

PREPARED FOR BY THE MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY CIVIC INSTITUTE AND ERIE COUNTY  
POLICY AND PLANNING COUNCIL COMMITTEES ON BEHALF OF THE ERIE COUNTY POLICY &  
PLANNING COUNCIL FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES



## Community Action Plan

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Erie County

**May 2024**

*The Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families (PPC) is a county-wide collaborative where members share information and work together to promote a flourishing, asset-rich community. The PPC supports sound decision making and research-based programs providing opportunities for youth and families to grow and thrive.*

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  - ii. Program Level Outcomes
  - iii. Preliminary Implementation Plans

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## Executive Summary

This plan describes the ways to address the priority risk and protective factors identified in Erie County's *Communities That Care* process. The *Communities That Care (CTC)* [www.communitiesthatcare.net](http://www.communitiesthatcare.net) system is a way for members of a community to work together to promote positive youth development and reduce risks. The system was developed by Dr. J. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard F. Catalano. Their research has identified risk factors that predict youth problem behaviors and protective factors that buffer children from risk and help them succeed in life.

Erie County developed its outcome-based plan after the Erie County Policy and Planning Council Data and Assessment Committee, with utilization from the Pennsylvania Youth Survey <https://www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/Documents/2021%20PAYS/PAYS-Highlight-Report-2021-V6.pdf> and reviewing other local archival data identified four risk factors and three protective factors as priorities for community planning:

### Priority Risk Factors:

- I. *Depressive Symptoms*
- II. *Low Commitment to School*
- III. *Neighborhood Attachment*
- IV. *Parental Attitude Favorable to Antisocial Behaviors*

### Priority Protective Factors:

- I. *Community Rewards for Prosocial Involvement*
- II. *School Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement*
- III. *Belief In a Moral Order*

After the Data and Assessment Committee completed their work, the Resource and Planning Committee of the Erie County Policy and Planning Council was charged with identifying gaps, barriers, and other issues relative to programs addressing the prioritized risk factors within Erie County. The committee members compiled a list of potential resources and created a survey to gather detailed information from these resources. The survey was administered online, the link was provided to those resources identified by the subcommittee members. Survey data was collected from April 20, 2023, through May 5, 2023. The assessment was complete May 5, 2023, data was compiled, and the results were shared with the committee on May 8, 2023. The committee established a Survey Review Team to go through each survey, as well as to identify additional resources that may not have completed the survey for additional outreach by the Community Action Plan Coordinator. Site visits and interviews were held to gather additional information to supplement the survey information.

As a result of the Community Resource Assessment, the following areas of focus were prioritized for focus in the strategy development phase which is to be conducted by the Community Planning Committee in the next step of the CTC process.

#### Depressive Symptoms:

- Increase awareness and sharing information
- Implement school-wide prevention programs that include self-regulation
- Explore mentoring opportunities to provide one caring adult for at risk youth
- Improve the identification of depressive symptoms, including the need for universal screening
- Provide training and education of what depressive symptoms looked like at various ages and/or stage

#### Low Commitment to School:

- Involve students in their plans for the future
- Develop a culturally responsive environment
- Explore mentoring opportunities for life skills, career and enrichment
- Provide enrichment opportunities for youth in school and community
- Encourage the use of educational data driven decision making in schools

#### Neighborhood Attachment:

- Offer year-round neighborhood events
- Provide training opportunities for residents
- Recruit neighbors for neighborhood participation
- Involve youth and college students in their neighborhoods
- Utilize new forms of communication such as apps and social media within neighborhoods

#### Parental Attitudes Favorable Towards Antisocial:

- Address multigenerational trauma
- Address family barriers surrounding basic needs
- Create a portrait of what a supportive parent looks like
- Addressing families who have antisocial behavior ideals
- Explore lack of faith in existing resources amongst families

The drafting of this document (the Erie County Community Action Plan) was the next step in the *Communities That Care* process. Over the course of a series of meetings during December 2023 – April 2024, the Resource and Planning Committee members debated and discussed policies, practices, and programs relative to the identified risk and protective factors and made recommendations. The following recommendations were made for the strategies identified by the Resource and Planning Committee to address the prioritized risk factors. As a result of the risk factor resource meetings, the following areas of strategy were prioritized for Erie County in the strategy development phase and next steps in the Community That Care process for the Erie County Community Action Plan:

#### Depressive Symptoms:

- Increase awareness and sharing information
- Implement school-wide prevention programs that include self-regulation
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## **Introduction**

### ***Purpose and Use of the Plan***

Erie County presents its 2024-2029 Community Action Plan. This plan will describe the changes we want for our community, the programs, policies and practices that will be implemented to address the community's identified priority risk and protective factors, and the outcomes that will measure the progress toward our community's vision.

Erie County implemented the *Communities That Care* process to help achieve the community's vision that all young people in Erie County grow up supported and nurtured by their families, schools and community, and become healthy adults who contribute positively to society.

### ***Prevention Science Overview***

The *Communities That Care* system helps community members work together to efficiently and effectively promote positive youth development. The system was developed by Dr. J. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard F. Catalano of the Social Development Research Group at the University of Washington, Seattle. It is based on their research, which has identified risk factors that predict youth problem behaviors and protective factors that buffer children from risk and help them succeed in life.

### ***Community Involvement***

The Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families is comprised of community members from public and private institutions including local government, education, health, law enforcement, local business and private social services. The involved community committee members listed below have participated in the Community Action Plan meetings, not all listed community committee members are members in the Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families general membership. Community involvement involved in the creation of the community action plan include:

- Mary Anne Albaugh, MD DLFAPA General & Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist Medical Director, Erie County DHS MH/ID
- Nate Allen, Truancy Supervisor – Erie's Public Schools and Millcreek Township School District Bethesda Lutheran Services
- Jessica Atwood, MS Functional Family Therapy Supervisor Family Services of NWP
- Lisa Austin, Co-leader BoulevardParkErie.org, Member Erie County Planning Commission, Organizer, ConnectUrbanErie.com, Founder, CIVITAS Design, Director Bruce Gallary.info, PennWest Edinboro University
- LaTicra Barnett, Bethesda Lutheran Services Erie County Independent Living Program Supervisor
- Erin Bastow, MS, LPC, NCC Clinical Director Harborcreek Youth Services
- Mary Jo Battle, M.S. Chief Juvenile Probation Officer Erie County Juvenile Probation
- Erika Berlin, M.A., Community Outreach Coordinator Susan Hirt Hagen CORE
- Amy Bizjak, Erie County Independent Living Program Director Bethesda Lutheran Services
- Kyle Blackmer, Properties Manager, SSJ Neighborhood Network
- Marjorie Bruce, President Glenwood Heights Association
- Mary Bula, Executive Director Erie Together
- Emily Burchill, Research Analyst Mercyhurst University Civic Institute
- Kristen Burillo, Senior Research Evaluation Analyst Mercyhurst University Civic Institute

