



Hopeful Empowered Youth

Building a 10-year vision and strategic plan for improving youth mental health and well-being in Greater Cincinnati

WHO WE ARE

Hopeful Empowered Youth (HEY) is a diverse coalition of community groups, healthcare providers, educators, policymakers’ families, and most importantly, young people themselves, working collaboratively to create a community that supports the well-being of all youth.

ADDRESSING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Good mental health is foundational for a fulfilling, productive life. Yet, far too many young people in Greater Cincinnati grapple with **stress, isolation, anxiety, and depression**, evidenced by increased **emergency room visits** at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and tragic instances of more young people **dying by suicide**.

*“It’s a school building full of kids who are depressed. They [adults] say ‘you can talk to me’ but then [they] **don’t come across as someone that you can talk to.**”*

- M., Black female, 15-18

BUILDING A COMMUNITY-WIDE MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

HEY conducted extensive research, completing a **Greater Cincinnati Youth Mental Well-Being Collaborative Needs Assessment** involving interviews, focus groups, and community meetings, engaging over **200** stakeholders, including **60** youth.

The name and the brand **HEY** were developed with the Youth Fellowship, ensuring this collaborative effort feels accessible and relevant to youth in our community.

The resulting 10-year vision is to build a community where every young person in the Greater Cincinnati region enjoys optimal mental health, is free of stigma and is empowered to realize their fullest potential now and into the future.

YOUTH MENTAL WELL-BEING NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

The assessment revealed six key challenges identified by young people and community leaders:

COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

CLINICAL CARE



School Environment

Academic pressure in school environments, compounded by the inability to access a trusted adult, bullying, and racial bias.



Access to Affordable Care

Low behavioral health reimbursement rates remain for many with private insurance.



Community Connection & Safety

Connection and loneliness are challenges. Youth are also worried about social issues, like violent crime and lack of spaces to relax.



Care Quality & Coordination

Disconnected systems lack the infrastructure for providers to share information and coordinate care.



Caregiver Knowledge, Attitudes & Practices

Adverse childhood experiences deeply impact youth development, while caregivers face a lack of awareness about mental well-being.



Provider Retention & Recruitment

Heavy workloads, low pay and limited support lead to low provider retention rates. Unpaid internships, expensive exams, and low pay also create barriers to entry in the field.

PROCESS: A COMMUNITY-WIDE VISION AND ACTION-ORIENTED PLAN



OUR COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE

An infrastructure including a **Steering Committee, Youth Fellowship, Funder Collaborative, Focus Area Working Groups,** and **Backbone Support** is in place to guide the overall assessment, visioning, and planning process.

Youth voices are represented as key decision makers in every stage of the planning process to ensure established strategies best support the needs of regional youth.

Thank you to our partners:

