

Successful Children and Youth Policy Team

September 28, 2022, Meeting Summary

Key decisions and actions are in **bold**.

SCYPT Members in Attendance:

Tom Arnold, Mike Axler, George Becerra, Michael Becketts, Michelle Boyd, Telaekah Brooks, Karla Bruce, Judith Dittman, Alicia Doe, Chuck Fanshaw, Ingrid Guerra-López, Kelly Henderson, Jessica Hudson, Rick Leichtweis, Chris Leonard, Rodney Lusk, Megan McLaughlin, Marc Mitchell (for Kevin Davis), Diane Mucci, Dalia Palchik, Sloan Presidio, Elaine Tholen, Paul Thomas, Matt Thompson, Lloyd Tucker, Daryl Washington, Jenna White

Discussion Item – Behavioral Health

Peter Steinberg of Healthy Minds Fairfax shared an update on the development of the new Healthy Minds Fairfax Blueprint (Children’s Behavioral Health Blueprint). He shared input received from over 700 individuals through surveys, focus groups, other engagement efforts, and other activities such as the Youth Behavioral Health Roundtable that met over the summer. Four key themes emerged from this work – prevention/education, access to services, service navigation, and system-level change – and teams are now developing strategies for the new Blueprint under each theme. Staff intend to return to the SCYPT at an upcoming meeting to share finalized recommendations, which will be developed by Healthy Minds workgroups and their Family Advisory Board and Youth Advisory Council.

Because service navigation has emerged as such a critical need, Healthy Minds staff are accelerating strategy development in that area, in order to submit a FY 2024 budget request. The proposal would fund the mapping of relevant services and the development of a “level of care” tool to help assess what service is most appropriate for a young person, personal service navigation support, and an enhanced website with local behavioral health resources.

Staff noted that they will keep the SCYPT informed of relevant budget requests and legislative needs that arise out of this work. SCYPT members asked that they be specific in budget requests about equity-related needs to address disparities related to geography, race and ethnicity, and gender and LGBTQ identify. They noted that language access work is staff-intensive. They also noted that efforts can complement existing workforce capacity work, such as the regional behavioral health workgroup examining workforce issues and state work on behavioral health care compacts (to provide services across state lines) and telehealth flexibility.

Conversation around increasing access focused on tapping into existing providers and capacity through enhanced navigation services, alignment with 988, and using peer-to-peer and group therapy approaches. Community schools can serve as an effective vehicle for delivering and connecting young people to services.

Members recommended the inclusion of trauma-informed practices and services to prevent and treat eating disorders. Steinberg assured the team they would be included, and noted that surveyed clinicians identified eating disorders as a top concern; Healthy Minds is already adding clinician training to try and address this issue.

Discussion Item – Career Readiness/Opportunity Youth

Sloan Presidio presented an update on the SCYPT’s career readiness/opportunity youth work. The committee has been focused on developing a comprehensive map of services and opportunities, and on engaging young people to help shape eventual recommendations. Key takeaways from this engagement include a common feeling of being alone or isolated, a lack of reliable guidance or career coaching, and substance use challenges. Many young people expressed an interest in serving as a “youth ambassador” to help peers in exploring and accessing career development opportunities. The initiative will focus on connecting with and serving opportunity youth, but will also strive to prevent disconnection in the first place. The committee expects to be ready to present recommendations to the SCYPT at an upcoming meeting.

SCYPT members reiterated the importance of engaging a variety of partners, including the business community (i.e., employers and business groups like chambers of commerce and the Economic Development Authority), FCPS Special Education Career and Transition Services (especially given the large proportion of opportunity youth who have a disability), and non-profits engaged in career development work (e.g., EasterSeals).

Presidio highlighted some existing promising programs, and SCYPT members echoed the need to build on and learn from current projects, and to complement them. Other examples, such as the WISH Center at Hybla Valley Community Center and the career readiness program for justice-involved youth, highlighted the need for interagency cooperation, innovation, ongoing and follow-up services, and an attention to equity.

It was noted that support for young adults with developmental disabilities who weren’t diagnosed when in school is a particular group at higher risk. It can be hard for them to access services if they were not diagnosed before age 18.

Staff noted that they will keep the SCYPT informed of relevant budget requests and legislative needs that arise out of this work.

Discussion Item – Fairfax County Youth Survey

Mike Axler (FCPS Intervention and Prevention Services) and Chloe Lee (Fairfax County Data Analytics) presented results of the 2021 Fairfax County Youth Survey. The survey is comprehensive, including a wide range of behaviors and experiences; this presentation focused on behavioral health data. Nearly 40% of students reported persistent sadness or hopelessness (depressive symptoms), continuing an upward trend and representing the highest prevalence seen since the survey began. Students experiencing disparately poor mental health and suicide related outcomes include girls, Hispanic students and students of other or multiple races, LGBTQ

students, and students from food-insecure homes. Most measures of substance use were reported at lower rates than in the past and are at or near historic lows. Axler and Lee emphasized the importance of protective factors (assets) at mitigating poor outcomes. Students reporting more protective factors (overall, at home, at school, and in the community) were much less likely to report persistent sadness or hopelessness, suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, substance use, and other risky behaviors.

SCYPT members asked about the availability of pyramid-level or school-level data, and Axler replied that FCPS and the County are currently working on the best ways to provide geographically disaggregated data more broadly. It was noted that intersectional data (e.g., Hispanic females) is as important as basic disaggregated data (e.g., Hispanics, females), and Jesse Ellis illustrated how the Youth Survey Interactive Data Explorer (available on the Youth Survey website, fairfaxcounty.gov/youthsurvey) allows people to pull data in a wide variety of ways, including based on intersectionality.

Members noted the connection between the Youth Survey data and SCYPT key issue areas. For example, the suicide data should be used to ensure Healthy Minds Fairfax continues working with Inova for suicide prevention and intervention.

Members expressed the importance of continuing to spread the word about the survey and Three to Succeed, and Ellis noted the Three to Succeed resources available on the Youth Survey website.

Items Presented by SCYPT Members

None

Public Comment

None

Note: Brief written updates on other SCYPT key issue areas are included in the agenda package.