

St. Lucie Hand In Hand

A Comprehensive Community Approach
for St. Lucie County, FL 2024



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Our History



The Roundtable of St. Lucie County, a 501(c)(3) organization, is a group of St. Lucie County leaders working together to accomplish system change that results in improved outcomes for youth. The Roundtable does not focus on “quick fixes.” Instead, it identifies and implements research-based, comprehensive solutions to achieve and sustain long-term success for youth and families in St. Lucie County.

In 1995, chief executives from five St. Lucie County agencies came together to create an infrastructure where collective problem-solving could effectively occur around children’s issues.

In 1999, the Roundtable was one of six sites in Florida to secure a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to develop a comprehensive plan to reduce risk factors and problem behaviors. The plan, called St. Lucie Hand in Hand, is centered on a “risk-focused” prevention model, supported by thirty years of adolescent problem behavior research by Dr. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard Catalano.

In 2007, the Roundtable selected Kids at Hope (KAH) as the primary means of increasing, supporting, and sustaining protective factors in St. Lucie County. KAH is a national initiative and a strategic cultural framework based on resiliency research designed to engage entire communities in supporting the success of all children, without exception. St. Lucie County and the Cities of Port St. Lucie and Fort Pierce have all passed resolutions to become Kids at Hope communities. St. Lucie County is the first in the nation to have all municipalities agree to adopt Kids at Hope. In addition, all St. Lucie Public Schools are trained in the KAH culture.

In 2015, in response to a growing sentiment among residents regarding the escalation of gang violence, Florida State Representative Larry Lee and other community leaders started the “Restoring the Village” movement, a grassroots anti-violence initiative that mobilized the community to action. The Roundtable established the Restoring the Village Youth Initiative, now known as IGNITE Youth Alliance, and adopted the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model in partnership with more than thirty other community agencies. The Roundtable successfully secured federal, state, local, and private funding to sustain the program through 2023. IGNITE Youth Alliance is recognized at the national level for its implementation of the model.

In 2017, the Roundtable’s Substance Abuse Prevention Network was awarded a five-year Drug Free Communities (DFC) grant of \$125,000 per year from the White House’s Office of National Drug Control Policy and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA).

In 2023, the Roundtable’s Drug Free St. Lucie Coalition was awarded the five-year continuation of that same grant. Also in 2023, the Roundtable was awarded the SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnership for Success Grant for \$375,000 per year for five years to launch the St. Lucie RISE Mental Health Collaborative.

Over the past 30 years, the Roundtable has grown from five member agencies to twenty-eight chief executives working together to improve outcomes for youth and families in St. Lucie County.

Achieving Success With Our Partners

23%

Pregnancies among
15-19 year old teens
(2014-2023)

82%

Past 30-day alcohol use
among high schoolers
(2014-2024)

72%

African American Infant
Mortality Per 1,000
Births
(2014-2023)

51%

Lifetime use of illicit
drugs (other than
marijuana) among
middle & high school
students
(2014-2024)

25%

Graduation Rates
in St. Lucie
County
(2014-2024)

75%

Early initiation of
marijuana use among
high school students
(2014-2024)

Over the last several years the Roundtable Networks and Initiatives have worked diligently in collaboration with our partners to improve the lives of youth and their families in St. Lucie County. Our focus has been on addressing key risk factors including, substance misuse and delinquent behavior among middle and high school students, improving health factors surrounding high-risk pregnancies and infant mortality, and improving academic performance. Together we have made great strides in reducing key risk factors that negatively impact our community.





Vision And Mission

Vision

We envision a community where county leaders, businesses, and residents are united to provide all children of St. Lucie County the resources they need to thrive, be successful, and achieve their full potential.

Mission

To sustain a team of county and business leaders who mobilize resources to improve the education, health, safety, nutrition, and care of all children in St. Lucie County.

How We Do It

- **Provide a mechanism for community dialogue and problem-solving** among key leaders for children and teen issues;
- **Share decision-making and accountability** at the policy level;
- **Maximize resources and minimize unnecessary duplication;**
- **Promote data-sharing and collective development** of data-driven strategies across sectors;
- **Coordinate** interagency initiatives and promote staff cooperation;
- **Make joint** policy and funding **decisions** and monitor implementation; and
- **Eliminate barriers and promote needed changes** in policies and practices.

Who We Are



ROUNDTABLE

TERESA BISHOP, CEO

- **Champions efforts** to improve conditions, standards, institutions, structures, systems, and policies affecting youth in St. Lucie County.
- **Membership comprised of chief executives** from education, law enforcement, government, juvenile justice, child protection, public health, funding agencies, and economic partners.



STEERING COMMITTEE

ADRIENNE HUGGINS, CHAIR

- **Appointed by the Roundtable**, to recommend direction of organization;
- **Assists with development and implementation** of strategic and action plans;
- **Recruits partners** for networks and subcommittees; and
- **Establishes and oversees activities** necessary to carry out the mission.



