



What Youth Are Saying About Safety in Adams County

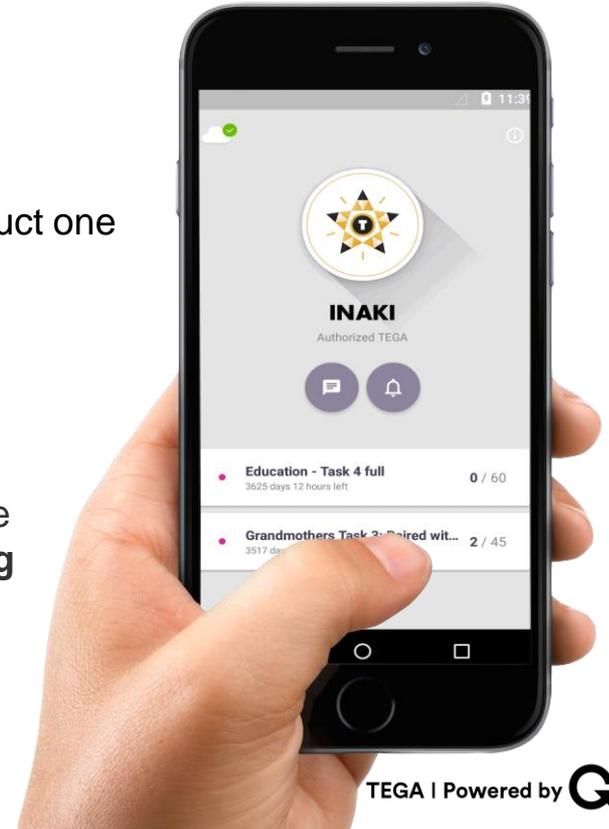
School Safety Interim Committee | August 20, 2019

Overview

- ▶ The Youth Initiative of Adams County (ACYI) is a **Partnership of community leaders** who are working together to improve critical outcomes for youth.
- ▶ This Partnership knows that they cannot improve systems without using **data**, including youth and community voice.
- ▶ They have discovered how to garner **authentic voice and perspective** from some of the most **marginalized voices** through a research methodology called TEGA (Technology Enabled Girl Ambassadors).

What is TEGA?

- TEGA is a peer-to-peer mobile based **research methodology** developed by the international nonprofit, Girl Effect
- TEGAs are youth from Adams County who are trained to conduct one on one interviews with youth and community members.
- Every quote you hear or see is **representative of a larger population** of those interviewed.
- It is a Lean Research Methodology: focused on speaking to the **right sample size, balancing rigor and relevance, and being respectful** of respondents' time.



About TEGA Video



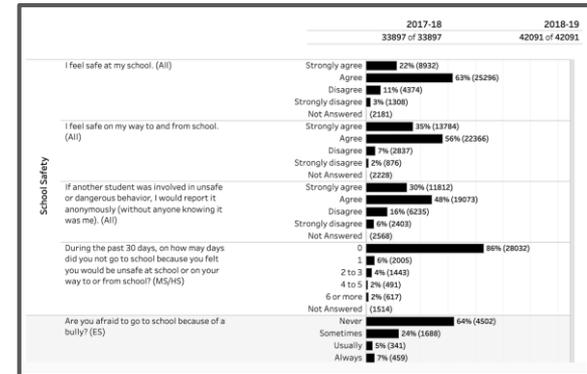
Adams County Student Survey

How Else Does ACYI Gather Youth Voice?

➤ The ACYI Partnership also uses **census level data** from the Adams County Student Survey to glean student voice. This survey is administered annually to students in grades 3-12 from **five school districts** in Adams County:

- 27J Schools
- Adams 12 Five Star Schools
- Adams County School District 14
- Mapleton Public Schools
- Westminster Public Schools

➤ Public data is aggregated from all five school districts



WHAT THIS REPORT COVERS

➤ An overview of what youth, parents, and adults who serve youth said in 5 separate studies

➤ Categories of Findings:

➤ **Community and Family Safety**

➤ **School Safety**

➤ **Internet & Social Media**

➤ **Mental Health & Wellness**

Who Was Interviewed?

