



A New Vision for Durham's Most Vulnerable Youth

April 22, 2016

Human Services Complex, Durham, NC

REPORT

Summary

The Durham Youth Relationship Violence Task Force (YRVTF) hosted the *A New Vision for Durham's Most Vulnerable Youth* on April 22, 2016 in partnership with the Durham County Department of Social Services (DSS), Transforming Hope Ministries, the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC), the Youth Opportunity Initiative, and Durham Crisis Response Center (DCRC). The 80 attendees represented 55 offices and agencies in Durham and the region. Participants indicated that the opportunity to network with service providers outside their field, information about human trafficking, and hearing directly from youth about their experiences were highlights of the day.

Recommendations generated from large and small group discussions include:

- Establish emergency housing and a drop-in center in Durham for unaccompanied youth under age 18.
- Train child welfare workers, health care providers, school personnel, and staff of service agencies to recognize the signs of trafficking and other high-risk behaviors.
- Strengthen access to high-quality afterschool programs and Durham Parks and Recreation (DPR) sites, including addressing issues of transportation.
- Establish a Child Advocacy Center and provide more culturally-appropriate support for families, starting in preschool.
- Increase education on healthy relationships and behavior for youth and families.
- Establish an easily-accessible, well-maintained database of resources in Durham and more opportunities for agencies to network across sectors.
- Open more channels for youth voices to be heard.

The Youth Relationship Violence Task Force is working with community partners to host more events and trainings in coming months.



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Background and Purpose

The Durham Youth Relationship Violence Task Force (YRVTF) hosted the *A New Vision for Durham's Most Vulnerable Youth* on April 22, 2016 in partnership with the Durham County Department of Social Services (DSS), Transforming Hope Ministries, the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC), and Durham Crisis Response Center (DCRC). The YRVTF is a subcommittee of Durham's Sexual Assault Response Team. Durham Crisis Response Center coordinates both teams; Appendix A includes a list of agencies participating in the YRVTF. The Youth Opportunity Initiative partnered with the YRVTF to develop an agenda built on existing collaborative efforts in our community.

Since its formation in January 2015, the YRVTF has met to support young people in Durham who have experienced violence or trauma. Our agencies work with young people who have been victims of sexual assault, dating violence, childhood sexual abuse, human trafficking, are at risk of dropping out of school or joining a gang. Many victims are vulnerable because of traumatic experiences in their earlier lives. While our services can address the current issues that our clients face, we need a different and more expansive response to prevent and decrease the occurrences of trauma and victimization.

The organizations comprising the YRVTF cannot do this alone. As a community, we need to create a safe, nurturing, healthy environment for all youth. We need a wide range of services and opportunities that build confident, resilient, healthy young people with strong support networks and good options. Durham has many programs and services for youth in place already and many of these are already serving our most vulnerable youth. More can still be done.

While Durham has many resources, not everyone is aware of the needs of our most vulnerable youth – those at greatest risk for violence, exploitation, homelessness, and other adverse outcomes. By bringing agencies together at this event, our mission was to facilitate an exchange of ideas and sharing of resources, to identify the gaps in our safety net, and to find ways to fill them to ensure that those with the greatest vulnerabilities are not overlooked.

Participants

Eighty people from 55 different agencies and offices attended for all or part of the day. It was a diverse and dynamic audience representing multiple sectors, including social services, education, youth development, juvenile justice, health, and law enforcement. Appendix B shows a list of all agencies attending.

Statistical Portrait of Durham

To set the stage for the day, the initial presentation painted a picture of youth in Durham with statistics on risk factors associated with increased vulnerabilities. The data were provided by local agencies or located through extensive research. While best efforts were made to find data from the county level, some information is only available at city, state, or national levels. No new data were collected for this event. See Appendix C for the slides from this presentation.

Youth Panel

The day's highlight was a panel of four youth: Tierra and Latasha, participants of the BECOMING Project, and Elijah and Aaron from Project BUILD. These young people spoke with candor and emotion about their experiences growing up in Durham. The assets they identified included:

- Durham Parks and Recreation programs;
- afterschool programming at the John Avery Boys & Girls Club and other locations;
- opportunities to explore art and music;
- Project BUILD;
- BECOMING Project.

They also spoke of challenges and needs, including:

- transportation to afterschool programs and Parks and Recreation facilities;
- lack of positive role models and exposure to people successful in a variety of careers including science and engineering;
- few safe spaces for youth to gather or play within their housing communities;
- insufficient opportunities to help youth find their passions;
- families living in poverty concentrated into small areas of city;
- not enough support for parents to meet basic needs for their families.

