

OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS



Promoting the health, well-being, and safety of children, youth, and families in Arlington.

Researching the strengths and needs of young people is a fundamental step in creating a plan to improve their quality of life. The Community Report was developed to stimulate data-informed reflection and, where needed, action throughout Arlington. Areas of concern identified in prior reports have sparked new initiatives and strengthened existing actions taken by key stakeholders, including APS, Healthy Communities Action Team (HCAT), Child and Family Services Division (CFSD), Division of Public Health, and numerous non-profits. We look forward to continuing to monitor data indicators and present updates on our findings and progress.

Striking Disparities

Taken as a whole, the 2019 Community Report calls attention to striking disparities within Arlington. These inequities surface in the health and well-being of children and youth based on factors such as income, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and level of English proficiency.

In the 2014 Community Report Card, APCYF began to highlight disparate issues in some of the data. In this 2019 Community Report we have worked to disaggregate the data to ensure that disproportionate findings are not hidden in the use of averages. This will help the community use the data more intentionally, targeting areas or populations that are in most need. For example, issues of mental health, bullying, adult support, and early childhood experiences can now be discussed through an equity lens. We can now (1) determine who is reporting what, which helps when we consider the why, and (2) then tailor strategies to address the specific need. This data-informed approach will move us from one-size-fits-all attempts to address issues (equality) to needs-based strategies (equity) that focus on small sub-populations across schools, the County, and the greater community.

Social Determinants of Thriving

APCYF has been actively working with two County initiatives—the Child Care Initiative (CCI) and Destination 2027 (D2027)—to take a deeper look at data and those who face increased risk for poor health and well-being. These innovative initiatives, among others, aim to improve the social and physical environments that promote good health for all. These include the (1) neighborhood and built environment, (2) health and health care, (3) social and community context, (4) economic stability, and (5) education. As illustrated in our 2019 Community Report, opportunities exist to improve the resources, supports, and determinants of thriving. Selected examples include:

- Many Arlington families lack access to quality child care, as spaces are available for only 51% of the county's children younger than age 5. Child care also puts a large financial burden on those families that can access it; requiring 39% of the Arlington median income for a family with an infant and 4-year old in care. Clear benefits exist for early childhood experiences. For example, economically disadvantaged youth who attended a private or APS preK program met the fall PALS benchmarks, a test of early literacy,

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at a rate much higher than those who had no formal preK. Increasing access to child care, including affordability and availability, can help with efforts to close the opportunity gap.

- Obesity and other risk factors for chronic diseases start in early childhood and disproportionately impact children who come from racial and ethnic minority populations or lower-income households. Children attending the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) program, an early education program for economically disadvantaged youth, are obese at a rate much higher than the national rate of obesity for preschool-aged children. Additionally, Hispanic youth in 8th-12th grade report obesity at a level nearly 4 times that of White youth – 16% of Hispanic youth vs. 4% of White youth. This same trend is seen in youth who report the recommended amount of exercise in high school (1 hour per day on 5+ days per week), with 34% of Hispanic youth vs. 51% of White youth.
- Childhood hunger and food insecurity continues to persist. Nearly 1/3 of APS students receive free and reduced fee meals, and nearly 1 in 10 high school students reported experiencing hunger due to not having enough food in the home. Creative programs such as schools that offer breakfast in the classrooms and Family Market nights at Carlin Springs Community School help decrease stigma and increase access to healthy foods and beverages.
- Access to affordable housing is an issue not just for those in or near poverty, but those in the middle as well. Families making the median income in Arlington have very few housing options that would not require them to substantially stretch above their financial means. For low-income families, there is a 5-year wait list for affordable housing.
- ACG and APS have introduced new initiatives and interventions with youth to help prevent suicide and ensure that youth who need mental health services can receive them. It will be important to monitor the impact of these programs on youth of color. For example, Hispanic youth reported higher incidents of depression and attempted suicide in 2017. The number of youth who said they received the help they needed for depression was so low for Black and Asian youth that a percentage could not be reported.
- Adult supports are a key factor in mitigating negative experiences in the life of a young person. While efforts have been undertaken to increase staffing ratios for student services in the schools, there are still fewer social workers, psychologists, and counselors than the national recommendations. This is especially true of Arlington's elementary schools. However, using only ratios to address staffing does not consider equity, which requires placing staff where they are needed most, not merely placing them to comply with ratios.

Emerging Issues

The Arlington community is evolving and changing more swiftly than in the past. Technology is the catalyst



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for much of this change, both good and bad. It enables dialogue to move quickly on topics of great impact to health and well-being but it also exposes youth to information, experiences, and opportunities in ways that have yet to be fully understood. In collecting and disseminating data, APCYF tries to keep pace with many of these evolving topics as youth in Arlington face many of the same challenges and risks as youth across the nation. Emerging issues from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and the 2018 Your Voice Matters (YVM) survey of note include:

- Questions about sexual harassment were added to the YRBS in 2017. Responses indicate that nearly half (46%) of female students in grades 8, 10, and 12 experienced sexual harassment on school property.
- In 2017, 13% of high school students report having used an e-vapor device within the past 30 days. Studies link the use of e-vapor products with later cigarette use and found the nicotine in these devices trigger the same reward centers that can lead to later substance use problems.
- Responses to questions about technology use indicate that high school students are on a screen for an average of 10 hours per day. These questions seek to further understand the ways that youth engage with technology, and to ascertain the correlations between time spent on a screen and time spent engaging in other activities, or the potential co-occurrence with other risk factors such as depression.

Key areas identified in the 2019 Community Report requiring additional data collection efforts include (a) monitoring the effectiveness of mental health programming, especially for children of color and (b) finding ways to measure and monitor Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), with an emphasis on equity. APCYF will continue advocating for efforts that keep the lens on equity by presenting findings using characteristics such as race, ethnicity, disability status, gender identity, and sexual orientation. This work is undertaken acknowledging that Arlington families and youth possess unique strengths and face singular adversities that cannot be reduced to simple demographic categorizations. Additionally, we recognize that averages can mask the needs of vulnerable populations so we will continue to disaggregate the data as it is available.

The Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families (APCYF) is celebrating its 20th Anniversary in 2019. It is our honor to continue our tradition of engaging all members of the community in strengthening policies, programs, and resource allocations to promote the health, well-being, and safety of all children, youth, and families in Arlington.

**Join us - together we can make positive differences in the lives of
Arlington's children, youth, and families!**