The Montgomery County Commission on Children and Youth

Critical Time, Critical Needs: 2013-2014 Survey of Out-of-School Time Service Providers

A "snapshot" of the needs of out-of-school time youth program providers in Montgomery County, MD

8/1/2014

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Summary

In 2013, the Montgomery County Commission on Children and Youth (the Commission), in its advisoy role, undertook a projec designed to measure the critical needs of youth-serving organizations providing out-of-school time (OST) services to young people throughout Montgomery County. The Commission decided to develop a "snapshot" of these needs by distributing a survey (the 2013-2014 Survey) to administrative and direct-service staff of youth-serving organizations via the internet. The survey included questions designed to assess organizational needs as well as areas of strength and success (See Appendix A). The data revealed several pressing needs, common to many organizations, as well as indications that, despite the challenges these organizations face, youth-serving organizations continue to provide much-needed resources to our County's young citizens. It is our hope that the results of this survey will encourage **meaningful dialogue** and **decisive actions** designed to support these organizations as they help our children.

The primary findings of the 2013-2014 Survey include the following:

1) Almost all of the organizations identified **secure and stable funding, new space for programming and administration,** and/or **additional, affordable transportation,** as their most pressing needs.
2) Most organizations identified **utilization of existing space, maintenance of staff to youth ratio,** and/or **implementation of best practices** as areas of strength.
3) Organizations that wish to expand their program offerings to additional areas of the county identified **"up-county"** and **"mid-county"** as the regions they most wish to enter.
4) The most frequently provided OST services/programs involve **community service, mentoring, arts/music/cultural activities, homework help, career/internship/workforce development** and **sports/physical activity.**
5) The vast majority of organizations provide services/programs **after school** and **during summer vacation.** Considerably fewer organizations provide services/programs on weekends or school holidays, and very few provide services/programs before school.
6) Several organizations requested help in c**ommunicating and networking** with other youth-serving organizations for purposes of sharing information, advice and best practices.

Background

Importance of Out-of-School-Time (OST) Youth Development

It is no secret that OST programs represent a critical component of our children's education. The Afterschool Alliance, a national advocacy organization, points out that "[a]fterschool programs are essential to keep kids safe, engage children in enriching activities, and give peace of mind to working moms and dads during the out-of-school hours." As evidence of the importance of these programs, the Afterschool Alliance cites a 2001 study by the YMCA of the USA which showed that "[t]eens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes than teens who do participate. They are also three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs and are more likely to drink, smoke and engage in sexual activity." They also cite a 2010 meta-analysis of 68 afterschool studies conducted by Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, which "concluded that high quality afterschool programs can lead to improved attendance, behavior and coursework. Students participating in a high quality afterschool program went to school more, behaved better, received better grades and did better on tests compared to non-participating students." (See www.afterschoolalliance.org)

What sparked the idea of conducting the 2013-2014 Survey

Several presentations from and, conversations with, key stakeholders (e.g. residents, school administrators, County Government officials, representatives of the youth-serving non-profit community) throughout Montgomery County illustrated the County's commitment to the physical, social and emotional health of our children. The County's commitment is clearly reflected in the exceptionally high quality of education and social services provided by its schools and government agencies. Unfortunately, despite the existence of these services, Commission members found a significant portion of our County's large and diverse youth population remained underserved during out-of-school hours. Early conversations with key informants illustrated that this service gap is being addressed by non-governmental organizations that work outside of the school day to support the needs of our County's young people. However, despite their best efforts to apply limited resources to a seemingly limitless need for their programs, these dedicated organizations face challenges that make it impossible for them to meet the needs of our young citizens and the adults who care for them.

The Commission's early conversations with representatives of the youth-serving non-profit community illustrated worrying findings. Several organizational leaders informed commission members that at least four non-profit youth program providers (Gandhi Brigade, Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers, Arts on the Block, the Boys and Girls Club) were going to be forced to relocate from their downtown Silver Spring and Wheaton program and office spaces by the end of calendar year 2013. These providers mentioned difficulty in securing public

space, local public sector redevelopment efforts in the greater Silver Spring area, and the increasing cost of affordable space as the primary causes of these relocations. The Commission took note of these developments and joined public conversations concerning the repurposing of public facilities and usage of existing public space in the County to support OST youth serving organizations.