- Gloria Butler, Neighborhood Leader Booker T. Washington Center
- Nicole Campbell, High School Guidance Northwest School District
- Erin Carey, Assistant Director, Department of Planning and Neighborhood Resources, City of Erie
- Lindsey Carney, B.A. Assistant Supervisor, Erie County Independent Living Program, Bethesda Lutheran Services
- Holly Cook, Director of Program Administration, Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie
- Starla Cochenour, Outreach Coordinator, Our West Bayfront & Bayfront East Side Taskforce
- Scott Coughenour, Director, Erie County Office of Drugs & Alcohol
- Donald "Craig" Heidelberg, Coordinator, Creative Community Connector, The Blue Coats Erie
- Captain Christopher Cusson, Director, Bayfront Maritime Center
- Tracy Applebee-Davis, Community Relations Manager Erie Neighborhood Growth Partnership (ENGP) and Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie
- Conor Dawley, LPC, CT Outreach and Education Coordinator - Child Grief Specialist Highmark Caring Place
- John A. DiMattio Director, Erie County Department of Human Services
- Kimberley Dziubkowski, Director, Community Health Services, Erie County Department of Health
- Cori Edwards Executive Program Manager, Youth Leadership Institute of Erie
- Amy Eisert, Director, Mercyhurst University Civic Institute
- Mary Kay Eisert-Wlodarczyk, Lake Erie Youth R.O.A.D. Crew
- Kaitlyn Falk, District Wellness Manager, Erie School District
- Heather Filson, Big Brothers Big Sisters Erie County, Family Services of NW PA
- Anna Franz, Executive Director Our West Bayfront
- Michael T. Gaines, Executive Director, Bradley H. Foulk Children's Advocacy Center of Erie County, Inc.
- Amy Grande, Community School Director, McKinley Elementary School
- Kerrie Grande, Associate Site Lead, ServeErie Grace Church Harborcreek
- Brittany Hayden, Ph.D., Vice President of Clinical Services Sarah A. Reed Children's Center
- Kelly Heberle, Erie High School parent, Parent Teacher Student Association
- Amy Mennen-Helmer, Director of Community Programs (Erie) Bethesda Lutheran Services
- Kristin Hesch, M.S., Associate Director of Community Outreach, Susan Hirt Hagen CORE at Penn State Behrend
- Breanne Hillen, Independent Living Program, Program Supervisor Family Services of NW PA
- Elizabeth Hirz, Erie County District Attorney
- Catherine E. Hornick, West Side Saints NW Coordinator, OWB Advisory Board, Gridley Park National Night Out Events Committee, Errie Fall Fest Committee, Erie County CERT and SKYWARN
- Gary Horton, President, Urban Erie Development Corp, Eastside Grassroots Coalition
- Mike Jaruszewicz, Senior Vice President, Community Impact United Way of Erie County
- Jen Johnston, Supervisor of Mental Health, Northwest Tri-County IU5
- Tamara Johnson, Director of Prevention and Outreach, Safenet Erie
- Latece Jones, Options Care Manager, Aging Department, Greater Erie Community Action Committee
- Charles R. Joy, MD Child Psychiatrist, community participant
- Rev. Matthew Judd, Pastor, Glenwood and Trinity Methodist Churches
- Tim Keibler, Family Group Decision Making Supervisor, Family Services of NWPA
- Denisha Keith, Booker T. Washington Center

- Natalie Kemp, Clinical Manager, Community Care Behavioral Health
- Gretchen Kerr, Neighborhood Resource Coordinator, Department of Planning and Neighborhood Resources, City of Erie
- Laura Kitcey, Early Intervention Service Coordinator, Erie Public Schools
- Lori Krause, Senior Director of Community Impact, United Way of Erie County
- Katie Kretz, Executive Director, Multicultural Community Resource Center (MCRC)
- Andrea Kobylinski, Mental Health Liaison, Northwestern School District
- Courtney Laver, Supervisor of Secondary Counseling, Erie Public Schools
- Matthew LeVerde, Director, Erie County Technical School
- Marissa Litzenberg, Project Manager, Our West Bayfront
- Michele Lombard, Director of Programs, Family Services of NW PA
- Lori Lutterbaugh, Mental Health Program Specialist, Erie County DHS, MH/ID Office
- Gina Mannarelli-Augustine, Mental Health Program Specialist, Erie County Department of Human Services
- Robin Mascharka, Outreach Coordinator, Mercyhurst University Civic Institute
- Zain Masri, Projects and Administrative Support, Mercyhurst University Civic Institute
- Jim McEldowney, Chief Executive Officer, YMCA of Greater Erie
- Kristin McQueeney, Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic Administrative Team Lead, Family Services of NW PA
- Doug Meyner, Deputy Chief of Erie Count, Juvenile Probation
- Maria Miller, President, Taylor's HOPE
- Steve Minick, Director of Programs, Family Services of NW PA
- Andrea Moffett, Teen Center Director, Downtown YMCA of Greater Erie
- Erin Mrenak, MPA Director of Public Health, Erie County Department of Health
- Jamie Murphy, Executive Director, NW PA Area Health Education Center
- Jeffrey Natalie, LCSW Regional Director, Community Care Behavioral Health
- Sara Naughton, Director of Data and Evaluation, United Way of Erie County
- Heather Newton, Community Outreach Coordinator, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Erie County
- Ken E. Nickson, Jr., Coordinator of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Erie Public Schools
- Patti Palotas, MS, LPC, NBCC Clinical Team Leader/Student Assistance Program Northwest Collegiate Academy
- Chelsey Pfeffer, LCSW Mental Health Specialist, Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit
- Dr. Matthew Platz, Executive Director, Corry Higher Education Council
- Jennifer Nygaard Pontzer, Director, Career Street
- John Popoff, Director, Boys & Girls Club of Erie
- Scherry Prater, Director of Student Services, Erie Public Schools
- Fr. Jerry S. Priscaro, Coordinator of the East Avenue/Hess Avenue Neighborhood Watch, Our Mother of Sorrows Parish/ St. Ann's Church, Erie PA
- Lana Rees, Executive Director, Erie County Office of Children and Youth
- Veronica Rexford, Program Director, Urban Erie Community Development Corporation at the EF Smith Quality of Life Learning Center
- Liz Reyes, Neighborhood Resource Coordinator, Department of Planning and Neighborhood Resources, City of Erie
- Tracy Robison-Chandler, Operations Manager, Erie Family Center
- Mark Rosenthal, Erie County District Attorney Office
- Joseph V. Schember, Mayor, City of Erie



- Marcy Shaffer, Truancy Supervisor, Erie County Public Schools, Bethesda Lutheran Services Truancy Program
- Trelane Sherrod, WIOA Youth Talent Development Specialist, Careerlink and Neighborhood Leader, Little Italy Historical Wellness Group
- Jude Shingle, Arts Program Director, Erie Center for Arts & Technology
- Doug Smith, Director of Administration, Erie County
- Norm Stanford, MA Harborcreek Youth Services, Director of Community Programs and MST Supervisor
- Kevin Stevenson, Team Leader, Creative Community Connector, The Blue Coats Erie
- Diane Stewart, Booker T. Washington Center
- Patrice Swick, Neighborhood Engagement Specialist, Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network
- Danielle Szklenski, M.A. Vice President of Development, Family Services of NW PA
- Lacy Thompson, LCSW Director of Mental Health, Achievement Center of LECOM Health
- Dr. Nick Viglione, CEO, Perseus House, Inc. & Perseus House, Charter School of Excellence
- Michael Whitney, Deputy Director, Erie County
- Cory Wurst, M. Ed Blended Age Mental Health Consultant (West Region), The Pennsylvania Key

### ***The Community Planning***

A key goal of the *Communities That Care* process is to develop a Community Action Plan that builds on the data-based assessment of a community's priorities, strengths and resources. This plan focuses on the priority risk factors and draws on community resources and strengths. While addressing resource gaps, issues, and barriers by recommending new, effective programs or systems-change strategies.

The Erie County plan accomplishes this goal by identifying specific, desired outcomes for each selected program, policy, or practice; for the priority risk and protective factors on which the plan is focused; and for adolescent problem behaviors. It describes how each selected program, policy and practice will work to bring about desired changes in Erie County's youth and presents preliminary recommendations for how these strategies will be implemented in the community.

### ***How the Information was Collected and Drafted***

Erie County developed its community prevention plan based upon the prioritized risk factors identified through the work conducted by the Data and Assessment Committee of the Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families (see Erie County Community Assessment Report for detailed information). This assessment identified four risk factors as priorities for community planning: depressive symptoms, low commitment to school, neighborhood attachment, and parental attitudes favorable towards antisocial behaviors.

### ***How to use the plan***

The Community Action Plan is intended to help guide the Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families and the Community Action Plan Coordinator to develop implementation, evaluation and budgeting efforts, for policies and practices while aligning those efforts to existing efforts. While the plan is a holistic approach in addressing all youth risky behaviors, the plan serves as the prevention prong of the Unified Erie Violence Reduction Strategy. <https://www.unifiederie.org/ebpdirectory>

### ***The Community Action Plan Development***

### ***Data collection efforts***

The Data and Assessment Committee collected and analyzed data on Erie County using data from the Pennsylvania Youth Survey and additional archival community data (births to teens, arrests, child abuse rates, juvenile placement rates, etc). With input from the committee members, they identified priority risk factors to address, as well as community protective factors to build on. The Community Assessment Report details the results of this work.

### ***Prioritization process***

Based on the analysis of the Data and Assessment Committee information and input from the community, the following risk and protective factors were identified as priorities for community attention:

#### **Risk Factors:**

- *Depressive Symptoms (Individual/Peer Domain)*
- *Low Commitment to School (School Domain)*
- *Neighborhood Attachment (Community Domain)*
- *Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior (Family Domain)*

#### **Protective Factors:**

- *Belief in the Moral Order (Community Domain)*
- *Community Rewards for Pro-social Involvement (Community Domain)*
- *School Opportunities for Pro-social Involvement (School Domain)*

These risk and protective factors were selected as priorities for prevention action primarily because data indicated that these risk factors are elevated and are lacking protective factors throughout Erie County.

### ***Existing resources, gaps, issues and barriers***

The Resource and Planning Subcommittee developed a community survey based upon the four prioritized risk factors to identify existing resources, gaps, issues, and barriers that exist within the community relative to those risk factors. The committee members created a survey to gather detailed information on potential resources from a list compiled by the committee members. The survey was administered online, the link was provided to those resources identified by the subcommittee members. Survey data was collected from April 20, 2023, through May 5, 2023. The assessment was completed May 5, 2023, and the results were shared with the committee on May 8, 2023. The committee established a Survey Review Team to review each individuals survey, as well as to identify additional resources that may not have completed the survey for additional outreach for the Community Action Plan Coordinator. Site visits and interviews were held to gather additional information to supplement the survey information to complete the assessment.

As a result of the Community Resource Assessment, the following areas of focus were prioritized for focus in the strategy development phase which is to be conducted in the next step of the CTC process by the Community Planning Committee:

#### **Depressive Symptoms:**

- Increase awareness and sharing information
- Implement school-wide prevention programs that include self-regulation
- Explore mentoring opportunities to provide one caring adult for at risk youth
- Improve the identification of depressive symptoms, including the need for universal screening
- Provide training and education of what depressive symptoms looked like at various ages and/or stage

#### Low Commitment to School:

- Involve students in their plans for the future
- Develop a culturally responsive environment
- Explore mentoring opportunities for life skills, career and enrichment
- Provide enrichment opportunities for youth in school and community
- Encourage the use of educational data driven decision making in schools

#### Neighborhood Attachment:

- Offer year-round neighborhood events
- Provide training opportunities for residents
- Recruit neighbors for neighborhood participation
- Involve youth and college students in their neighborhoods
- Utilize new forms of communication such as apps and social media within neighborhoods

#### Parental Attitudes Favorable Towards Antisocial:

- Address multigenerational trauma
- Address family barriers surrounding basic needs
- Create a portrait of what a supportive parent looks like
- Addressing families who have antisocial behavior ideals
- Explore lack of faith in existing resources amongst families

#### ***Barriers to Service***

Erie County is resource rich with evidence-based programs; however, the utilization, fidelity, and target populations being served by those programs warrant further examination. For purposes of this plan, evidence-based program <https://www.unifiederie.org/ebpdirectory> is defined as programs included as promising or model programs on the Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development Programs <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/> or listed on the SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices list <https://youth.gov/federal-links/samhsa%25E2%2580%2599s-national-registry-evidence-based-programs-and-practices-nrepp> . SAMHSA is an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). SAMHSA is responsible for leading public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the

nation, with a focus on substance abuse prevention, addiction treatment, and mental health promotion.

In Erie County there are many evidence-based programs for youth that focus on areas such as mental health promotion, substance abuse prevention, academic support, and social-emotional learning. Programs include but are not limited to: The Incredible Years <https://www.incredibleyears.com/> , Parent Child Interactive Therapy (PCIT) <https://www.pcit.org/what-is-pcit.html> , Functional Family Therapy (FFT) <https://www.fftllc.com/> , Big Brothers Big Sisters <https://www.bbbs.org/> , 24/7 Dad <https://www.fatherhood.org/program-24-7-dad> , ACT Raising Safe Kids <https://www.apa.org/act> , Family to Family Program <https://www.nami.org/support-education/mental-health-education/nami-family-to-family/> , Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) <https://preventionservices.acf.hhs.gov/programs/672/show> , Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) <https://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/> , Nurturing Parent Program (NPP) <https://preventionservices.acf.hhs.gov/programs/218/show> , Parents as Teachers (PAT) <https://parentsasteachers.org/> , and Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) <https://tfcbt.org/> .

The Resource and Planning Subcommittee reported that there are many programs & resources in our community that directly or indirectly focus on our priority risk factors. These programs are staffed and operated by caring, dedicated, and hard-working staff and that often face gaps, issues and barriers such as:

- Awareness
- Communication
- Coordination of services
- Cultural barriers
- Family engagement
- Language interpretation
- Long-term funding
- Parental support
- Program capacity
- Shared information
- Staff consistency
- Transportation
- Treatment mobility
- Volunteer challenges

### ***Recommendations***

Developing a community action plan for Erie County would involve collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and community members. Following these recommendations and engaging in a collaborative, data-driven planning process, Erie County can develop a comprehensive community action plan that effectively

addresses the needs of residents living with risk factors. This approach promotes mental health and well-being for all. Here are some recommendations for creating an effective plan:

- Create and sharing depressive symptom glossary to raise awareness about depression to reduce stigma, promote understanding, and encourage help-seeking behavior.
- Review messaging campaigns around depressive symptoms for consideration of the target audience, key messages, delivery channels, and desired outcomes
- Increase efforts to address community disorganization.
- Enhance the collaboration and communication between existing programs, especially those that target our priority risk & protective factors.
- Establish consistent training and education on what depressive symptoms resemble at various stages and ages. Utilize poverty simulations, reentry simulations and evidence-based programs.
- Develop a professional training for staff, volunteers, community in areas of positive reinforcement, consistency, incentives and best practices.
- Review school wide prevention programs for effectiveness and positive outcomes.
- Aid in facilitator, volunteer and staff for established programs in Erie County.
- Improve universal screening and identification of depressive symptoms.
- Explore mentoring opportunities to provide one caring adult for at risk youth.
- Assist programs which provide mentorship for parents and adults.
- Examine the target population and fidelity of existing evidenced-based programs within the community to assure programs are aligned to provide the most effective services to the most appropriate populations.
- Follow data driven examples found in schools.
- Collaborate with community partners to reduce barriers for school involvement.
- Create a student advisory board for the Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families.
- Review access and awareness issues pertaining to existing services from both referral sources and the community at large.
- Examine current messaging campaigns around depressive symptoms and mental illness.
- Involve students in their plans for their future.
- Develop a culturally responsive environment in schools, community and Erie County.
- Review utilization of existing evidenced-based resources to address barriers that may be hindering referrals to existing services.
- Consider implementation and expansion of prevention strategies as opposed to intervention services as opportunities to address the prioritized risk factors.
- Increase accountability of services to the community.
- Establish a Neighborhood Resource Organization for Erie County.
- Design and implement a Portrait of a Supportive Parent.
- Although not included in the community resource assessment, recommendations regarding planning needs to incorporate building upon priority protective factors including:
  - Community Rewards for Pro-social Involvement
  - School Opportunities for Pro-social Involvement
  - Belief in a Moral Order

## **Community Planning Results**

### *Community Level Outcomes*

Erie County developed outcomes for each of the prioritized risk factors:

- *Depressive Symptoms*

**Description:** Depressive symptoms refer to the signs and experiences associated with depression, a mental health condition characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities. These symptoms can vary in severity and duration but often include, persistent sadness or emptiness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed, changes in appetite or weight, sleep disturbances (insomnia or excessive sleeping), fatigue or loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or remembering things, restlessness or slowed movements and speech and/or thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts. It is essential to note that experiencing some of these symptoms occasionally does not necessarily indicate depression. However, when these symptoms persist for an extended period (typically two weeks or more) and significantly interfere with daily functioning, it may indicate clinical depression and require professional evaluation and treatment.