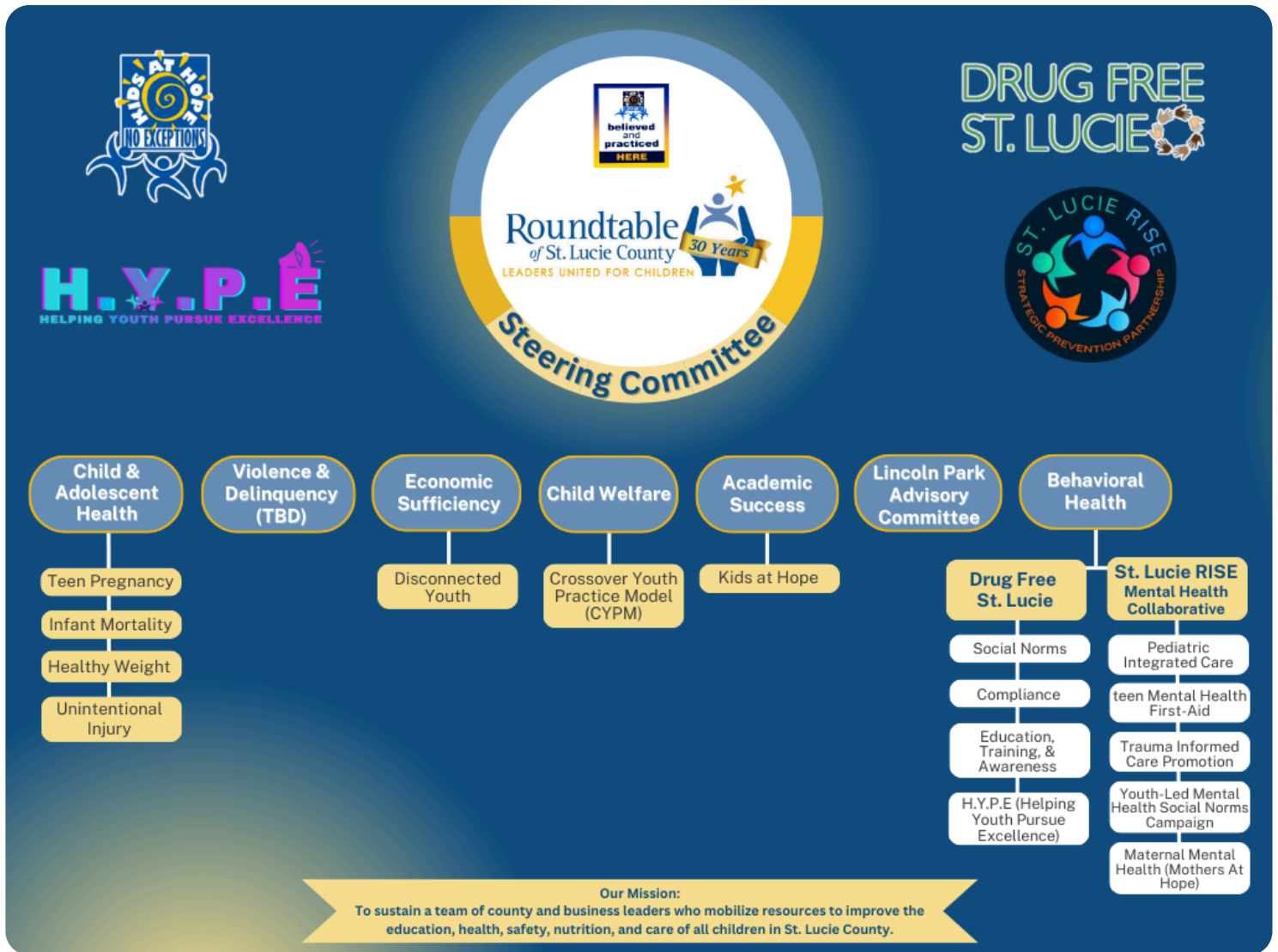
NETWORKS

- Serve as **subject matter experts**;
- Utilize expertise to **gather and analyze data**;
- **Identify and recommend programs, policies, and practices** for Roundtable consideration and approval;
- **Identify barriers** that prohibit implementation or positive outcomes; and
- **Drive implementation** activities to achieve strategic goals.

NETWORK CHAIRS:

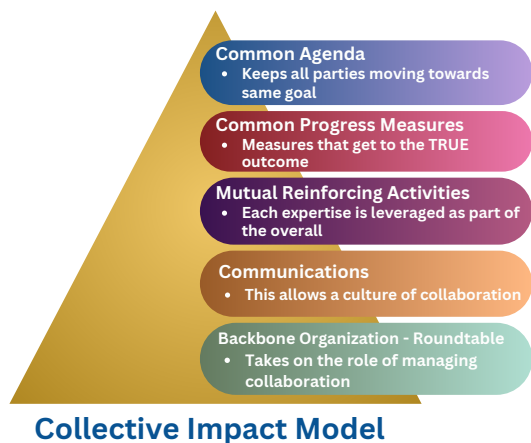
- **ACADEMIC SUCCESS:** Esther Rivera, St. Lucie Public Schools
- **DRUG FREE ST. LUCIE / SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION:** Casey Wood, New Horizons
- **ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY:** Canieria Gardner & Eleanor Chin, Incubate Neighborhood Center
- **HEALTHIEST WEIGHT:** Stefanie Myers, Jason Barela, & Stacy Pierre, FL Department of Health
- **INFANT MORTALITY:** Sonya Gabriel, FL Department of Health
- **LINCOLN PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Clorisse Stephens, Helping People Succeed
- **ST. LUCIE RISE / Mental Health Collaborative:** Valerie Richards, DATA
- **TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION:** Sonya Gabriel, FL Department of Health
- **UNINTENTIONAL INJURY:** Kendell Vaillancourt, FL Department of Health

Our Structure



www.RoundtableSLC.org

Roundtable Frameworks



Consistent with the Roundtable's mission, it has evolved and utilizes the **Collective Impact** approach to maximize positive outcomes for youth and their families. This model engages stakeholders across systems to collaborate in a structured way by utilizing common progress measures and implementing mutually reinforcing activities towards a common goal with the Roundtable serving as the "backbone" organization to support these efforts. To this end, the Roundtable has secured funding and continues to lead initiatives that employ the tenants of collective impact at its core.



Since its inception, the Roundtable has utilized the evidence-based **Communities that Care (CTC)** Model, based on the research of Dr. J. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard F. Catalano. **CTC** is a coalition-based prevention operating system that uses a public health approach to prevent youth problem behaviors such as violence, delinquency, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, depression, and anxiety. The Roundtable has extended this model to address adolescent health (unintentional injury, infant mortality, and obesity) and youth disconnection from education and employment. The model is designed to help the Roundtable and its community partners understand and apply information about risk and protective factors, develop common measures, and support approaches that are proven to make a difference in promoting healthy youth development.



The Roundtable Networks utilize SAMHSA's **Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF)** to guide their work from year to year. The SPF is designed to provide an intentional process to support the network's ongoing capacity-building efforts, planning and implementation of strategies, and evaluation of their contribution to improve outcomes for all youth.



Our Goals

- Reduce youth violence, delinquency, school dropout, substance misuse, and teen pregnancy in St. Lucie County.
- Improve physical and mental health outcomes for children and youth, including infant mortality, childhood obesity, falls, drownings, motor vehicle injuries, depression, anxiety, and suicide.
- Support community efforts to reduce the number of children living in poverty and increase opportunities and access for vulnerable youth to quality education, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and other gainful employment.
- Reduce risk factors and increase protective factors to prevent youth from engaging in problem behaviors.
- Increase community support for children and youth in juvenile dependency and/or delinquency systems.
- Coordinate technical assistance, training, and professional development opportunities to build community capacity for youth prevention, support quality services, and improve outcomes for youth and families.
- Support coordinated development of cross-sector policies, practices, and legislative recommendations affecting youth.
- Increase availability of, and access to, quality prevention programming, services, and opportunities, especially for vulnerable youth and families.
- Increase positive youth outcomes through active support and involvement in community revitalization efforts in Lincoln Park and nearby surrounding communities in Fort Pierce.

Academic Success



OBJECTIVE #1: Increase third-grade reading levels in St. Lucie County from 42% in 2023 to 46% in 2028, as measured by the percentage of third-grade students scoring on grade level on the State reading assessments.



STRATEGIES

- Support efforts from partner organizations to establish reading programs at Pre-K sites serving children who reside in neighborhoods that feed into lower-performing schools.
- Partner with community organizations to increase the number of age-appropriate books available to students through county library programs, “little libraries”, book drives, and “reading days”, where books are distributed.
- Establish **Book Mobiles** to improve access to books, particularly in remote and/or economically deprived areas of the county.
- Partner with Early Learning and Head Start providers to engage Pre-K parents in reading with their children through in-house parent engagement activities.
- Continue implementing Ruby Payne’s **Getting Ahead** and **Bridges Out of Poverty** training.
- Explore and provide tools and training to implement an evidence-based reading recovery curriculum that can be incorporated into out-of-school programs to supplement classroom-based reading interventions in line with district-approved programs.
- Support access to high-quality summer learning experiences.
- Partner with St. Lucie schools to publicize literacy and education technology that equips parents and youth service providers with tools to prevent learning loss.
- Increase parent and community engagement with student learning by (i) educating parents on the use of school-based technology to support school-home communication and success (i.e., Skyward and i-Ready); (ii) assisting parents to build their literacy skills; and (iii) encouraging parents and community representatives to participate on school advisory committees for lower performing schools.
- Promote **Reading Partners, Community Reading Mentorship Programs** that pair students with trained community volunteers who provide one-on-one reading support, helping to improve reading skills and foster a love for reading.
- Promote and support **Family Literacy Programs** to engage parents and caregivers in their children's reading development, fostering a home environment conducive to literacy (parent workshops, facilitate family reading events).

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Academic Success

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OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease absenteeism from 21.5% in 2021 to 19% by 2028, as measured by the FL Department of Education's report of students absent 21 days or more.

- Enhance, promote, and implement a county-wide, multi-cultural strategic campaign emphasizing the importance of regular full-day school attendance.
- Promote and support the **"Be There" Campaign**, a data-driven approach that allows the campaign to tailor community messaging, create targeted school interventions, and advise policy changes to support improved attendance
- Continue **Kids at Hope Training** for school staff to increase students' connection and attachment to schools.
- Roundtable to promote the increase of social connections in the community.



OBJECTIVE #3: Maintain or exceed graduation rates, as measured by the FL Department of Education's report of Proportion of Graduating from St. Lucie Public Schools at 94% for all student subgroups by 2028.

- Increase mentoring programs for students at risk of dropping out (failed core classes in middle school, been suspended, poor attendance, or over-aged).
- Promote the utilization of services provided by community partners such as Acceleration Academy, Project LIFT, and CareerSource **Youth Connections Program** for students at risk of not graduating or returning students.
- Provide opportunities through **Kids at Hope** "Time Travel" and Youth Leadership activities to encourage and support middle and high school students and their families with college preparation (apply to college or vocational training, scholarship and financial aid, career opportunities).
- Enroll all Freshmen in **Freshmen Seminar**.
- Work with school liaisons to encourage and support district-approved efforts to bring community resources to public schools through partnerships between schools and local professionals, businesses, social service agencies, health care providers, and volunteers.
- Promote and implement **School Climate Interventions** to support the overall social and physical environment of a school, encompassing relationships, safety, engagement, and connectedness.
- Promote and implement **School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (SWPBIS)**, a proactive, systematic approach that establishes and reinforces clear behavioral expectations across the entire school.
- Promote and support **Online Credit Recovery**, an intervention that enables students who have failed core courses to retake them in a digital format, allowing for greater flexibility and potentially more personalized instruction.

ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH



OBJECTIVE #1: Decrease the percentage of middle and high school female students who report feeling depressed or sad most days in the past year from 57% in 2022 to 52.5% by 2028, as measured by the FL Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS).

OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease the percentage of middle and high school male students who report feeling depressed or sad most days in the past year from 31% in 2022 to 29% by 2028, as measured by the FYSAS.

OBJECTIVE #3: Decrease the percentage of middle and high school female students who report attempting suicide in the past year from 13% in 2022 to 10% by 2028, as measured by the FYSAS.

OBJECTIVE #4: Decrease the percentage of middle and high school male students who report attempting suicide in the past year from 4% in 2022 to 3% by 2028, as measured by the FYSAS.



STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with Southeast FL Behavioral Health Network (SEFBHN), St. Lucie RISE, and medical providers to gather and assess county-wide data on youth mental health issues, including, but not limited to, rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide in St. Lucie County.
- Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the accountability and strengthening of partnerships.
- Establish a mental health database accessible to the general population/outside SEFBHN.
- Collaborate with St. Lucie Public Schools and community partners to provide **Mental Health First Aid** and **teen Mental Health First Aid**. Integrate **teen Mental Health First Aid** into clubs and other structures.
- Explore the implementation of **The Green Bandana Project**, a school-based program for youth and young adults that increases students' awareness of available mental health and suicide prevention resources and their ability to seek support before or during a mental health crisis.
- Explore, engage, and incentivize pediatric practices to implement **Pediatric Integrative Care**.
- Increase funding for and facilitate dialogue and awareness among youth service providers, schools, out-of-school programs, and community partners about the impact of trauma on children and the potential of trauma-informed communities and organizations to heal traumatized youth.
- Increase access to therapists in middle schools.
- Examine/review obstacles youth experience when attempting to access/establish mental health services.

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ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

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STRATEGIES

- Increase **Trauma-Informed Care** training for all providers of youth mental health.
- Advocate for **Trauma-Informed Care** as a contractual requirement by funders.
- Promote and increase awareness of local resources like 211.
- Engage the **National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI)** in St. Lucie RISE.
- Promote co-location of substance misuse prevention and mental health services on school campuses and after-school programs.
- Develop and distribute “**St. Lucie Cares**”, a **Behavioral Health Resource Guide**.
- Advocate for Children’s Services Council-funded programs to receive **Trauma-Informed Care** training.
- Train faith-based organizations on **Mental Health First Aid** and **Trauma-Informed Care**.
- Partner with community-based organizations to implement **MindUP**, a mindfulness program that promotes emotional regulation, resilience, and stress management.
- Implement **Sources of Strength**, a peer-led youth suicide prevention program that aims to improve social connections and help-seeking behaviors by focusing on strengths and resilience.
- Implement the **FRIENDS Program**, a cognitive-behavioral program that promotes resilience and reduces anxiety and depression in youth.
- Implement **Parent-Focused Intervention** programs that equip parents with skills to support their children’s mental health.

SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION

DRUG FREE
ST. LUCIE



OBJECTIVE #1: Decrease underage drinking in St. Lucie County from 17.5% in 2020 to 12% by 2028, as measured by the percentage of youth reporting past 30-day alcohol use on the FL Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS).

OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease early initiation of alcohol use from 17.5% in 2020 to 9% in 2028, as measured by the percentage of youth reporting they consumed alcohol before the age of 13 on the FYSAS.

OBJECTIVE #3: Maintain the youth vaping marijuana rate at 3.3% in 2020 over the next 5 years at 3.3% in 2028, as measured by the percentage of youth reporting past 30-day vaping marijuana use on the FYSAS.

OBJECTIVE #4: Decrease early initiation of marijuana use from 6.8% in 2020 to 2% by 2028, as measured by the percentage of youth reporting that they smoked marijuana before the age of 13 on the FYSAS.

OBJECTIVE #5: Decrease youth illicit drug use, other than marijuana, from 2.2% in 2020 to maintain below the state average by 2028, as measured by the percentage of youth reporting past 30-day use on the FYSAS.

OBJECTIVE #6: Decrease youth marijuana use from 6.2% in 2020 to 5% in 2028, as measured by the percentage of youth reporting past 30-day use of marijuana on the FYSAS.

(Due to the pandemic and the small sample of youth testing in 2022, 2020 data is used for the baseline.)



STRATEGIES

- Build the capacity of a broad-based coalition of community partners and key stakeholders to coordinate efforts within the county to prevent youth misuse of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, prescription pills, and other drugs.
- Educate youth and equip them to educate their peers about healthy behavior, refusal skills, life skills, dealing with direct and indirect social pressure, social media, and media literacy (teaching youth to analyze, understand, and evaluate media messages they encounter).
- Increase opportunities for peer interaction/peer mentoring, including younger-aged youth.
- Promote a public education campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of marijuana use and underage drinking through media advocacy, social marketing/norming, and encouraging parents to communicate a zero-tolerance policy about alcohol and drug use to their children.

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SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION

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DRUG FREE
ST. LUCIE 



STRATEGIES

- Mobilize community partners to oppose laws favorable to recreational marijuana use and promote legislation limiting access to marijuana.
- Increase substance misuse awareness/campaigns.
- Provide **Know the Law** training opportunities to parents and caregivers to learn about the consequences of providing alcohol and drugs to minors.
- Increase opportunities and incentivize youth for healthy behavior and prosocial involvement (Ex: **Friday Night, Done Right** events, **Glow Parties**).
- Increase partnerships with the city and county (parks & recreation), and local businesses.
- Educate parents, teachers, and out-of-school program providers about how to identify substance misuse issues in youth and develop protocols for early identification and referral for treatment.
 - Promote **Hidden in Plain Sight** virtual and onsite mock youth bedrooms.
- Provide educational opportunities in Spanish and Creole.
- Obtain school administrative buy-in to co-locate substance misuse prevention and mental health services on school campuses and after-school programs.
- Pursue funding opportunities to implement **Project Success** programming and curriculum, designed to connect students to their purpose through a proven experiential learning method.
- Implement **Natural High** after-school curriculum (free online).
- Promote and support **Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST)** upper elementary & middle school programs.
- Explore the **Strengthening Families Program (SFP)** model or similar programs.
- Promote **Family Check-Up (FCU)**, a brief intervention that focuses on improving family dynamics to reduce youth substance misuse.
- Increase proper medication disposal by partnering with law enforcement and health partners to facilitate safe and responsible ways for people to dispose of prescription drugs.
- Partner with local pharmacies to promote and support **National Drug Take Back Day**; **DETERRA** drug deactivation disposal bag and **Safe Rx Prescription Locking Pill Bottles** distribution.
- Reduce harm, death, disability, and other negative consequences associated with drug use and overdose by providing educational opportunities to the community on how to respond to an overdose situation and supporting the availability of **Narcan (Naloxone)** for law enforcement and first responders.
- Create Drug Free St. Lucie subcommittee to collect, organize, and monitor data on overdose and prescribing behaviors.
- Continue to promote and support **Too Good For Drugs (TGFD)**.

TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION



OBJECTIVE #1: Maintain birth rates among females aged 15-19 from 14.6 per 1,000 births in 2022 to 14.6 per 1,000 births by 2028, as measured by Florida Charts.



OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease birth rates at or below the State rate among females aged 18-19 from 29.2 per 1,000 births in 2022 to 25 per 1,000 births by 2028, as measured by Florida Charts.

OBJECTIVE #3: Maintain repeat birth rates among females aged 15-19 from 14.3 per 1,000 births in 2022 to 14.3 per 1,000 births by 2028, as measured by Florida Charts .



STRATEGIES

- Establish a collaborative effort/relationship with all youth-serving, faith-based, and community-based organizations that can offer programs, services, and education to teens and parents to address disconnected youth.
 - Increase outreach to parents and youth.
 - Provide curriculum and incentives for participation to educate parents about how to talk about safe sex with kids.
 - Maintain workgroup to improve access to and knowledge of clinic & youth services.
 - Continue to explore and implement evidence-based community-wide initiatives to decrease teen pregnancy.
 - Host an annual Youth Summit with a focus on life skills, sexual health, hygiene, anatomy, and puberty.
- Increase participation in the **Teen Zone Clinic/Florida Community Health Center (FCHC)** teen clinic.
 - Create and administer surveys and focus groups to determine why teens do not visit the clinics.
- Develop after-school youth community centers.
- Engage with St. Lucie Public Schools.
 - Work with St. Lucie Public Schools to offer **REAL Essentials** curriculum in middle schools, a state-approved curriculum for soft skills – communication, decision-making, etc.
 - Offer community service hours for attending programs/trainings (incentivize).

INFANT MORTALITY

OBJECTIVE #1: Decrease African American infant mortality from 11.7 per 1,000 live births in 2022 to 10 per 1,000 live births in 2028, as measured by Florida Charts.

OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease infant mortality from 6.7 per 1,000 live births in 2022 to 4.7 per 1,000 live births in 2028, as measured by Florida Charts.

OBJECTIVE #3: Decrease the number of infant deaths from Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) (Aged under 1 year) from 1.6 per 1,000 live births in 2022 to below 1 per 1,000 live births in 2028, as measured by Florida Charts.



OBJECTIVE #4: Decrease the percentage of females who do not access prenatal care (PNC) from 5.1% with no PNC status in 2022 to 3.2% in 2028, as measured by Florida Charts.

OBJECTIVE #5: Decrease the obesity rate of pregnant African American females from 42.9% of total births in 2022 to 37.9% in 2028, as measured by Florida Charts.

OBJECTIVE #6: Decrease the obesity rate of pregnant females from 34.4% of total births in 2022 to 29.4% in 2028 and match or report below the State, as measured by Florida Charts.



STRATEGIES

- Sustain a **Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR)** to help analyze root causes of infant health disparities in St. Lucie County, augment community needs assessments, and identify issues and gaps in services and systems that may contribute to fetal and infant death.
- Publish an annual report by the **FIMR Community Assessment Team (CAT)** for accountability and utilize findings from the FIMR and the above-mentioned research to institute change within the continuum of care of pregnant women within St. Lucie County, based upon findings.
- Advocate for a prevention curriculum (in multiple languages), to include nutrition education for patients at the providers' offices on best practices related to reducing pre-term births.
- Include laminated materials in multiple languages at an appropriate reading level, such as a nutritional chart.
- Educate and promote referrals to the **One Fit Mama Program**.
- Advocate for the recruitment of more prenatal care providers, OB residency programs, and bilingual prenatal care providers in the county.
- Educate legislators regarding the recruitment of more prenatal care providers, OB residency programs, and bilingual prenatal care providers in the county.
- Engage the **National Health Services Corp.** scholarship and loan repayment programs to increase access to quality healthcare in St. Lucie County.
- Implement strategies to increase education and access to prenatal screenings.

INFANT MORTALITY

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STRATEGIES

- Advocate for **Centering Pregnancy Group Prenatal Care**, particularly for new OB recruits in the area.
- Increase awareness of WIC services to the residents of St. Lucie County, including breastfeeding peer counselors.
- Promote WIC participation before 29 weeks (evidence-based practice reducing preterm births).
- Continue and increase delivery of intensive, face-to-face case management and related risk reduction services through Healthy Start by focusing on high-risk women, including women with a history of premature births and poor birth outcomes.
- Conduct focus groups regarding infant mortality within St. Lucie County to gather data and understand root causes regarding the most predominant contributing factors for African Americans (and subsequently tailor strategies, such as safe sleep campaigns, accordingly).
- Develop an infant mortality awareness/marketing campaign to educate vulnerable communities living in high-risk zip codes.
- Generate dialogue around causes, access, prevention, and the system of care delivery.
- Identify leaders in faith-based organizations, community organizations, businesses, and neighborhoods who will champion the goal of reducing infant mortality rates in the populations of greater risk.
- Promote and support comprehensive preconception education regarding the effectiveness of waiting at least 18 months before a repeat pregnancy in improving birth outcomes.
- Promote and advocate for preconception and interconception care.
- Promote and support breastfeeding and overall health (nutrition, health literacy) education, particularly in the African American community.
- Explore and bring awareness of prenatal and pediatric services and accessibility to services (i.e., transportation and insurance) in St. Lucie County.
- Train and implement the **SafeBaby** curriculum for Healthy Start staff and community partners.
- Continue to partner with the Fire Department for the **DOSE program**.
- Provide **Safe Sleep** education and Safe Sleep environments to families in need, using resources from **Cribs for Kids**, Children's Services Council, and state and local funds.
- Engage community influencers to advocate for safe sleep practices in high-risk areas.
- Collaborate with hospitals, pediatric clinics, and community organizations to offer **Safe Sleep** classes.
- Explore a mobile health program that provides pregnant women and new mothers with personalized health information and resources via text messages. Research shows this improves maternal health behaviors and increases access to prenatal care, contributing to healthier pregnancies and lower infant mortality rates.
- Promote the evidence-based **Count the Kicks** campaign to all pregnant women and maternal child health services providers to prevent stillbirths.
- Continue to offer culturally relevant community-based doula services and breastfeeding support to women in high-risk areas.

HEALTHY WEIGHT

OBJECTIVE #1: Decrease the percentage of first graders who are overweight or obese from 29.3% in 2023-24 to 27.3% in 2028, as measured by St. Lucie Public School (SLPS) Nurses.

OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease the percentage of third graders who are overweight or obese from 28.8% in 2023-24 to 26.8% in 2028, as measured by SLPS Nurses.

OBJECTIVE #3: Decrease the percentage of sixth graders who are overweight or obese from 21.2% in 2023-24 to 19.2% in 2028, as measured by SLPS Nurses.

OBJECTIVE #4: Decrease the percentage of middle school students who are overweight or obese from 35.7% in 2024 to 33.7% in 2028, as measured by the FL Youth Tobacco Survey.



STRATEGIES

- Increase the provision and use of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) **MyPlate** framework, which offers toolkits and resources to support obesity prevention for all ages.
- Identify and obtain funding to sustain and support the coordination of services for children and teens to achieve a healthy weight in St. Lucie County.
- Partner with St. Lucie County Schools to identify **Health Champions** at each school to support healthy weight initiatives.
- Identify childcare providers and out-of-school programs in the Lincoln Park area and support their efforts to champion healthy weight strategies.
- Promote and increase the use of the free Go Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (**Go NAPSACC**) platform to assist early childcare and education providers in improving the health of young children through evidenced-based practices, policies, and environments.
- Promote and increase participation of schools and youth-serving organizations and businesses in the Alliance for a Healthier Generation platform, which provides assessments and evidence-based programming and resources to help build healthier environments and support the development of lifelong healthy habits.
- Maintain the school and after-school based youth nutrition education and community garden programs provided by the **UF/IFAS Family Nutrition Program** (SNAP Education), and identify other partners and resources to expand the reach of these types of programs.
- Increase utilization of the SNAP Education programming for adults and parents provided by the Treasure Coast Food Bank.
- Strengthen partnerships with pediatric medical providers, churches, and other groups to educate parents and supportive adults and encourage the implementation of strategies to create healthy environments and support children in developing healthy habits.
- Conduct focus groups with parents at identified childcare centers that have the highest BMI rates to gather in-depth, qualitative data about parents' experiences and inform additional strategies for promoting healthy eating and physical activity.

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HEALTHY WEIGHT

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STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with the state and Region 5 **Food Policy Council** and other partners to explore the feasibility of community-wide strategies around (1) promoting healthy corner store initiatives through incentives for neighborhood convenience stores to stock healthy food items; (2) increasing the purchasing power of **SNAP** customers at farmers' markets; (3) exploring partnerships with clinics and hospitals to provide coupons for parents of children with high BMIs to buy fruits and vegetables (ex. **Philly "Food Bucks" Initiative**); and (4) working with government and for-profit partners to address food deserts.
- Identify existing **Mobile Markets** in communities with low access to healthy food options and identify strategies to expand reach to more neighborhoods.
- Establish and/or expand opportunities for the community-based **Bright Bodies-Smart Moves for Kids** program.
- Establish partnerships with churches, neighborhood organizations, housing communities, and after-school providers to engage youth and parents in planting and maintaining community gardens.
- Support **the Healthy St. Lucie Coalition Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)** to further address increasing healthy weights of youth in the community.
- Increase social media and marketing to promote healthy behaviors and changing environmental factors through targeted messages and strategies, focusing on parents, children, and communities.
- Explore the **SPARK (Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids)** Early Childhood Curriculum Program, a physical education program designed to improve physical activity and fitness in children from early childhood through adolescence.
- Advocate for school-based gardening programs such as the evidence-based **Edible Schoolyard Project**.
- School | Food Nutrition Services.
- **Our Story / Inter-Faith Food Shuttle.**

UNINTENTIONAL INJURY



OBJECTIVE #1: Decrease deaths of 15-19 year-olds due to motor vehicle accidents from 4 in 2021 to below the State rate by 2028, as measured by Florida Charts.



OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease emergency room visits for injury by motor vehicle for 0-19 year-olds from 2,456 in 2022 to 1,842 by 2028, as measured by hospital records county-wide.

OBJECTIVE #3: Decrease emergency room visits for injury by falling for 0-19 year-olds from 65 in 2021 to 49 by 2028, as measured by hospital records county-wide.



STRATEGIES

- Work with St. Lucie County schools to educate physical education teachers and coaches regarding concussion awareness, over-exertion, dehydration, and swim safety.
- Advocate for and promote gun safety training opportunities for the community.
- Advocate for and promote the **Stop the Bleed** campaign.
- Partner with K-8 schools to promote bike safety, and educate on concussions and sport safety.
- Conduct focus groups to survey and elicit feedback from high school students on the most effective messaging regarding unintentional injury prevention.
- Provide **Impact Teen Drivers** training to raise awareness of reckless and distracted drivers.
- Partner with St. Lucie County schools and law enforcement to provide **Impact Teen Drivers** training to parents and students.
- Partner with law enforcement, neighborhood homeowners' associations, and low-income apartment complexes to offer free swim lessons.
- Continue monitoring fall data in ages 0-19 and implement fall prevention strategies.
- Ensure children have access to safe playgrounds and recreational spaces.
- Provide free CPR to children and young adults.
- Provide boating safety, life jacket regulations, and other water safety educational programs to the community and the schools.
- Advocate for safety events in schools.
- Promote "**car loop cards**" to educate parents and caregivers about booster seats vs. seat belts.
- Provide **Parent Education Opportunities** for car seat safety, teen driving, and swim safety.
- Recruit and secure funding to increase the number of paid swim instructors.
- Promote the **Treasure Coast Safety Village**.

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY



OBJECTIVE #1: Decrease the percentage of disconnected youth (ages 16-19) in St. Lucie County from 8.2% in 2022 to at or below the State average of 7% by 2028, as measured by the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS).

OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease the percentage of disconnected youth (ages 16-19) in Fort Pierce from 9.6% in 2022 to 7.7% by 2028, as measured by the U.S. Census ACS.

OBJECTIVE #3: Decrease the percentage of disconnected females (aged 16-19) in Fort Pierce from 14.5% in 2022 to 12.75% by 2028, as measured by the U.S. Census ACS.



STRATEGIES

- Support the efforts of CareerSource Research Coast (CSRC), Indian River State College, and St. Lucie Public Schools to expand job training and workforce development through increased creation and sustainability of vocational, apprenticeship, and pre-apprenticeship programs.
- Support the efforts of CSRC to expand employer hiring of teens and young adults, and employer participation in **Youth Connection** job fairs, job mentoring, and shadowing opportunities.
- Increase awareness of disconnected youth resources with a background or legal barriers (promote federal bonding program for youth).
- Implement evidence-based practices and programs geared toward disconnected female youth.
- Seek out evidence-based programming to establish a mobilized ecosystem of partners focusing on barriers of disconnected youth in the Lincoln Park area and surrounding communities.
- Provide an entrepreneurship program for disconnected youth.
- Pursue the establishment of a community hub for support services for disconnected youth.
- Address gaps in services for vulnerable youth at risk for disconnection from education and/or gainful employment.
- Establish a partnership with the Juvenile Justice Circuit 19 Advisory Board and Teen Pregnancy Network.
- Implement evidence-based practices and programs geared toward connecting vulnerable populations to education and/or gainful employment.
- Promote and support youth mentoring programs.
- Implement the **Sanctuary Model**, **Trauma-Informed Care**, and **Support Program**.
- Promote and support **Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)**.
- **Digital Youth Divas** - community-based digital literacy and technology training.
- Continue to promote and support summer and out-of-school **Youth Empowerment** programs.
- Increase opportunities for employability skills and career opportunity training.

BULLYING & DELINQUENCY



OBJECTIVE #1: Decrease bullying as measured by the number of youth who report being kicked or shoved in the past 30-days from 26.1% in 2022 (notable: the rate in 2014 was 13.4%) to 24.1% or a 2% reduction in 2028, as reported by the FL Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS).

OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease bullying as measured by the number of youth who report being a victim of cyberbullying in the past 30-days from 29.7% in 2022 (notable: the rate in 2014 was 8.8%) to maintain at the State rate in 2028, as reported by the FYSAS.



OBJECTIVE #3: Decrease bullying as measured by the number of youth who report that they have physically bullied others in the past 30-days from 15.9% in 2022 to 14.9% in 2028, as reported by the FYSAS.

OBJECTIVE #4: Decrease delinquency as measured by School Arrests as reported by the FL Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) from 219 in 2022-23 to 1% or 300 (based on the projected 60K student population), which is below the State rate, in 2028.

OBJECTIVE #5: Decrease delinquency as measured by school referrals in the first 81 days, as reported by St. Lucie Public Schools, from 15,829 in 2022-23 to <21,000 or 35% based on the projected student enrollment population in 2028.



STRATEGIES

- Explore the implementation of the **Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)** in St. Lucie County; **OBPP** is a comprehensive, schoolwide approach aimed at creating a safe and positive school climate by reducing bullying and improving peer relations across K-12 schools.
- Identify federal, local, and/or private grant funding streams within youth and family-serving entities, to expand and support the placement of additional counselors and social workers in schools and other areas that are easily accessible to young people (e.g., the Boys and Girls Club).
- Adopt a system or model (e.g., **Handle with Care**) in which professionals working with youth are trained to be aware of and effectively respond to students who may have experienced trauma, which might influence changes in their behavior.

YOUTH VIOLENCE

OBJECTIVE #1: Decrease youth violence as measured by youth felony aggravated assault/battery by the FL Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) from 77 in 2023 to 60 in 2028 (22% decrease in numbers based on 2023 data. Note: percentage change in numbers to be measured in 2028 will factor in population growth).



OBJECTIVE #2: Decrease youth violence as measured by misdemeanor assaults by the DJJ from 90 in 2023 to 124 in 2028 (34% decrease in numbers based on 2023 data. Note: percentage change in numbers to be measured in 2028 will factor in population growth).

OBJECTIVE #3: Decrease youth violence as measured by youth who report attacking someone with the intent to harm from 6% in 2022 to 5.5% in 2028, as reported on the FL Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS).



STRATEGIES

- Establish regular and ongoing de-escalation and behavior management training for all school staff and personnel throughout the school year. This may entail pooling resources across schools to minimize costs and increase engagement of school staff across districts.
- Improve ‘hand-offs’ between schools when students are changing or entering a new school to prepare educators and staff in advance of student’s arrival.
- Establish and implement a comprehensive, coordinated, integrated, and sustainable approach to reducing youth violence for youth living in high-crime areas of St. Lucie County, including increased access to primary prevention and intervention programming for youth at-risk or who are engaging in violent activity in the schools and community.
- Increase culturally appropriate mentoring programs for all youth, particularly high-need youth or “frequent flyers”.
- Expand comprehensive gender-specific programming (i.e. Project LIFT and PACE Center for Girls).
- Provide youth at-risk for or gang-involved and other anti-social behaviors, access to high-quality resources, prosocial role modeling, encouragement, education and employment opportunities, and substance misuse and mental health services to decrease violence, delinquency, recidivism, and victimization in this population.
- Engage residents and youth living in “hot spot” crime areas through activities designed to increase their involvement in civic life and responsibilities, educate them about resources, mobilize for collective action, and conduct ongoing program assessment and evaluation.