Why the Commission took on this project

As the Commission met with representatives from Montgomery County Public Schools, the Department of Health and Human Services, the County Council and the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families (the Collaboration Council), commissioners utilized these opportunities to ask questions and gather information to guide future research and recommendations. These meetings were helpful, yet did not illustrate sufficient evidence to clearly articulate or quantify the needs of OST youth serving organizations throughout the entire county. In response to the community concerns referenced above, the Commission, in its advisory role, undertook a project designed to measure the critical needs of youth-serving organizations providing out-of-school time (OST) services to young people throughout Montgomery County. The Commission gathered past survey efforts from the Afterschool Alliance and the Collaboration Council, and developed a new tool to answer the question, "At present, what are the self-identified critical needs of OST youth program providers in Montgomery County?"

Methodology

Development of the Survey Instrument

The Commission developed a "snapshot" of these needs by creating the 2013-2014 Survey. The 2013-2014 Survey (See Appendix A) was distributed via email utilizing SurveyMonkey. Each recipient was informed that their individual responses would be anonymous, since all responses would be an aggregate of data received from all of the participating organizations. The 2013-2014 Survey consisted of 20 questions, some of which were closely based on questions contained in recent surveys conducted by both the Afterschool Alliance and the Collaboration Council. Some questions were multiple-choice, while others asked respondents to rank options according to their organization's experiences. Several of the questions asked respondents to provide clarification in the form of written comments. The survey included questions designed to assess organizational needs as well as areas of strength and success.

Identification of Survey Participants

Initially, the survey was sent to non-governmental youth serving organizations listed in the "infoMontgomery" database maintained by the Collaboration Council. Shortly after the initial distribution, the list of organizations was expanded based upon the professional networks of Commission members, the Commission's

Nancy Dworkin Outstanding Service to Youth Award nominee lists from previous years, and the lists of past Youth Having A Voice Roundtable non-profit partners. Approximately one month after the second electronic distribution, Commission members called the leaders of organizations that had not yet responded, and reminded them to encourage as many members of their staff as possible to fill out the survey. Two weeks after the conclusion of these phone calls, data collection ended.

Data analysis process

Commission members used the data tabulations provided by SurveyMonkey to generate preliminary findings. Statistical analyses of the information were completed by Commission members Jane de Winter, PhD and Carson Henry III, MPA. In addition, a thorough review of qualitative open response information was utilized to complement the quantitative information captured through the Commission's survey instrument.

Profile of Respondents

Description of organizations

There were 73 individual responses from 35 organizations. Thirty-two (32) of the organizations were non-profits, one was a for-profit organization, and two were quasi-government agencies. Two organizations did not provide responses beyond names, position of person filling out survey, and a few details about their organization. In the majority of organizations with only one respondent, that respondent was the Executive Director or Director. Organizations with multiple respondents tended to have responses from program directors as well as youth workers. These organizations reported a wide range of employees: from 2-400. Five reported offering before school programs; 31 offer after school programs; 19 offer programs on weekends; 12 offer programs over school holidays; and 24 offer programs during summer vacation.

Of the 33 organizations with responses, 22 reported offering programs up-county. The same number offer programs in the mid-county area; 13 offer programs in East County; 15 offer programs in the B-CC area; and 21 offer programs in the Silver Spring area.

