

# COMMUNITY NEEDS REPORT



Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



## Positive Youth Development Programming Sheboygan County Extension

On June 12, 2025, Sheboygan County hosted a Community Needs Forum with participation from representatives and partners across local community organizations. Attendees engaged in facilitated discussions around current goals, challenges, existing and needed resources, underserved audiences, and opportunities for collaboration. The purpose of this report is to highlight community-identified needs relevant to the Positive Youth Development (PYD) Institute, and to demonstrate how programming from Sheboygan County Extension is addressing these gaps.

### Forum Discussion Summary

The Forum discussion at the PYD table focused on strengthening youth development and well-being in Sheboygan County through **mental health support**, **school attendance**, deeper **community partnerships**, and improved **access to essential services**. There's a strong drive to **reconnect with underserved populations**, especially youth and immigrant families, and to **build sustainable systems** that address workforce burnout, housing, transportation, and resource navigation. Programming is needed for 18-24 year olds to manage workplace norms.

### Identified Community Needs & Gaps

Analysis of the forum data revealed several key needs that align with the scope of Positive Youth Development programming:

- **Mental Health as a Core Challenge:** Widespread concern about insufficient mental health resources for youth and adults.
- **Education & Community Organizations:** Increased collaboration desired between schools and community organizations.
- **Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships:** Better use of existing programs and models, build trust, and co-create solutions with youth, not just for youth.
- **Community Engagement:** Emphasis on listening to youth input directly to guide program design
- **Career Building Skills:** emotional regulation, self-care, and values alignment

### EXTENSION ALIGNMENT

#### Needs Assessment with Youth

Positive Youth Educator builds into needs assessment work on how to get young people more involved from the beginning. Ask the young people where they are at, demonstrating youth have a voice in determining solutions.

### **Youth Empowerment**

Positive Youth Educator work will focus on youth empowerment and youth voice. Positive Youth Development Institute Youth Empowerment programs empower young people to use their voice while working in partnership with adults to positively impact their communities. Why? When young people are connected to their communities through service they are more likely to be invested as leaders who contribute to their community's success both now and in the future. Youth and adults working together creates stronger and more well-connected communities that better serve their residents.

Intended Outcomes: Youth Empowerment is where youth practice leadership skills while exploring important issues in their communities and making informed decisions with adults.

The 4-H Program Educator plays a vital role in fostering an inclusive and empowering environment throughout the Sheboygan County 4-H program. This work involves close collaboration with 4-H clubs and groups to support and develop 4-H Club Officers and Youth Leaders. The goal is to ensure that these young leaders are equipped to create a welcoming, respectful, and engaging atmosphere for all 4-H members and participants. In addition, the 4-H Program Educator also provides targeted support to adult 4-H volunteers. This includes facilitating group training sessions and offering individualized coaching to help 4-H volunteers create youth-centered environments that actively encourage youth voice, leadership, and participation. Through these efforts, the 4-H Educator ensures that both youth and adults are prepared to lead, listen, and learn together in a vibrant and supportive 4-H community.

### **Experiential Learning**

The 4-H program educator's focus is on Experiential Learning, which uses the interests and curiosities of today's youth (Sparks) to foster and support educational opportunities for youth. All youth have the potential to identify their Spark—the inner flame within that excites them and taps into their passion. Youth who connect with and are supported in exploring their Sparks are more likely to thrive. The learning journey that begins with their Spark may lead to a career, lifelong passions, interests, or hobbies, as well as life and leadership skills they can use throughout life. Intended Outcomes: Experiential Learning is where youth find and explore their Sparks. Older youth leaders and adults encourage them to learn and grow in their interests, learning resilience as they build life and leadership skills.

### **Career and College Readiness**

The PYD Institute's Career and College Readiness programs assist youth in transitioning from adolescence to adulthood with the necessary abilities, skills, and mindsets to navigate life's

opportunities and challenges. More capacity would be needed locally in PYD to create capacity for the work. Moving from 1.5 FTE PYD educator positions to 2.0 FTE educator positions.

## **Mental Health**

### **Potential Area of Growth**

Offer **Supporting Youth Mental Health training** to schools and organizations that work with youth. Local educators schedule and regional educators deliver the program.

<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/impacts/articles/supporting-youth-mental-health-and-well-being/>

### **Supporting Youth Mental Health Care Card**

<https://4h.extension.wisc.edu/4h-resources/supporting-youth-mental-health-care-card/>