar lived experience to youth. Staff can also teach youth about the impacts of engaging in crime.

Early intervention and prevention

One of the most expressed themes was the idea that the community needs more early intervention and prevention services. Additionally, it was shared that the YCC could provide preventive services.

Service ideas shared are listed in the table below. Services are for youth, families, or parents and/or guardians.

Table 3: Preventive and early intervention

Type of Service	Population(s) Suggesting
Recreational Hobby activities	all
Vocational	youth, parents
Supportive services & assistance	all
Community Resource information	Parents, professionals

Participants also noted gaps in community services. One youth participant mentioned that the YMCA North had cut back on youth services and the perception was that similar programs had not been offered by anyone else to replace these services.

Some comments from all three populations indicated that these types of resources need not necessarily be provided by the YCC if they are provided by other organizations. Participants mentioned that the YCC staff should help connect youth, parents, or families with services. Other points made referred to the idea of when and how the youth end up at the YCC via law enforcement. Participants suggested this was “too late” for early intervention, and that there should be an opportunity for youth to access the YCC staff and services without being brought in by law enforcement.

Mental health system barriers and solutions

Mental health was asked about during the community sessions, specifically question 3: “What are the youth mental health needs in your community?” as well as question 6 “What should be the role of the YCC in addressing mental health needs and supports for family?” Mental health was mentioned as a common theme by participants in questions 2, 3, and 6.

Increased need for mental health support

Participants discussed mental health across the continuum of care from prevention to supporting youth who may have a mental illness. Respondents justified the need for continued mental health support because mental health issues may contribute to crime. One youth participant shared that when mental illness goes unchecked, mental health is usually expressed through anger. Another participant shared that since George Floyd’s murder, more youth have struggled with their mental health. Because of increased mental health struggles and because mental health issues can contribute to crime; participants highlighted a need for increased mental health support.

Barriers to care

Community members recognized the importance of mental health care but noted that accessing and receiving care comes with limitations. Stigma around mental health care was mentioned as a barrier in the African American community. People from other cultural backgrounds also noted the stigma of mental health. Youth participants noted that parents do not believe their kids are experiencing a mental health issue.

Other barriers mentioned were delays in accessing therapy appointments and long wait times for services. The youth participants mentioned adults do not always connect youth to therapy

when youth need therapy. The professional group noted that families do not have a strong network for learning about and accessing services for youth.

Solutions

Participants mentioned solutions to these barriers should include culturally competent therapy. The professional group session noted that culturally competent support needs to look beyond western medicine. This group also mentioned the importance of Spanish speaking therapists. Respondents also noted there needs to be more therapists of color to meet the needs of the community. Wraparound and multisystem services were mentioned as a solution from the professional group.

Participants highlighted the importance in engaging family in conversations around mental health. Youth shared that families need to know that mental health is not a bad thing. Another idea mentioned by youth is serving a dinner that families can come to and talk about mental health. Parents shared that help needs to be provided to parents and families processing passed trauma. This support could be provided through family therapy and education.

Some additional solutions mentioned by the professional group include trauma support, video therapy, flexible hours, transportation, appointment tracking, and mental health education. The youth participants shared that support systems of friends, family, and school can help youth with their mental health. Therapy can also help youth process challenging emotions (like anger). Families also use support systems to learn about services such as therapists. Case workers can help connect families to emotional support.

YCC role in addressing mental health

The professional group shared that the YCC can serve the role of connecting youth to mental health services. During the youth sessions, youth shared social workers can support youth mental health needs. One youth mentioned that social workers are different than case managers and that youth associate case managers with jail time. Social workers could create a youth support group for youth. Social workers can also support parents and help improve connections with parents and youth. Youth might need additional mental health support through a psychiatrist. Youth should be able to go to the YCC before they get in trouble. Communities need an increased understanding of mental health through education and family therapy. The youth sessions mentioned that when diagnosing youth with a mental health condition, teach them about their strengths as well.

Teaching youth the impact of criminal behavior and supporting parents

Participants shared that youth do not always understand the impact of their actions. A potential solution to criminal activity is teaching the youth the impact of criminal behavior. Respondents shared that there are consequences to actions and youth need to understand these outcomes. Participants shared the importance of this type of diversion when responding to questions 1, 2 and 5. This theme was seen in the parent, youth and professional sessions.

Youth may not understand the impact of criminal activity. Community participants saw education for youth as a solution to criminal activity. Teaching youth about the impact of criminal activity may divert them from crime. Youth shared that if people knew how their criminal behavior could impact their future they would be less likely to engage in that behavior. For example, a criminal record would show up on a background check for an apartment and make it much harder to get a place. Youth in sessions commented that if they knew what they were getting into and how their actions could impact their future, they might change. Mentors can teach youth about the impact of crime. Participants suggested teaching youth about others who have been involved in the justice system. Youth mentioned YCC staff can teach youth about the impacts of engaging in crime.

Parents shared that it is important to support parents instead of punishing parents for their child's behavior. Supporting parents will increase trust with the community. Examples of how to do this include educating and giving parents resources earlier before criminal behavior starts, and outreach to historically traumatized communities from schools and other community organizations to let them know how they can partner with the parent to identify concerns or issues early on.

Alternative programs and activities

When participants were asked about ideas for services for youth who were not engaged in criminal activities, many of the responses focused on reaching out to youth and making alternative activities available to them. Programs providing alternatives for youth were given as ideas in several of the questions.

A frequent idea shared by all participants was to use the YCC and/or its staff resources to provide or link youth to alternative programs and activities to explore other interests, activities, or vocational programs. Table 4 below shows alternative activities and what group shared these ideas.

Table 4: Alternative activities ideas for YCC

Idea for Alternatives	Population(s) Providing this idea
More youth programming at local community centers (like YMCA used to have)	youth
Hobbies, current interests and/or help youth find new interests	youth, parents
Life skills training programs	youth
Sports or different activities, more after school programs	youth, professionals
Vocational programs where they can learn skills or trades	youth, professionals
Youth groups or talking with people that have been through what youth have experienced	youth
Income based programs that help youth with their future	youth
Provide opportunities to learn about resources for youth, both youth and adults	youth, adults

One youth shared, “Don’t make it boring,” when referring to alternative activities. Providing community services requires thoughtful programming and marketing.

Addressing Racism, Education and Support

When asked about programming the YCC could create to address racism, community members did not always start with sharing solutions. Discussions explored participant’s perception of racism in their community, policing, other professionals, and personal stories. Ideas on how the YCC could address racism varied quite a bit, but three main themes emerged.

1. BIPOC communities need space to feel safe and explore their culture in a trusted environment. Especially among youth, this feeling of needing to be amongst their own to heal and deal with situations was voiced often.
2. Education is needed with a variety of groups, often with different goals in mind. African Americans need to have space to learn about their culture, as mentioned previously. Education is needed for professionals in the community

who were identified as “racist” or part of racist structures or institutions. Education can help professionals understand the impact and consequences of their actions and teach them better approaches. The importance of education was shared by youth, professionals, and parents.

3. Youth, parents, and professionals shared that having youth providers that are the same race, speak the same language and are culturally competent is important to support youth.

Participants shared that more outreach is needed to support people of color. More programs are needed that surround youth with culture and tap into their culture to help them tap into the person they are meant to be. Another participant shared the importance of keeping track of data and outcomes. Some questions to consider include: who is being brought in, what does it look like and what is the outcome/follow up? Overall, education and creating a trusted environment were themes shared across community sessions.

Wrap around Services

The idea of wrap around services was given as a solution by youth, parents, and professionals. Wrap around services were mentioned as a solution to help divert youth from further crime. Additionally, participants shared that wrap around services help prevent criminal behavior from starting with youth and that this is an approach that can be incorporated with mental health services for youth.

Participants had different definitions of wrap around services. Wrap around services did not necessarily refer to a “one stop shop” type of service model where multiple services or resources could be obtained under one roof. When described by participants, wrap around services were seen as an approach to working with youth and their families to address their needs. These services link youth and families with resources and may reduce youth criminal activity.

Standout ideas

There were ideas that were only mentioned once throughout the sessions that stood out as valuable information from community members. There were also standout ideas and quotes from the sessions that may provide insight when considering changes to the YCC model.

One of the standout ideas was about embedding services in the community. It is essential to build a relationship with trusted and imbedded programs that have a vested interest in community and have a relationship with the streets. A participant shared that we only hire individuals to do this work who have “alphabet soup behind their name,” but these individuals may not always be connected to the community.