Between May and October 2018 these **five studies** were conducted in order to gain insight into life in Adams County

May 2018

Understanding Youth in Adams County

37 Youth

May 2018

Parents Perspective on Youth in Adams County

18 Parents

June 2018

Youth on School Safety and Bullying

28 Youth

July-Oct. 2018

Early School-to-Prison Pipeline Youth

59 Youth

July-Oct. 2018

Adults Providing Interventions to Youth

19 Intervention Specialists & School Resource Officers



Community & Family Safety

- Youth See Communities as “Safe” but “Boring”
- Perceptions of Safety Differ by Neighborhood

Youth See Their Communities as “Safe” but “Boring”

➤ Youth feel there is a **need for more places to go** where they are away from home or school and safe from bad influences and crime. They want it to be fun enough to keep kids, particularly teens, coming regularly.

“...when youth don't have things to do, they're going to go find something to do, and typically those things are bad. So, if we had more things for them to do, they might not do as many bad things.”

Female Youth, Age 14

Perceptions of neighborhood safety vary across diverse neighborhoods

“I feel like cops don't crack down on drug dealers, 'cause literally, at, like, some corners, yeah, you can just, like, knock on a door and ask for drugs and it'd be there at the disposal of, like, your hands.”

– Male Youth, 20



➤ Professionals working with youth who are at risk of, or already have been in, trouble with the law overwhelmingly **identify the same neighborhoods as high crime areas** and understand how safety can vary greatly across a community, district, or county.



School Safety

- Home is Perceived as Safer Than School
- Students Recognize and Appreciate Safety Efforts Schools Are Making
- Bullying is a Safety Concern for Youth
- Safe2Tell is Seen as Positive and Taken Seriously

80%

of youth* in the School Safety and Bullying study said they feel **safer at home than school**

This is for a host of reasons including fear of **physical violence, school shootings, bullying, and harassment.**

Students Recognize Efforts Being Made by Schools to Keep Them Safe

Drills



88%

of students **know the drill** when it comes to safety at school and this makes them feel more prepared.

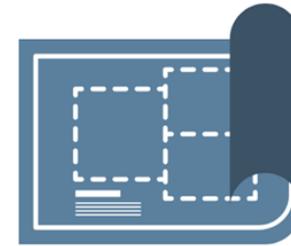
Lockdowns



100%

of students could recite **EXACTLY** what to do in the case of a lockdown.

Safety Plans



Many students **do not have a specific plan with their families.** Some mentioned relying on schools to help them and their families be prepared in the event that something dangerous did happen at school.

Bullying Is a Safety Concern for Youth

▶ Many youth called out **bullying** as a looming concern regarding safety in school because it both reduces the perception that school is a safe place and also tends to spiral into other trouble.



– Female Youth, Age 17
Involved with Diversion Program, 17th Judicial District
(Voiced over by a TEGA for confidentiality)

According to the **Adams County Student Survey** from the 2018-2019 school year...

39%

of middle schoolers reported having been bullied on school property last year

21%

of middle schoolers reported having been bullied via social media



Safe2Tell is Seen As Positive and Taken Seriously by Majority of Students

*“I feel like Safe2Tell is a good, like, app to, like, talk about your personal stuff, because you're not, like, **exposing yourself out, but you're getting help on it...** it's you behind your screen, which makes it seem like, oh I don't -- like, they can't look at me and judge me in that type of way right now.”*

– Female Youth, Age 12



Internet & Social Media

- Technology and Safety Are Closely Linked for Youth
- School Resource Officers Identify Impact of Technology on Youths' Behavior and Social Skills
- Both youth and adults recognize that social media plays a role in **youth misconduct.**

Safety and Technology Are Strongly Linked

61%

of youth* said they feel safer in person than they do online

"I feel safer in real life, because on social media, like, you don't know what kind of people are out there in the world. Like, they could be sending you nasty things, saying, "You want to do this, or you want to do that?" So, I prefer - it would be much safer in real life."

