

Research Questions

- What are the issues facing teens today?
- What organizations meet these needs?
- What are the gaps?

Research Method

Phase 1: We invited seven professionals—from areas that work with teens such as youth ministry, health services, financial stability and mentoring programs—to participate in a focus group. We facilitated a discussion around our research questions and recorded the major themes addressed.

Phase 2: We sent a follow-up survey to the same seven professionals that participated in the focus group, plus one more that was unable to attend. The survey asked the participant to rank the issues and the gaps in programming in order of importance to the community.

Findings/Results/Analysis

The major issues that were identified during the focus group:

1. Issues with physical, emotional and mental health.
2. Teens do not have a home life that meets their basic needs or support.
3. Prevalence of violence in the community.
4. Stigmas regarding teens being qualified or dependable.
5. Issues regarding and within the realm of technology and social media.
6. Barriers preventing refugees from adjusting and accessing resources.
7. Issues with available transportation.
8. Issues with finances and managing money.

The major gaps in programming that were identified during the focus group:

1. Providing family based services.
2. Jobs and opportunities for teens.
3. Connecting teens to the resources available.
4. Collaborating between the organizations in the community.

In the follow-up survey, 50% of professionals agreed that the number one issue was in the realm of physical, emotional and mental health.

50% said that the most important gap that needed to be addressed was providing family based services and 62.5% ranked connecting teens to the resources available as number two.

Implications for Research and Practice

The finding from our study indicate that there are many effective programs in place to aid the teens in the Cedar Valley. The issues that need to be addressed more thoroughly, however are: making teens more knowledgeable on the resources already available and creating more opportunities and jobs for teens. The professionals also agreed that collaboration between organizations is key to providing good service to the entire family.

Literature

- Mental Health and Obesity are still important public health issues in adolescents (Melnik, Kelly, Jacobson & Marsiglia, 2013).
- In a study of Violence, Crime and Abuse exposure at the national level “almost one-quarter of the sample [22.4%] had witnessed violence in the last year in the family or in the community” (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, et al, 2013, p. 618).
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes that while the media has some positive influences, they can also contribute to risks and health problems that children and teenagers are affected by (2013).
- Young refugees are at risk of developing various health problems because of “the immigration process, their trauma history and social, cultural and linguistic differences between their places of origin and their new settings” (Sleijpen et al, 2015, p. 1).
- Social Media can help identify health and social habits of young adults such as sexual behaviors, alcohol, drug use and online safety (Yonker et al, 2015).

