

Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

LOB #171:

TEEN CENTERS

Purpose

Teen centers provide County youth with a safe space to meet and connect with diverse and energetic peers. Teen Centers also provide young people the forum in which to identify and explore their strengths and develop their unique interests in a supervised, and structured environment. Staff members, partners and volunteers at the Teen Centers serve as positive adult role models who provide teens with the skills necessary to make positive decisions and improve their personal resiliency.

Description

Teen Centers operate in the Regional Services and Center Operations (RSCO) division. Teen Centers provide youth-driven and prevention-focused activities and services that build and promote community capacity to provide and support quality teen programming.

Teen Centers are built around a regional model, with centers located in each of the County's four human service regions. Teen Centers provide an array of after-school and out-of-school time opportunities for youth. Registration is free, and most of the programs are free. All individuals who are in grades 6 through 12 and live in Fairfax County are eligible to participate in a teen center program.

The four main regional teen centers (James Lee, Mott, Reston and South County) offer programming on weekdays from 2pm to 9pm and on Saturdays from noon to 10pm. These centers offer programming including nature and outdoor experiences; intergenerational programs; leadership development opportunities; fine and performing art opportunities; prevention programs; health, wellness, fitness and nutrition programs; athletic competitions; job skills development; and computer learning programs. Transportation is provided from targeted communities and area schools via 14-passenger vehicles for each region.

In addition to the regional hub Teen Centers, there are an array of drop-in sites located in schools and communities across the County. These primarily school-based centers are located in areas that have a higher reported level of youth engaging in at-risk behaviors. The police, community, and other human service agencies provide input on the specific placement of the drop-in locations and as such, the specific site locations can be flexible. Drop-in sites generally operate on Friday and Saturday evenings.

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Benefits

Out-of-school-time: As noted in *Child Trends* March 2014 Research Brief, “children and youth who participate in out-of-school-time (OST) programming are more likely than their non-participating peers to do well in school, get sufficient physical exercise, and avoid involvement in risky behaviors. However, the accessibility of these activities and programs and whether participation in them is sustained, varies. Cost, location, and accessibility have been cited as barriers, and lower rates of participation have been reported for children and teenagers living in low-income households.” The placement of Teen Centers across the County ensure that families and youth who cannot afford to pay for services are granted access to out-of-school-time programming (after school, evening, weekend, summer, and other extended school breaks.)

Successful children and youth: Teen center programming and service delivery is aligned with the human services Successful Children and Youth results area. Specifically the outcomes addressed include: children and youth succeed academically, children and youth are physically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally healthy and resilient, children and youth are safe and free from violence and injury, youth enter the workforce ready to succeed, and youth contribute to the betterment of the community. Programs and services are offered to all teens but particularly are directed toward children and youth that are at particular risk, including those at risk of not completing school; becoming involved with the juvenile court systems; using drugs and/or alcohol; becoming sexually active at an early age; and becoming a member of a gang with resulting involvement in delinquent behavior. Through attending teen center programs, the protective factors for these youth are enhanced. These factors include fostering resiliency; providing opportunities to engage; allowing for positive interactions; and developing social competencies.

Enhanced programming for teens: In addition, teen center staff also provide technical assistance to community-based providers serving teens to enhance the quality of their program delivery. Teen center staff led programs for clients served by other human services agencies are designed to meet the unique needs and challenges of the populations served by these agencies and participate in multi-disciplinary teams to support discharge and transition planning. These efforts allow teen participants to engage in individual leadership development.

Mandates

This Line of Business is not mandated.

Trends and Challenges

Support for youth needs: According to the Fairfax County Youth Survey for School year 2014-2015, challenges for the community include decreasing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; decreasing incidence of bullying and cyberbullying; decreasing depressive symptoms as well as suicidal ideation; improving students’ habits in the areas of nutrition and physical activity; and increasing adult engagement with our community’s youth.

Depression: Additionally, as noted in the *FY 2014/2015/2016 Trends and Work Priorities Affecting the Human Services System* report, provided to the Fairfax County Human Services Council in February of 2014, depression rates for FCPS students are reported higher than the national rate, and JDRDC court-ordered psychological evaluations for youth have increased 49 percent since FY 2010.

Community input: The operation of teen centers is heavily driven by community data and youth input. Teen center programming is built around supporting the County’s response to these challenges.

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Resources

| Category | FY 2014 Actual | FY 2015 Actual | FY 2016 Adopted |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| LOB #171: Teen Centers | | | |
| FUNDING | | | |
| Expenditures: | | | |
| Compensation | \$914,924 | \$967,988 | \$1,000,442 |
| Operating Expenses | 172,633 | 151,909 | 151,793 |
| Capital Equipment | 0 | 18,933 | 0 |
| Total Expenditures | \$1,087,557 | \$1,138,830 | \$1,152,235 |
| General Fund Revenue | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund | \$1,087,557 | \$1,138,830 | \$1,152,235 |
| POSITIONS | | | |
| <i>Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</i> | | | |
| Positions: | | | |
| Regular | 10 / 10 | 10 / 10 | 10 / 10 |
| Total Positions | 10 / 10 | 10 / 10 | 10 / 10 |

Metrics

| Metric Indicator | FY 2013 Actual | FY 2014 Actual | FY 2015 Actual | FY 2016 Estimate | FY 2017 Estimate |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Teen center attendance | 75,796 | 92,885 | 94,142 | 95,083 | 96,034 |
| Teen center cost per attendee | \$17.90 | \$11.71 | \$11.90 | \$12.12 | \$12.31 |
| Percent of satisfied teen center participants | 86% | 92% | 90% | 90% | 90% |

Attendance at teen program locations across Fairfax County continued to rise as outreach efforts, collaboration with Fairfax County Public Schools, and targeted programming shifted to meet the needs of local communities. Additionally, concerted efforts were made to provide for transportation to/from various teen program venues, further increasing attendance at these sites. Service quality results indicate a continued high level of satisfaction with teen programs.