Additionally, a youth participant shared that instead of stealing cars, teach kids to build or fix cars. Youth could do a class for mechanics, giving them an opportunity to go into a field they know about instead of going to jail.

Another participant shared that someone committing a minor crime might have a good reason for engaging in crime. If someone doesn't have enough food and parents are not providing food, they may need to engage in crime. If this need is taken care of, they would stop engaging in crime. This is a similar thought to the wrap around model described in the previous section.

One final standout idea is providing youth who may be struggling with their mental health a safe space. Participants thought it was important for youth to have a space where people don't judge them.

Suggested Recommendations for Changes to the YCC Model

The subcommittee engaged in consensus building activities to reach agreement on recommendations. The team considered what themes were major, what “stood out” for them, what similar services suggested by participants already were part of the YCC model, how resource intensive an idea would be, how easy or difficult it would be to implement, and finally their own feelings based on their subject matter expertise along with the data and discussions on what the highest priorities should be. Although the committee had diverse rationale for specific recommendations, the first four listings here scored the highest priority during the Project Team consensus building.

1. **Increased Promotion** of the YCC’s current services with special attention to changes in the existing model. This promotion would let residents know that **YCC services can be used earlier and that self-referrals for families or youth are allowed. The promotion would also include information on new services that may be offered.** YCC promotion will be most effective if the other changes to the model listed below were implemented or close to being implemented. The subcommittee expressed the opinion that this promotion would not be through advertising but through:

- a. Enlisting the help of Hennepin County’s Communications area to create a marketing plan.
- b. Creating new materials for distribution
- c. Hosting information sessions with the community
- d. Leveraging relationships with other staff/community partners and promotion via “word of mouth”

2. **A wrap around approach or model** which includes emphasis on support for youth and families

In the listening sessions it was clear that many participants did not feel the existing case management model should be modified to provide what would be considered more traditional wrap around services to address basic needs and barriers. The Project

Team believes this model should prioritize **mentorship programs** and **learning and educational life skills** programs for youth. While the existing case management model may be similar in some respects to a wrap around model, many participants in all three groups did not perceive YCC services as a wrap around model. Project Team members suggested that as changes are made to what the case manager does, a new title and description of services provided as case management should be considered because not everyone sees themselves as needing “case management.” An alternative title to case management could be service coordination.

Key suggestions and comments for a “wrap around support” model included:

- a. Clearly defining what “wrap around” means for the YCC model.
- b. Services that include recreational options for youth and families
- c. A stronger collaboration between the YCC and services like recreations services that The Link already provides.
- d. Since the case manager at The Link uses a similar approach, consider rebranding what case managers do when it involves wrap around services as many people see the term case management as negative.

3. **Mentorship Services and Learning and Education Programs**

The Project Team thinks mentorship services and learning and education programs should be implemented *regardless of whether other wrap around services get implemented.*

Examples of mentorship and learning and education programs suggestions from the Project Team and community engagement participants include:

- a. A program to educate youth on how criminal behavior could affect their future.
- b. A program to teach life skills and career development.
- c. Programs the YCC can partner with to provide mentors to youth.
- d. YCC collaboration with agencies that do prevention work.

4. **New Processes for Addressing Mental Illness and Chemical Dependency**

While the YCC does not provide mental health services, the Project Team noted that communities felt the YCC can help individuals and families dealing with mental health and substance use issues. Based on community feedback, three recommendations were suggested:

- a. Mental health awareness is low among youth, and not talked about. YCC staff should discuss mental health with the youth as a way of breaking down stigmas and raising awareness.
- b. Develop a process with the county so that youth who go to the YCC have access to immediate walk-in counseling services.
- c. Create formalized partnerships with culturally specific chemical dependency and mental health providers.

In addition to the top three sets of recommendations shared above, ideas about changing location and addressing racism were also suggested by the committee.

5. **Changing location** or bringing YCC services and staff into communities where people reside

While there are some advantages to the YCC's current location, a presence in geographic areas where utilizers of YCC reside would allow for better access, especially if walk-ins are emphasized as a new referral pathway. There is concern from the Project Team that a new location would be resource intensive and difficult to implement.

6. **Addressing Racism**

The Project Team felt that the YCC is limited in how the organization can **combat racism**, but there are some steps the YCC can take.

- a. Expand utilization of The Link's **We Will Breathe Group** to address racial justice/trauma issues identified by YCC youth.
- b. The YCC should be a more active partner with programs like the JCPP and other organizations on racism topics and recommendations.
- c. Share makeup of the YCC staff and/or look at staff demographics.

