



# CHILDREN & YOUTH COMMUNITY PLAN (CYCP) REPORT CARD



ALEXANDRIA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS ENSURING EVERY CHILD SUCCEEDS TODAY AND TOMORROW

## VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

This issue reports on the progress made on promoting youth mental health between April 2021 - May 2023

## CYCP GOAL

All Children and Youth will be Safe & Healthy

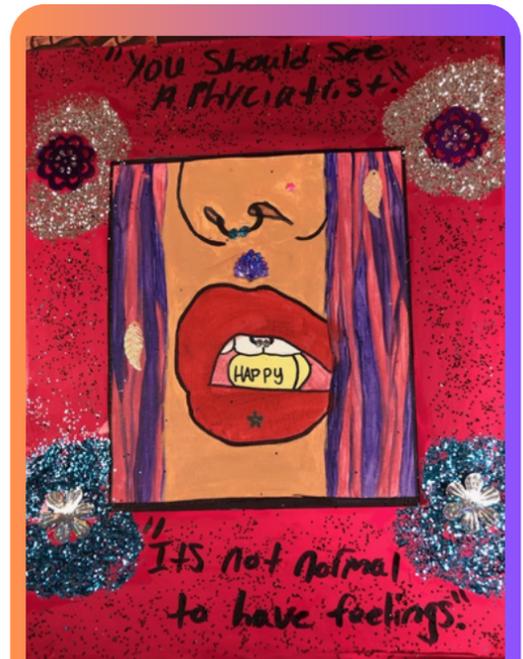
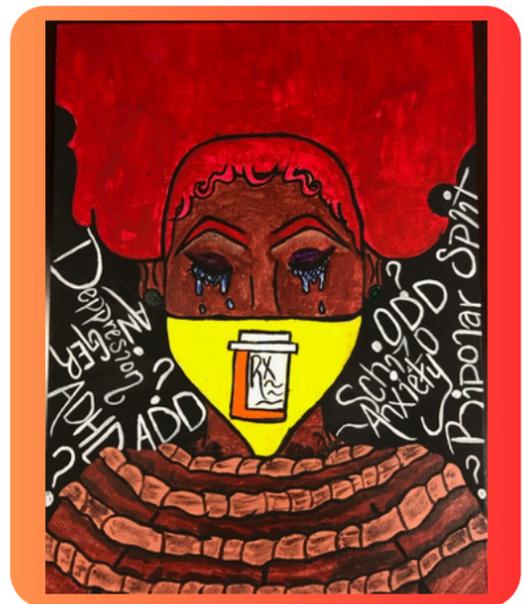
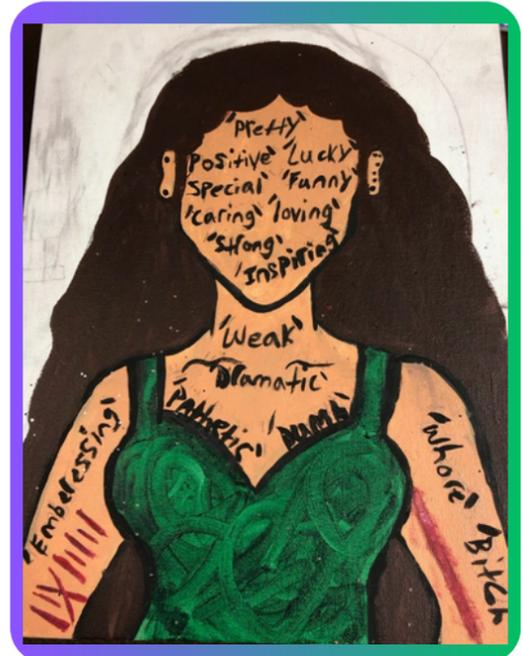
## ALEXANDRIA SPOTLIGHT

This Report Card recognizes and celebrates the **Capital Youth Empowerment Program** (CYEP) for their contributions to improving youth mental health in Alexandria. For five years in a row, CYEP has been awarded the *Youth-Led Mental Health and Wellness Mini-Grant*. This mini-grant program funds youth-planned, youth-led projects to reduce stigma associated with mental illness among their peers. The grant is funded by a regional suicide prevention grant from the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and administered by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services.

