



2017 Prosper and Succeed
Youth and Young Adult Services
Decatur, Illinois Analysis

Summary

In the Spring of 2017, Grow Decatur's Prosper and Succeed Working Group identified a concern about the mismatch between available jobs and available unemployed people creating a barrier for prosperity and success in our area. Several employers in the group spoke about applicants who were not ready to work in the currently available jobs market for a number of reasons. One potential area of impact is the Youth (14-18) and Young Adult (19-24) age group and making sure that they have the tools to decrease barriers and improve their outlook for employment.

After discussion, it was determined that many groups are doing good work in this area, but we wanted to assess whether this could be improved upon. To create a baseline and understand where we are today, a survey was developed and conducted with the help of a Community Youth Services Grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services to Dove, Inc. The survey was answered by 93 Youth & Young Adult Service Providers representing 58 unique Organizations, and 126 Youth & Young Adults. 86% of the Existing Service Organizations were listed in the United Way 211 system and 93% were aware of the Grow Decatur initiative. 86% of the Existing Service Organizations served Youth, while only 42% indicated services for Young Adults.

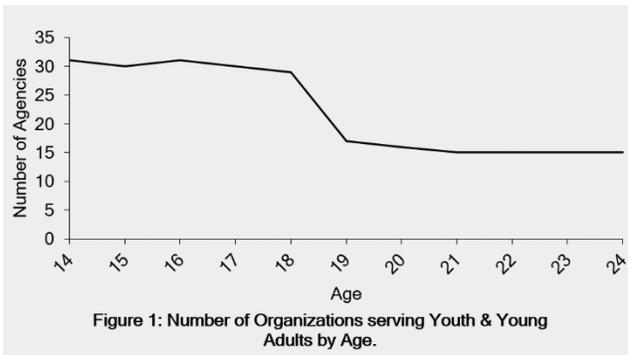
Youth (14-18) indicated that they felt there were "too few" or "far too few" services available in Healthy Families/Parenting, Role Modeling, and Leadership. Youth did not indicate that they felt there were "too many" or "far too many" services in any area surveyed. Young Adults (19-24) felt that there were "too many" activities in fitness, nutrition, and leadership, while indicating "far too few" services on Healthy Families/Parenting, Soft Skills, and Life Skills. 56% of all Youth and Young Adults indicated participating in one or more existing service, reflecting 54% of Youth and 63% of Young Adults participating. 33% of respondents indicated participating in two services, 16% in 3 or more services or activities. 79% of Youth and Young Adults indicated that they felt the activities of these services were relevant to their future success.

A total of 48 organizations indicated existing services for Youth (14-18). The least provided services for Youth were Job Training, Peer Mentoring, and Nutrition, which had a total capacity of 6285 seats provided by 14 organizations. The most provided services were Role Modeling, Leadership, Goal Setting, Soft Skills, and Mentoring (from adults), which had a total capacity of 5980 seats across 16 organizations. The total current system capacity for Youth services is 14,300 seats across all organizations responding, approximately 9285 individuals, compared with the current population estimate of 6300 individuals in Decatur, IL in the Youth age groupⁱ. However, organizations typically indicated that clients from surrounding Macon County Communities were also served, Macon county demographics for this age group indicate approximately 7400 individualsⁱⁱ.

A total of 16 organizations indicated existing services for Young Adults (19-24). The least provided services for Young Adults were Job Training and Peer Mentoring, which had a total capacity to serve just 1800 seats provided by 8 organizations. 50% of these organizations indicated that they had both the will and resources to ramp up is hundreds more clients were available within 6 months. The most provided services for Young Adults were Role Modeling, Leadership, Employability Skills, Healthy Relationships, Soft Skills, and Life Skills. This was done by 14 organizations with a maximum capacity of 7,800 seats. 48% of organizations indicated that they had the will to ramp up capacity for hundreds more clients, but only 21% indicated that they had the resources (financial, manpower, etc.) to do so. The total current system capacity for Young Adult services is 9760 seats across all organizations responding, approximately 5900 individuals, compared with the current population estimate of 9171 individuals in Decatur, IL in the Young Adult age groupⁱⁱⁱ.

