

**Transforming services to achieve better
outcomes for youth and their families:
Barriers and Enablers to Achieving Resilient
Youth and Families**

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Acronyms

EACH	Emerging Adult Court of Hope
MDFC	Multi-Dimensional Treatment for Foster Care
MST	Multi Systemic Therapy
QCON	Quad City Open Network
YAP	Youth Assessment Program

Background

Since 1849, Family Resources has worked with vulnerable and marginalized children and their families in the bi-state Quad City region (Illinois and Iowa). In 2020-21 Family Resources aims to enter a new phase of work to better respond to the needs of children, youth, and families in the Quad Cities, strengthening their focus to be more inclusive to increase the resilience of and partnership with their youth and family clients. Family Resources' vision is to build a safe, healthy, and inclusive community. This research is a result of a partnership between Family Resources and St. Ambrose University, aiming to shed light on the barriers and enablers experienced by marginalized and vulnerable youth and their families as they enter, experience, and/or exit social services. The research aims to further explore the challenges and identify opportunities for solutions by identifying actions to reduce programmatic gaps and better streamline services for this marginalized and vulnerable group.

A rapid literature review found that, nationwide an increasing number of children experience life in foster care. Children placed in foster care typically experience maltreatment in the form of physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse, and/or general neglect (Leve et. al., 2012; Bergstrom et. al. 2020). Family instability may lead to involvement with the child welfare system with homeless youth disproportionately represented among foster youth. The links between foster care and incarceration are well documented (Summersett- Williams, 2019) with one survey of foster care alumni showing that by their 25th birthday, 81 percent of males had been arrested, and 35 percent had been incarcerated (Youth, Rights & Justice Juvenile Law Reader, 2014). Our current system expects youth to be independent at age 18, the reality is very few have acquired the skills needed to live on their own post-emancipation. In addition, early involvement with the justice system increases a youth's chances of later homelessness, with 1 in 11 youth being becoming homeless within a year of release from the juvenile justice system. (Sermons et. al., 2001). Recent analyses show that resilient youth, those with strong community support, individual talents/interests, educational strengths, and spiritual/religious strengths were at a significantly lower risk of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system (Summersett- Williams, 2019).

There is a strong evidence base that documents youth who experience, witness, or perpetrate violence have serious and lasting effects on their physical, mental, and social health (CDC, 2016). Youth can be a perpetrator, victim or witness of violence, and all three are likely to contribute to behavioral and mental health difficulties, which may include continuing the cycle of violence, harmful substance use, smoking, obesity, depression, academic challenges, and suicide (David-Ferdon, 2016). Additionally violence remains the leading cause of death among young people (CDC, 2016). Many studies document the strong relationship between childhood trauma, violence, and youth entering juvenile justice system (Zetter, 2021).

Nationally there is a direct correlation between out of school suspensions and youth in the juvenile justice system (Youth, Rights & Justice Juvenile Law Reader, 2014) with race being a factor, as it is nationally documented that brown and black children are over-surveilled and over-policed by the child welfare system (Detlaff et al., 2020). Specific to Scott County, African American youth represent only 13.8% of the youth population however this group makes up 76% of those youth detained (white youth at 18% and other races at 6%). Additionally in Scott County African American youth are 21.5 times more likely to be detained than white youth, with an average length of stay in detention being 2.8 days longer than white youth (Iowa Department of Human Rights-Criminal Juvenile Justice Planning Division, 2021). In Davenport school

systems, the rate of student removal from the classroom exceeds the Iowa state average. Specifically during the 2017/18 school year, the Davenport Iowa School District recorded high rates of forced removal from the classroom with 26 students per 100 removed in 2017-18 and 13 per 100 removed during 2018-2019. This is more than double the state average for Iowa (6.8 per 100) (CCAS, 2018). Additionally, the impact of COVID-19 on youth and their families is only just becoming clear locally and nationally. Understanding how COVID-19 may increase the risk of youth and families to enter foster or juvenile services remains at the forefront (Buchanan et al., 2020).