– Female Youth, Age 18

80%

of youth* personally had a negative experience or knew someone who had encountered a negative experience on either Snapchat, Instagram, or both.

"In my perspective, a lot of drama starts online because if I send something and then they probably interpreted it the wrong way... So, online a lot more things happen than in person."

– Female Youth, Age 12

Implications of Internet and Social Media on Behavior and Social Skills

- Intervention Specialists and School Resource Officers also recognized that technology and social media present implications for a youths' **behavior and social skills**.
- Both youth and adults recognize that social media plays a role in **youth misconduct**.

Question: Have you personally ever been suspended or expelled? Sent to detention, the principal's office, or dean's office?

*“This boy was, like, talking crap about my friend... saying that she was a lesbian. ... I go up to **confront him**, to tell him to take it off his story [social media post], because he put it on his story.”*

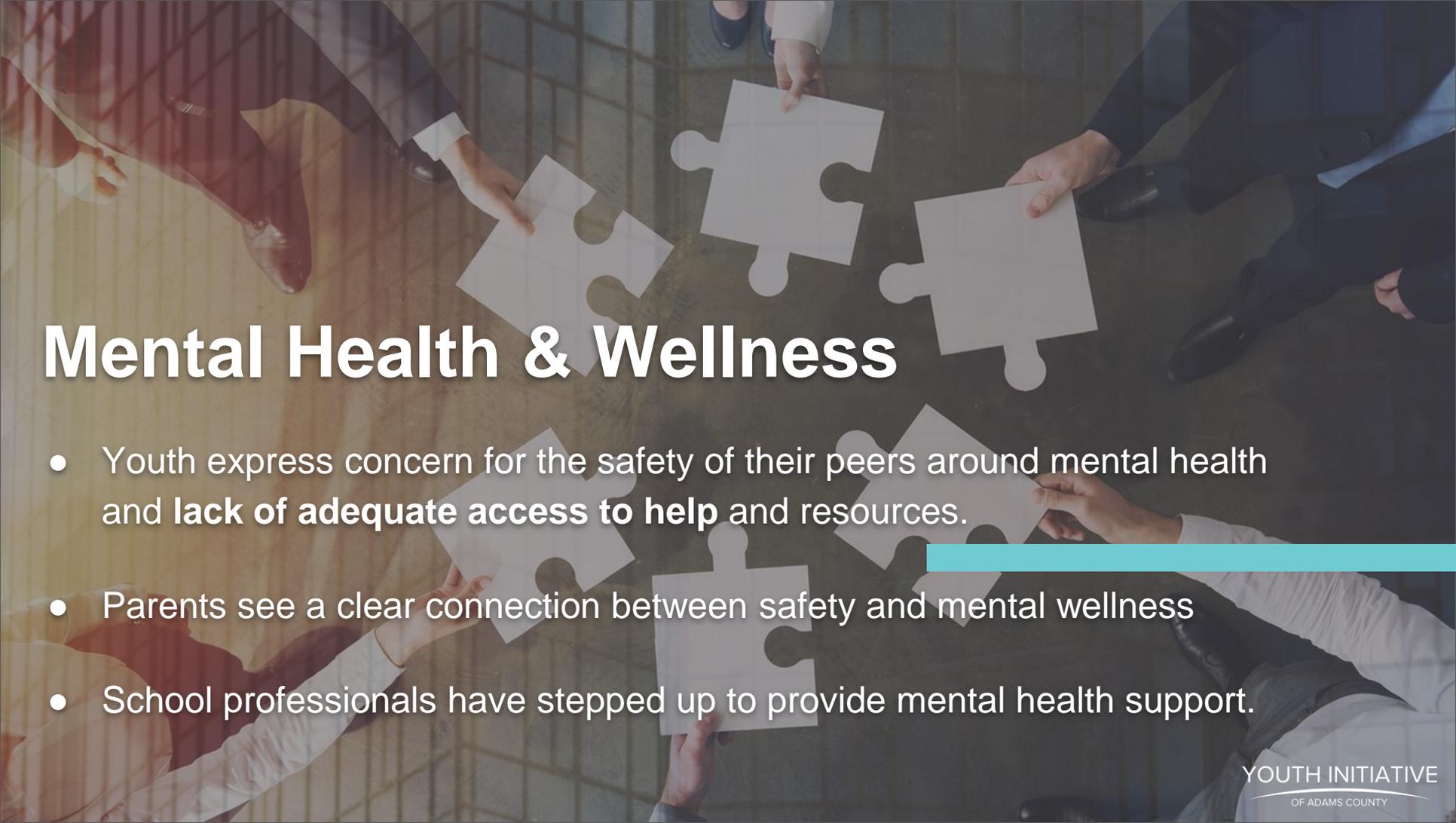
– Female Youth, Age 14

Social Skills

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professionals in the juvenile justice sector saw technology and social media as **one of the biggest issues** that Generation Z faces.

▶ Although technology is presented as a concern, it is the effects tech has on a youth's development of conflict resolution and emotional management skills that really worries adults who work with youth.



Mental Health & Wellness

- Youth express concern for the safety of their peers around mental health and **lack of adequate access to help** and resources.
- Parents see a clear connection between safety and mental wellness
- School professionals have stepped up to provide mental health support.

Students' Perspective

Throughout TEGA research, youth have expressed concern for the safety of their peers regarding suicide prevention and the **lack of adequate access to help** and resources.

*"I'd say **one of the biggest issues** that we have in Adams County is probably mental health and just problems, for example, depression and loneliness and all that stuff..."*

– Male Youth, Age 16

*"They should add a **mental class** here, 'cause a lot of people are crazy. You know, there's some things -- like, a lot of people are suicidal here, too. I know in the old Adams City building, where my sister used to attend, there used to be a lot of suicides. ... you know, they should offer a class here."*

– Male Youth, Age 13

Parents Role in Youths' Mental Health