While total capacity of seat numbers appears to be in line with population, individuals often participate in more than one service, meaning that the total unique individuals served is likely significantly lower than the seat capacities noted. Based on information gathered from survey respondents approximately 49% of individuals utilize multiple seats within organizations and across multiple organizations with 16% utilizing 3 or more seats. Based on this, the Young Adult population is underserved, and could benefit from capacity building. The Youth age group may be well covered, but the limited data sample does not indicate this clearly. Future study would be helpful in developing an unduplicated count.

Data



In general, less than half of the number of organizations serve clients once they turn 18 or graduate high school (Figure 1). The capacity of the system is currently at 14,300 Youth Seats and 9760 Young Adult Seats, which exceeds the area population in both age groups. However, 49% of unique individual’s report utilizing multiple programs. 50% of all seats are used by an individual youth (see Figures 2 & 3).

Organizations were tied geographically to the City of Decatur, Macon County, or a multi-county area. Only 2 responding organizations indicated geographic boundaries tied to other subunits such as school district, school, township, or neighborhood. During follow-up interviews it was determined that age group for this study was a factor in determining geography. Of organizations responding that they also serve younger children and youth than included in this study 50% focused those programs on a neighborhood or elementary school. The perceived

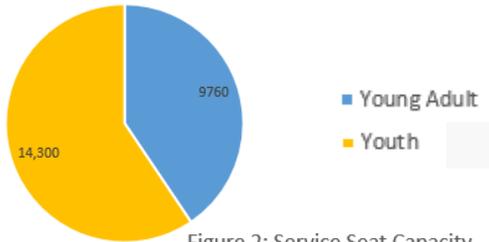


Figure 2: Service Seat Capacity

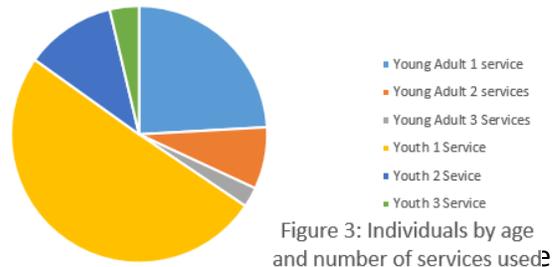
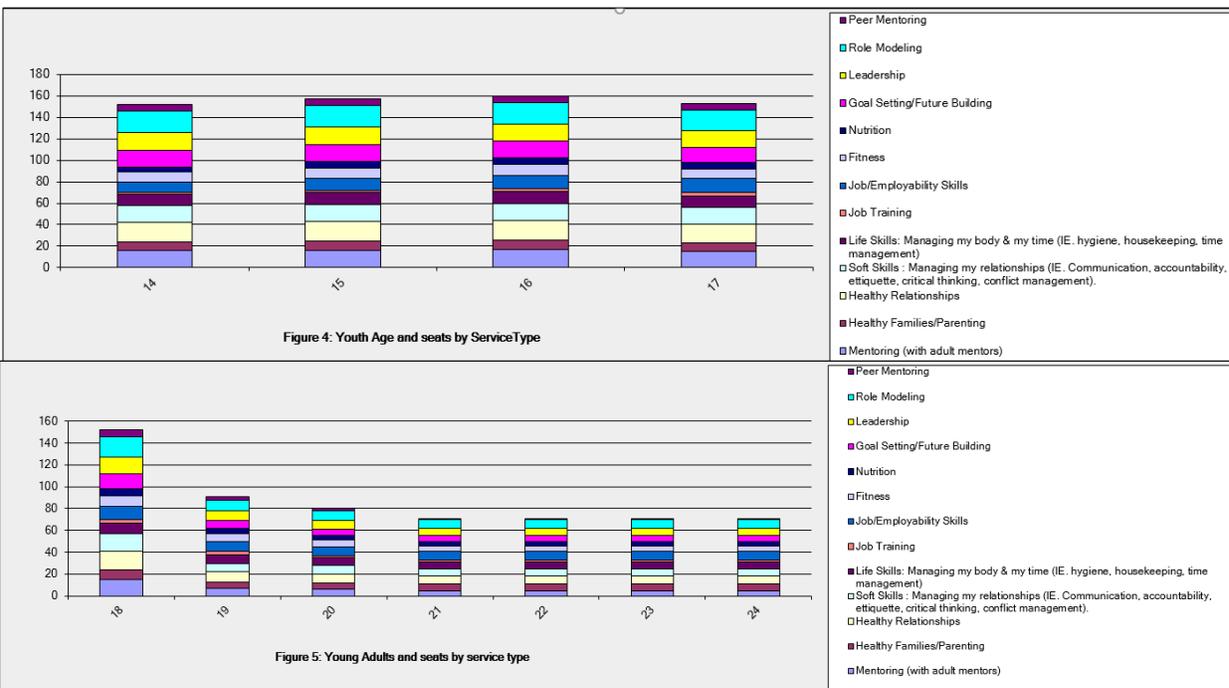