Study Goal and Objectives

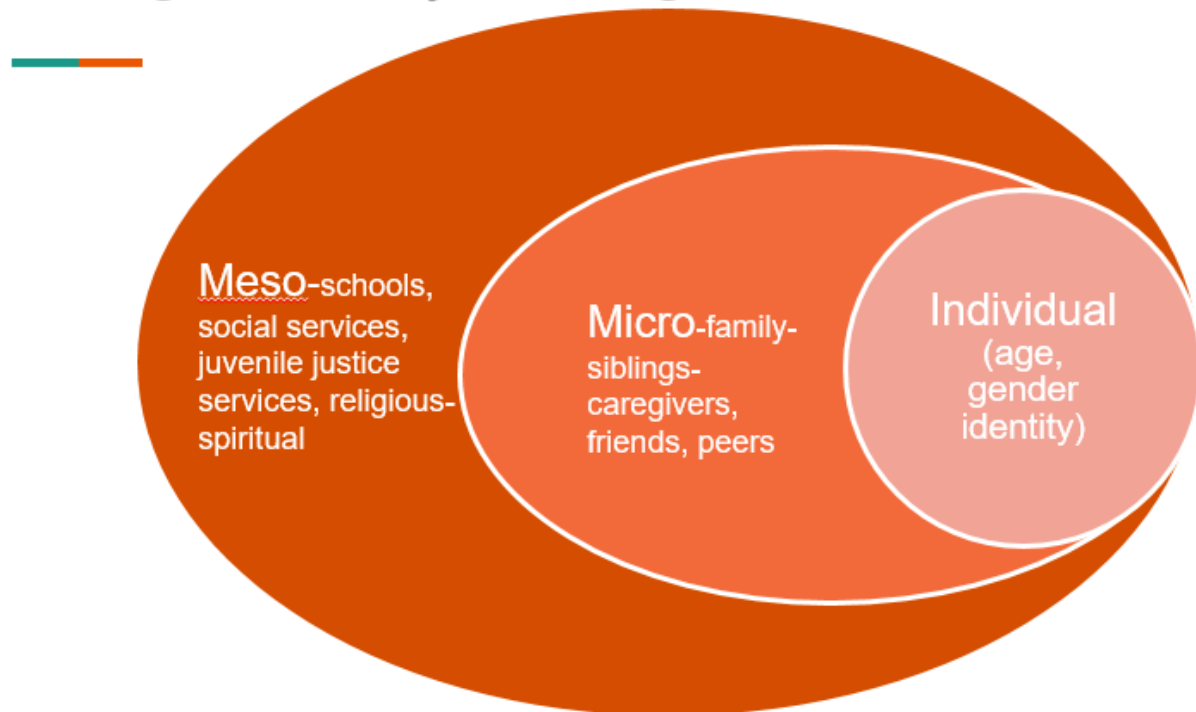
In the bi-state Quad City region, it has been challenging to meet the needs of families who are engaged in the child protection/foster and juvenile justice systems, specifically as our community lacks stable housing, employment, transportation, childcare, and support systems—all social determinants that build healthy communities. This study aims to understand how we can better serve our youth and families and redirect children and families earlier before they experience foster or juvenile justice systems.

The study is informed by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, which focuses on the linkages between the individual and his/her environment (Fraser, 2004; Landau, 2007). Acknowledging that a child does not develop in isolation, ecological theory examines the layers surrounding a child, inclusive of the family, peers, school, and community, culture, and society. All these systems are interconnected and as the child develops, they may be either negatively or positively influenced by the transactions between these systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Resilience has many definitions, but it is broadly understood as “good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (Masten, 2001, p. 229).

Resilience within the framework of ecological theory examines systems that surround the individuals (Figure 1). A resilience perspective examines contextual and individual variables to maximize protective factors, while also working to minimize risk factors.

Figure 1: Ecological Theory of Change Model

Ecological Theory of Change Model



This study aims to understand how we can better serve our youth and families gathering data to inform the following **research question**: What are the barriers and enablers related to both entering and exiting social services for vulnerable youth and their families?

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was employed to collect data using both qualitative and quantitative methods to interrogate and answer the defined research question. The coalescing of these two methodological approaches will allow for an in-depth understanding of the nuances of how social service agencies engage with youth and families who may be at risk for out-of-home placements via fostering or juvenile justice. The study reflects a two-phase process:

Phase 1: To understand the literature that exists on this particular topic, we conducted a rapid comprehensive literature review. The literature review informed the design of an informed and evidence-based approach for collecting quantitative (phase two) and qualitative (phase three) data in the field. A google scholar search was conducted to yield relevant existing literature on this topic using the key terms: “vulnerable youth”, “vulnerable families”, “juvenile justice interventions”, “foster care interventions”, “prevention”, “early intervention”, and “resilience”.

Phase 2: Quantitative and qualitative data collection via surveys with open-ended questions were delivered to providers to identify community priorities and perceived barriers and enablers

among social service and juvenile justice providers and organizations serving vulnerable and marginalized youth.

Ethics Review

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. Ambrose University approved this research in November 2020. The IRB considered (i) the risks and anticipated benefits, if any, to subjects; (ii) the selection of subjects; (iii) the procedures for securing and documenting informed consent; (iv) the safety of subjects; and (v) the privacy of subjects and confidentiality of the data. All research was conducted in accordance with this approved submission. Personal or identifying information was not retained within the transcripts and they were kept in a secure location. Only the three lead evaluators have access to the data files, and the files will be destroyed within two years of data collection.

Data Collection

The questions in the survey were informed by the literature review findings and modified via feedback from the Family Resource team. The survey tools were designed to gather information on community gaps, notably services, program, and systems elements to impede or promote success (enablers and barriers), as well as any specific benefits of existing services. The survey included open-ended questions, most often taking the form of a text box in a survey, thus allowing respondents to provide a unique answer (as opposed to providing a list of predetermined responses to select from). Data collection occurred between December 2020 and continued until the end of March 2021. The survey tool went through both content and face validity processes as it was reviewed by four individuals with more than fifty years of direct experience working with vulnerable and marginalized children and families to ensure the questions were representative of what it aimed to measure (content) and appeared to be suitable when linked to the study's aims (face).