Through this grant and in collaboration with youth, CYEP has:

- Hosted two mental health/physical health sessions at the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center, ShelterCare, and Alexandria High School. The interactive and engaging sessions helped 22 youth gain the skills and knowledge to:
  - Identify the warning signs and symptoms of mental health issues,
  - Identify ways of connecting youth who are in distress with a supportive adult who can help,
  - Identify warning signs or symptoms that a youth may have a substance abuse problem, and
  - Educate youth on physical fitness activities they can do to de-stress.
- Held an art competition for youth to use their creative abilities to express their feelings.
- Engaged 35+ youth in educational presentations and discussions on mental health awareness and stigma, depression, anxiety, and mental health advocacy. These youth were equipped with the skills to:
  - identify the warning signs of depression and anxiety,
  - reduce stigma,
  - manage their emotions,
  - use resiliency to navigate mental health and wellness,
  - advocate for themselves and support others,
  - practice self-care, and
  - how to access community resources.

This year, CYEP is in the process of implementing the "Maintaining Mental and Physical Health in the COVID-19 Era" program. The program, which engages 20-30 youth at the Alexandria Residential Housing Authority (ARHA) Brent Place Apartments and Alexandria Less Secure Shelter (Shelter Care) Center, aims to reduce mental health stigma, increase advocacy, build resiliency, and teach strategies promoting positive mental health. Youth development programs like CYEP are powerful because they help create a world where youth are supported in developing good mental health so they can grow up to be healthy adults.



## RESULT

All children and youth are mentally healthy

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from infancy through adulthood. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices (World Health Organization). Good mental health means that you can find healthy ways to cope with challenges, work productively and function well, feel good about yourself, and contribute to society.

When you're struggling with your mental health, it makes it difficult to focus on school and other responsibilities. Currently 1 in 3 youth living in Alexandria report feeling depressed (Developmental Assets Survey, 2022). Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health was named as one of the top concerns by Alexandria's youth. Mental health problems in youth often co-occur with other health and behavioral risks like increased risk of drug use, experiencing violence, and higher risk sexual behaviors. So it's really important that youth are supported in developing good mental health.

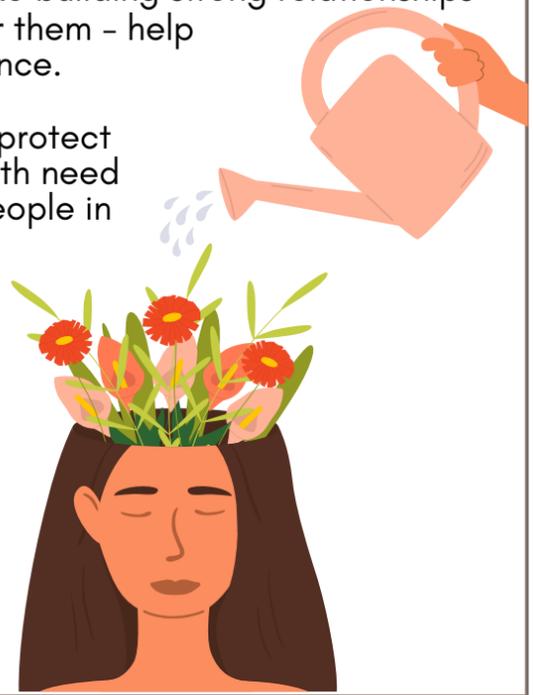
Adults and institutions like schools and governments have a huge role to play in supporting mental health among infants, children, and youth and creating a world where young people thrive. It is especially important for adults to protect the mental health of youth who, for reasons out of their control, are at a higher risk for mental health difficulties, including LGBTQ+ students, female students, and students across racial and ethnic groups (Department of Health and Human Services, 2022).

Fortunately, the same things that improve mental health - like building strong relationships with youth and creating safe and affirming environments for them - help prevent a range of bad experiences, like drug use and violence.