**Explanation:** signs of a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest affecting how you feel, think, and behave.

**Outcome:** To decrease the percentage of at-risk youth experiencing moderate depressive symptoms as reported by the Pennsylvania Youth Survey from 48% to 42% by 2029.

- *Low Commitment to School*

**Description:** Low commitment to school refers to a lack of engagement, motivation, and investment in academic pursuits and activities among students. It can manifest in several ways and may include, poor attendance, decline in achievement, lack of participation, minimal effort, disengagement, negative attitude, peer influence, and lack of future orientation. Addressing low commitment to school requires a holistic approach that considers individual, family, school, and community factors. Providing support, encouragement, and resources to foster a positive school environment, promoting student engagement, and addressing underlying issues contributing to disengagement are essential steps in improving students' commitment to their education.

**Explanation:** young people who have ceased to see the role of student as a viable one are at an increased risk to engage in problem behaviors.

**Outcome:** To decrease the percentage of at-risk youth at risk experiencing low commitment to school as reported by the Pennsylvania Youth Survey from 60% to 55% by 2029.

- *Neighborhood Attachment*

Description: Neighborhood attachment refers to the emotional connection, sense of belonging, and identification that individuals feel toward their residential community or neighborhood. It encompasses feelings of familiarity, loyalty, and investment in the local environment and social networks. Some key components and characteristics of neighborhood attachment include, emotional connection, social bonds, sense of identity, investment in community, perceived safety and security, knowledge of local environment, long-term residency, and positive perceptions and attitudes. Overall, neighborhood attachment plays a vital role in fostering community resilience, social cohesion, and quality of life. It contributes to residents' well-being and satisfaction with their living environment, promoting a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for creating vibrant and inclusive communities.

Explanation: relates to one's emotional connection to the physical and social environments. Where there is little attachment to the community, where the rates of vandalism are high, and where there is low surveillance of public places, more problem behaviors occur.

Outcome: To decrease the percentage of at-risk youth experiencing low neighborhood attachment as reported by the Pennsylvania Youth Survey from 50% to 45% by 2029.

- *Parental Attitudes Favorable to Antisocial Behaviors*

Description: Parental attitudes favorable to antisocial behaviors refer to beliefs, behaviors, or parenting styles that condone or even encourage actions that are considered antisocial or disruptive to societal norms. These attitudes can have a noteworthy influence on children's development and behavior, potentially contributing to the manifestation of antisocial traits or behaviors. Some examples and characteristics include, lack of discipline, modeling antisocial behaviors, justification of misconduct, reinforcement of aggression, neglect or indifference, emotional detachment, perception of antisocial behaviors as normative, enabling substance abuse, and inconsistent parenting practices. Addressing parental attitudes favorable to antisocial behaviors requires interventions that promote positive parenting practices, enhance parental awareness and skills, and provide support to families in need. This may include parenting education programs, family therapy, community resources, and interventions aimed at addressing underlying issues such as substance abuse, mental health problems, or family dysfunction. By promoting healthy parent-child relationships and fostering environments that prioritize empathy, communication, and mutual respect, we can mitigate the risk factors associated with antisocial behaviors and promote positive social and emotional development in children.

Explanation: if parents approve of or excuse their children for breaking the law, then the children are more likely to develop problems with juvenile delinquency.

Outcome: To decrease the percentage of at-risk youth experiencing parental attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior as reported by the Pennsylvania Youth Survey from 46% to 41% by 2029.

## **Risk factor: Depressive Symptoms**

### *Selected Strategies*

Selected strategies with regard to deliberate and targeted approaches to achieve goals and positive outcomes for at risk youth suffering from depressive symptoms involve making choices and allocating resources in a manner that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness. This involves carefully choosing where to focus resources to achieve the best return on investment. These strategies involve making planned choices about where to allocate resources, attention, and effort to achieve desired objectives while minimizing risks and inefficiencies.

### ***Information and awareness around depressive symptoms***

Raising awareness about depressive symptoms is crucial for promoting early recognition, intervention, and support for individuals experiencing depression. It is important to note that experiencing one or more of these symptoms does not necessarily mean a person has depression, but if these symptoms persist for an extended period and significantly impact daily functioning then clinical depression could be diagnosed. By increasing awareness about depressive symptoms and promoting open dialogue about mental health, we can reduce stigma, improve early detection and intervention, and ultimately enhance the well-being of individuals affected by depression. Some information and strategies for increasing awareness about depressive symptoms:

- Depressive symptoms glossary: Produce a list of terms, common, technical or specialized in nature, accompanied by agreed usage definitions or explanations. The depressive symptom glossary would be used to provide a quick reference to depressive symptom terms encountered in symptoms, treatment and meanings.
- Educational Campaigns: Develop public awareness campaigns through various mediums such as social media, television, radio, and print materials. These campaigns can provide information about the signs and symptoms of depression, its impact on individuals and society, and available resources for help and support.
- Media Representation: Advocate for accurate and responsible media representation of depression and mental health issues in television shows, movies, news articles, and other forms of media. Promote portrayals that reduce stigma, increase understanding, and encourage help-seeking behavior.
- Collaboration and Partnerships: Collaborate with mental health organizations, advocacy groups, government agencies, schools, businesses, and community organizations to maximize the reach and impact of awareness efforts.
- Online Resources: Develop and promote online resources such as websites, forums, and educational materials that provide accurate information about depressive symptoms, treatment options, self-help strategies, and support networks.



### ***School-wide youth prevention programs that include self-regulation.***

Implement educational programs in schools aimed at increasing awareness of mental health issues, including depression. Provide students with information about common depressive symptoms, coping strategies, and where to seek help if they or someone they know is struggling. Work with early childhood providers on expanding education and awareness of appropriate signs and awareness of depressive symptoms of children and youth.

- Cultural Sensitivity: Recognize and address cultural factors that may influence how depression is perceived, expressed, and treated within different communities. Tailor awareness efforts to be culturally sensitive and inclusive of diverse experiences and perspectives.
- Peer Support Programs: Establish peer support programs where individuals who have experienced depression can share their stories, provide support, and offer guidance to others who may be struggling. Peer support can help reduce feelings of isolation and encourage individuals to seek professional help.

### ***Explore mentoring opportunities to provide one caring adult for at risk youth***

Expanding support and services focused on mentorship and pairing individuals with caring adults can have profound positive effects, particularly for vulnerable populations such as youth facing mental health challenges or at-risk of adverse life outcomes. Implementing these recommendations and prioritizing mentorship and pairing with caring adults, communities can provide critical support and guidance to individuals, particularly youth, who may be facing mental health challenges or other obstacles to success. Mentorship has the potential to empower individuals, build resilience, and foster positive relationships that can last a lifetime.

- More Caps and Gowns Project: An Erie Together [www.erietogether.org](http://www.erietogether.org) initiative with the idea for adults to help students stay on track to graduation to be successful on the job or in further studies. Adult mentors 18 years or older will be trained in how to relate to students and must pass police background checks.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of NW PA: [www.fsnwpa.org/services/mentoring-and-education/big-brothers-big-sisters](http://www.fsnwpa.org/services/mentoring-and-education/big-brothers-big-sisters) , As a prominent evidence-based mentoring program for youth the "Big Brothers Big Sisters of America" (BBBSA) program is a nationwide organization that matches adult volunteers ("Bigs") with youth ("Littles") in one-to-one mentoring relationships. The program aims to provide positive role models and supportive relationships to help youth achieve their full potential and thrive. BBBSA has been extensively evaluated and has demonstrated positive outcomes for participating youth, including improved academic performance, increased self-esteem, reduced risky behaviors, and enhanced social and emotional development.
- Susan Hirt Hagen Center for Community Outreach, Research and Evaluation (CORE): <https://behrend.psu.edu/school-of-humanities-social-sciences/research-outreach/shh-center-core> , Positive Youth Development, The Mentor Project, and Trainings for the Community.

- Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA): <https://www.eriebgc.com> ,BGCA provides mentoring and supportive relationships to at-risk youth through its network of clubs across the country. Adult staff and volunteers serve as mentors and positive role models, offering guidance, support, and opportunities for personal and academic growth.
- Police Athletics League (PAL): <https://www.eriepal.org> , The Police Athletic League (PAL) is a youth development organization that operates in many communities across the United States. PAL programs are typically affiliated with local law enforcement agencies and aim to build positive relationships between police officers and young people through athletic, recreational, educational, and mentoring activities. Overall, the Police Athletic League plays a significant role in providing positive opportunities and support for young people, fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and the community, and promoting the overall well-being and success of youth. PAL programs are often highly valued in communities for their impact on youth development and community safety.
- Erie City Moms: <https://www.eriecitymoms.org> , The Erie City Moms Mentoring Support Program in Erie City aims to provide comprehensive support and guidance to mothers in the community, empowering them to navigate the challenges of parenthood and achieve their personal and professional goals. The program facilitates peer support groups where mothers can connect with each other, share experiences, and offer mutual support. Support groups provide a safe and nurturing environment for mothers to discuss common challenges, celebrate successes, and learn from each other's experiences. connects mothers with a network of community resources and support services to address their needs and enhance their well-being. Resources may include childcare assistance, housing support, healthcare services, mental health counseling, job training, educational opportunities, and financial assistance programs.

***Identification of depressive symptoms; need for universal screening.***

Universal screening for depressive symptoms refers to the systematic assessment of depression symptoms across an entire population or specific demographic groups, regardless of whether individuals exhibit obvious signs of depression or seek help for mental health issues. This approach aims to identify individuals who may be experiencing depression but have not yet been diagnosed or sought treatment. Universal screening typically involves the use of standardized questionnaires or tools designed to assess symptoms of depression, such as the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)

[https://med.stanford.edu/fastlab/research/imapp/msrs/jcr\\_content/main/accordion/accordion\\_content3/download\\_256324296/file.res/PHQ9%20id%20date%2008.03.pdf](https://med.stanford.edu/fastlab/research/imapp/msrs/jcr_content/main/accordion/accordion_content3/download_256324296/file.res/PHQ9%20id%20date%2008.03.pdf) or the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) <https://www.ismanet.org/doctoryourspirit/pdfs/Beck-Depression-Inventory-BDI.pdf> . Screening can be conducted in various settings, including primary care clinics, schools, workplaces, and community centers, and can help facilitate early detection and intervention for depression, ultimately improving outcomes for affected individuals.

- Encourage routine mental health screenings in healthcare settings, schools, and workplaces to identify individuals who may be experiencing depressive symptoms. Provide information about the importance of seeking help and accessing appropriate treatment.

### ***Training and education at various ages or stage of what depressive symptoms looked like.***

Training and education on depressive symptoms across the lifespan play a critical role in promoting mental health literacy, reducing stigma, and facilitating early intervention and support for individuals experiencing depression. By increasing awareness and understanding of depressive symptoms at different ages and stages of life, communities can better support the mental health and well-being of individuals and families. Training and education for adults can focus on recognizing depressive symptoms in themselves and others, reducing stigma around mental health issues, accessing appropriate treatment and support resources, and developing coping strategies for managing stress and maintaining well-being. Training and education efforts for caregivers, healthcare professionals, and older adults themselves can address the unique challenges of diagnosing and treating depression in the elderly, including coexisting medical conditions, medication interactions, and social factors such as loss of independence or bereavement. Training and education on depressive symptoms at various ages or stages is crucial for increasing awareness, promoting early detection, and facilitating effective intervention and support.

- Training for Professionals: Provide training for healthcare professionals, educators, employers, and community leaders on recognizing depressive symptoms, conducting assessments, and referring individuals to appropriate mental health services. Empower these professionals to create supportive environments and respond effectively to those in need.
- Community Workshops and Events: Organize workshops, seminars, or community events focused on mental health awareness and depression. Invite mental health professionals to speak about depressive symptoms, treatment options, and destigmatizing mental illness.

### *Program Level Outcomes*

These outcomes reflect a holistic approach to combating depressive symptoms, addressing both individual-level factors (such as knowledge, coping skills, and symptom management) and systemic factors (such as stigma reduction, access to resources, and social support). By targeting these outcomes, programs can effectively support individuals in their journey toward mental health recovery and well-being. Program level outcomes for combating depressive symptoms may include a range of goals and objectives aimed at addressing mental health issues and promoting well-being. Program level outcomes for selected strategies to combat depressive symptoms for Erie County youth:

- Increased Awareness and Understanding: Participants demonstrate improved knowledge and understanding of depression, including its causes, symptoms, risk factors, and available treatment options.
- Early Detection and Intervention: Participants develop skills in recognizing early signs of depression in themselves and others, leading to timely intervention and support.
- Enhanced Coping Strategies: Participants acquire effective coping strategies and resilience-building techniques to manage stress, negative emotions, and life challenges.
- Improved Self-Care Practices: Participants adopt healthier lifestyle habits, including regular physical activity, adequate sleep, balanced nutrition, and stress management techniques, to support mental well-being.

- Enhanced Social Support Networks: Participants strengthen social connections and support networks, reducing feelings of isolation and increasing access to emotional support and practical assistance.
- Reduced Stigma and Shame: Participants demonstrate decreased stigma associated with mental illness, leading to increased willingness to seek help and support when needed.
- Increased Access to Resources: Participants gain knowledge of available mental health resources, including counseling services, support groups, helplines, and online resources, and feel empowered to access these resources as needed.
- Improved Symptom Management: Participants experience a reduction in depressive symptoms, such as sadness, hopelessness, irritability, and sleep disturbances, leading to improved overall mental health and well-being.
- Enhanced Quality of Life: Participants report improvements in their overall quality of life, including increased satisfaction with relationships, work, leisure activities, and overall life functioning.
- Long-Term Resilience and Prevention: Participants develop long-term resilience skills and preventive strategies to reduce the risk of recurrent depressive episodes and promote sustained mental wellness.

#### *Preliminary Implementation Plans*

- Allocate resources, including funding, staff, training, and technical assistance, to support implementation activities.
- Develop and implement community engagement and education initiatives to raise awareness about depressive symptoms, risk factors, and available resources.
- Provide education and training on mental health literacy, stigma reduction, and early intervention strategies for community members, healthcare providers, educators, employers, and other stakeholders.
- Promote the importance of destigmatizing mental illness and seeking help for those experiencing depressive symptoms.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress, collect data on outcomes, and assess the impact of interventions.
- Regularly review and analyze data to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement.
- Use feedback from stakeholders and participants to adapt and refine interventions based on emerging needs and lessons learned.
- Develop strategies to ensure the sustainability and continuity of efforts beyond the initial implementation phase.
- Identify opportunities for integration with existing programs, services, and systems to maximize impact and efficiency.
- Advocate for policy changes, funding support, and institutional commitments to prioritize mental health promotion and address social determinants of health related to depressive symptoms.

## **Risk factor: Low Commitment to School**

### *Selected Strategies*

Low Commitment to school selective strategies refer to the deliberate and targeted approaches used to achieve specific goals or outcomes. This involves carefully choosing where to focus resources to achieve the best return on investment. Selective strategies involve making strategic choices about where to allocate resources, attention, and effort to achieve desired objectives while minimizing risks and inefficiencies.

### ***Involve students in their plans for the future***

Students help with planning what they want to do in their future plans is essential for fostering their sense of agency, self-efficacy, and goal attainment. Here are some strategies to support students in envisioning and planning for their futures include:

- **Goal Setting:** Encourage students to set short-term and long-term goals for their personal, academic, and career aspirations. Help them identify specific, achievable objectives and create action plans to work towards their goals.
- **Career Exploration:** Provide opportunities for students to explore different career pathways and learn about various professions, industries, and educational opportunities. Offer career counseling, job shadowing experiences, internships, and guest speaker events to expose students to a range of career options.
  - Career Street [www.careerstreeterie.org](http://www.careerstreeterie.org) is a program designed to provide resources and support for youth seeking to explore career options, develop job skills, and connect with employment opportunities. Careerstreet partners with Erie County school districts. Their centralized online platform and network offer a range of career-related services and resources for students.
  - Earn+Learn program at the Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC) <https://www.gecac.org/work/employment-and-income/earn-and-learn> refers to an initiative aimed at providing youth with opportunities to both earn income and gain valuable skills through education and training. Earn+Learn is a collaborative effort between the Erie County Government, Erie County Gaming and Revenue Authority, GECAC, and other supportive individuals and organizations that have recognized the need to address employability issues for our disconnected youth population aged 14-21 years old.

### ***Develop a culturally responsive environment***

Create a culturally responsive environment that is welcoming, supportive, and inclusive, schools can foster a sense of belonging and connection for all students, promote social-emotional development, and enhance academic success. Culturally responsive practices contribute to a positive school climate where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to achieve their full potential.

- Social-Emotional Curriculum: Implement a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum that incorporates culturally responsive practices and perspectives. Develop lessons and activities that promote self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making while recognizing and respecting cultural differences. Use culturally relevant materials, examples, and case studies in SEL instruction to make connections with students' lived experiences.
- Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices: Use culturally responsive teaching practices that acknowledge and incorporate students' cultural backgrounds and experiences into instruction. Adapt instructional methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate diverse learning styles, languages, and cultural norms. Incorporate culturally relevant literature, music, art, and other resources into the curriculum to engage students and make learning meaningful and relevant to their lives.
- Family and Community Engagement: Foster partnerships with families and community organizations to support culturally responsive practices in the school environment. Involve families in decision-making processes, curriculum development, and school activities. Collaborate with community organizations to provide culturally relevant resources, services, and programming for students and families.

### ***Explore mentoring opportunities for life skills, career and enrichment***

Exploring mentoring opportunities for life skills, career development, and enrichment can provide youth with valuable guidance, support, and resources to navigate various aspects of their personal and professional lives. Listed are a few know Erie County mentoring opportunities for life skills, career development, and enrichment; additional agencies and mentoring opportunities can be partners with. Depending on the needs and interests of participants, mentoring programs can be customized to provide organic support in specific areas and help individuals achieve their goals and aspirations. Some mentoring opportunities in these areas:

- More Caps and Gowns Project: An Erie Together [www.erietogether.org](http://www.erietogether.org) initiative with the idea for adults to help students stay on track to graduation to be successful on the job or in further studies. Adult mentors 18 years or older will be trained in how to relate to students and must pass police background checks.
- YMCA Mentoring Programs: <https://www.ymcaerie.org/> Many YMCA branches offer mentoring programs for at-risk youth, matching them with caring adult mentors who provide support, guidance, and positive role modeling. These programs often focus on academic success, character development, and life skills.
- 100 Black Men of America, Inc: <https://100blackmen.org/> 100 Black Men of Erie, PA is a local chapter of the national organization, 100 Black Men of America, Inc. The organization is dedicated to improving the quality of life and enhancing educational and economic opportunities for African American communities, particularly young people. They meet at Erie City Community Centers. The organization focuses on goals, activities, and impact. 100 Black Men of Erie, PA plays a vital role in supporting and empowering African American individuals and communities, fostering leadership, academic achievement, and socio-economic advancement for future generations.

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of NW PA: <https://www.bbbs.org/> Research studies have shown that youth who participate in BBBSA mentoring relationships are more likely to graduate from high school, pursue higher education, and avoid involvement in delinquent or criminal behavior compared to their peers who do not participate in the program. The success of Big Brothers Big Sisters is attributed to its evidence-based approach, which includes careful screening and training of mentors, ongoing support and supervision of mentoring relationships, and structured programming to promote positive outcomes for youth. The organization provides resources, guidance, and best practices to its network of local affiliates across the country to ensure consistency and effectiveness in program implementation.
- Supporting organic mentoring of one caring adult involves creating conditions within schools and communities that facilitate the development of natural, supportive relationships between adults and youth. By supporting organic mentoring of one caring adult, schools and communities can create nurturing environments where youth have access to positive relationships, support, and guidance that contribute to their overall well-being and success.
- Model Caring and Supportive Behaviors: Model caring and supportive behaviors in your interactions with youth. Demonstrate empathy, active listening, and respect for youth's perspectives and experiences. Show genuine interest in their lives, goals, and aspirations.
- Create Safe and Supportive Environments: Ensure that schools and community spaces are safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments where youth feel comfortable expressing themselves and seeking support from adults. Address issues such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination to promote a culture of respect and belonging.
- Provide Training and Resources: Offer training and resources to adults who interact with youth to enhance their skills in mentorship, communication, and relationship-building. Provide guidance on best practices for supporting social-emotional development and well-being for youth in Erie County.
- Recognize and Support Informal Mentors: Acknowledge and support individuals who naturally serve as mentors and positive role models for youth within their families, schools, and communities. Provide recognition, resources, and opportunities for informal mentors to enhance their impact and effectiveness.
- Facilitate Peer Mentoring: Encourage peer mentoring relationships among youth, where older students' mentor younger peers. Provide training and support to peer mentors to develop leadership skills and create opportunities for positive peer influence and support.

### ***Enrichment opportunities for youth***

Enrichment opportunities for Erie County youth can span a wide range of activities and programs designed to enhance their personal, academic, social, and professional development. Access to these enrichment opportunities can help Erie County youth develop new skills, explore their interests, expand their horizons, and build a strong foundation for future success and fulfillment. It's essential to offer a diverse range of programs that cater to the unique needs, interests, and aspirations of youth in the community.

- Erie County is resource rich with enrichment opportunities. Opportunities are often limited by barriers. Opportunities are vast and plentiful but face challenges with awareness, communication, coordination of resources, cultural barriers, family barriers, language barriers, funding, parental support, shared information, transportation and staffing/volunteer challenges.

### ***Educational data driven decision making in schools***

Implementing educational data-driven decision-making in Erie County Schools can bring several benefits to students, teachers, administrators, and the school community as a whole. Overall, educational data-driven decision-making in Erie County Schools can lead to better outcomes for students, and a stronger, more equitable education system that prepares all students for success in school and beyond.

- The Profile of a Graduate [www.erietogether.org/grad](http://www.erietogether.org/grad) is a statement that summarizes the aspirations of members of a community for their high school graduates. It is a resource that expresses the knowledge, skills, abilities, and mindsets that make an individual ready for the next step in life beyond high school graduation. School districts across Erie County are integrating this resource into their curricula, and through Erie Together [www.erietogether.org](http://www.erietogether.org) our community is developing strategies to help youth develop these skills outside the classroom. Profile of a Graduate was developed with input from hundreds in our community, including employers, educators, students, parents, social service providers, government officials, and more. [www.erietogether.org/grad](http://www.erietogether.org/grad)
- Partnering with the United Way of Erie County <https://www.unitedwayerie.org/> , Community Schools <https://www.unitedwayerie.org/our-impact/student-success/community-schools/> to leverage their expertise, resources, and community connections to strengthen data-driven decision-making processes, improve student outcomes, and create positive change in the community. Partnering with the United Way of Erie County can provide valuable resources and support for implementing data-driven decisions in schools.