Convenience sampling was used to recruit respondents that included individuals working in human services (including social, education, and juvenile justice sectors) that provide direct support to youth and families engaged in or at risk for foster care and/or juvenile detention. The survey was widely circulated during the four-month period to social service partners and providers, who were encouraged to send along to others. Additionally, the survey was circulated through the Quad City Open Network (QCON), a collaboration of public service organizations working together to increase community well-being through a strong human services sector. A total of 133 people completed survey.

Data Analysis

Demographic and descriptive data was computed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Frequencies were run to determine the distribution of roles (director/executive, supervisor/manager, front line), the number of years worked, and other key variables. Additionally, descriptive statistics were employed to simplify large amounts of data and provide summaries about the sample and measures to produce graphics. A process of in-vivo coding was used to organize the data from the answers to the open-ended questions. In-vivo coding allowed the author to code an excerpt based on the participant's own words, using the respondents own language to reflect their intent and meaning as much as possible.

Results

Descriptive Demographics

Descriptive information for the sample is presented in Table 1. The respondents were grouped in three ways, the first was tied to the sector of work, the second to their role in their current work, and the third group was divided into how many years they have worked. Of the 133 surveyed, 54% (N=72) identified as working social service sector, 15% (N=20) in the juvenile justice/police sector, and 25% (N=34) in the education sector, with 5% (N=7) as other such as elected official, healthcare worker, retired.

Of the 133 surveyed, 132 reported their role, with 45% (N=61) identifying as front line workers, 22% (N=29) identifying as managers or supervisors, and 32% (42) identifying as director or executive positions. When analyzing the years worked, the data was divided into three groups showing 23% (N=31) have worked five years or less, 18% (N=24) having worked six to ten years, and the remaining 59% (N=78) working 11 years and more. The range of years worked was between less than one year to 45 years.

The results show that the sample consisted of good representation from the three sectors associated with foster care, education, and juvenile justice sectors as well as a range of roles in their organizations. The majority of the respondents identified as front line workers (45%, N=61), with 22% (N=29) who were at the manager/supervisory level, and 32% (N=42) who reported being a director or a chief executive. The respondents represented a wide range of years worked in their field, from less than one to 45 years, with the mean being 14 years (N=133).

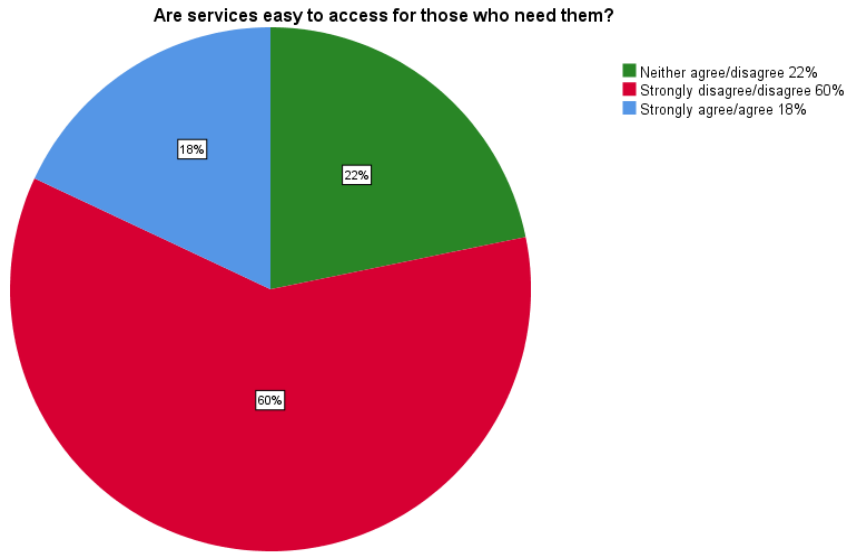
Table 1-Respondent demographics

	N		N (%)
Sector	133	Social Service	72 (54%)
		Juvenile Justice/Police	20 (15%)
		Education	34 (26%)
		Other	7 (5%)
Role	132	Front Line	61 (46%)
		Manager/Supervisor	29 (22%)
		Director/Executive	42 (32%)
Years worked	133	Less than 5 years	31 (23%)
		5-10 years	24 (18%)
		11 years and above	78 (59%)

