

Status of the Community's Readiness for Implementing the Communities that Care (CTC) Model to Prevent Youth Risk Behaviors in Lafayette, Colorado

December 15, 2016

Overview

From October 27 to November 8, 2016, the Lafayette CTC team interviewed 13 adults representing health/human services, business, law enforcement, schools, and community organizations. The team also facilitated one focus group with ten Lafayette youth ages 14-18. The goal was to better understand the possible challenges we may face to implementing CTC as well as the values and assets that exist which can be utilized to advance our efforts. We also asked about community members' aspirations and ideas for CTC in Lafayette. We analyzed the findings by coding the notes taken from each interview into these three categories (assets, challenges, and aspirations) and then determining key themes from all of the interviews. These key themes are outlined by category below.

Community Values and Assets for CTC Implementation

Lafayette has a small town feel.

Many people mentioned how Lafayette had a very distinctive small town feel, in which everyone knows one another, talks and celebrates with each other, and interacts with other diverse members of their community. This word cloud visualizes some of the description they gave of their fellow community



members. People also felt that Lafayette residents are willing to have conversations that promote genuine discourse and understanding of others in their community. They are a community that speaks freely and cares deeply. There is also a strong multigenerational feel to the community that keeps members connected to one another. There were some caveats to this description, however, as some noted that this strong community *used* to be this way and may just be this way *on the surface*. A Human Rights Board was recently established to ensure that diverse communities receive equal rights. Residents also described

Lafayette as creative and eclectic. The community takes pride in their public art; events promoting the arts are attended by diverse groups. Moreover, community events are a critical part of life in Lafayette

for many residents. People specifically mentioned MLK Day, Cesar Chavez Day, Art Night Out, Bike Rodeo, Public Safety Day, BBQ at Boulder Ridge, high school sporting events, and Fire Department tours. “Showing up” is important to the Lafayette community.

Youth are valued and prioritized.

Several community members noted that youth are valued in Lafayette. Adults in the community genuinely want to see youth achieve their goals. Some mentioned that because of this stance, youth activities are prioritized in City decision-making. Additionally, many people also felt that youth in Lafayette are exceptionally engaged in the community and will be ready to address the important issues that they face related to substance abuse, mental health, and violence.

The community will be responsive to youth needs.

Several groups were specifically mentioned as being willing to address problems that youth face in Lafayette:

- City Council: Willing to bring forth issues even when they lack support
- Schools: Have strong, tight-knit communities, offer multiple extracurricular options and want to promote their culture of belonging for all students
- Community-based organizations: Offer multiple programs for youth engagement and promote education/awareness of problems that youth face and should be addressed
- Faith community: Have several programs that provide positive reinforcement and support for youth
- Medical community: Many health professionals have been in Lafayette for decades and know generations of families
- Parents: Want what is best for their children
- Retailers: There is historical precedent that retailers will collaborate with youth

Community Challenges and Barriers to CTC Implementation

Lafayette is changing due to an influx of affluent community members.

Many mentioned that more affluent families are moving into Lafayette as the housing market and prices in Boulder and Louisville climb. Those lower and middle income families who have been part of Lafayette prior are now feeling or getting pushed out by these changes and suggest that Lafayette is becoming less inclusive and accessible to the families who have been there for many years.

There are two Lafayettes.

The division, separation and/or segregation between two communities in Lafayette were discussed often. This division came across in different ways:

- Geographic segregation: Highway 287 geographically separates the lower income Hispanic/Latino community (east of 287) from the middle and upper income white, suburban neighborhoods (west of 287)

- Housing conditions: There is new suburban development and then there is the mobile home park. Mobile home parks often have visual barriers that hide them from the public eye.
- Representation in schools: “Suburban moms” have taken over the Parent-Teacher Associations and more diverse voices of parents of youth of color have been pushed out or are not heard.
- Affluence divide: As higher income populations move east from Boulder and Louisville, lower and middle income communities feel that their community is less affordable and accessible.

Youth risks/problems are commonly identified, but their underlying causes are often not discussed.

Overall, the following issues were identified as problems that many Lafayette youth face:

- Substance abuse (alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, oxycontin, heroin, and meth mentioned)
- Mental health (depression specifically)
- Bullying
- Ease of social media to increase cyberbullying and sexting
- Teen pregnancy
- Dating violence
- School dropout
- Juvenile delinquency / too many youth in criminal justice and judicial system

The issues were largely tied to different cultural and racial/ethnic groups. Teen pregnancy, dating violence, school dropout, and juvenile delinquency and over-involvement in the criminal justice system were largely tied to Latino/Hispanic youth in Lafayette. Mental health issues such as depression, bullying, cyberbullying and sexting were issues identified across youth race/ethnicity. Substance abuse was also identified as an issue for all youth and that many see substance use as a “rite of passage” for youth. There may be some complacency and cultural acceptance of substance use in the community. While all populations of youth were identified as buyers of drugs and alcohol, the sellers were largely identified as youth of color because it is a *job*.