Types of services provided

The table below shows the program offerings that respondents could select and the number of organizations that offer programs in these areas:

Program Area	# Org offering Programs in:
Community Service	21
Mentoring	17
Arts/Music/ Cultural Activities	16
Homework Help	15
Career, Internship or Workforce Development	15
Sports/Physical Activity	14
Teambuilding/ Outdoor Education	13
Civic Engagement/Leadership	13
College Preparation	13
Bullying Prevention	12
Drug, Alcohol or Tobacco Prevention Programs	12
Reading	11
Nutrition/Wellness/Cooking	11
Services for Parents & Families	11
Digital Learning	10
Violence/Gang Prevention	10
Mental Health Services	8
Language and/or ELL Services	7
Science Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)	6
Services Specifically Designed for Children with Special Needs/Learning Disabilities	5
Pregnancy Prevention Programs	5
Medical & Dental Services	2
LGBTQ	1

The most frequently provided out-of-school time services/programs involve community service, mentoring, arts/music/cultural activities, homework help, career/internship/workforce development and sports/physical activity. The only significant 'other' response was an organization that offers services directed toward LGBTQ youth. Organizations where multiple employees responded to the survey might be offering different programs in different geographic areas. It was not surprising to find only five organizations that offered programs directed at youth with special needs. This has previously been identified as a need, especially by families of children and youth with special needs. What was surprising was the low number of programs in the STEM fields, given their prominence in current discussions about updating curricula in public schools throughout the United States.

Findings

Needs Identified

The accompanying spreadshe et (see Appendix B) shows the ranking of the organizational needs by the 73 individual respondents. T he top ranked needs were quite consistent. Almost all of the organizations identified **secure and stable funding, ne w space for pr ogramming and administration,** and/or **additional, affordable transportation** as their most pressing needs. The next four areas were also fairly consistently ranked: staff recruitment and retention; capacity building; obtaining program feedback from youth and families; and staff development. Several organizations requested help in communicating and networking with other youth-serving orgnizations for purposes of sharing information, advice and best practices.

Strengths Identified

Most organizations identified utilization of existing space, maintenance of staff to youth ratio, and/or implementation of best practices as areas of strength. Organizations that wish to expand their program offerings to additional areas of the county identified "up-county" and "mid-county" as the regions they most wish to enter. The vast majority of organizations provide services/programs after school and during summer vacation. Considerably fewer organizations provide services/programs on weekends or school holidays, and very few provide services/programs before school.

Most Critical Needs

It is worth repeating that almost all of the organizations identified **secure and stable funding, new space for programming and administration,** and/or **additional, affordable transportation** as their most critical needs. The actual words used by respondents to describe these needs are worth noting.

With regard to **secure and stable funding**, written responses included the following:

- "Despite the need for our programs in several high schools, we are having a difficult time acquiring funding to launch and sustain that expansion."

- "Funding is an ongoing issue with the nonprofits. The ability to keep up with the demand is quite stressful. The demand far outweighs the number of therapists and tutors we have available to provide the service."

- "We have a yearly struggle to keep our programs funded."

- "Funding has been a challenge for the last 6 years."

With regard to **new space for programming and administration**, written responses included the following:

- "Regarding Program Space (new and retaining current) – all of our work with youth is in the community, and relies on community spaces (sports fields; gymnasiums; spaces at schools or community centers for meetings, etc.). We don't have funding for renting these spaces, and when we are able to obtain free space, it is not always available at the times we need/would prefer or on a predictable basis."

- "Acquiring new program space can be difficult in some areas, especially for programs that are not based at a school."

- "We need help finding space for our programs and events. We need exclusive use of space for programs and large spaces for a full day for events. Schools, churches, and community centers are not appropriate, unavailable, or cost too much."

- "We are quickly outgrowing our current location and would benefit from a satellite space or a larger facility."

- "We don't have a budget to attain program space in our area so we make do with what we have; this limits our programming for such things as fitness and nutrition education."

- "Affordable space in Silver Spring is hard to find."

With regard to **additional, affordable transportation**, written responses included the following:

- "Transportation is a very big challenge when working with families who cannot assist with transporting the youth to programs. Many of them live far away from the schools and locations where programs take place."

- "Transportation is an issue at some of our sites. We would offer more programs . . . if there were activity buses at more middle schools at 5:00 p.m."