Provider Panel

Captain Raheem Aleem of the Durham Sheriff's Office, Dale Alton from Wake County Salvation Army's Project FIGHT, Abbi Tenaglia, founder and director of Transforming Hope Ministries, and Fernando

Campos, Bilingual Drop-out Prevention Specialist with Durham Public Schools shared their insights from the providers' perspective. Project FIGHT and Transforming Hope Ministries work with victims of human trafficking. Dale Alton and Abbi Tenaglia spoke of the factors that make youth vulnerable to human trafficking and the continuum of risk that includes dating violence, sexual assault, homelessness, gang involvement, criminal behavior, and other adverse outcomes. By addressing the risks associated with all of these issues, our community can reduce the risk of human trafficking among our youth. Establishing a Child Advocacy Center in Durham would provide a home for collaborative efforts to serve children, youth, and families within the community.

The majority of victims seen by Project FIGHT and Transforming Hope have had contact with the child welfare and healthcare systems. Some youth are still attending school while they are being exploited by traffickers. Service providers, teachers and school staff, and others who have contact with youth need more training to recognize signs of trafficking and to provide appropriate responses when trafficking is suspected.

Fernando Campos works directly with immigrant students and families in Durham Public Schools. Having limited English proficiency is a high risk factor for students dropping out of school. He spoke of the difficulties families have in navigating systems within the school system as well as within community social services. Support systems across the community need to be culturally competent with language resources to assist all families. Service providers working with families, including ESL staff at DPS, need more training in recognizing and responding to risk factors among the youth they serve.

Captain Aleem discussed the role of School Resource Officers (SROs) in addressing the needs of youth in Durham Public Schools. He shared their current approach that emphasizes building relationships with students and providing positive role models. While the media and community groups focus on the number of students SROs have arrested, this is very small compared to the number of students involved in incidents who are not referred to the criminal justice system. Officers in the schools are addressing issues such as fighting with alternative responses, reserving arrests for the most serious offenses such as possession of a weapon.

Round Table Discussions

After a networking lunch, attendees participated in discussions at their tables about addressing the needs of Durham's most vulnerable youth. Participants discussed three questions at their tables with individuals from different agencies and sectors:

- 1) Without any new resources, how can your agency meet some of the needs of Durham's most vulnerable youth as described this morning?

- 2) What additional resources would allow you to provide services to the most vulnerable youth?
How would you use more funding or personnel?
- 3) What barriers does your agency face in serving the most vulnerable youth? What gaps does Durham need to address as a community?

From these discussions, we generated a list of opportunities and recommendations for addressing the needs of more youth, particularly those most vulnerable to adverse outcomes.

Recommendations

- **Establish emergency housing and a drop-in center in Durham for unaccompanied youth under age 18.** Youth homelessness is a major risk factor for exploitation, violence, and other adverse outcomes, particularly for LGBTQ+ youth. While many young people in Durham are couch-surfing or living in temporary accommodations, they are not counted in homelessness statistics as they deliberately stay below the radar. The LifeSkills program has implemented one point-in-time count of homelessness among minors and is planning another in 2016. Drop-in and residential services would address some of the challenges in our community's response to runaways and provide alternatives to putting youth into the criminal justice system. Agencies in Durham are developing a plan for these services, and the city and county should support these efforts.
- **Train child welfare workers, health care providers, school personnel, and staff of service agencies to recognize the signs of trafficking and other high-risk behaviors.** Agencies working with youth need to know how to identify high-risk behaviors and how to refer youth and families to appropriate resources. Local agencies, including Transforming Hope Ministries and Project FIGHT provide these trainings and are looking for opportunities to work with government and nonprofit agencies.
- **Strengthen access to high-quality afterschool programs and Durham Parks and Recreation (DPR) sites, including addressing issues of transportation.** While Durham has many programs for youth of all ages, these opportunities are only available to youth who can reach them. Durham Public Schools does provide transportation to some DPR facilities and programs but more options need to be explored to make sure that all youth can access programs. The Youth Panel also recommended more choices to be involved in creative arts programs at young ages and opportunities to showcase youth talents at existing venues and community events. Participants also suggested more recreation facilities within housing communities.
- **Establish a Child Advocacy Center and provide more culturally-appropriate support for families, starting in preschool.** Many parents struggle to meet their families' basic needs and

require assistance navigating the social supports systems. Parents and caregivers need services and support in their own languages. Providers need training in working with youth and families, including those who have very limited English skills and youth who are in the US without their parents. Many youth and families have immigration issues but do not have resources to access professional assistance. Visa and immigration issues can be major barriers to higher education and employment for youth.

