



Introduction

During the months of September 2021 through January 2022, Alliance Medical Center partnered with Leap Solutions Group and conducted an extensive community outreach effort to reach community leaders, service providers, and parents. The organizing team held approximately six meetings to plan, develop, strategize, and review findings.

The purpose of the outreach effort was to create spaces where people could share how to best support students returning to school and the families during current COVID. During these three months, there was a community dialogue and a community parent survey.

This work was sponsored by the Community Foundation of Sonoma and inspired by Healdsburg Forever.

Below are some key takeaways and a brief analysis of the findings.

Community Dialogue

The community dialogue was hosted on September 29, 2021. There was a total of 32 participants.

These are some of the organizations that participated:

- Alliance Medical Center
- Corazon Healdsburg
- Sonoma County Office of Education, Foster and Homeless Youth
- Career Technical Education (CTE) Foundation
- Redwood Community Health Coalition
- Heartizens.org
- Community Matters
- Burbank Housing Resident Services Coordinator
- Boys & Girls Clubs Sonoma-Marin
- LandPaths
- Student Services, Healdsburg Unified
- 4Cs of Sonoma County
- Sonoma County Behavioral Health, AOD Prevention Team
- Sonoma County Office of Education
- 10000 Degrees
- SOS Community Counseling



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The goals of the meeting were to:

- Listen to school personnel and school advocates about current student needs
- Listen to community leaders about resources available in the community
- Identify gaps in resources available and barriers to access

Key takeaways from the community dialogue were the following:

- Schools are acutely understaffed;
- Limited mental health capacity to support the community healing from stress-inducing events in Sonoma County
- Limited financial capacity to support the community
- Extra supports are needed to reduce barriers to extra help for students, teachers, and school staff
- Time is essential to manage the trauma and current stresses of the time and community support can facilitate the work

Community Parent Survey

The parent community survey was open to for community input December 2021 – January 2022. There were 91 responses. The survey was sent to patients 18 and over and residents of Winsor and Healdsburg.

Key takeaways from the parent community survey were the following:

- Some of the pressure points children and youth are experiencing as they return to school include:
 - Falling behind in their learning
 - Experiencing more anxiety and stress
 - Having a hard time socializing again
- 30% stated that their children and youth were experiencing stressors going back to school such as:
 - More schoolwork than last year
 - Not wanting to leave the house
 - Fear of getting sick
 - Refocusing in the classroom
 - Being near more kids
 - Physical contact
 - Classroom anxiety and peer bullying
 - Frustration as they catch up
 - No motivation



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- Relearning school routines and behavior
- Sleeping problems
- Anxiety
- Wearing a mask

- Parents expressed their own personal stressors:
 - 73% said a fear of COVID providing more disruption
 - 38% said there were not enough opportunities for socialization for their children
 - 30% said basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, etc.

Conclusions

Community leaders, service providers, and parents all shared a common story. The findings demonstrate a continued need for additional support for families, children, and youth. There is a clear request for more school and school-age programs to support students re-learn, re-socialize, and re-connect with school and peers. There is also a request for more mental health care. The community is still recovering from the previous trauma caused by the fires and now managing the stress of the pandemic. Mental health care support – not necessarily clinical but support for mental health - can facilitate healing and support our children and families in need.

Basic needs were also identified as a priority. There is an opportunity for community service providers to partner and find innovative ways to provide basic needs support to families in the community.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations to continue the work started and to support our community:

- Schools should not be afraid to reach out to community leaders, service providers, and parents to bring resources to students, families, school personnel
- Increase mental health awareness – American Red Cross psychological first-aid is a good start: <https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/coronavirus-information/psychological-first-aid-online-course>
- Increase school supports – community leaders/providers reach out to the schools or offer resources beyond the building – fun, homework help, teen/elementary school-age tutoring, arts, environmental, physical, sports,
- Work with local health clinics
- Reach out to youth and administer a survey during school hours
- Hold another convening via zoom in March
- Support another community survey April



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