Limitations

Engagement Level only at consult level

Based on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, the empower level is the highest level of engagement that government can achieve when engaging a community. However, due to limitations of time, budget, and staff capacity, the community sessions focused on the consult/involve level of community engagement (figure 1).

Limited time to conduct sessions

There was limited time to conduct these sessions. The session took place between April - June 2023 with the goal of report completion by September 2023. The YCC received additional funds to improve programing in 2022, so to use these funds, limiting the scope of community engagement was crucial so that it could inform program decisions.

Limited Financial Resources

The YCC Project Team had \$2,500 in funding to support community engagement efforts. With a limited budget, the team was limited in staff time, amount of compensation for participants, and the number of community sessions.

Lack of Native American engagement

Native youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system relative to the general population. While reviewing close-out survey data, the Project Team noted that few participants identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native. We reached out to three organizations that support Native youth and were unable to organize a session with these groups within the time frame and budget limitations that we had. We recognize that our data is a small subset of the overall population that is impacted by the justice system and further engagement would provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of community needs.

Gender

The identified genders percentages of males vs. females is not similar between YCC participants and youth listening sessions. With participants, a clear majority of users are male, while with the listening session the opposite was true, female youths were predominant. To an

extent, identified gender may shape how youth respond to questions and this could be seen as a limitation.

Some ideas for change were already a part of the model

Although background information on the YCC's history, structure, and services were provided at the beginning of each session, often participants would suggest an idea that the YCC staff or referred case managers already provide. Sometimes this would give other participants the impression that the YCC or The Link wasn't doing something that is already part of the services they offered. An example would be "early intervention services." The YCC has always described its current services as early intervention or prevention, as it seeks to engage and provide services and resources to youth brought in to help avoid criminal conduct in the future. However, some participants in the sessions stated "even earlier" intervention is needed with youth, parents, and families and suggested the YCC could be a part of this solution.

Below is a list and description of services provided by the YCC and/or The Link that were also suggested by community participants as a new approach for the YCC:

Mentorship/role models: YCC's case managers act as trusted adults in young people's lives. They become informal mentors and role models alike. There is no time limit to case management so some of these young people have access to their case manager for 18+ months.

Early intervention and prevention: This is the core value of why the YCC exists. It is defined as an early intervention and prevention program and for many youth this is their first time with any system involvement. We also see about 10% of youth coming into the YCC with no formal citation or ticket, but they are still offered the same services. Also, if we are working with a family already on case management and their parent says they have a sibling who is on the brink of becoming system involved we will help the parent with that young person as well.

Teaching the youth the impact of criminal behavior and supporting parents as a form of diversion: The YCC is now involved with three different types of diversion: curfew diversion, pre-trial diversion, and auto-theft pilot diversion. In regards to supporting parents all of the caregivers and parents of YCC youth can access the YCC Parent Support Program if they live within Minneapolis proper or a suburb close to Minneapolis.

Alternative Programs and Activities: YCC case management participants can attend weekly groups during the school year and bi-weekly during the summer. These

groups are geared towards life skills, academic support, positive pro-social activities, other hobbies or interests group participants suggest.

Addressing Racism, Education, and Support: The Link created an equity diversion and inclusion plan 5 years ago to make sure they were not only addressing issues of racism and inequality internally, but also created change in the community.

The YCC RILE youth advisory group is a part of many community groups and helps bring to light issues of inequality within the system.

The Link also started a We Will Breathe cohort which is a group of young BIPOC participants that seek to address social injustice within the greater community.

Wrap Around Services: Youth specialists at the YCC and case managers provide wrap around services to families. These staff provide resources that help eliminate barriers and reduce criminal activity.

The YCC also has access to many systems that can help build connections with other involved workers at schools, therapists, or other county workers to make sure the YCC is doing the best they possibly can for families.