While all interviews were asked about specific problems facing youth in Lafayette, not all respondents discussed the reasons why youth face these issues. The root causes do not seem to be commonly understood but those who did respond identified:

- Lack of education (or lack of support and skills development in the education system)
- Language barriers for non-English speakers (especially parents)
- Parents who either were preoccupied with other stressors which made it more difficult to be attuned to their children’s needs or who hold a lax attitude about substance abuse
- Loneliness and isolation of youth
- Peer pressure and acceptance
- Affordability and lack of public transportation
- Poverty and economic inequality
- Discrimination/racism (in schools and law enforcement specifically mentioned)
- Lack of access to resources

Not having access to resources was mentioned repeatedly. Without these resources youth are unable to engage in positive and meaningful opportunities. Moreover, since not all community members

discussed the root cause of youth issues in Lafayette, a critical challenge the CTC team may face is to create a safe and nurturing environment in which these causes can be discussed.

The City of Lafayette and Boulder County governments do not offer the right kind of support.

Lafayette was often mentioned as being “second rate” to other cities/towns in Boulder County. While programs and centers are prevalent and well-funded in many other communities, Lafayette lacks basic services and resources for community members. Several mentioned that there are very few (if any) County offices, and that there is specifically no community center, youth center, or housing authority available to Lafayette community members. They also mentioned specific services and/or activities that are lacking for youth such as camps and after school programs which can serve as preventive and positive reinforcement environments for youth. Youth said that there is generally not much for them to do for a positive outlet. Several individuals also discussed the lack of treatment centers for those who have already had substance abuse and mental health issues in the community.

Lafayette community members believe that some of these limitations in support of resources, services and activities that could be positive for youth are because the City of Lafayette government has not traditionally been involved in human services or people-oriented issues. Rather, they have largely focused on traditional government issues such as development, roads, utilities, and public safety. Many cited this as a concern for sustainability of these efforts as CTC will need government buy-in to be sustainable.

There is disconnect between adults and youth.

Disconnects between perspectives of youth and adults became apparent particularly as community members discussed problems faced by youth in Lafayette. While some problem behaviors were similarly identified, youth also mentioned that many of these would not be problems if they had parents and mentors who they trusted and with whom they could have an open dialogue. They also felt that adults and schools do not know how to address issues youth face (substance abuse and mental health issues were specifically mentioned). Because adults are unwilling to facilitate these conversations, there is a general lack of awareness and understanding of issues youth face. Youth also believe that they are subsequently misunderstood by adults, not taken seriously, and not considered to be valuable members of the community. However, as noted in the assets, adults often discussed how valuable youth are to the community.

Long- Term Collaboration is difficult and rarely sustained.

While people in Lafayette are largely open to collaborating around problems youth face, many individuals mentioned that funding and resources for addressing youth issues often results in competition rather than collaboration. Also, where collaborative efforts have been successful in the past, there is concern that “nothing sticks”. Those successes have largely only been events-based or episodic. Collaborations have often been dependent on a single individual, have largely been unorganized, and expire after funding recedes. Collaborating and sustaining efforts will be challenges in the Lafayette community. CTC might provide the needed structure and support to maintain collaboration.

Community Aspirations and Ideas for CTC in Lafayette

Everyone should have the opportunity to succeed.

Equity and justice are and should continue to be fundamental aspects of living in Lafayette. We need to work to decrease the barriers for accessing opportunities for achievement, especially for low income and minority youth. Youth need to have possibilities available to them, and community members specifically focused on education and skill-building opportunities:

- Setting a goal that 100% of youth should graduate.
- Increasing opportunities for youth to engage with their school and feel like they belong.
- Provide youth with real-world experiences.
- Give youth the skills and tools they need to achieve their dreams.
- Have opportunities for youth outside of schools, like a youth center which provides a place to hang out and access resources needed to succeed.

There was a call that the City of Lafayette allocate appropriate resources to youth-oriented services and support. Lafayette should focus on providing opportunities at a reasonable cost and a consistent location.

Youth should be at the table.

Community members agreed that it is time to have a difficult conversation about the underlying cause of problems youth face in Lafayette. Many also suggested that youth initiate and lead these conversations, because people will listen to them. This would give youth the ability to take their own initiative, share their voice, become more socially aware, and to be given opportunities to succeed.

All Lafayette youth should feel...

Cared
Loved for
Heard
Comfortable Safe
Valued

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