Accessibility and Availability

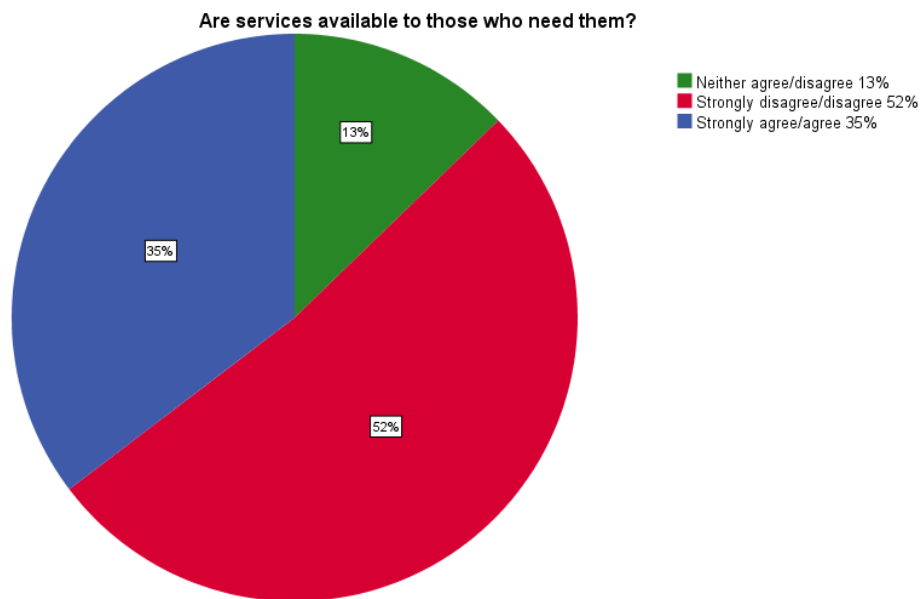
Findings revealed that respondents perceived gaps related to access and availability of social services in the community. Specifically, 60% of all respondents (N=80) reported that services were not easy to access, with only 18% (N=24) agreeing or strongly agreeing that services were easy to access. The remaining 22% (N=29) neither agreed nor disagreed to the question asking if social services were accessible to all who need them in the community.

Figure 1: Access



In terms of availability, 52% of all respondents (N=68) reported that services were not available to those who needed them, with 35% (N=47) agreeing or strongly agreeing that services were available. The remaining 13% (N=17) neither agreed nor disagreed to the question asking if social services were available to all who need them in the Quad City community.

Figure 2: Availability



Quotes from survey participants about availability and access:

“Parents aren’t aware of services that are available to them...culture plays a role whether or not parents will seek services... for others the parents don’t know [of services].”

“Services are difficult to access, fragmented, and too bureaucratic from the perspective of the person/family seeking help.”

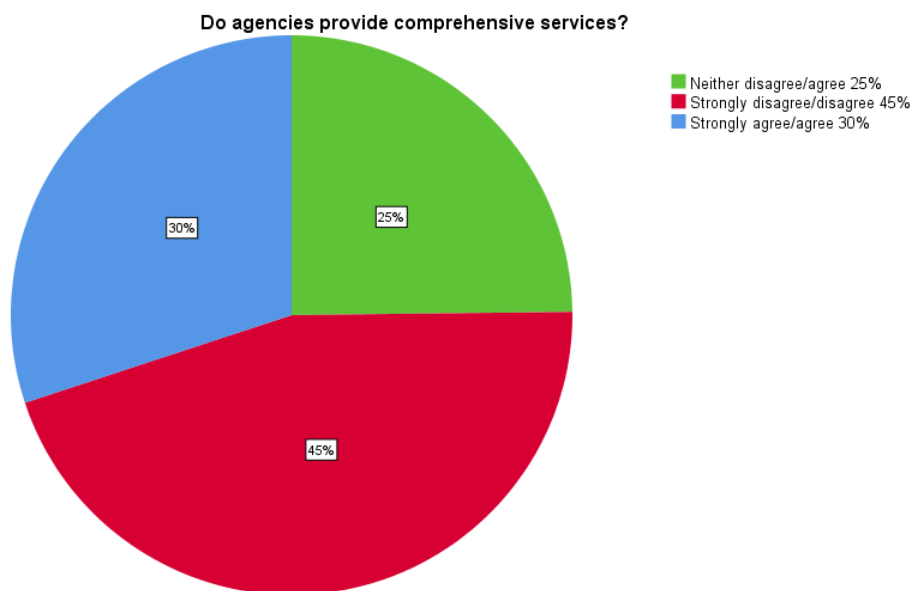
“We have families who want and need help and are not sure where to turn”

“Families just over assistance qualifications guidelines options are limited...difficulty accessing those options due to [lack of] transportation or hours of availability.”

Comprehensiveness and Referrals

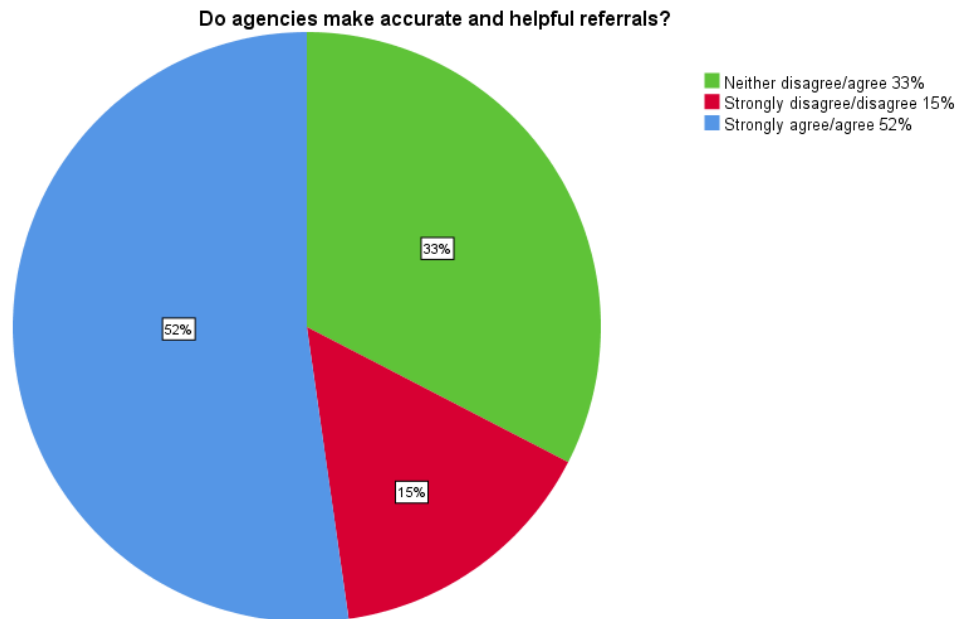
Findings revealed that respondents perceived gaps related to social services agencies providing comprehensive services. Specifically 45% of all respondents (N=60) reported that comprehensive services were provided by agencies in our community, with 30% (N=40) agreeing or strongly agreeing that the services provided in our community are comprehensive. The remaining 25% (N=33) neither agreed nor disagreed to the question asking if agencies are able to provide comprehensive social services in the community.

Figure 3: Comprehensive Services



In terms of referral networks, 52% of all respondents (N=69) reported that accurate and helpful referrals were regularly made by social services agencies, with 16% (N=21) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that helpful and accurate referrals are being made. The remaining 32% (N=43) neither agreed nor disagreed to the question asking if social services agencies regularly make helpful and accurate referrals in the Quad City community.

Figure 4: Referrals



Gaps and Challenges in Community Services

Findings revealed that respondents perceived gaps in community services around three major domains, early intervention, prevention, and diversion programs.

Gap 1: Early Intervention Services

The majority of respondents (74%, N=99) ranked lack of early interventions as the number one gap in services. Early intervention was defined as services identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of entering systems such as family services or juvenile court. Increasing early intervention services to prevent later involuntary services was consistently ranked as the number one action our community can take.

Quotes from survey participants on early intervention:

“Expand access to free/highly affordable early childhood programs located in neighborhoods of residence”

“We need more services working with youth early and connecting families to education-helping families find safe and affordable housing and employment”

“Too few programming options that address issues at a very young age before they grow to the point of requiring intervention in child welfare/justice system”

Gap 2: Prevention Services

The second gap reported by 70% (N=94) was prevention services, defined as programs or services that reduce or deter specific problems and help to promote pro-social or desired behaviors.

Quotes from survey participants on prevention:

“Limited programs for youth, not easily accessible, not comprehensive, lacking a holistic approach”

“Take a more proactive approach...and allow these kids a chance before imprisonment is needed. Recidivism will continue if we don’t look at root causes. Programs for ALL children not just a certain demographic”

“There are large gaps with preventative efforts and services...our state and community needs to invest in preventative models”

Gap 3: Diversion Services

The third most reported gap was diversion (43%, N=55), defined as programs or alternatives to initial or continued formal services in Juvenile Court.

Quotes from survey participants on diversion:

“Diversion activities are initiated too late to make an impact”

“Very little programs on restorative justice”

“Systems are more concerned about court dates and adjudication rather than reform”

“Students do not have a rehabilitation support, mainly punish[ing]”

“No services being offered to kids who have already been involved in the juvenile court...no transitional services when they leave residential programs”

Challenge 1: Social Determinants of Health

The top two challenges marked by respondents reflected challenges both related to social determinants of health, with two key domains (housing and transport) all reported by over 70% of all respondents. Specifically housing instability reported by 74% of respondents, and limited access to transport by 73%. Additional challenges including lack of coordinated systems (68%), limited access to childcare (60%), and difficulty accessing the right services (56%) were also reported.

Quotes from survey participants on social determinants of health:

“When you have a stable place to live, a job, and food to eat you can continue to thrive but when you are constantly worried about one of those three, things start to break”

“Transportation is a huge issue that contributes to families not participating in services”

“Provide affordable, safe housing for high-risk individuals and families, regardless of income or past rental history.”

“Providing a living wage for people would be a solid start. More housing and transportation support would be a good next step.”

Challenge 2: Mistrust, Trauma, and Mental Health

The issue of clients' mistrusting the system was reported by 71% (N=94). This was also mentioned in write-in answers to the question about rebuilding social services, with participants stating a need to develop more person-centered and relationships with clients is key. Additionally, many respondents noted the need to address trauma and practice trauma informed care. When people were asked to list one thing that would have the most positive impact for the population that accesses social services, the most common response (36%, N=48) was to provide free mental health services.