Thanks to our Community Engagement Partners

Community Engagement Subcommittee/Project Team:

Don Ryan: Hennepin County Safe Communities, Project Sponsor
Amanda Harrington, Hennepin County Be At School Program
Michelle Sanchez, Hennepin County Human Services, REIT Champion
Blaine Turnbull, The Link, Supervisor
Josh Terrio, The Link
Tashonda Williamson, The Link
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YCC Monthly Work Group Participants

Janelle McCafferty, Hennepin County Human Services

Ty Baker, Hennepin County Human Services

German Alvarado, Hennepin County Human Services

Kari Fletcher, Hennepin County Human Services

All the Participants of the Community Engagement Sessions

Community Partners:

- Abdi Ali, Center for Multicultural Mediation, Executive Director, Facilitator for Somali Youth Session
- Victor Gavilan, Centro Tyrone Guzman, Be@School Program Manager
- Anthony Turner, Brooklyn Park High School, School Social Worker
- TaShonda Williams, TheLink
- Josh Terrio, TheLink
- The Link Organization for hosting a session at their building
- Other staff from agencies mentioned above who helped set up sessions.

Appendices

Appendix A: Community Engagement Listening Session Questions

1. What do youth need to prevent them from engaging in criminal or unsafe behavior?
2. For youth engaged in criminal or unsafe behavior what are some ideas that could help prevent them from continuing down that path?
3. What are the youth mental health needs in your community?
4. How do families learn about and access services for youth?
5. What should be the YCC's role to help keep youth safe?
6. What should be the role of the YCC in addressing mental health needs and supports for families?
7. Understanding that we see overt and systematic racism in our community and juvenile justice system, how can the YCC create a program that addresses this?
8. Were you aware of the YCC before this meeting? What were your ideas about it? Would these ideas lead you to use these services?
9. Knowing what you know about the YCC, what other services might the YCC be able to offer to divert youth away from the juvenile justice system?
10. What else do you need from a social service program that supports youth? What else do you want us to know?

Appendix B: Participant Closeout Survey

Closeout survey

Thank you for participating in the Youth Connection Center (YCC) Community Engagement Facilitated Session supported by Minneapolis Public Schools, Hennepin County, and the City of Minneapolis. We appreciate your feedback and are looking to gather more information

about the participants in the session with the goal of understanding what groups in the community we have heard from.

Please note - any information shared in this survey is voluntary and you will remain anonymous.

1. What is your age? Please write your age in the space provided.
2. What is your zip code? Please write your zip code in the space provided.
3. Which race and/or ethnicity do you most closely identify with? Please circle your answer(s).
 - White
 - Black or African American
 - Asian
 - Hispanic, Latino, Latinx or Spanish
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Native Hawaiian
 - Pacific Islander
 - Two or more races and/or ethnicities
 - Prefer not to answer
4. Which gender do you closely identify with? Please circle your response.
 - Female
 - Male

- Non-binary, genderqueer, third gender, gender-fluid or gender non-confirm
- Prefer not to say

5 .Please make an x by the type of focus group you participated in:

____Parent group

____Youth group

____Professional group

6. How did the session go? Please rank the session on a scale of 1-5, 1 meaning the session did not go well and 5 meaning the session went extremely well. Please circle your answer.

1

2

3

4

5

5. Do you want more information about the YCC and what it does? Please circle yes or no.

Yes

No

6. Please write any additional information you may wish to share with us below:

Appendix C: Sources For Literature Review for Developing for Engagement Sessions

1. Hennepin County Board Resolution 20-0242 Declares Racism a Public Health crisis that affects the entire county- a response.
2. JDAI (Now Youth Justice Council) Community Focus Groups Report (2017)
<https://hennepin.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/teams/YCCExpansion2/Shared%20Documents/General/JDAI%20community%20focus%20groups%20report.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=Xrhj50>
3. Juvenile Supervision Center (JSC) Strategic Planning Report, Feb 2018
<https://hennepin.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/teams/YCCExpansion2/Shared%20Documents/General/JSC%20Strategic%20Planning%20Report%20FINAL.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=ehG5YH>

4. Mn. Dept of Health Reimagining Youth Mental Health (2019)
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/blackyouth.html>
5. Star Tribune Article "Hennepin County board declares racism public health crisis" June 23, 2020
<https://www.startribune.com/hennepin-county-board-declares-racism-public-health-crisis/571455752/>
6. System of Care: Community Engagement 2021, by Jocelyn McQuirter (not confirmed)
<https://hennepin.sharepoint.com/:p:/r/teams/YCCExpansion2/Shared%20Documents/General/System%20of%20Care%20Community%20Engagement%202021%20.pptx?d=wf8718d096a7347d2ad5178beb58502c4&csf=1&web=1&e=ziVsSg>

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