(continued on next page)

YOUTH VIOLENCE

(continued)



STRATEGIES

- Work with Roundtable member organizations and partners, including law enforcement, schools, probation, the judicial system, public health, child welfare agencies, mental health, and substance misuse prevention providers, funders, workforce development, youth service providers, churches, and community residents, to identify and remove barriers or gaps in service for youth at-risk for or gang-involved and their families.
- Utilize evidence-based curriculum in school and out-of-school programs where data shows high levels of fighting to develop competencies in youth around conflict resolution and anger management.
- Expand programs such as **Functional Family Therapy** and **Multisystemic Therapy** that engage parents as collaborative partners in changing norms in families and tools for appropriate means of resolving disputes.
- Continue to implement and expand opportunities for the **Fatherhood Initiative**.
- Increased organized sports activities (**Night Basketball League, More Than a Game Initiative**).
- Support school resource officers in elementary schools to help develop competencies around conflict resolution and behavior management and help youth build positive relationships with law enforcement at an early age.
- Explore and support evidence-based programs such as **Too Good for Violence, Stop Now and Think, SANKOFA, Achievement Mentoring, PATH, Guiding Good Choices (Family Competency)**, and **Strengthening African American Families**.
- Reestablish the **Bridging the Gap** program, a national program designed to rebuild mutual respect and trust between youth and law enforcement.

Increase Collective Impact of Member Agencies



Support Coordinated Professional Development in Key Areas

Promote training for member agencies and community partners:

- **Mental Health First Aid** and **Teen Mental Health First Aid**.
- Best practices for engaging parents and guardians.
- **Trauma-Informed Care** and practices.
- Wraparound-informed (family-led) practices and care.
- Culturally appropriate mentoring strategies.

Develop Cross-Sector Policies and Coordinate Legislative Advocacy Around Children's Issues

Convene interagency workgroups to develop:

- Protocols for systemic identification and response for Pre-K and early elementary students exhibiting early and persistent behavioral challenges.
- Targeted interventions for "frequent flyers" (youth with high numbers of disciplinary referrals and in-school suspensions).
- Protocols for cross-system information sharing, while protecting privacy, between community partners.
- Enhancing access to pro-social opportunities for selected (at higher risk) and indicated (already engaging in high-risk behavior) youth.
- Areas and subject matters to address through legislative advocacy.

Increase Access to Quality Services and Opportunities for Children and Families

Develop strategies and champion efforts to increase availability of and access to family support services:

- Transportation improvements.
- Co-location of services in areas experiencing disproportionate levels of problem behaviors or poor health outcomes (e.g., community resource centers and schools).
- Build capacity for service delivery through faith-based organizations to increase community access to existing resources (buildings, busses).

Support Community Revitalization Efforts in High-Need Communities

Target collective efforts and strategies in high-need communities for maximum impact on community outcome:

- Comprehensive community revitalization efforts (i.e., **Purpose Built Communities**).
- Crime prevention through environmental design (i.e., expand community beautification projects targeted at crime prevention).
- Urban green space.
- **Neighbor To Neighbor**.



Acknowledgements

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First and foremost, we extend our deepest appreciation to the Roundtable Board members and staff, and the Roundtable Networks for their valuable insights, experiences, and perspectives that have provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to youth problem behaviors or conditions in the community.

Special thanks to our Network chairs and to Collectively, led by Dr. Julie Radlauer, who assisted with gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the data and recommending evidence-based strategies for our community which are included in this report. Their research and commitment resulted in a robust assessment of our community. Without their active involvement, this report would not have been possible.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our agency partners and community members who have contributed to this professional community assessment by providing insight through participation in focus groups, surveys, interviews, and stakeholder planning sessions.

Finally, we thank our funders and their commitment to the Roundtable to support the development of our Hand in Hand strategic plan as well as our initiatives.

Our collective expertise, support, and dedication have been the driving force behind the successful completion of this endeavor. We hope this report will serve as a valuable resource for positive change within our community and beyond. It goes without saying, “It takes a village”.

A Special Thank You To Our Funders



Carol M. Jacobsohn Foundation

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Treasurer: Nathan Peterson
Secretary: Ann Berner
Past Chair: Tony Loupe
At Large Member: David Pickett
Steering Committee Chair: Adrienne Huggins

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Strategic Planning Sessions



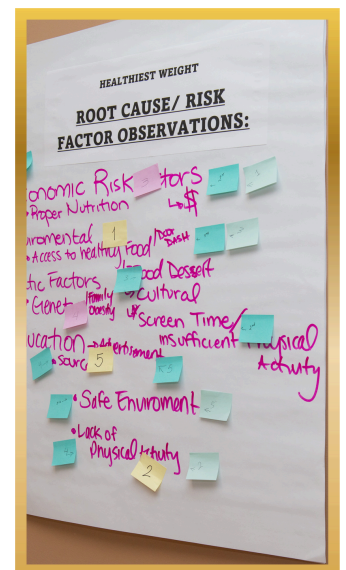
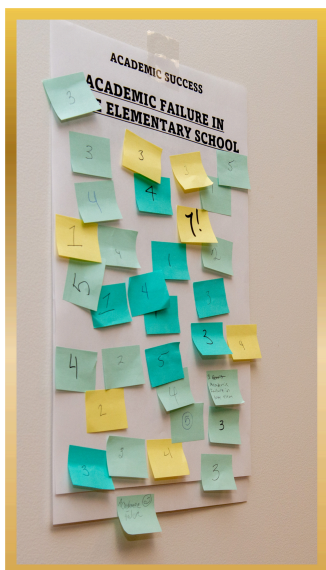
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Strategic Planning Sessions



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**Celebrating 30 Years of Serving
St. Lucie County Youth and their
Families!**