This will provide youth with a sense of belonging which can protect youth from poor mental health and other risk behaviors. Youth need to know someone cares about them and it starts with the people in their family, school, and community.

“ If we seize this moment, step up for our children and their families in their moment of need, and lead with inclusion, kindness, and respect, we can lay the foundation for a healthier, more resilient, and more fulfilled nation.

- Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General

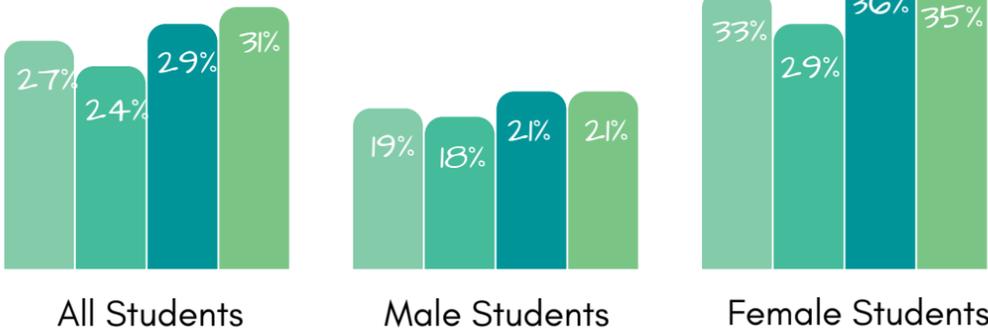


## HOW WE ARE DOING

### Youth Depression/Attempted Suicide\*

Source: Developmental Assets, Alexandria City Public Schools, Search Institute

2013 2016 2019 2022



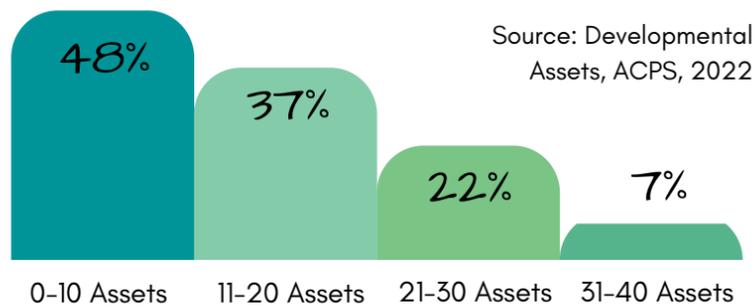
Youth Depression and Attempted Suicide Rates have increased by 14.8% over the last decade. 1 in 3 female students and 1 in 5 male students report feeling frequently depressed or have attempted suicide in 2022.

### The Protective Power of Developmental Assets

Strong and consistent evidence shows that youth who report more [assets](#) also report fewer high-risk behaviors. The bar graph to the right presents data that demonstrate an inverse relationship between rates of depression/suicide attempts and levels of [Developmental Assets](#) in young people

### % of Youth Reporting Depression/Attempted Suicide by Asset Level

Source: Developmental Assets, ACPS, 2022



\*Data, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, will not be available until the Youth Risk Behavior Survey results from 2019 & 2022 have been published.

## CYCP STRATEGIES

**Strategy #8:** Incorporate social, emotional, and academic learning into the school day

**Strategy #9:** Increase access to mental health and wellness services, supports, resources, and dialogues

## IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

Progress with promoting mental health:

2 Strategies, 9 Action Steps,



67% are in progress

## STRATEGY CHAMPION

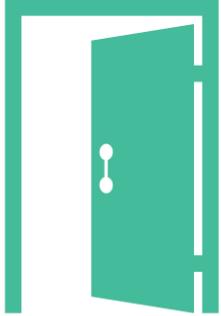


[DCHS - Child and Family Behavioral Health Services](#)

## TACTIC OWNERS

- [Alexandria City Public Schools - Office of Student Support Teams](#)
- [DCHS - Youth Development](#)
- [DCHS - Early Childhood Wellness Program](#)

## WHAT DID WE DO?



To increase access to mental health and wellness services, supports, resources, and dialogues...

