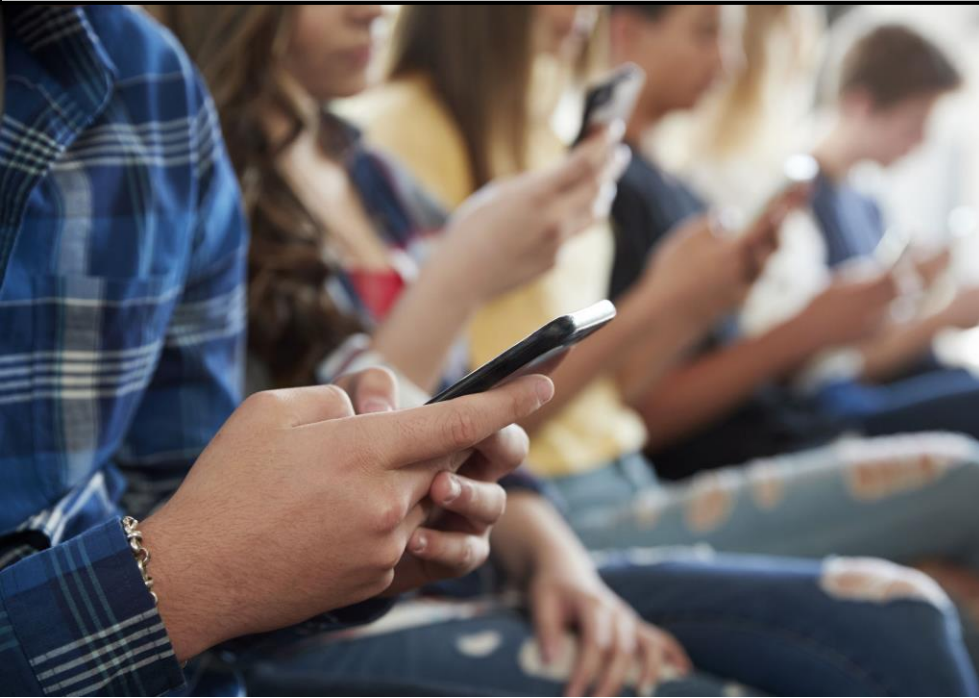




2020

# State of the Youth of Loudoun County



Prepared by the Loudoun County Advisory Commission on Youth

March 2020

## To the Board of Supervisors

Thank you for the opportunity to advise the Board of Supervisors (Board) and serve the youth of Loudoun County. The Advisory Commission on Youth (ACOY) considers the health and connectedness of all of Loudoun's 129,000 youth through age 19. We gather as representatives from each Board Member's district and representatives from Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS), the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO), Youth Advisory Council (YAC), Loudoun County Public Libraries (LCPL), and the Loudoun County Juvenile Court Services Unit (JCSU).

As in each of the last five years, we've once again pulled together the most reliable indicators of the health and connectedness of Loudoun's youth. We looked closely at demographics, graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, truancy, school behavior, and juvenile justice involvement. This year, we looked at the results of recently published school climate surveys, dug deeply into absenteeism data, and uncovered the root causes of screen-time overuse.

We found Loudoun youth are as healthy and successful as their peers in many neighboring counties. Their graduation rates exceed the state average and our youth have access to resources that are available in Loudoun, the wealthiest county in the nation. However, our research also found a few troubling trends: fewer students graduating on time, more students falling into chronic school absenteeism, and increased incidents of substance abuse, bullying, and offenses against others.

### Key Findings:

- Loudoun **youth are directly engaged in the design and delivery of several youth programs** best seen in Youth Advisory Council, Step Up Loudoun Youth Competition, Loudoun's Battle of the Bands, and the Loudoun Youth Leadership Program of Loudoun Youth, Inc.
- Loudoun's youth identify school **bullying and drug availability as the biggest problems** they face.
- **Chronic absenteeism** among Loudoun students **increased** during the 2018-19 school year. An alarming 6,860 of our students did not show up for 10% or more of the school year. A deeper look indicates this problem is most prevalent among certain segments of the youth population.
- The percentage of Loudoun **youth not graduating on time rose** from 4.5% to 5.3% from 2018 to 2019.
- A recent survey shows **Loudoun's youth are inseparably tied to their smartphones**, on average using them for 7.5 hours each day, a full 50% above the 5-hour national average.

**Key Recommendations:**

- Continue to support **youth involvement in the design and delivery of youth programming** to keep them connected to the community.
- Library **After-Hours-Teen Centers on Fridays and Saturdays** should be added to all County libraries to give more of our youth a safe place to go. Currently, this practice is limited to Cascades library in Sterling. Each library teen center varies. Some libraries have larger dedicated space with computers, games, or maker spaces and others have a table with a few chairs. Low cost transportation to each district’s local library is needed so our youth have access to a safe space to gather.
- **Chronic absenteeism requires interventions**, especially in targeted populations. This should include activity buses to get students home following afterschool activities, culturally relevant afterschool activities, rewarding attendance, and co-locating community services in schools that serve the targeted populations.
- Develop a **“see something say something” anti-bullying social media program**, that articulates consequences for bullying behavior and taking advantage of the Sheriff’s department mobile reporting app.
- Leverage what research tells us about middle school influencers, adding **drug prevention programs and interventions in middle schools, delivered by high school students** rather than school counselors, police, or other adult staff.
- Train Loudoun school professionals on **Screening, Intervening and Referral to Counseling or Treatment** for substance use.
- Continue to **expand the Youth After School Program run by PRCS** to have a program at all middle schools in the county, not just busing to a nearby program. One school, Trailside Middle School, has no access at all.
- As part of ACOY’s involvement with Loudoun County’s Youth Net initiative, some key findings from the study on why Youth are not involved in Loudoun County or youth programming are because: **Youth are unaware of programs offered, No transportation to get there, Costs are too high**

The following report offers current data for Loudoun’s youth from a variety of government sponsored sources, and offers the Board of Supervisors practical and affordable solutions to each problem presented. In most cases the solutions are inexpensive and do not require more than a commitment to reshape existing programming and resources for our kids.

The research for this report, data analysis, meetings to vet proposals, and other costs are contributed by the volunteer commission members. If you have questions or feedback about

the data presented or recommendations made, please contact ACOY Vice Chair, Mr. Michael Reles at [mreles@comcast.net](mailto:mreles@comcast.net) or ACOY Chair, Dr. Jeffrey Goldman at [jeff@ieee.org](mailto:jeff@ieee.org).

## Background

The Loudoun County Board is committed to supporting a high quality of life for Loudoun County youth. ACOY represents all Loudoun districts and has the expertise to advise the County's Board on issues and opportunities to help keep Loudoun's youth connected, healthy and safe. Similarly, YAC involves youth in the development of County programs and activities for youth.