### *Program Level Outcomes*

Creating program level outcomes for low commitment to school youth in Erie County involves understanding the unique challenges these youth face and designing interventions to address their needs effectively. These outcomes reflect a comprehensive approach to addressing low commitment to school among youth in Erie County, focusing on holistic development, resilience-building, and empowerment to promote positive educational experiences and future success.

- Increased School Engagement: increased attendance and participation in school activities, including classes, extracurriculars, and school events. Students feeling more connected to their school community and demonstrating a sense of belonging and purpose.
- Improved Academic Performance: improvement in academic performance, including grades, test scores, and completion of coursework. Students demonstrate enhanced motivation, effort, and persistence in academic tasks and assignments.



- Enhanced Social and Emotional Skills: develop social and emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and relationship-building skills. Students demonstrate improved conflict resolution, communication, and teamwork abilities, leading to healthier peer relationships and reduced disciplinary issues.
- Increased Resilience and Coping Strategies: develop resilience and coping strategies to navigate challenges and setbacks in school, including stress, peer pressure, academic difficulties, and family issues. Students that demonstrate adaptive coping skills, problem-solving abilities, and a growth mindset toward overcoming obstacles and achieving success.
- Positive Identity and Future Orientation: develop a positive sense of identity, self-worth, and confidence in their abilities and potential for future success. Students that demonstrate increased clarity and purpose in setting and pursuing academic and career goals, including exploring post-secondary education and career pathways.
- Improved Family and Community Connections: strengthen family and community connections through increased parental involvement, communication, and support for their educational goals. Students that engage in community service, volunteerism, or mentorship activities, fostering a sense of belonging and social responsibility.
- Increased Access to Support Services: access and utilize support services and resources available within the school and community to address their individual needs and challenges. Students that demonstrate improved awareness of available support systems and feel empowered to seek help when needed.
- Long-Term Educational and Career Success: exhibit positive outcomes in terms of educational attainment, career readiness, and post-secondary transitions, including high school graduation rates, enrollment in higher education or vocational training programs, and successful employment outcomes.
- Continued Engagement and Support: maintain their commitment to school and ongoing participation in support programs and services beyond the initial intervention period. Students remain connected to a supportive network of peers, mentors, and community resources to sustain their progress and well-being over time.

### *Preliminary Implementation Plans*

Creating preliminary implementation plans for addressing low commitment to school among youth in Erie County involves a strategic and collaborative approach. By following these steps and engaging stakeholders at every stage of the process, Erie County can develop a comprehensive and effective implementation plan for addressing low commitment to school among youth, promoting positive educational experiences, and supporting their long-term success.

- Build the capacity of schools, community organizations, and service providers to implement effective interventions through training, professional development, and technical assistance.
- Allocate resources, including funding, staff, partnerships, and infrastructure, to support the implementation of interventions and ensure sustainability over time.
- Community engagement and outreach, engage youth, parents, families, and communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of interventions to ensure relevance, cultural responsiveness, and buy-in.

- Conduct outreach and awareness campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of school engagement, promote positive attitudes toward education, and reduce stigma around seeking help for academic and social-emotional challenges.
- Collaboration and coordination among schools, community organizations, government agencies, and other stakeholders to align efforts, leverage resources, and maximize impact.
- Establish formal partnerships, advisory committees, or task forces to facilitate communication, information-sharing, and joint decision-making among stakeholders.
- Monitoring and Evaluation framework to track progress, collect data on outcomes, and assess the impact of interventions. Review 2023 and subsequent years PA Youth Survey data for updates. Follow trends. Regularly review and analyze data to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement, and use findings to inform decision-making, adjust strategies, and allocate resources effectively.
- Policy and systems change as needed to advocate for policy changes, system reforms, and resource allocations at the local, state, and federal levels to address systemic barriers and inequities that contribute to low commitment to school. Promote policies and practices that support positive school climates, culturally responsive teaching, family engagement, mental health services, and community partnerships.
- Sustainability and continuity of efforts beyond the initial implementation phase, including securing ongoing funding, building organizational capacity, and institutionalizing effective practices. Document lessons learned, best practices, and success stories to inform future initiatives and promote continuous improvement in addressing low commitment to school among youth in Erie County.

**Risk factor: Neighborhood Attachment**

*Selected Strategies:*

Selective strategies refer to the deliberate and targeted approaches used to achieve specific goals or outcomes for neighborhood attachment as a risk factor for Erie County. Selective strategies involve making choices and allocating resources in a manner that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness. This involves carefully choosing where to focus resources to achieve the best return on investment. Selective strategies in neighborhood attachment for Erie County involve making strategic choices about where to allocate resources, attention, and effort to achieve desired objectives while minimizing risks and inefficiencies. Neighborhood Attachment strategies will center around creation of a neighborhood resource organization for Erie County. The organization will provide assistance with year-round neighborhood events, training opportunities for residents, recruiting of neighbors for neighborhood participation, involving youth and college students in their neighborhoods, and utilize new forms of communication such as apps and social media within neighborhoods.

A neighborhood resource organization, also known as a community resource organization or neighborhood resource center, is a nonprofit or governmental organization that operates within a specific community or neighborhood to provide various resources, services, and support to residents. These organizations typically aim to address the needs and challenges of the community they serve, ranging from social services to educational programs to community development initiatives.

Overall, neighborhood resource organizations play a vital role in strengthening communities, fostering social cohesion, and addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by residents in specific neighborhoods. They serve as valuable hubs for resources, support, and opportunities for individuals and families to thrive. Some common features and functions of neighborhood resource organizations:

- **Social Services:** offer social services such as counseling, mental health support, substance abuse treatment, and assistance with accessing government benefits and resources.
- **Educational Programs:** provide educational programs and workshops on topics such as job training, financial literacy, parenting skills, and academic support for children and youth.
- **Community Development:** engage in community development projects aimed at improving the overall quality of life in the neighborhood. This could include initiatives regarding affordable housing, economic development, beautification efforts, and crime prevention.
- **Youth Programs:** offer programs and activities specifically designed for children and youth, such as after-school programs, recreational activities, mentoring, and leadership development opportunities.
- **Health and Wellness Services:** provide health and wellness services, such as access to healthcare providers, nutrition education, fitness programs, and preventive health screenings.
- **Community Engagement and Advocacy:** engage in community organizing, advocacy, and outreach efforts to raise awareness about local issues, empower residents, and advocate for positive change.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** collaborate with other nonprofits, government agencies, businesses, and community stakeholders to leverage resources and maximize their impact.

### *Program Level Outcomes*

Program level outcomes for neighborhood attachment focusing on the specific goals and interventions of a neighborhood resource organization would increase neighborhood attachment for youth. These outcomes can serve as indicators of the resource organizations effectiveness in promoting neighborhood attachment and can be measured through various methods, such as surveys, interviews, observation, and qualitative assessments.

- **Increased Sense of Belonging:** Participants feel a stronger connection to their neighborhood and identify more strongly with its values, culture, and community.
- **Enhanced Social Cohesion:** Participants develop closer relationships with their neighbors and experience increased trust, reciprocity, and cooperation within the community.
- **Improved Neighborhood Satisfaction:** Participants report higher levels of satisfaction with various aspects of their neighborhood, such as safety, cleanliness, amenities, and overall quality of life.
- **Greater Civic Engagement:** Participants are more actively involved in local decision-making processes, community events, volunteer opportunities, and other forms of civic participation.

- **Reduced Social Isolation:** Participants experience decreased feelings of loneliness and isolation as they build stronger social connections and support networks within their neighborhood.
- **Increased Neighborhood Pride:** Participants take pride in their neighborhood and actively work to improve and maintain its physical environment, appearance, and reputation.
- **Improved Mental Health and Well-being:** Participants experience positive mental health outcomes, such as reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, as a result of their increased sense of belonging and social support within the neighborhood.
- **Enhanced Perceptions of Safety:** Participants feel safer and more secure in their neighborhood, leading to greater peace of mind and improved overall quality of life.
- **Positive Behavioral Changes:** Participants demonstrate positive behavioral changes, such as increased prosocial behavior, environmental stewardship, and community involvement, as a result of their strengthened attachment to the neighborhood.
- **Long-term Sustainability:** The program contributes to the long-term sustainability of the neighborhood by fostering a sense of ownership, responsibility, and investment among residents, leading to ongoing efforts to maintain and improve the community.