DCHS's Child and Family Behavioral Health Services is in the process of:

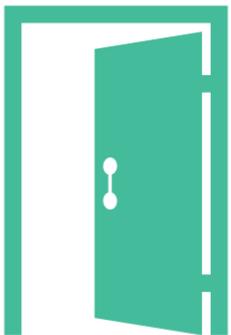
- Increasing access to Family Mental Health Services via Schools
- Strengthening community-based education, outreach and access around and Family Mental Health

DCHS's Youth Development Team is in the process of:

- Providing and promoting mental health trainings and education



## HOW MUCH DID WE DO?



### Increased access to mental health & wellness supports

8

School-Based Therapists

3,706

Calls/emails to DCHS Youth Central Intake

354

Youth and families received clinical intakes (in school or not) through DCHS

852

Youth and families received mental health services (in school or not) through DCHS

16.5%

Increase in funding for public family behavioral health services (FY22-FY23)

### Mental Health Trainings & Education

5

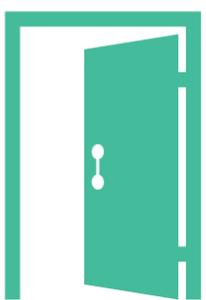
Youth Mental Health First Aid Trainings Delivered

101

Individuals trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid



## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?



### Increased access to mental health & wellness supports

13

Average number of students on waitlist

100%

of CFBHS providers implement evidence-based practices

100%

of youth and families receiving CFBHS services report having been treated with respect

64%

of staff are bilingual

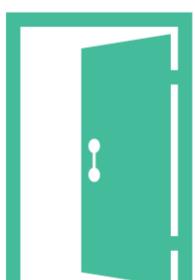
### Mental Health Trainings & Education

88%

of participants report an increase in their YMHA knowledge



## IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?



### Increased access to mental health & wellness supports

97.5%

of youth and families receiving CFBHS services report they got their needs met



### Mental Health Trainings & Education



92%

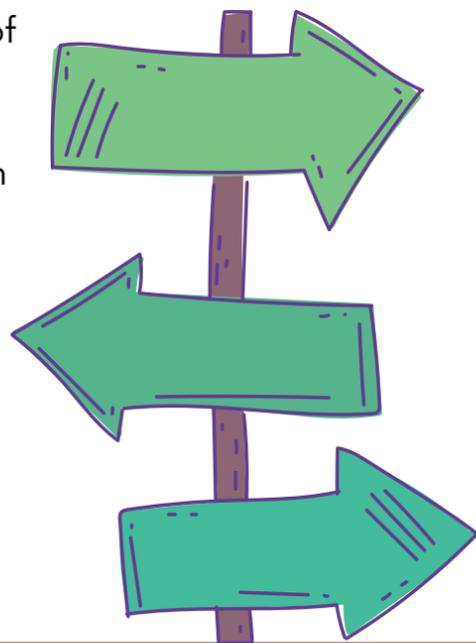
Participants know how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders



# WHERE WE ARE HEADED

## From now until 2025, the City of Alexandria and ACPS will ...

- Integrate mindfulness and movement activities across out of school time programming
- Support existing statewide efforts to develop a system to screen and assess the mental health needs of children birth to 5 by developing an informational and marketing campaign designed to raise awareness of Infant Mental Health (IMH) that include a consideration of prenatal care and parent mental health as it relates to infant mental health
- Support efforts to establish an IMH network comprised of public and private agencies, organizations, coalitions, community groups, and others that incorporate essential components of "promising practices" for Infant Mental Health



## RESOURCES

### How to access available resources, services, and programs

Concerned about your child's mental health? There is help! Below are resources for your child's mental health or you can download the [flyer](#).