- "We . . . do not transport youth due to liability concerns and access to resources. When transportation is needed, we pay for metro transportation. However, again our resources to provide this service are limited."

- "Our organization only has two vans that in total only hold about 14 students . . . this is a challenge since there is limited space to drop off students or a cap amount when planning field trips."

- "We serve predominantly [sic] (though not exclusively) youth in elementary school who are unable to use Ride On as a transit option. We also offer our programs at school, so the transit accessibility of the school is a factor."

- "Some of the high school youth who attend tutoring as either student or volunteer use public transportation which can be unreliable."

- "Transportation for middle school students to attend summer programs is a big issue."

Incidental Findings

- Slightly remarkable was that **capacity building** was a much lower priority up-county while communicating with families speaking other languages was a higher priority up-county than other locations.
- Overall, the data on **communicating with families speaking other languages and interacting effectively with youth and parents of different cultures** suggest that some organizations have strategies to bridge the language gap while some do not; and either they are interacting effectively with families of different cultures or don't realize that they are not.
- Other findings worth noting are that **staff training** is a higher need in east county and that recruiting and retaining youth are more difficult up-county and mid-county than elsewhere.
- An additional exception is that east county ranked **implementing best practices** as higher need than other geographic areas, which may follow from also ranking the need for staff development highly. These two things go hand in hand.
- It is an interesting finding that **'aligning your program with school offerings'** ranked as highly as it did. While there is quite a bit of public discussion of partnering with the school system and the "whole child," it usually is not along the lines of aligning programs with school offerings. This result could be a proxy for wanting more collaboration in general, or it may mean that organizations would like their programs to support what's happening in schools, but have difficulty accessing information on how to do that.
- One last incidental finding is that the closer respondents were to being direct service providers (i.e. further from the administrative end of the organization,) the less they knew about overall budget, number of employees, number of children and youth served, and even whether or not

their organization was a non-profit. Non-profit organizations, in general, may want to share more information about these issues with their employees and volunteers.

Conclusion

The data revealed several pressing needs common to many organizations, as well as indications that, despite the challenges these organizations face, youth-serving organizations continue to provide much-needed resources to our county's youngest citizens. It is our hope that the results of this survey will encourage **meaningful dialogue** and **decisive actions** designed to support these organizations as they help our children.

Acknowledgements

The Commission wishes to thank all who supported us in this endeavor and the organizations that took the time to respond. In particular, we thank:

Montgomery County Representatives
- The Honorable Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive
- The Honorable Nancy Navarro, Montgomery County Council
- Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
  - Uma Ahluwalia, Director
  - Kate Garvey, Chief, Children, Youth and Family Services
- Montgomery County Recreation
  - Gabe Albornoz, Director
- Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
  - Dr. Ursula Hermann, Director, Department of Student Services
- Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families
  - Carol Walsh, Executive Director
  - Cheryl Jenkins, Director, Data and Research
  - Lynn Sobolov, Excel Beyond the Bell Program Manager

Appendices

Appendix A – Survey of Out-of-School Time Service Providers

NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

The Montgomery County Commission on Children and Youth is disseminating a brief survey to document the needs of out-of-school time programs/providers in Montgomery County. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Survey results will be shared with the County Executive, County Council, and the Collaboration Council to raise their awareness and help them make informed policy and budget decisions about out-of-school time programming.

Confidentiality Notice: Your answers will be anonymous. They will be grouped together with those of other providers and no one individual will ever be identified. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question or do not know the answer, you may skip the question.

*1. Organization Name:

[ ]

2. What is your current title within your organization?

[ ]

3. On average, in your current role within your organization, what percentage of your time is spent on administrative and/or direct service?