Each year since 2014, we have reviewed all available measures on Loudoun youth's connectedness, achievement, and struggles to update the Board on the status of County youth. For purposes of this reporting, youth are defined as all County residents aged 19 and under. For each problem identified, we suggest economical solutions that show promise for making our kids healthier, happier and better connected.

### Loudoun's increasingly Diverse Youth Population

Living in the nation's wealthiest county presents great opportunities and challenges for youth. On one hand, the great wealth of Loudoun County and the planned development provide resources many areas of the country can only dream of. Kids enjoy endless eateries, academic advancement opportunities, organized arts and sports, and for many, the means to afford all of them. On the other hand, youth have much greater access and opportunity to make bad choices and the wide range of wealth and status makes it very difficult for kids who do not identify with high wealth or status to feel connected.

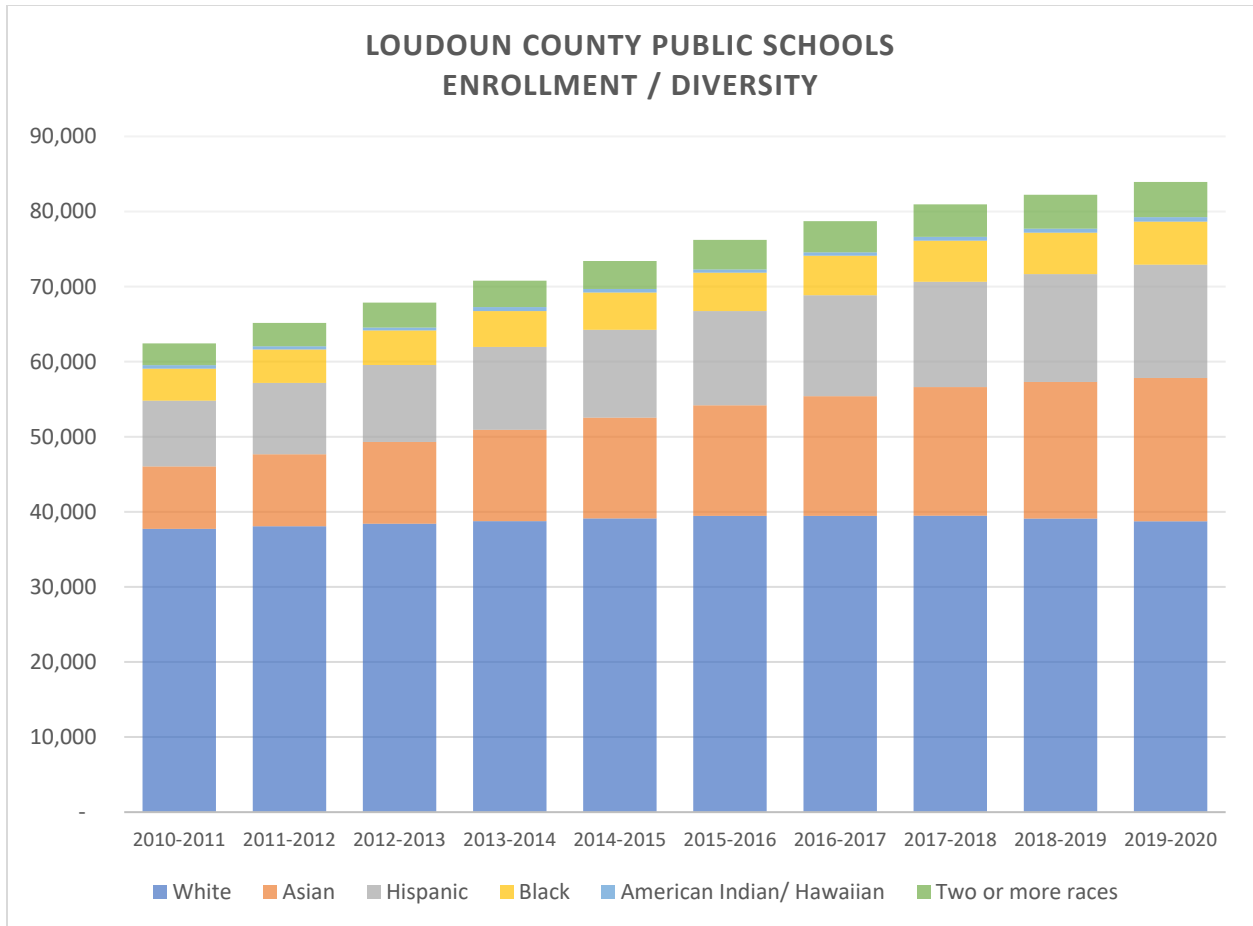
The US census shows the Loudoun County youth population doubled from 2000 to 2010 and currently is growing at a rate of 3% per year, as shown below:

**Table: Loudoun Youth Population Forecast, 2000 to 2040**

Age	2000 Actual	2010 Actual	2020 Forecast	2030 Forecast	2040 Forecast
<b>Total</b>	53,332	101,042	129,534	145,081	155,857
<b>under 5</b>	16,460	27,538	35,288	42,337	44,610
<b>5 to 9</b>	15,270	28,998	33,811	40,072	43,192
<b>10 to 14</b>	12,573	25,273	32,349	35,012	38,224
<b>15 to 19</b>	9,029	19,233	28,086	27,660	29,831

Source: Population by Age Forecasts, 2010 to 2040, Loudoun County Department of Planning and Zoning  
<https://www.loudoun.gov/DocumentCenter/View/81776/Age-of-Population-Forecasts>

**Loudoun Youth More Diverse:** Along with population growth is a changing mix of race and ethnicity. In the 2018-19 school year, there were 82,246 school aged youth enrolled in Loudoun County Public Schools. This does not include youth enrolled in Loudoun's private schools or home schooled. In the 2019-20 school year, LCPS was 46% White (down from 61% in 2010-11); 7% Black/African American (no change from 2010-11); 18% Hispanic (up from 14% in 2010-11); 23% Asian (up from 15% in 2010-11); and 6% multi-racial (up from 5% in 2010-11) as shown below:



Source: Virginia Department of Education School Quality Profile: <https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/>

Along with the growing diversity among our youth population are significant changes in Loudoun’s youth outcomes. County supported youth services should consider the changing needs of our families, as programs that have historically worked well, might not be as effective as our population becomes more diverse. For instance, research overwhelming shows family-oriented educational delivery modes, rather than child-only modes, are more culturally appropriate among Latino and Asian communities. In diverse communities such as Sterling, the "family approach" to programming might encourage more Latino families to become more involved in making academic success and youth connectedness a reality.

Similarly, the Asian youth population (which includes families with backgrounds from India, China, Armenia, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Vietnam, and more than 30 other countries) in Loudoun County has grown and requires youth programs that are culturally informed (demands respect for others, accommodating individual learners, use of intercultural communication skills, focused activities and intentionally structured environments). As with the Latino population, Asian youth programming should consider family-based settings that embrace and acknowledge their cultures. This might include community center or off hours school located programs that invite both youth and their families to culturally significant activities. Teens that adhere to the Islamic tradition might have

a different style of dress. They might also be required to meet other religious requirements, such as praying five times a day. Providing programming that allows Asian American youth in Loudoun to gather, pray, laugh and share in their own culture will help these youth and their peers respond more favorably to our increased diversity.



The / **Viajes de mi Vida project**, developed as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)/ALA grant Latino Americans: 500 Years of History, awarded to Loudoun County Public Library (the only Virginia recipient of the grant) provides a shining example of programming suited to our growing youth diversity. Seventy students at Park View High School (PVHS), working with award-winning Latino artist John Parra, met for two full days to produce original stories and illustrations to be made into bilingual picture books. At PVHS, 52 % of the population are recent immigrants with little or no English language skills.

Similarly, the **EDGE (Empowering Diversity in Gifted Education)** program is designed to provide additional academic challenges and experiences for students who exhibit gifted potential and who are from groups historically underrepresented in the County's gifted programs. These equitable learning experiences lead to deeper learning for students. This may include students from culturally or linguistically diverse or low socioeconomic backgrounds or students who have disabilities. The EDGE program is currently implemented in 13 elementary schools.

The EDGE Plus program builds on the foundational practices described in the EDGE (Gifted program) and engages students in STEM activities intended to build mathematical and critical thinking skills. EDGE Plus focuses on identifying high achieving, economically vulnerable students with the goal of helping them plan and prepare for academically rigorous coursework in middle and high school and for entry into rigorous and competitive academic programs such as the LCPS Academies of Loudoun. EDGE Plus also serves as a bridge program to CAMPUS (College Achievement Minority Program for Unique Students). The EDGE Plus program is currently implemented in three elementary schools.

**Loudoun Youth need a safe place to gather on Friday and Saturday nights** - Loudoun County supports teens through school sports, facilities and services through Loudoun Parks, Recreation and Community Services and through a wide range of clubs and activities. These activities keep youth connected to school and community. However, research tells us that youth also need safe, less structured places to gather. In fact, two out of three young people nationwide wish there were more places they could hang out where they could feel safe and have fun. Safe and secure places to live, learn, and play<sup>1</sup>: Safe and supportive places such as schools, neighborhoods, communities, and healthy environments foster and support healthy adolescent development across the spectrum, including physical and mental health, social interactions, and cognitive growth. Adolescents also benefit from safe places to congregate and just “hang out.” These places need to be safe, reliable and predictably open.



Teens gather at 9pm on a Friday to “hang” in the Cascades Library without structured programming.

All libraries built within the last 10 years include a dedicated teen center space. These spaces are quiet supervised settings. The *After-Hours Teen Center* held at Cascades Library every Friday night provides a safe setting for up to 200 youth to gather, game, and interact with one another. While supervision is available the programming allows kids to be kids. As shown in the following table, this program is currently only available at Cascades and should be expanded to all library locations.

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<sup>1</sup> America’s Promise, The Alliance for Youth. (2006). A report from America’s Promise Alliance: every child every promise, turning failure into action.



**Table: 2019 Update - Loudoun Libraries Offering Teen Centers**

Library	Location Served	Teen Center Area	After Hours Teen Center
Ashburn	Ashburn	Yes	No
Brambleton (NEW)	Brambleton	Yes	No
Cascades	Potomac Falls	Yes	Yes
Gum Spring	Stone Ridge	Yes	No
Lovettsville	Lovettsville	Yes	No
Middleburg	Middleburg	Yes	No
Purcellville	Purcellville	Yes	No
Rust	Leesburg	Yes	No
Sterling	Sterling	Yes	No

Source: <https://library.loudoun.gov/Kids-Teens/Just-for-Teens/Your-Libraries>

Last year, ACOY had an opportunity to share our recommendations with the Library's Board of Trustees emphasizing a need for safe spaces for teens for each district with easy access. We made these same recommendations to that Board. Specifically, we identified some of the "teen centers," notably in the western part of Loudoun that are limited to a table and chairs or a shared common space. Nevertheless, after hours availability for teens only would be a start to a safe space requiring only an additional quarter-time librarian. We were specifically asked if we had a wish list for the libraries, what would it be. Our response was to have all county libraries be like Brambleton or Gum Springs with after-hours teen centers like Cascades.

### Youth-Led programming thrives in Loudoun County

The Loudoun Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is a year-round youth-development and leadership program. It includes representatives from each of the public high schools, private high schools and the home-schooled community in Loudoun County. YAC is coordinated by the Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services department. Loudoun Youth, Inc. co-coordinates several projects and programs with YAC throughout the year. YAC meets twice a month throughout the school year to work on special events for their peers and community service projects.

### Spotlight on Loudoun's Youth-Managed Activities

Step up Loudoun Youth Competition	Loudoun Habitat for Humanities	Youth Advisory Council
Middle and high school youth across Loudoun County identify an issue in their school, neighborhood or community, create a plan to address that issue, and implement the plan. The goal is to encourage, support and reward the youth of Loudoun County for making positive changes in their own lives and the lives of others.	High school students work with Loudoun Habitat to host fundraising events, provide volunteers for Habitat events and spread the word about the work of Habitat in Loudoun County. This provides the opportunity for students to learn valuable leadership skills, understand economic issues facing the community and earn service hours needed for graduation.	The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is a student led organization composed of highly motivated teens who reside in Loudoun County Virginia. As a leadership development, community service, and civic engagement program, YAC is mentored by Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services Youth Initiative and Teen Services Specialists.

### **PRCS Youth After School Programs at All Middle Schools**

PRCS runs a subsidized program for middle school students with interactive programming and a safe space at our schools. For a nominal cost, families are afforded an opportunity for supervised activities for their kids during the normal working hours of the school week. They are required to pick up their middle school students at the end of the session. Currently, every middle school has either a PRCS Youth After School (YAS) program, or if they do not, there is transportation one way to a nearby sister middle school that has programming space. The exception is Trailside Middle School in Ashburn. Currently they do not have transportation to Belmont Ridge where there is capacity to accommodate.

However, it is the recommendation of ACOY to offer a YAS program native to each of the schools. The reason for this is often parents who need the program can't participate when they must pick up their children at a school further away. Parents are also less inclined to participate when they know their child must be bused to another school. In addition, the same areas where there are concerns for absenteeism find even the nominal fee is an economic hardship to participate. Instead, the more participants with an expanded and inclusive YAS program we have, will offer a safe space sooner to more youth in Loudoun.

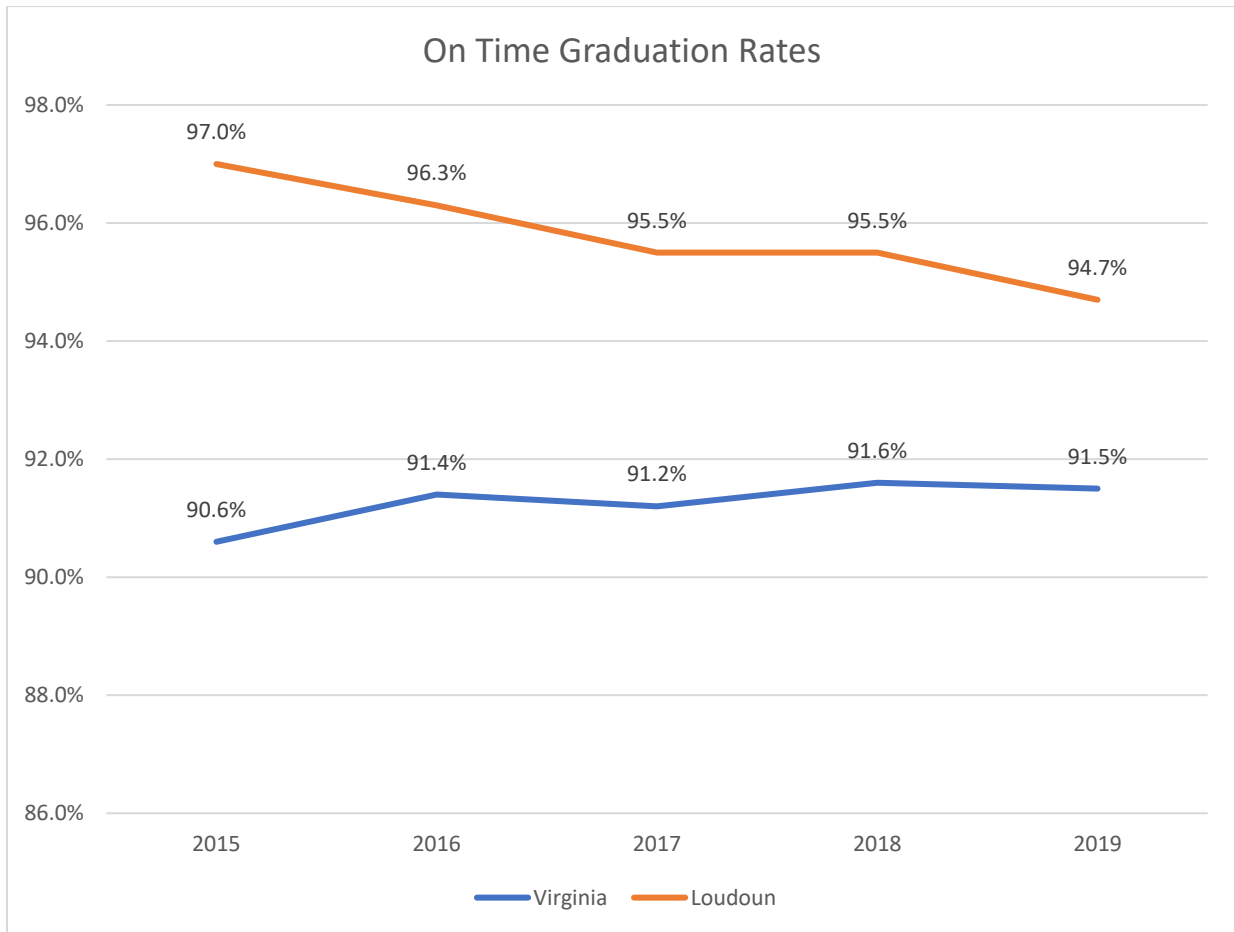
### **Recommendations:**

1. Continue to support **youth involvement in the design and delivery of youth programming** to keep them connected to the community.
2. Expand **activity bus service** that allow students safe transport home from afterschool activities at middle schools and high schools in the **Leesburg, Sterling and the rural areas west of Leesburg.**
3. Library **After-Hours-Teen Centers on Fridays and Saturdays** should be added to all County libraries to give our youth a safe place to go. Currently, this program exists only at Cascades library.
4. Develop **culturally informed youth and youth/family programming** at community centers and school locations.
5. **Expand the YAS programs until every middle school in the county has a program** of their own. At a minimum, offer a YAS program for Trailside Middle School who currently have a handful of students without a program to attend.

**Improving Connectedness**

Disconnected youth are young people who are neither working nor in school. Emphasis is placed upon this group because the years between the late teens and the mid-twenties are believed to be a critical period during which young people form adult identities and move toward independence. The effects of youth disconnection—limited education, social exclusion, lack of work experience, and fewer opportunities to develop mentors and valuable work connections—can have long-term consequences that snowball across the life course, eventually influencing everything from earnings and self-sufficiency to physical and mental health and marital prospects. Absenteeism is an early indicator that youth are having a problem making connections.

**The 2019 on-time graduation rate at Loudoun County public high schools was 94.7 %**, which exceeds the statewide average. However, this rate is lower than that of the class of 2016, when 96.3 % of the graduates completed high school within four years. The 2018-19 rate ranked 32nd among Virginia’s 131 school divisions in on-time graduation. Just three years ago, Loudoun ranked 10<sup>th</sup>. At the same time, statewide on-time graduation rates rose, as shown below:



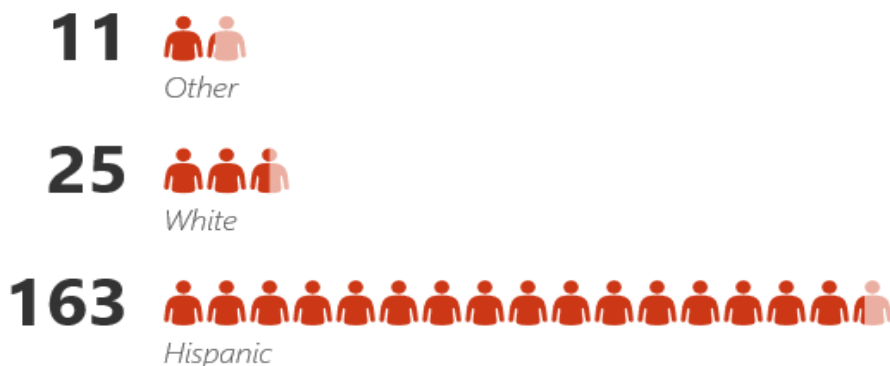
The FY 2018-19 on-time graduation rates for LCPS high schools with a graduating class were:

Park View High School	77.1 %
Tuscarora High School	88.0 %
Dominion High School	90.8 %
State Average	91.5 %
Loudoun County High School	91.5 %
Heritage High School	93.6 %
Potomac Falls High School	94.4 %
Broad Run High School	97.1 %
Loudoun Valley High School	97.4 %
Riverside High School	97.4 %
Woodgrove High School	97.4 %
John Champe High School	98.1 %
Stone Bridge High School	98.1 %
Freedom High School	98.5 %
Briar Woods High School	98.6 %
Rock Ridge High School	99.0 %

**Dropouts:**

Many factors may place students at risk and contribute to their decision to drop out of school. These include school, community, and family related factors. In many cases, no one factor leads to a student's decision to drop out, rather it is a combination of factors. In Loudoun, most students dropping out of school are Hispanic. While Hispanic students make up just under 20% of the school population, they represent 80% of students dropping out as shown below:

## LOUDOUN STUDENTS DROPPING OUT: 2019

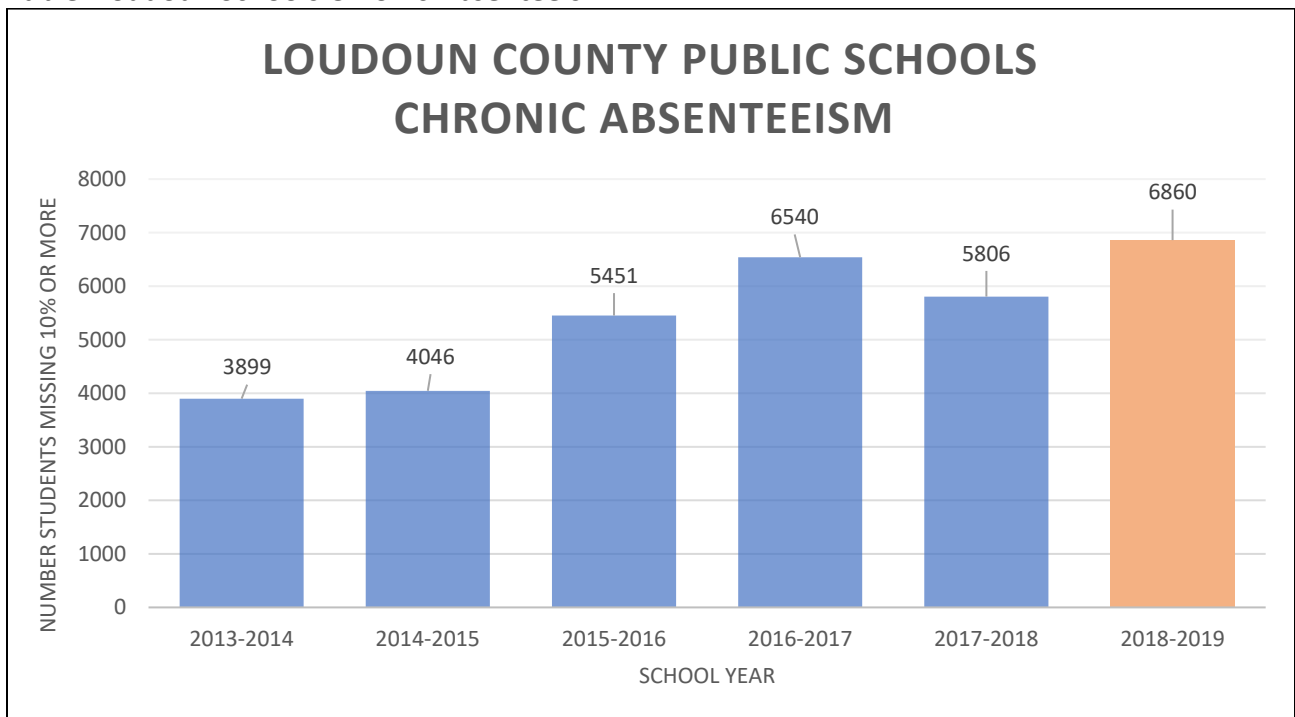


Virginia Department of Education: Virginia Cohort Reports  
[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics\\_reports/graduation\\_completion/cohort\\_reports/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/cohort_reports/index.shtml)

**School Attendance is a Protective and Chronic Absenteeism being a Risk Factor for Youth:** The Virginia Department of Education reports daily attendance is critical to success in school. A student is considered chronically absent if they are absent for 10 % or more of the school year, regardless of whether the absences are excused or unexcused. Per the U.S. Department of Education<sup>2</sup>:

- Children who are chronically absent in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade are much less likely to read on grade level by the third grade.
- Students who can't read at grade level by the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.
- By high school, regular attendance is a better dropout indicator than test scores.
- A student who is chronically absent in any year between grades eight and 12 is seven times more likely to drop out of school.
- The calculation for chronic absenteeism includes only students enrolled for at least half the school year.

**Table: Loudoun Schools Chronic Absenteeism**



Note: The Virginia Department of Education defines Chronic Absenteeism as a student missing 10% or more of the total school year.

Source: Virginia Department of Education: Loudoun Public Schools: Chronic Absenteeism 2017-18 School Year: All Students <http://schoolquality.virginia.gov/divisions/loudoun-county-public-schools>

<sup>2</sup> US Department of Education, CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN THE NATION'S SCHOOLS, <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>

A closer look at the characteristics of chronically absent students in Loudoun County shows that the Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students' chronic absenteeism is double the County average. No other race or ethnic student group presents this risk factor.

**Recommendations:**

1. Add **multilingual attendance officers** who encourage attendance and/or reward attendance improvements among Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students.
2. **Chronic absenteeism requires interventions in targeted populations.** This should include activity buses to get students home following afterschool activities, culturally relevant afterschool activities, rewarding attendance, and co-locating community services in schools that serve the at-risk populations.
3. Continue support of the **CAMPUS and EDGE programs** to promote college opportunities to underserved students.

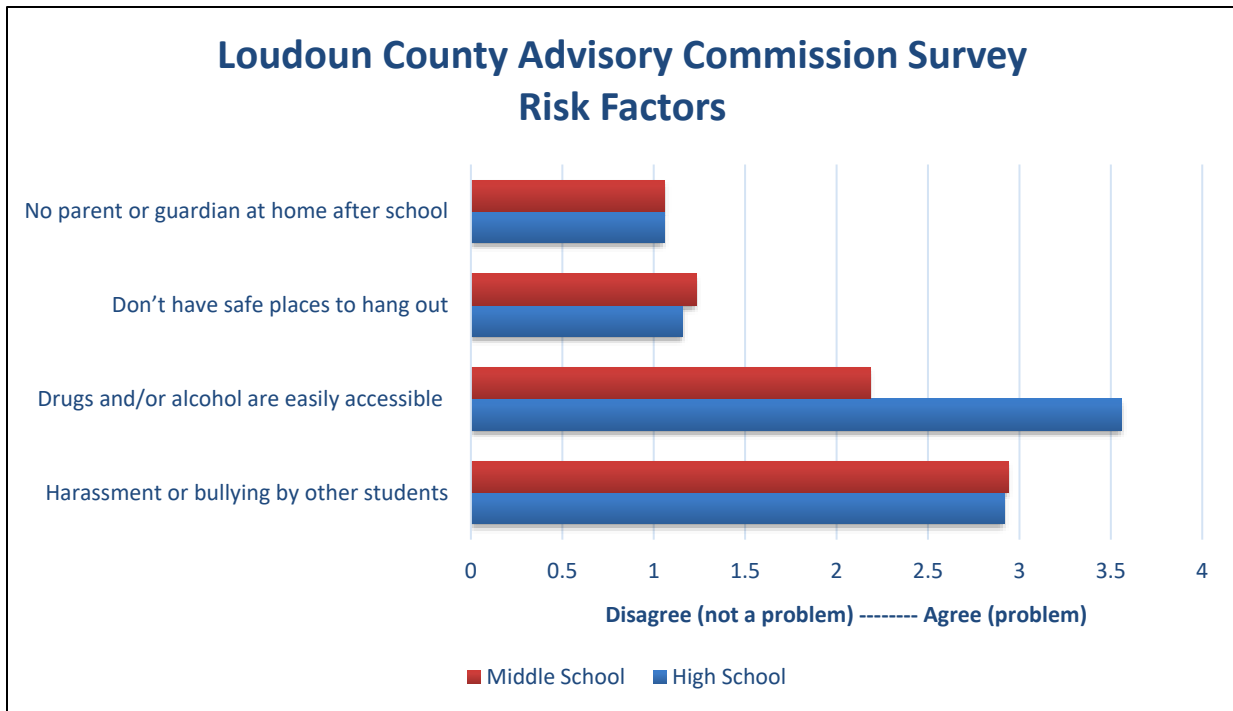
**Youth Bullying, Drug Use, and Problem Behavior**

In 2016, we surveyed over 1,500 Loudoun youth and what we heard, along with Loudoun’s youth data culled, informed our conclusions and recommendations on the health, success, and struggles of our County’s kids. We asked each youth to consider four preventive factors that facilitate their ability to grow up in a safe and supportive environment; and four risk factors that stifle that ability. The two biggest risk factors they named were:

1) drugs and alcohol are easily available, and 2) students are bullying and harassing each other.



RISK FACTORS ARE THE PRECURSORS OF BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS. PROTECTIVE FACTORS ARE THE COMPONENTS OR CIRCUMSTANCES THAT REDUCE THE PROBABILITY OF YOUTH DEVELOPING PROBLEMS.

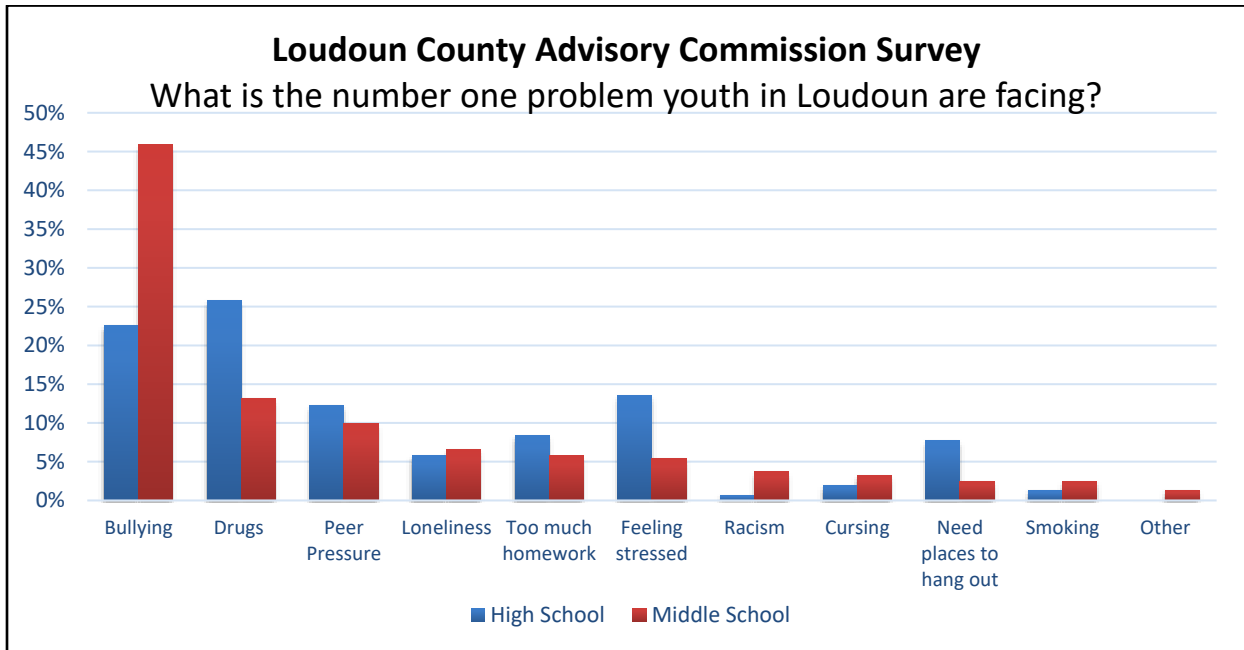


Source: Tabulated Advisory Commission on Youth student survey results

Bullying is the use of force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate, or aggressively dominate others. The behavior is often repeated. One essential prerequisite is the perception, by the bully or by others, of an imbalance of social or physical power, which distinguishes bullying from conflict. Behaviors used to assert such domination can include verbal harassment, social media harassment (cyberbullying), physical assault or coercion, and such acts may be directed repeatedly towards one individual or a set of individuals whom the bully determines he or she can dominate. Rationalizations of such behavior can include differences of social class, race,

religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, behavior, body language, personality, reputation, lineage, strength, size, or ability.

At the high school level, additional problems emerge including the availability of drugs. When we asked 1,500 high school students to tell us “What is the number one problem youth in Loudoun are facing?” The second most common response (after bullying) was the availability of illicit drugs.



Source: Tabulated Advisory Commission on Youth student survey results

**Loudoun schools report rising incidence of youth discipline, offenses, and violence.** This includes a two-year 215% increase in alcohol, tobacco, and other drug offenses, and a five-year 52% increase of offenses against students, and a 59% increase in offenses against staff as follows:

Table: Loudoun School Offenses

Offense Category	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Two Yr. Chg.	Five Yr. chg.
Weapons Offenses	29	39	34	36	44	45	25%	13%
Offenses Against Student	111	167	190	283	264	346	22%	52%
Offenses Against Staff	38	39	50	76	86	95	25%	59%
Other Offenses Against Persons	533	447	467	582	606	715	23%	37%
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Offenses	213	247	234	225	496	707	214%	65%
Property Offenses	44	43	42	53	38	38	-28%	-13%
Disorderly or Disruptive Behavior Offenses	443	362	361	380	412	489	29%	26%

Source: Virginia Department of Education School Report Card 2017-2018. <http://schoolquality.virginia.gov/divisions/loudoun-county-public-schools>



**Drug use and availability:** Early use of any illicit drugs increases a person’s chances of developing addiction or using more toxic substances. Remember, drugs change brains—and this can lead to addiction and other serious problems. So, preventing early use of drugs or alcohol may go a long way in reducing these risks. If we can prevent young people from experimenting with drugs, we may reduce incidents of drug addiction.

*The National Institute of Health Survey on Drug Use and Health indicate that among those adults who first tried marijuana at the age of 14 or younger, 13.2 percent were classified with illicit drug dependence or abuse later in life; this percentage was 6 times higher than that for adults who first used marijuana at the age of 18 or older. In fact, among adolescents, the transition from initiation to regular use of alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs often occurs within 3 years.*

Risk of drug abuse increases greatly during times of transition. For a teenager, risky times include moving or changing schools. In early adolescence, when children advance from elementary through middle school, they face new and challenging social and academic situations. Often during this period, children are exposed to illicit substances such as cigarettes and alcohol for the first time. When they enter high school, teens encounter greater availability of drugs, drug use by older teens, and social activities where drugs are used.

As mentioned in the survey above, Loudoun high school students perceive drugs are readily available. Loudoun County schools should partner with existing Loudoun County sheriff staff to message the consequences of drug offenses through broad based high school presentations in health class. Loudoun should adopt a peer messaging program that has high school students presenting anti-drug messaging to middle school students for their community service hour requirement.

**Vaping poses a new risk to our youth.** Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling the aerosol, often referred to as vapor, which is produced by an e-cigarette or similar device. The term is used because e-cigarettes do not produce tobacco smoke, but rather an aerosol, often mistaken for water vapor, that consists of fine particles. Many of these particles contain varying amounts of toxic chemicals, which have been linked to cancer, as well as respiratory and heart disease.

Vaping has grown in popularity with the rise of e-cigarettes, which were introduced to the U.S. mass market in 2007. Vaping devices include not just e-cigarettes, but also vape pens and advanced personal vaporizers (also known as ‘MODS’). E-cigarettes, which resemble smoked cigarettes, and vape pens (because they resemble large fountain pens) are typically simpler in design and less expensive than devices that have been customized by the user.

In June **ACOY joined the American Association for Cancer Research to brief the Senate on impacts of vaping and interventions that work.** At this presentation, Senators Tim Kaine and Mitch McConnell introduced legislation to raise the minimum age for vaping product sales to 21.



### Loudoun Youth Juvenile Justice Involvement

The table below indicates the number of youths who have been referred to intake from 2013 through FY 2019. Felony crime had risen steadily over a 5-year period but declined in 2018. All other categories below have been steady or on the decline. These numbers do not reflect the number of youths who have appeared in court on a formal petition. Many of the youth who come before intake have been diverted to a Juvenile Court Service Unit (JCSU) in-house program as previously described. Loudoun JCSU is one of the state leaders in diversion rates. In recent years, the JCSU has averaged a 40% diversion rate for all youth appearing before intake.

INTAKE COMPLAINTS	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
<b>TOTAL JUVENILE CRIMINAL COMPLAINTS</b>	<b>1,485</b>	<b>1,617</b>	<b>1,876</b>	<b>1,816</b>	<b>1,775</b>	<b>1,525</b>
<b>FELONY</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>CLASS 1 MISDEMEANOR</b>	791	621	924	889	796	648
<b>CLASS 2-4 MISDEMEANOR</b>	197	210	255	231	205	167
<b>CHILD IN NEED OF SERVICES /SUPERVISOR</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>182</b>

Source: Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice - Loudoun Court Service Unit (20L FIPS 107). FY 2018 data from Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

**Evening Reporting Center:** The Loudoun County Evening Reporting Center (ERC) was closed. The purpose of the ERC was to provide an intervention for court-involved youth who have been referred by probation staff, and in some cases ordered by the court for noncompliant behavior with probation and court expectations. The ERC served up to eight youth Monday through Friday from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM. The ERC provided dinner, mentoring, educational and recreational activities for youth.

#### MHSADS Youth Programming

The Prevention and Intervention (P/I) services from the Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Services (MHSADS) promote public health using evidence based approaches for the general public and strategies specifically tailored for high risk populations (e.g., prevention of youth suicide). P/I services are both school and community-based. P/I has strong collaborative partnerships with Loudoun County Public Schools, public and private agencies, and local residential complexes. P/I provides Club REAL (Raising Education, Achievement, and Leadership), in the schools and in community-based settings as a free after-school activity and Camp REAL which is a summer program. Club REAL and Camp REAL provided by P/I includes Life Skills Training which is an evidence based violence/gang and substance abuse prevention/intervention group for selected high risk elementary, middle, and high school students. Youth can be referred by school counselors, social workers, probation officers, and clinicians. MHSADS P/I also facilitates the Prevention Alliance of Loudoun (PAL). PAL is a coalition comprised of diverse community stakeholders that works to address a variety of substance abuse related issues and receives special funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to address opioid prevention specifically.

#### Recommendations:

1. Return the **Evening Reporting Center** or provide a resource for court involved youth to attend afterschool.
2. Leverage what research tells us about middle school influencers, adding **drug prevention programs and interventions in middle schools, delivered by high school students** rather than school counselors, uniformed police, or other adult staff.
3. Train Loudoun school professionals on **Screening, Intervening and Referral to Counseling** for substance use.
4. Develop a “**see something say something**” **anti-bullying social media program** that articulates consequences.
5. Make the Loudoun County Sheriff’s Vaping presentation **part of Back to School Night** in both middle and high schools which will better educate the parents on this Nationwide problem for our Youth.



## Loudoun youth smartphone use is 50 % above the national average

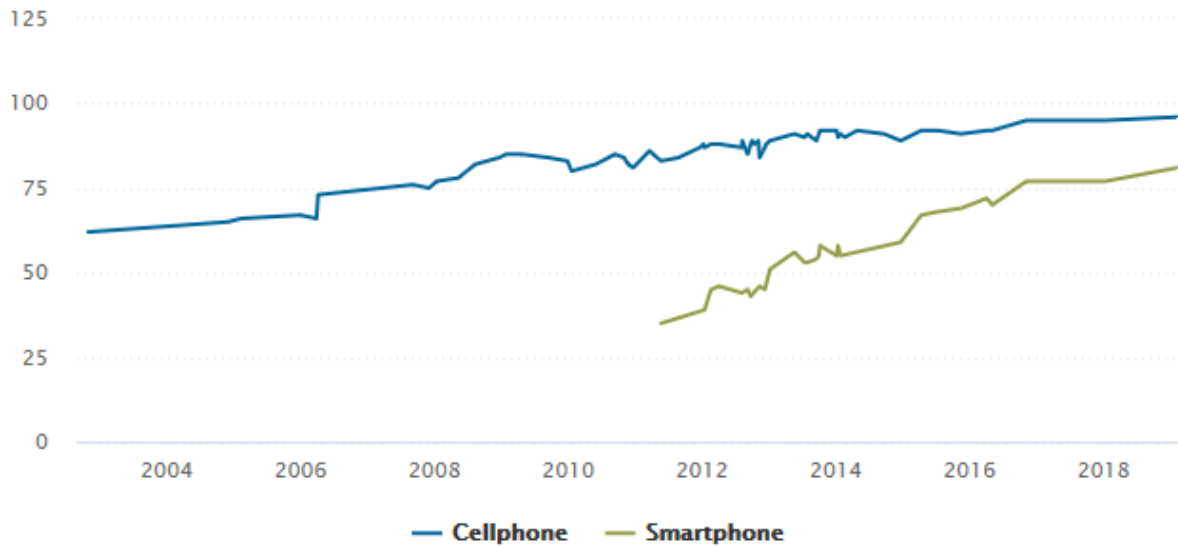
A recent survey shows Loudoun youth are inseparably tied to their **smartphones, on average using them for 7.5 hours each day, a full 50% above the 5-hour national average.** Phone/social media access has been linked to increased depression, anxiety and, potentially, suicide.<sup>3</sup>



**Most people own a smartphone:** American's obsession with mobile devices starts with the growth of smartphone ownership. The share of Americans that own smartphones is now 81%, up from just 35% just 6 years ago as shown below.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2017/12/17/571443683/the-call-in-teens-and-depression>  
<https://childmind.org/article/is-social-media-use-causing-depression/>  
<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/social-media-use-increases-depression-and-loneliness>  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-depression-socialmedia/social-media-linked-to-higher-risk-of-depression-in-teen-girls-idUSKCN1OY00I>  
<https://www.arnoldpalmerhospital.com/health-hub/how-smartphones-and-social-media-contribute-to-depression-and-anxiety-in-teens>

*% of U.S. adults who own the following devices*

**Smartphone owners are using phones more hours:** At the same time as ownership has risen, use per owner has also doubled. While all cell phone usage has risen over time, smartphone usage has doubled since 2012, growing from 2 hours to nearly 5 hours for all users. According to studies, about half the time (1 hour, 56 minutes) is spent on the top five social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube. Younger people use smartphones more hours than average. In fact, a simple online survey of 631 respondents in Loudoun County who reported they were between ages 14 and 20 said they used their phones 7.5 hours per day.

**Recommendation:**

1. Provide **training to students on what constitutes online bullying and overuse of smartphones.**
2. Fund an **ACOY sponsored study to better understand screen time usage** among our Youth and to explore their effects.

## **ACOY Participated in the Loudoun County Youth Net Initiative**

The Youth Net Initiative is providing a separate report to the Board of Supervisors. Without replicating the results here, we wanted to expand on a part of this initiative directly related to ACOY's reporting. The Youth Net Engagement Survey development was assigned to the Youth Assessment subcommittee, led by Jeff Goldman, ACOY Chair. Assessment was the focus of the April 2019 meeting of the Youth Net Committee, during which "youth" was defined for the purposes of assigning a target audience as pre-K to 22 years of age and a decision was made to develop separate surveys for youth, parents, and providers. A discussion of potential service gaps informed a subcommittee break-out conversation about preliminary questions, youth-centered unbiased language, and desired survey logic.

The initial survey questions that emerged from this breakout session were entered into a Google document that was shared with the subcommittee for further refinement over the next month. The same iterative process was used to develop all three surveys. Based on the feedback, a decision was made to keep the questions to the minimum required to obtain the needed information and to provide the same questions (using more sophisticated language) to the parents as provided to the youth. In addition to the focused engagement questions, all surveys included a preamble to explain the purpose of the survey and value of participation, as well as demographic questions designed to allow for a more robust data analysis. Because of the time constraints for delivery related to the end of the school year, the youth and parent surveys were prioritized over the provider survey, which was developed and released after those were finalized.

The Youth Net Steering Committee prepared an online survey using Survey Monkey and distributed it publicly to solicit input about current youth activities, programs, and community engagement. It was also distributed as a link on the Loudoun County government website. The survey contained a path specifically for young people and another for parents and others involved with Loudoun's young people. Clicking on a role allowed the user to enter responses based on their status as a young person or adult involved with youth. Social media, youth groups, and other service providers advertised the purpose of the survey and provided the web link for easy access.

While the goal was to hear from as many of the 100,000+ Loudoun County youth as possible, from each of the different districts, we had less than 1,000 respondents including parents. Despite the small percentage representation, it was the largest county survey response in the previous 5 years of county conducted online surveys. We also had representation from each of the districts from youth and parents. Even with the small number of responses compared to the larger county population, we do have some clear results and recommended actions we can take now to improve an already positive image of Loudoun County.

## **Results**

Most of our survey respondents were parents; however, we still received a significant number of youths who responded as well. Our raw data is presented as a summary in the following paragraphs. It is important to note that while we had 967 survey respondents, not all respondents answered every question. Unfortunately, this was the case with many of the questions. In addition, we also read through the free responses to pick up on themes across 2 or more questions. In summary, the youth of Loudoun are looking for **more teen programs, volunteer opportunities, and safe spaces**. They are grateful for the opportunities in the community including sports, libraries, and education. Parents' responses echo those

of their kids. They also approve of the community centers and services from PRCS. Their key needs include **transportation and affordability**.

**Recommendation:**

1. **Better advertise what Loudoun has to offer to Loudoun Youth.**
2. **Add activity bus routes to the Sterling, Leesburg, and rural areas.**
3. **Make the Youth Net Initiative part of the ACOY responsibilities** along with a \$25,000 annual budget to continue these studies to support our youth.