

NAPCRG 52nd Annual Meeting — Abstracts of Completed Research 2024.

Submission Id: 6750

Title

Community of Solutions – A Photovoice Project of Youth Mental Health Through the Pandemic

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Behavioral, psychosocial, and mental illness

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased focus on youth mental health and well-being. This study team co-created a photovoice survey of youth to better understand their perspectives and facilitate open conversations in the community to identify areas of opportunity to improve youth well-being. Objective: Evaluate Allentown School District(ASD) middle school students' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Evaluate themes of coping mechanisms middle school youth used during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify areas of need. Study Design: The Allentown Community of Solutions group, which consisted of members from nine community organizations across health, education and social services sectors, co-created a qualitative photovoice assessment of youth mental health. Analysis: Qualitative analysis of 27 photovoice entries. Setting: Trexler Middle School in the ASD, in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Population Studied: Middle school students, ages 11-14. Intervention/Instrument: A two-question survey related to mental health and well-being for participants to anonymously input photographs and a written statement to provide context to their photo response. Recruitment consisted of the survey link in ASD newsletters and flyers shared with community organizations and ASD staff. Outcome Measures: Qualitative data from the two-question survey to assess 1) feelings of connectedness among family, friends, or peers and 2) methods of coping that youth use when dealing with life's challenges. The photographs and written statements were coded using an immersion crystallization approach. Results: Technology and in-person connections were described as the most common ways youth felt connected to others. Examples of communication platforms and eating together were expressed. When dealing with life's challenges, youth expressed it wasn't always easy and they had need for finding outlets to release anger or having to bottle it up. Youth also expressed that outlets like art, sports, or being around friends helped them cope during the pandemic. Conclusion: Photovoice allows youth an opportunity to engage and communicate their perspectives with

greater effect and openness. The use of a photovoice project can facilitate youth engagement in the community, especially as social media has become an increasingly popular influence on youth in society today. Community organizations may use these results to create impactful and actionable solutions.

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