- **Improve education on healthy relationships and behavior for youth and families.** Local agencies offer programs such as Safe Dates and anti-trafficking training at no cost; Safe Touch and StartStrong are available for a fee for K-12 schools. Durham Public Schools and other education agencies should work with local providers to begin educating students in elementary school about recognizing healthy relationships and preventing unhealthy and unsafe choices. These programs should also include training on internet safety for youth and parents, so that both parents and their children know the risks and consequences of unsafe online behavior.
- **Establish an easily-accessible, well-maintained database of resources in Durham and more opportunities for agencies to network across sectors.** While Durham is resource-rich, providers and families do not have information about all services available in the community. A centralized database of services that is kept up-to-date and can be accessed by youth, families, and service providers would improve the collaboration across sectors and help agencies address the multi-dimensional, complex needs of their clients.
- **Open more channels for youth voices to be heard.** While service providers are trained in working with youth and families, young people are the experts of their own experience. Bringing youth into conversations about all of these recommendations will improve the likelihood of success while empowering our young people to speak for themselves. Providers and policy-makers should encourage and enable youth to participate in planning and decision-making about services and programs designed to serve them.

Evaluation

Evaluations from participants were strongly positive with 89% of respondents rating the day as excellent or good, and all respondents finding the day somewhat or very useful. Many participants indicated that the new information gained and contacts made would be useful in their work and also included in the day's benefits:

- Opportunities to network, especially across sectors;
- Gaining information about other services and resources available in the community;

- Insights from the data presented about youth in Durham;
- Information about human trafficking in Durham;
- Hearing directly from youth on the panel.

Many participants said they would like to meet again to learn more about specific issues and to develop concrete plans for addressing the gaps and needs.

Next steps

The Youth Relationship Violence Task Force will continue to meet to ensure that our agencies are providing the best response to the young people who seek our services. We will work with other agencies and efforts to build on what we accomplished together at *A New Vision for Durham's Most Vulnerable Youth*. We hope to collaborate with other efforts on another event in October as well as trainings on recognizing and responding to specific high-risk behaviors.

For more information about the Youth Relationship Violence Task Force or with questions about this report, please contact:

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Appendix A

YOUTH RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE TASK FORCE

- 1 Alliance BHC BECOMING Program
- 2 Durham Crisis Response Center
- 3 Durham District Attorney's Office
- 4 Duke School of Medicine
- 5 NC Division of Mental Health
- 6 Durham Police Department G.R.E.A.T. Program
- 7 Durham Police Department Special Victims Unit
- 8 Durham Police Department Victim Services Unit
- 9 Durham Public Schools
- 10 Durham County Social Services Child Protective Services
- 11 Duke University Health System Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program
- 12 Durham County Sheriff's Office
- 13 Juvenile Crime Prevention Council
- 14 JusticeMatters
- 15 Project BUILD
- 16 Project FIGHT
- 17 Transforming Hope Ministries
- 18 Youth Opportunity Initiative
- 19 Youth Extensions

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Appendix B

ORGANIZATIONS ATTENDING APRIL 22 EVENT

- 1 Achievement Academy of Durham
- 2 Alliance Behavioral Healthcare
- 3 BECOMING Project/Alliance BHC
- 4 Center for Child and Family Health
- 5 Citizen Schools
- 6 Criminal Justice Resource Center - Gang Reduction Program
- 7 Criminal Justice Resource Center - Misdemeanor Diversion Program
- 8 Diaper Bank of NC
- 9 District Court System
- 10 Duke School of Medicine
- 11 Duke University - America Reads/America Counts Program
- 12 Durham City Council
- 13 Durham County Health Department
- 14 Durham County Sheriff
- 15 Durham Crisis Response Center
- 16 Durham Department of Social Services - LINKS Program
- 17 Durham Department of Social Services - Child Protective Services
- 18 Durham District Attorney's Office
- 19 Durham Parks & Recreation
- 20 Durham Police Department - SVU
- 21 Durham Public Schools - Community Education
- 22 Durham Public Schools - ESL Programs
- 23 Durham Public Schools - K-5 schools
- 24 Durham Public Schools - Social Work
- 25 Durham Public Schools - Student Services
- 26 Durham's Partnership for Children
- 27 Exchange Family Center
- 28 Guardian Ad Litem Program
- 29 JusticeMatters NC
- 30 Juvenile Crime Prevention Council
- 31 Kids Voting

- 32 Legal Aid - Advocates for Children's Services
- 33 Life Skills Foundation
- 34 Lighthouse
- 35 Made in Durham
- 36 Mental Health Alliance
- 37 NC Central University
- 38 NC Coalition against Domestic Violence
- 39 NC Coalition against Sexual Assault
- 40 NC Division of Mental Health, Development Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services
- 41 Orange County Rape Crisis Center
- 42 PAC 1
- 43 Partners for Youth Opportunity
- 44 People's Alliance
- 45 Project BUILD
- 46 Project FIGHT at Wake County Salvation Army
- 47 Salvation Army of Durham
- 48 SaySo
- 49 Southern Coalition for Social Justice - Youth Justice Project
- 50 Stand Up Speak Out NC
- 51 Strong Fathers
- 52 Transforming Hope
- 53 Triangle Family Services
- 54 Youth Extensions
- 55 Youth Opportunity Initiative