Quotes from survey participants on trust:

“Hold people accountable”

“Involve the community the families reside in [programs]”

Quotes from survey participants on trauma:

“We could identify children than have experienced trauma and are in need of services at an earlier age before the trauma puts them on a path to enter into the system”

“There are also not enough resources (and support for parents to get kids to appointments) for all kids who have experienced trauma to receive comprehensive services.”

Quotes from survey participants on mental health:

“People need basic needs, and mental health [services], especially depression.”

Challenge 3: Funding and Coordination

Barriers related to low levels of collaboration, funding and coordination emerged frequently in write-in answers. Additionally, many respondents commented on the need to provide free mental health care (36%, N=48), individuals requested increased funding (31%, N=41), and 29% (N=39) wrote in a need to centralize the system as a way to strengthen social services.

Quotes from survey participants on funding and coordination:

“We need more funding for...programs that will take a more proactive approach with our youth and give them a chance”

“Provide funding for relationship-based practice”

“Have a centralized system in place for families...[to have a] direction to go for services”

“Cross-collaboration between experts in each field...both foster and juvenile systems.”

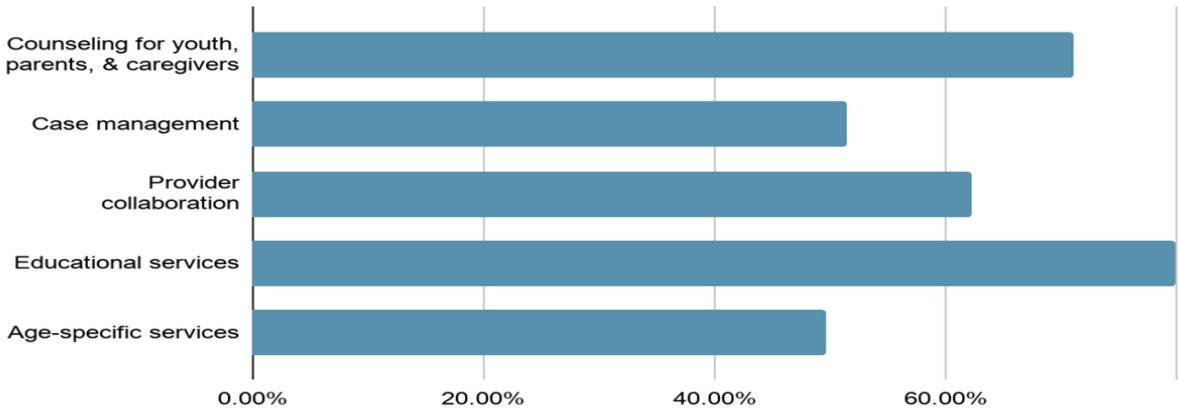
“Coordinate services and programs and resources”

“[Funding] cuts in mental health services are more than crippling in early support for our young people.”

Strengths and Future Priorities

Respondents reported future priorities for our area (Figure 5), with 83% (N=110) of respondents reporting that more education programs and services are needed. Seventy six percent (N=102) responded that youth/parent/caregiver counseling is an effective tool, service, or program that helps families, with more collaboration (63%, N=84) and case management (53%, N=70) also reported as a priority. Future actions should focus on increasing early intervention services (65%), prevention services in relation to entering foster care (31%), or juvenile justice services (22%).

Figure 5: What are the most effective tools, services or programs that help families that you would like to see our community provide?



