

Adult Focus Groups: Youth Safer Communities Report

Executive Summary

Project: To explain and clarify some results from the Youth Safer Communities Survey and to gather a deeper understanding of youth safety and wellbeing in Chestermere, Langdon, and SE Rocky View County.

How: We conducted 4 semi-structured focus groups with 23 adults. These sessions were held in Chestermere and Langdon. Informed consent was obtained from participants before each focus group.

Results: The analysis produced 5 themes that provided insight into adults' perspectives on youth safety and wellbeing in their communities



Theme 1: Social Dynamics

This theme included information about:

- (1) safety in community locations
- (2) social relationships between youth
- (3) impact of technology and media
- (4) safety of LGBTQ2S+ youth
- (5) experiences related to racial/ethnic, and cultural identities
- (6) relationships between youth and adults

We discovered that adults have concerns about youth conflict, bullying, and unhealthy relationships, feeling that social media exacerbates and normalizes these issues. They also noted that there are barriers for LGBTQ2S+ and racialized youth in our communities.

“especially in the junior highs again – a lot of friendship issues & conflicts... I feel like more and more students coming in and telling me about other students just saying rude & mean things and they don't really know how to deal with it.”

Theme 2: Safety in Schools

This theme included information about:

- (1) safety concerns in schools
- (2) supports available in schools
- (3) need for support in schools

We identified that one of adults' biggest concerns was the capacity of school staff to support students in terms of their well-being and mental health. School staff responded by sharing that there is a gap in resources within schools and more funding is needed. They also identified the different supports that are currently available to students in schools, noting that these supports often change.

“I've heard my [child] indicate this year even, not feeling safe in [their] classroom during unsupervised times”

Theme 3: Mental Health and Wellbeing

This theme included information about:

- (1) attitudes towards mental health and wellbeing
- (2) experiences of mental health and wellbeing
- (3) suicide
- (4) characteristics of youth supports

Adults felt that attitudes towards mental health depend on the context. School counsellors noted that they work with many youth managing anxiety and depression. Additionally, adults identified the qualities they believe youth need in a support person.

Theme 4: The Adult Experience

This theme included information about:

- (1) adult knowledge of youth resources and supports
- (2) training and education
- (3) parenting and caregiving
- (4) worry
- (5) comparison to childhood

We identified adults' awareness of the resources available to youth and their interest in training and education. Adults also shared some issues they face in caregiving and their general worries about youth.

Theme 5: Barriers, Gaps, and Needs

This theme included information about:

- (1) barriers to getting help
- (2) gaps in professional support services
- (3) gaps in social and recreation services
- (4) gaps in infrastructure in Langdon
- (5) need for communities to connect

There is a range of barriers that prevent youth from seeking help for mental health issues or bullying. Several missing support services were identified, along with a lack of social and recreational services and infrastructure in Langdon. Lastly, adults expressed the need for communities to gather and develop relationships with one another.

"I have one young person and they're like, "Oh yeah, this person is suicidal." Who else are they telling this to, are you the only one? You're 14. You should not be the one that they're going to."

"...boys can say no, and they can give consent as well...if you're in a relationship with a girl... that you have to get consent, [and] you also have the right to give consent, like it works both ways for anything..."

"Some students come to me and they say, "Well, I told this person and they did nothing about it. So nothing's ever going to be done about it. So why should I even bother?""

RECOMMENDATIONS

These issues are complex and multifaceted, requiring a systemic response.

Please see [Appendix E](#) for specific next steps for different systems in our communities.

The systems that have been identified in changing daily experiences of youth safety and wellbeing include:

- City/County Municipal Government
- Community/Recreation Services
- Parents/Caregivers
- Protective Services
- Schools

Please note that these recommendations are complementary to the recommendations in the Youth Focus group report. Please review these with your team and utilize them as next steps.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this project. If you have any questions or concerns about the following findings, please contact Synergy at 403-212-0242 or via email at involved@yoursynergy.ca.

Scan the QR code or click [this link](#) for the full report!

