Indiana Coalition To Improve Adolescent Health
Focus Group Report

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Research Questions

• How do adolescents view health & wellness?
• What are adolescents’ health concerns?
• What solutions do adolescents identify?
Methods

• 60 minute focus groups
• 6-10 adolescents per group
• Interview guide:
  – What makes a teenager healthy?
  – What are teenager’s health concerns?
  – What keeps you from being healthy?
• Audio recorded & transcribed
Data Analysis

• Independently coded by 2 authors

• Developed 4 broad categories:
  – Physical Health
  – Psychological Health
  – Social Support
  – Health Communication

• Recurrent themes identified:
  – Relationships & connection
  – Contexts & Environment
# Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Participants</strong></th>
<th><strong>Location</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 groups</td>
<td>Gary (Urban)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 adolescents</td>
<td>Indianapolis (Latino)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terre Haute (College)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Rossville (Rural North)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 young men</td>
<td>Scottsburg (Rural South)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 young women</td>
<td>Indianapolis (Teen Parents)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>32 White</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 African American</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Latino</td>
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Importance of Youth Voice

“Cause a lot of times they say that (want an adolescent’s opinion), they don’t give a shit what we think. They’re like ‘Oh this is good for them, let’s do this.’ We are different people, we have different thoughts, and we are unique in every aspect of everything.”
Results Overview

- Initially stated well known individual risk behaviors.
- Participants viewed health in much broader terms.
- Three levels of discussion about health
  - Individual
  - Relationship
  - Contextual
Results: Individual

• Identified Risk Behaviors & Poor Health Outcomes
  – Obesity and Nutrition
  – Stress and Fatigue
  – Substance Use
  – Sexual Health

• Recognized Individual Responsibility
Relationships

• Include family, peers, school, and community members.

• 3 ways relationships support healthy behavior.
  – Providing connection
  – Remaining positive and non-judgmental
  – Respect for evolving abilities
Connection & Support

• Having someone to talk to
• Similar life experiences
• Willing to listen
• “Talk with” as opposed to “Talk to”
Connection

“I have a pastor at my church that’s really good...but he was the rock n’ roll type, you know the partying. He finally turned his life around..he helps all of the youth at our church. Any kind of problems they have got, he has been through it.”
Support

“The first time I met her [adult coordinator of youth leadership group] was this year, but I knew from like the beginning she was nice and I felt comfortable around her.

The way she talks to you like she do, she keeps it real. She be like ‘You do this, you do this, you gonna have these consequences. But if you need somebody even you make a mistake, you can come to me.’

See people don’t say that, they just tell you your mistake and your consequence.”
Positive & Nonjudgmental Tone

• Feel valued
• Encourage self worth
• Support healthy behavior and outcomes
Positive Tone

“Well, um, like if you doin’ something and you like have your heart in it or if you just doin’ something and your parents or your friends they support you, that they basically have your back in what you need to do, or they don’t even have your back they should give you positive criticism if criticism is needed. So because nobody wants to be down all the time, so you need that type of support and encouragement.”
Nonjudgmental

“I mean, like don’t use your personal judgment and your personal opinion on my schooling. Like, when I’m in school that’s my focus. Yeah, I have a kid, and yeah, I think about him every minute, but I’m here to learn....Your job is to teach me. You’re not getting paid to like, criticize me about having a kid at my age.”
Respect

• Respect for adolescent as a person
• Recognize evolving abilities
• Involve them in decision making
• Honesty and truthfulness

(Particularly important in health care setting)
Respect for Adolescents as People

“I am terrified of doctors, like I won’t go and half the time it’s because I tell them I can’t take pills and then they prescribe me ten pills. Like I can’t swallow them, like it just doesn’t work with my body. So... and then, on top of that, half the time some of them are just rude. Like they don’t believe what you say because of your age.”
Involvement in Decision-Making

“At like the counseling center they totally give you the option. Do you wanna be prescribed something or do you wanna go a different route? I totally said different route. The stuff they worked on, like breathing techniques and stuff, I feel totally work a lot better than just being put on something.”
Context & Environment

• Contexts:
  – Physical Environment (school & community resources, neighborhood safety, buildings, roads and green space)
  – Financial Stressors
  – Honest, Truthful, and Complete Information

• Either promote health or act as a barrier
Physical Environment

“There’s no sidewalks in Indianapolis! Yeah, if there’s cars driving and you know, I used to live close to my job and I didn’t have a car so I would walk over there, but I didn’t like it because there were no sidewalks. I had to walk on top of the grass.”
Safety & Violence

“I used to be outside but seeing as how I can’t stay outside....I used to could stay outside past a certain hour, but thanks to people around my neighborhood....so stayin’ outside just went out the window. So therefore, I would...people stay on the Internet all the time.”
Financial Stressors

• Less healthy choices often more affordable
• Need for jobs and income leads to stress
• Lack of access to health care:
  – Health insurance (older adolescents)
  – Quality health care providers (especially rural)
Less Healthy Choices More Affordable

“Right. And so instead of buying one hamburger at McDonald’s, since it’s a dollar you buy like 3 double cheeseburgers, a Big Mac, and all that stuff.”
Need for Jobs Leads to Stress

“The day is too short sometimes, like especially when I have to work at 4:00, I get out at 9:30, have to do my homework, take a shower and wake up at 6:00 in the morning and start again. You don’t have enough time for yourself, to take care of yourself.”
Access to Health Care

“When I was a kid, I was on Medicaid, and when I turned eighteen I didn’t have it anymore. I mean, if I go to the doctor I pay. And pretty much the only reason I have any coverage is because my mom gets a little bit of insurance through work. So most of the time I’m sick I don’t go to the doctor.”
Health Information

– Truth-telling and honesty
– Complete and accurate information
– Harm reduction
Accurate & Complete Information

“They say you need to be abstinent but it doesn’t help. They should probably spend more time on you know, showing how to do it safely instead of saying not to do it.....So instead of just saying ‘Don’t have sex, don’t have sex’, and ‘Oh, here’s a condom, go have sex,’ but talk about safe sex. And you know, teach them....you know safer sex would be the best way to say it.”
Harm Reduction

“I mean, you can tell them it’s better to just not [drink], but I think the best way, especially in our generation, is to teach them how to be safe while they’re doing something like that. Not to do stupid stuff.”
Summary

1. Adolescents provided a key perspective.

2. Relationships with caring adults and connection to a community were critical.

3. Broader contexts could either support or hinder healthy decision-making.
Implications

1. How are these results consistent (or inconsistent) with your experiences with youth?

2. What is the best way to involve youth in the coalition?

3. What is the best way to frame these findings?

4. What are the implications for the state plan?

5. How can we best present this information in the state health plan?
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