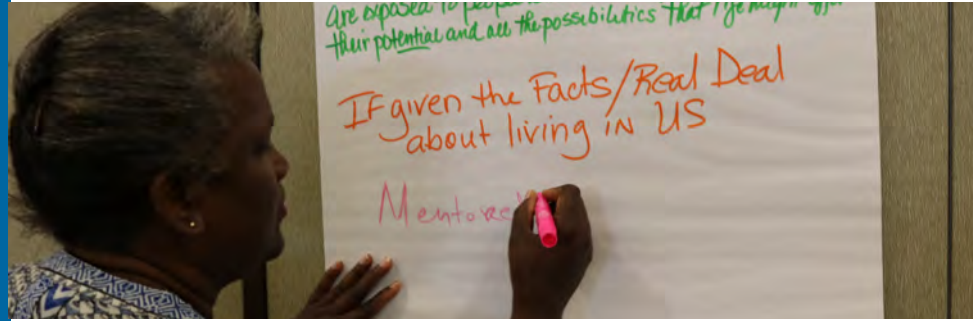


# GCAPP Community Conversations: Summary & Key Findings 2022



GEORGIA CAMPAIGN FOR  
ADOLESCENT POWER & POTENTIAL  
Education • Prevention • Action  
For Adolescent Health

# OVERVIEW



This report captures the top concerns and lessons learned from Community Conversations convened by GCAPP in 2022. Staff from GCAPP and partners like Family Connections organized conversations with stakeholders from across the youth-serving ecosystem—e.g:

- educators
- faith institutions
- afterschool providers
- law enforcement
- community leaders
- parents

Each conversation was grounded in a review of adolescent health data and local stories of the lived experience of each community. From here, each conversation explored the most pressing needs of local youth and a review of resources currently available and necessary to address each need.

Convening local conversations is a community-based participatory approach to improving health outcomes for youth and eliminating disparities by engaging community stakeholders as equal partners in all steps of systemic inquiry, planning, and action. Engaging nearly 250 organizations and community leaders, GCAPP has facilitated community conversations in counties across Georgia since 2018.

These guided conversations enable local stakeholders to come together and identify the most pressing issues facing youth in their communities, laying the groundwork for Community Action Teams to take the next steps to address these challenges by working with GCAPP to implement proven, sustainable, scalable programs and strategies. In 2022, GCAPP convened eight Community Conversations in Thomas, Crisp, Chatham, Jasper, Baker, Worth, Ben Hill, Ware, and Laurens counties.

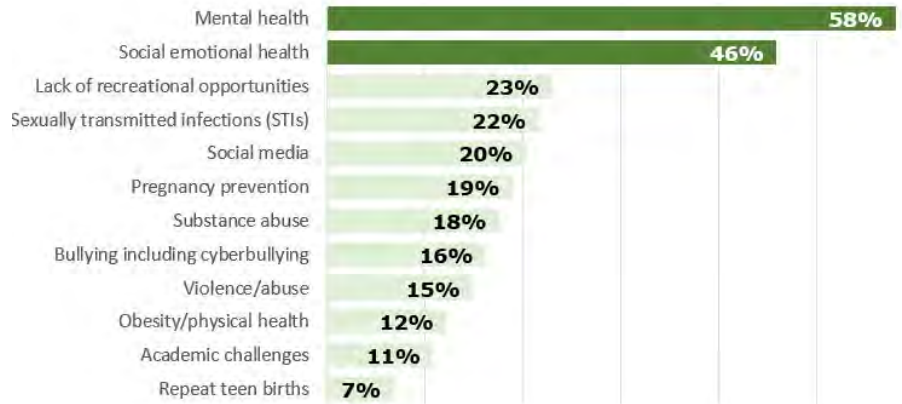
## TOP TWO ADOLESCENT HEALTH CONCERNS

There are troubling signs and consistent themes of adolescent health and wellness concerns in each county: The top two adolescent wellness issues communities face are mental health and social emotional health.

**Mental Health:** The percentage of teenagers who report having poor mental health is increasing (Mental Health | DASH | CDC). Among the leading causes of illness and disability among the adolescent population there is depression, anxiety and behavioral disorders with suicide as the fourth leading cause of death among those between the ages of 15-29 years (Mental health of adolescents (who.int)

**Social Emotional Health:** In the past decade, SEL has emerged as an umbrella term for a number of concepts including non-cognitive development, character education, 21st century skills, and trauma-informed learning, among others. (NAVIGATING SEL FROM THE INSIDE OUT, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, 2017). Social and emotional learning programs were defined as those that include specific “instruction in processing, integrating and selectively applying social and emotional skills ... in appropriate ways” (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 3), as well as programs where adults model these skills and children have opportunities to practice using them in diverse situations such that “safe, caring learning environments” are established organization-wide (ibid, p.3). 2

# OTHER KEY FINDINGS



Additional adolescent health and well-being concerns expressed in conversations, but not necessarily shared by all communities include:

- **Young people and STIs:** Risky sexual behaviors can result in unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases or infections (STDs/STIs). Over 50% of the new STD cases reported in 2020 were among individuals between the ages of 15 to 24 years
- **Substance Abuse:** Substance use during the adolescent years can contribute to risky sexual behaviors, violence, mental health issues, and suicide ideation.
- **Lack of Recreational Opportunities for Youth:** These opportunities encourage social interaction, keep kids out of trouble, and improve their concentration and learning
- **Social Media Concerns for Youth:** 16% of high school students were electronically bullied in 2021 via texts and social media.
- **Violence/Abuse:** In the United States, the leading cause of death and injuries among adolescents is violence. Not only does violence place lives at risk, but it may be associated with mental health issues, poor academics, risky sexual behaviors, and substance use.
- **Academic Challenges:** 32% of youth feel stressed with homework overload and keeping their grades up
- **Bullying:** 15% of high school students were bullied at school in 2021 and 16% were electronically bullied.
- **Repeat Teen Births-:** Georgia ranks 26th in repeat teen pregnancies (2019). In Georgia, 16% of all teen births in 2019 were to teens who already had a child.

Sources: Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2011-2021 (cdc.gov); <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5-teen-births-to-women-who-were-already-mothers?loc=12&loct=2#ranking/2/any/true/1729/any/254> <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/national-state-data/georgia>

Stakeholders also reflected on their local community's resolve to address the health and well-being of their youth and on the use of CBPA/Community Conversations to foster action:

- **Individuals are committed to the youth in their local communities:** The overwhelming majority (57%) of individuals report that they participated in Community Conversations to help address issues youth face in their local communities; 39% participated to learn more about GCAPP's available resources and work across Georgia.
- **Community Conversations are an asset to strategy;** 74% found the Community Conversations very useful.
- **The need to address local concerns is high;** 92% of the participants identified specific issues facing youth that need to be addressed.
- **After participating in a Community Conversation,** 98% of participants are working toward efforts to provide adolescent health and wellness programs in their communities.

# WHAT WE LEARNED



Based on a survey (conducted between July and September 2022) of representatives from 125 organizations, this is a summary report outlining how the convening of Community Conversations, in a diverse and inclusive way, can help local communities improve adolescent health and well-being concerns. This report provides the top concerns in communities across Georgia and offers recommendations and processes for local leaders to maximize partnerships, tailor and implement programs, and prioritize a community's specific needs. Participants included a cross section of representatives from community organizations, youth serving providers, teachers, parents, youth, community leaders, board members of local organizations, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, and elected officials.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Include stakeholders from every facet of local communities.
- Parents' feedback is paramount; Involve more parents in the process.
- Hearing from youth themselves either in person or on video will provide a better understanding and perspective of the issues.
- Provide specific takeaways and next steps and follow up in expected timeframe.
- Continue the conversations and share key takeaways and next steps with participants.
- Involve more policy makers and elected officials.
- Identify local organizations and Community Action Teams to ensure next steps.

### About GCAPP

*GCAPP is a statewide adolescent health organization that ensures young people have the information, knowledge, and motivation they need to maximize their potential. Partnering with over 300 schools and youth-serving organizations across Georgia in five program areas (teen pregnancy prevention, comprehensive sex ed, parent engagement, youth empowerment, and physical activity nutrition) we help youth mitigate risks that often result in negative consequences that are difficult to overcome.*