Parents see a clear connection between safety and mental wellness as their kids are tackling these issues, but also understand that it **drains resources that not every family can spare.**

*“So, we've had many discussions about mental health, particularly around the issues of bullying. Our daughter actually had went through some bullying at school which had caused some drastic **changes in her behavior and in her mental health** [depression]. We fortunately have the resources to support her.*

But, she does report, you know, lots of kids in the middle school and high school being bullies. I mean, she finds herself now, wanting to be the advocate for those kids. But, sometimes that puts her in a really tough position.”

– Father, Age 47

Intervention Specialists and School Resource Officers

School professionals have stepped up to provide mental health support, mentorship, and modeling of positive behavior. They cautioned, however, that **their caseloads are too high** to attend to all the students' mental health needs.

*“The least effective is when we, as individuals, are **the only person that's keeping tabs on a kid** and supporting a student. Like with 500 kids, I can't physically, emotionally, spiritually support that many students that need that level of help...”*

– Intervention Specialist, Female

10 of 19

Intervention Specialists and School Resource Officers mentioned large caseloads being a challenge to supporting *all* youth

Mental Health and Wellness

Students, Parents, and School Professionals Had Many Ideas On How to Improve Mental Wellness

“So, probably could **improve more suicide prevention lines** because they give it to us at schools and everything but they don't really promote it as hard as they promote sports and all that kind of stuff because it's only a once a year thing.

– Male Youth, 16

“**They should add a mental class** here, 'cause a lot of people are crazy. You know, there's some things -- like, a lot of people are suicidal here, too.”

– Male Youth, 13

“I would get more counselors in here, more school counselors and **more mental health counselors from Community Reach** because so often our kids, in the criminal justice system are also dealing with mental health issues...”

– Intervention Specialist

“I think the **drug prevention groups, more parent engagement**, and help for parents would be essential, and then **training our teachers** on really, how to work with kids with trauma.”

– Intervention Specialist

Thank You!

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**For more
information visit
ACYI.org**