- ○ 0% Administrative; 100% Direct Service
- ○ 25% Administrative; 75% Direct Service
- ○ 50% Administrative; 50% Direct Service
- ○ 75% Administrative; 25% Direct Service
- ○ 100% Administrative; 0% Direct Service

Organization Background

4. Is your organization a 501(c)3?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ I don't know

5. Which part of Montgomery County does your organization serve? (check all that apply)

☐ Up-County

☐ Mid-County

☐ Eastern County

☐ Bethesda-Chevy Chase

☐ Silver Spring

☐ I don't know

6. About how many full-time employees work at your organization?

☐

7. About how many hourly employees work at your organization?

☐

8. About how many employees at your organization provide direct service?

☐

Out-of-school Time Programming

9. How many unduplicated youth participate annually in your organization's out-of -school time programming?

○ Under 50

○ 50-100

○ 100-500

○ 501-1,000

○ 1,000 – 2,000

○ 2,000-5,000

○ 5,000+

○ I don't know

10. When do you provide out-of-school time services/programs? (Check all that apply)

☐ Before school

☐ After school

☐ Weekends

☐ School holidays

☐ Summer vacation

11. What types of out-of-school time services/programs does your organization provide to young people in Montgomery County? (Check all that apply)

☐ Homework Help

☐ Sports/Physical Activity

☐ Teambuilding/ Outdoor Education

☐ Arts/Music/ Cultural Activities

☐ Reading

☐ Nutrition/Wellness/Cooking

☐ Community Service

☐ Science Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

☐ Bullying Prevention

☐ Mentoring

☐ Services for Parents & Families

☐ Digital Learning

☐ Drug, Alcohol or Tobacco Prevention Programs

☐ Civic Engagement/Leadership

☐ College Preparation

☐ Services Specifically Designed for Children with Special Needs/Learning Disabilities

☐ Violence/ Gang Prevention

☐ Career, Internship or Workforce Development

☐ Language and/or ELL Services

☐ Pregnancy Prevention Programs

☐ Mental Health Services

☐ Medical & Dental Services

☐ Other (please specify)

_____

12. What amount of your organization's annual operating budget is devoted to out-of-school time programming?

○ $1 - $50,000

○ $50,001 - $250,000

○ $250,000 - $500,000

○ $500, 000 - $1,000,000

○ $1,000,000 +

○ I don't know

Organization Needs Assessment

How would you describe your experiences with the following?
Rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5 based on how challenging they are for your organization, with a 1 being "achieve successfully" and 5 being "needs assistance"

13. My experiences with...

|	1	2	3	4	5	Does not apply
Securing stable and adequate funding	○	○	○	○	○	○
Capacity building	○	○	○	○	○	○
Staff development	○	○	○	○	○	○
Staff training	○	○	○	○	○	○
Staff recruitment and retention	○	○	○	○	○	○
Maintaining staff to youth ratio	○	○	○	○	○	○
Program innovation	○	○	○	○	○	○
Program evaluation	○	○	○	○	○	○
Acquiring new program space	○	○	○	○	○	○
Utilizing existing program space	○	○	○	○	○	○
Retaining program space	○	○	○	○	○	○
Assessing youth and community needs	○	○	○	○	○	○
Adapting to a changing environment	○	○	○	○	○	○
Recruiting and retaining youth in programs	○	○	○	○	○	○
Engaging youth in development of programs and services	○	○	○	○	○	○
Availability of transportation for youth participants	○	○	○	○	○	○
Working or communicating with families	○	○	○	○	○	○
Obtaining program feedback from youth and families	○	○	○	○	○	○
Communicating with youth and parents speaking other languages	○	○	○	○	○	○
Interacting effectively with youth and families of different cultures	○	○	○	○	○	○
Implementing 'best practices'	○	○	○	○	○	○
Aligning your program with school offerings	○	○	○	○	○	○

14. For any area listed above that you rated as "needing assistance" (rated as a 4 or a 5) please give a one sentence reason(s) for your response.

Addressing Needs

15. The Montgomery County Commission on Children and Youth advises the County Council, County Executive, Department of Health and Human Services, and Board of Education in matters relating to children, youth, and families.