Figure 3: Individuals by age and number of services used

18 in proportion with the total seats.

40% of the organizations also work with parents of clients consistently across age groups. Healthy Families and Parenting was the most common service (65%) provided to Parents followed by Soft Skills, Parental Engagement, and Healthy Relationships (each at 44%). Substance Abuse Counseling/Prevention/Referral was added to the survey as the most common “other” response for Parent Services Offered. 70% of organizations reported providing this service for parents of Youth, and 20% reported providing this service for parents of Young Adults.



Attendance is currently the primary measure used by organizations. Needs are generally assessed by requests and referrals. Of the Organizations reporting 7 indicated doing needs assessments in order to plan. In follow-up conversations, 10 organizations noted that state and national programs are responsible for determining need and they are focused on service delivery. 12 noted that funds are not available for needs assessments, causing them to operate based on anecdotal evidence.

For a list of responding organizations and services offered, please refer to the Youth and Young Adult Opportunities Guide available at <http://doveinc.org/programs/community-services/youth-referral-guide/>¹.

Discussion

Around age 18, the Decatur community stops providing the majority of success strengthening services. This sink or swim moment would be appropriate if we were certain that all Youth at 18 had the skills needed to prosper and succeed. However, Youth do not feel prepared, and have fewer opportunities to get prepared as they face some of life's challenges. Consistently, Health Families and Parenting are the area in which young adults feel least prepared to succeed, however the majority of this instruction is offered to the parents and not the youth or young adults. This suggests that strengthening the connection between parent services and youth/young adult services would be appropriate to working on this multi-generational barrier.

The Youth system has a strong capacity for growth, indicating an available seat capacity well in excess of the target population. However, the Young Adult system is at or over capacity. This suggests that steps could be taken to improve the number of supports for Young Adults or to shift resources from Youth to Young Adults. It may also mean that steps should be taken earlier to minimize need at the Young Adult age.

Role Modeling is the largest form of service provided, while Job Training is the least provided. It may be an assumption inherent in the system that employers will provide job training. This is not necessarily accurate as employers have large numbers of applicants and can choose amongst the best. Further exploration is suggested as to the extent to which employers are and are willing to provide job training. Additionally, given the prevalence of Role Modeling as a technique, it should be further explored what evidence is available to suggest that Role Modeling Services are effective at producing individuals capable of prosperity and success.

Attendance is currently the primary measure used by organizations. Needs are general assessed by requests and referrals. Combining the two types of need assessment, local and regional, less than 1/3 of organizations are participating in a data-based approach to service design. Those looking to support services may wish to consider supporting and funding data-based approaches, rather than direct service alone, if they prioritize data-based approaches to service delivery.

ⁱ 2016 US Census bureau https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

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¹ Some organizations chose to opt out of sharing information in the guide.