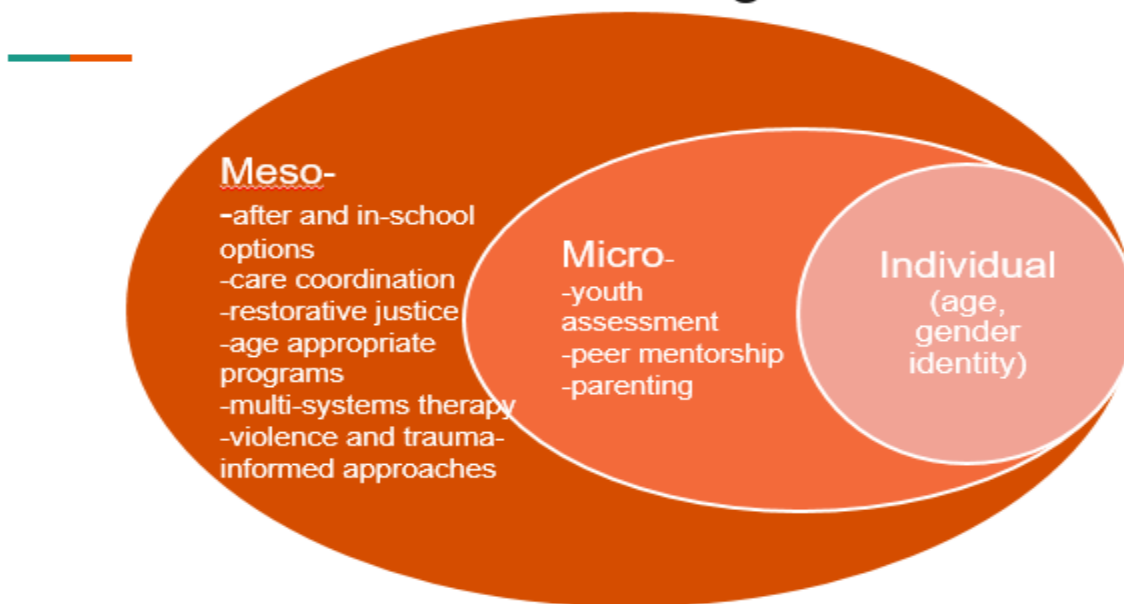
Discussion and Recommendations

Resilience is transactional within an ecological framework, meaning it emerges in tandem with the agency or behaviors of the youth (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012). Interventions informed by resilience create and/or reinforce positive bidirectional interactions between a youth and their environment at the micro and meso systems levels (Ungar, 2010). These interactions can be reinforced via program activities at multiple levels as a youth engage with their family, peers, and social services (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012). The individual level reflects the key biological characteristics the youth comes to the table with, notably age and gender identity. The microsystem is repeated interactions and activities the youth experiences in their immediate environment. Interactions within the family and peers would all be examples of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). When a youth engages with their family or peer group, there are opportunities for programs/interventions to reduce risks, to identify and use resources, and systems that can positively influence the youth's development. Mesosystems are the linkages between the child and their community. Examples include the link between the youth and their teacher, their case coordinator/social worker, or their religion (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Models of resilience tend to focus on three key strategies to promote resilience: **1) reducing risks, 2) catalyzing existing resources**, and recognizing and engaging systems that **3) protect human development and growth** (Masten, 2001; Masten, 2014b). Selected interventions are outlined below under the resilience framework of reducing risk, optimizing existing resources, and protecting human development. In the Quad City area, social services and juvenile justice organizations and workers could utilize the results of the study to add to or enhance their existing interventions that can lead to impact at the meso and micro-systems levels.

Figure 6: Interventions linked to ecological levels

Interventions at different ecological levels



Reducing Risk: There is continued movement away from speaking about the vulnerabilities associated with youth and their families who engage in foster and juvenile systems, with a movement towards examining the strengths that can both exist and emerge within the youth and their family. Actions to reduce risk may include programs that focus on prevention and early intervention in education, social services, and/or juvenile justice. There are strong multi-level evidence-based interventions that can be strengthened in our area.

One program is **Multi Systemic Therapy (MST)** a family and community based intervention that addresses multiple causes of risk, including social determinants of health and serious antisocial behavior in juvenile offenders. The intervention works to strengthen youth and family resilience by improving the real-world functioning of youth by changing their environment in the mesosystem, their home, school, and neighborhood to improve prosocial behavior (van der Stouwe et al., 2014). Additionally, the **Multi-Dimensional Treatment for Foster Care (MDFC)** program is a community based alternative to placement in group or residential care for youth with severe emotional or behavioral disorders. MDFC originated in Oregon as an alternative approach to prevent entry into the juvenile justice system, allowing families and youth age-appropriate support at multiple levels (school, birth/kin family, peers, foster family) and has been shown to be cost effective alternative to institutional and residential care (Leve et al., 2009).

Catalyzing Existing Resources: The survey showed serious gaps related to both accessibility to services as well as availability. Access is defined as being able to use services with minimal or no barriers. This includes minimizing barriers that clients face related to financial, organizational, social, or cultural reasons that limit the use of services (Gulliford et.al., 2002). Availability means services may be offered in the community, but they may not be accessible by all populations and groups. The difference in perceptions related to access and availability show that more respondents perceive that although services may be available, they may not be accessible to the populations who most need them. Additionally, almost half of the respondents reported that comprehensive services were available. More than half of all respondents reported a working referral system, stating that accurate and helpful referrals were commonly made, with only a small percentage (16%) disagreeing with this statement.

Actions to catalyze existing resources may include the holistic **Youth Assessment Program (YAP)** that focuses on early intervention to engage youth and their families to prevent crisis situations. This program employs a wrap-around approach to catalyze existing resources to link community services to youth and their families to better address their social determinants and reduce their risk of entering foster and/or juvenile justice systems. This is a client driven program, building on the strengths that families and youth have internally, reinforcing their resilience.

Other priorities to better catalyze what exists include **supporting networks to increase linkages** to improve referrals, to reduce gaps between service delivery programs, and to improve the delivery of culturally sensitive and responsive care. Currently, the Quad Cities has committed to integrated services via improving the collaboration and coordination between services. Specifically the **Quad Cities Open Network (QCON)** is operating a service hub that provides a web-based platform for public services organizations to increase coordination and to provide bi-directional referrals to improve community well-being.