How can the Commission on Children and Youth support your organization in addressing its needs? (for example, providing testimony in support of your work, assisting you in researching trends in the field, etc.)
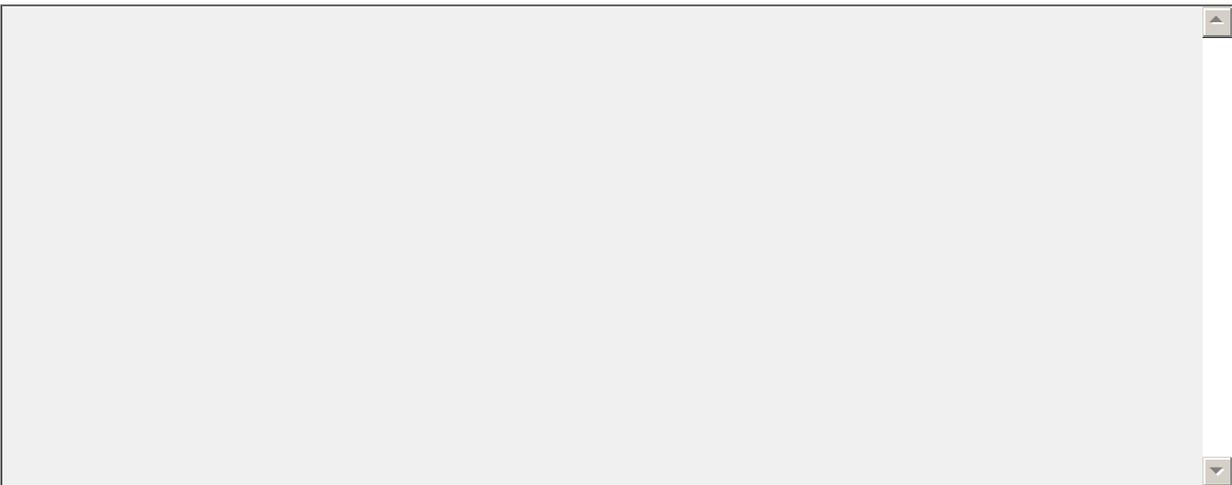
16. Indicate all areas of the County into which your organization is interested in expanding.

☐ Up-County

☐ Mid-County

☐ Eastern County

☐ Bethesda-Chevy Chase

☐ Silver Spring

☐ f. Not interested in expanding (Please specify why)

17. How does your organization encourage or facilitate youth participation in the operation and/or management of your organization's services/programs?

18. Are you aware of professional development opportunities for out-of-school-time programming providers in Montgomery County? (for example, Advancing Youth development training, YPQA Methods Workshops such as Reframing Conflict, etc.)

○ Yes

○ No

19. Have you attended professional development opportunities in Montgomery County?

○ Yes

○ No

20. Do you have any suggestions for professional development topics to address specific needs in your OST program?

Appendix B – Statistically Relevant Averages by Type of Youth Worker Practitioner

Statistically <u>Relevant</u> Averages by Type of <u>Youth Worker Practitioner</u>

	Securing stable and adequate funding	Capacity building	Acquiring new program space	Availability of transportation for youth participants
Direct service	2.6	2.4	3.33	3
Direct Service (Some Admin)	2.97	2.4	3.09	2.73
50/50	2.87	2.93	3.18	2.67
Administrative (Some direct)	3.91	3	3.25	3.73
Administrative	3.88	3.44	2.98	3.56

Statistically <u>Relevant</u> Averages by <u>County Location</u>

	Securing stable and adequate funding	Capacity building	Acquiring new program space	Availability of transportation for youth participants
Up-County	3.28	2.72	3.07	3.25
Mid-County	3.26	3	2.86	3.54
Eastern County	3.31	2.92	2.75	3.5
Bethesda	3.3	3.07	3	2.86
Silver Spring	3.21	2.91	3.14	3.06

Statistically <u>Relevant</u> Averages of All Responses

	Securing stable and adequate funding	Capacity building	Acquiring new program space	Availability of transportation for youth participants
Unfiltered Average	3.21	2.91	3.14	3.13

Heat Scale and Index Map			
1	2	3	4