- Reach out to your child's teacher, school social worker, counselor or psychologist; for ACPS, call 703.619.8108 or email [student\\_services@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:student_services@acps.k12.va.us)
- Discuss your concerns with your child's pediatrician
- Contact your insurance company for options
- Contact Child & Family Behavioral Health Services at 571.213.7963 or email [DCHSYouthIntake@alexandriava.gov](mailto:DCHSYouthIntake@alexandriava.gov); priority is given to youth most at risk and those without insurance
- Check out the City of Alexandria's [Behavioral Health Services for Children and Families webpage](#)
- If you or someone you know is in crisis, dial 988, or dial 911 in case of emergency.



### What youth can do to stay mentally healthy:

- Build and maintain healthy relationships.
- [Learn and practice techniques](#) to manage stress and other difficult emotions.
- Take care of your body and mind. To get started check out these "[50 Ways to Build Resilience](#)" handouts - one for every day of the week!
- Be intentional about your use of social media, video games, and other technologies.

### What youth can do if they are struggling with their mental health:

- Discuss your concerns with an adult you trust. If you're struggling to talk to your parents about mental health, Mental Health America has [tips to get the discussion started](#).
- Discuss your concerns with your pediatrician or physician.
- Make a free and confidential appointment at the [Teen Wellness Center](#), located at Alexandria City High School. The Center serves ALL teens ages 12-19 who live in Alexandria. Text "APPT" to 571.329.2245 to make an appointment or call 703.746.4776.
- Reach out to your teacher, school social worker, counselor, or psychologist. For ACPS, call 703.619.8108 or email [student\\_services@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:student_services@acps.k12.va.us)
- Visit [Youth MOVE VA](#), [Seize The Awkward](#) and [Teenage Grief Sucks](#) - websites for youth where you can join conversations about mental health and teenage grief.
- Call one of the LGBTQ+ hotlines, including LGBT National Youth Talkline (800-246-7743), [TREVOR Project](#) and [Trevor Space](#) Phone: 866.488.7386 (toll free 24/7), or Trans Lifeline (877) 565-8860
- Call or text [988](#) or [Chat with Lifeline](#).

### Free Trainings and Workshops

- [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#)
- [Understanding ACEs & Building Self-Healing Communities](#)
- [Creating Trauma-Informed Spaces](#)
- [Developmental Assets](#)

### Mental Health Resources

- [Wellness Resource Guide](#)
- [Race Based Trauma Resources](#)
- [Coping with Fear and Uncertainty](#)
- [LGBTQ Resources](#)
- [Multicultural Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Resource Directory for Youth and Young Adults - Social Services](#)

### What adults can do to support youth mental health:

- Listen to youth and believe them. Remember that mental health challenges are real, common, and treatable.
- Do your best to provide children and youth with a supportive, stable, and predictable home and neighborhood environment. Create positive, safe, and affirming environments wherever young people are.
- Be the best role model you can be for young people by taking care of your own mental and physical health, and seeking help for yourself when you need it.
- Help children and youth develop strong, safe, and stable relationships with you and other supportive adults.
- Look out for [warning signs](#) of distress and seek help when needed.
- [Minimize children's access to means of self-harm](#), including firearms and prescription medications.
- Be attentive to how children and youth spend time online.
- Take [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#) to learn how to recognize signs of changes in mental and physical health among youth, including trauma and behavior changes. Take appropriate action when needed.
- Attend or request a free [Trauma-Informed Workshop and/or Understanding ACEs training](#) to learn how to implement trauma-informed practices and to create healing centered environments that promote safety, dignity, health, and healing for all.
- Learn how to build intentional relationships with young people and how to be the type of caring adult that brings out the best in youth by registering for a free Developmental Assets Workshop.
- [Become a mentor](#) through one of Alexandria's many mentoring programs.
- Advocate for the expansion of the school-based mental health workforce and support the mental health of all school personnel.
- Advocate for evidence-based programs that promote healthy development, support children, youth, and their families, and increase their resilience.
- Learn how to support children and youth [heal in the wake of traumatic events](#) and [cope with uncertainty](#).
- Connect youth to [mental health resources](#).
- Create environments free of stigma that allow young people and their families to talk about their mental health and well-being and seek help without feeling ashamed or fearing discrimination.