Piloting **sector specific coordination network/portal** could be a way to improve the use of the QCON hub around one issue, such as age-appropriate gang prevention or restorative justice programs. The community may consider investing in one sector specific coordination portal and

reinforce its use to improve early intervention and age-appropriate programs/services to better link the foster care and juvenile justice systems and better coordinate early intervention to prevent family disruption/displacement.

Protecting Human Development and Growth: A child's resilience is linked to the multiple levels of connection and relationships that youth have with their schools, peers, families, and in some cases, juvenile justice systems. Looking at human development and growth using a life-cycle approach allows interventions to best respond to the needs of the child/youth as it relates to their age. Age-cohort programming can also reflect the fact that risk, trauma, and exposure to violence can accumulate over time and can be linked to poor outcomes later in life (Borgonovi, 2010).

Increasing the linkages between social services and justice systems continues to emerge nationally as a way to prevent youth and families from entering services. One promising evidence based intervention recognizes how violence intersects with human development, and uses community relationship building to build stronger connections between law enforcement, community leaders, social service providers and the youth and families all these sectors serve. This intervention is the [Group Violence Intervention \(GVI\)](#) and it aims to reduce homicide and gun violence by using a deterrence, not enforcement, lens to reduce juvenile delinquency.

Other noted gaps in diversion interventions include programs that focus on restorative justice for young adults, those 13-18 and also for those who have aged out of foster and juvenile systems. Restorative justice uses community-building techniques that focuses on healing and understanding. **Young adult (18-25) diversion programs** that use a restorative justice approach, such as the [Emerging Adult Court of Hope](#) (EACH), provides an individualized approach for high-risk young adults focused on building trust and developing relationships between the youth and social and criminal justice systems (Scott, 2021). Restorative justice approaches are being used more frequently for children under 18 and in school settings (Song et. al., 2020), but these programs for young adults are only just emerging in the United States (Scott, 2021). Most are informed by the fact that human brain is not fully developed until the late 20s, allowing for significant positive behavior changes that could happen during this critical window.

Future research: There is a need to better understand how the community can meet the gaps identified in this research, that includes a strong focus on race-specific challenges to acknowledge the over-representation of children and young people of color who engage in foster and juvenile justice systems. The fact that so many youth of color are facing high rates of expulsion from schools should be further studied. Specifically in our community there is a need to create a **comprehensive service mapping that includes age-and population-specific programming, perhaps tied to the QCON Hub**. This mapping can contextualize these results to provide a clear picture of what programs exist, where they exist, what age-groups they target, what levels they are targeting (meso/micro/individual), what sectors (single or multiple), and for what population (age-specific, race-specific and/or parent/caregiver focused). Although this information may be widely known by many providers in the Quad City area, these results clearly state the perceived gaps related to access and availability, which likely contribute to missed opportunities for youth and their families. A comprehensive services mapping may help contextualize these results and plan for future steps.

Limitations

These results have several strengths and weaknesses. While the study captured a range of perspectives from a large number of informants in the bi-state Quad City area, the respondents were from a limited convenience sample of mainly individuals who work in social services. The results may not be generalizable to other communities. While our results show clear barriers and gaps in services, there are also strengths and benefits highlighting the good work that is currently ongoing. Policy makers, donors, and program planners can use data from this study to inform how to transform social services, specifically foster and juvenile systems, taking into account the context and setting which may require adaptations that will increase benefits for youth and their families.

Conclusions

This study provides evidence of the gaps related to the services that are available for youth and families the Quad City region, additionally it leads to conclusions that focus on the importance of age-appropriate, trauma-informed, multi-level interventions that can be linked to building the traits that contribute to youth and family resilience. Interventions that exist should be able to clearly link their work to the appropriate levels associated with the ecological model and also be able to connect their program actions to reducing risks, catalyzing existing resources, and promote age-appropriate human development and growth.

Social services and juvenile justice services need to directly address a number of issues that emerged related to relationship and trust building, focused on creating linkages of trust between youth, their families/caregivers and the social/justice service system. For example, programs should examine how often they listen to the youth's needs and their family's requests for age-appropriate programming and support. Additionally, services should look at the multiple social determinants of health and understand how race plays into service utilization to optimize issues related to housing support, transportation support, and childcare support. Services should continue to prioritize proactive measures, instead of being reactive, and age-appropriate early intervention programs should be identified and strengthened at multiple levels such as within schools, families to prevent placement in the foster and/or juvenile justice system. Existing gaps, such as trust-building services for youth who age out of care, but are still in the criminal justice system, should be piloted in our community. Additionally, cross-cutting issues related to violence, the impact of COVID-19, and the overrepresentation of African-American youth in both foster and juvenile justice programs should be further explored and prioritized in any response. Overall, the Quad City community recorded strong commitments to promote positive youth development, to better collaborate/coordinate services, and to proactively engage with youth and their families to improve the resilience of our youth and families to prevent family disruption and placement into foster and/or juvenile justice services.

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