#### *Preliminary Implementation Plans*

#### **City of Erie Department of Planning and Neighborhood Resources**

The focus of this department is to coordinate the efforts of the City of Erie to achieve its goals and implement the City's Comprehensive Plan, Erie Refocused, and its 5 Year Action Plan. Ensuring that the community's vision for the future is understood, memorialized and then acted upon is paramount to the mission of planning and will help drive progressive change in Erie. This endeavor will take the collective effort of the City and its community partners to realize so coordination at this moment in our history is key.

The Department works with all City departments to align resources to meet community needs as well as help identify areas where additional research, policy development, or planning is needed and fill those areas of need. The Planning Department works with the Planning Commission in order to provide the citizen planner's voice to meet the challenges and opportunities for the City of Erie as well as with a multitude of neighborhood groups, businesses, residents, and other agencies within the City of Erie and the region.

Love your Block Erie is a community-centered initiative managed out of the department that empowers neighbors to take pride in their neighborhood by awarding mini-grants to resident volunteers for projects that spur neighborhood-driven change.

## **Risk factor: Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Problem Behaviors**

### *Selected Strategies:*

Parental attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior selected strategies refer to the direct and intentional approaches used to achieve specific goals of positive parenting skills. This involves making choices and allocating resources in a manner that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, it involves carefully choosing where to focus resources to achieve the best return on investment. Selective strategies involve making strategic choices about where to allocate resources, attention, and effort to achieve desired objectives while minimizing risks and inefficiencies for Erie County around parental attitudes favorable to antisocial behaviors.

### ***Multigenerational trauma.***

Addressing multigenerational trauma in Erie County requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges historical context, cultural factors, and systemic inequities. Program outcomes should focus on healing, resilience, and promoting positive intergenerational relationships. By achieving these program outcomes, initiatives addressing multigenerational trauma in Erie County can promote healing, resilience, and social justice, ultimately contributing to the wellbeing and thriving of individuals, families, and communities across generations. Potential program outcomes include:

- Increased Awareness and Understanding: Community members demonstrate increased awareness and understanding of multigenerational trauma, including its historical roots, impacts on individuals and families, and perpetuation across generations. Stakeholders recognize the importance of addressing multigenerational trauma as a public health and social justice issue.
- Healing and Recovery: Individuals and families affected by multigenerational trauma demonstrate progress in their healing and recovery journeys, including improved mental health, emotional wellbeing, and resilience. Participants report increased access to trauma-informed care, counseling, support groups, and other healing modalities that address the root causes of intergenerational trauma.
- Cultural Reconnection and Identity Affirmation: Communities engage in cultural revitalization efforts that honor and affirm the cultural identities, traditions, and resilience of those impacted by multigenerational trauma. Participants experience a sense of belonging, cultural pride, and connection to their heritage, fostering a positive sense of identity and belonging.
- Healthy Family Dynamics and Relationships: Families demonstrate improved communication, cohesion, and supportiveness as they address intergenerational trauma and work towards healing together. Participants develop healthier parent child relationships, stronger family bonds, and more effective coping strategies for navigating challenges and conflicts.

- Trauma informed Systems and Services: Service providers, organizations, and institutions adopt trauma informed practices and policies that recognize and address the impact of multigenerational trauma on individuals and communities. Systems collaborate to provide integrated and culturally competent services that meet the diverse needs of those affected by intergenerational trauma.
- Empowerment and Advocacy: Survivors of multigenerational trauma and their allies engage in advocacy efforts to raise awareness, challenge stigma, and advocate for policies and practices that promote healing and justice. Participants develop leadership skills, self-advocacy abilities, and a sense of empowerment to effect positive change in their communities.
- Prevention and Intergenerational Healing: Programs and initiatives are implemented to prevent the transmission of trauma across generations and promote intergenerational healing and resilience. Families receive education, resources, and support to break the cycle of trauma and promote positive parenting practices, attachment, and emotional wellbeing for future generations.
- Community Resilience and Social Support: Communities demonstrate increased resilience and social cohesion as they come together to support and uplift those affected by multigenerational trauma. Participants access supportive networks, peer mentorship, and community resources that provide validation, solidarity, and hope in their healing journey.
- Reduced Disparities and Inequities: Efforts are made to address systemic disparities and inequities that contribute to the perpetuation of multigenerational trauma, including socioeconomic inequalities, racial injustices, and access barriers to services. Programs prioritize equity, inclusion, and social justice in their approach to healing and addressing intergenerational trauma.
- Measurable Impact and Sustainability: Program outcomes are measured and evaluated using quantitative and qualitative indicators, including changes in mental health outcomes, family functioning, community engagement, and policy impact. Programs demonstrate sustainability and long-term impact through ongoing evaluation, collaboration, and adaptation to meet evolving community needs.

***Provide access to resources for family barriers with basic needs.***

- Local Social Services Agencies: Contact local social services agencies or departments of social services in Erie County. These agencies often provide assistance with food, housing, utilities, healthcare, childcare, and other essential needs. They can also help connect families with additional resources and support services.
- Food Assistance Programs: Explore government-funded food assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly known as food stamps, which provides eligible families with funds to purchase groceries. Additionally, local food banks, food pantries, and meal programs that offer free or low-cost food to individuals and families in need.

- Housing Assistance Programs: Investigate housing assistance programs offered by local housing authorities, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. These programs may provide rental assistance, subsidized housing, homelessness prevention services, and supportive housing for families experiencing housing instability or homelessness.
- Financial Assistance Programs: Check for financial assistance programs that can help families cover basic expenses such as rent, utilities, transportation, and medical bills. This may include cash assistance programs, utility bill assistance programs, and emergency financial assistance provided by local charities or nonprofit organizations.
- Healthcare Resources: Access healthcare resources such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provide low-cost or free health coverage for eligible families and children. Additionally, community health centers, community schools and clinics sometimes offer affordable healthcare services, including medical care, dental care, mental health services, and prescription medications.
- Childcare Assistance: Look into childcare assistance programs that help families afford childcare expenses, such as daycare subsidies, vouchers, or scholarships. Some employers also offer employer-sponsored childcare benefits or flexible spending accounts for childcare expenses.
- Educational Support Services: Connect with schools, community schools, community organizations, and educational programs that offer support services for families, such as tutoring, academic enrichment programs, after-school programs, and school supplies assistance. These programs can help children succeed academically and alleviate financial burdens for families.
- Legal Aid Services: Seek legal aid services if families are facing legal issues related to housing, employment, benefits, immigration, family law, or other matters. Legal aid organizations provide free or low-cost legal assistance to individuals and families who cannot afford private attorneys.
- Community and Faith-Based Organizations: Reach out to community and faith-based organizations in Erie County that offer assistance with basic needs, such as churches, mosques, synagogues, community centers, and nonprofit organizations. These organizations often provide food distributions, emergency assistance, financial counseling, and other support services to individuals and families in crisis.
- Online Resources and Helplines: Utilize online resources and helplines that provide information, referrals, and assistance for families in need. Websites such as 211.org and Benefits.gov offer searchable databases of resources and services available in your local area. Additionally, national helplines such as the National Hunger Hotline (1-866-3-HUNGRY) can provide immediate assistance and referrals to food assistance programs.

### ***Create a portrait of what a supportive parent looks like:***

Creating a "Portrait of a Supportive Parent" involves identifying the key qualities, behaviors, and attitudes that contribute to fostering a positive and nurturing environment for children. Overall, a supportive parent is someone who nurtures, guides, and empowers their child to reach their full potential, navigate life's difficulties, and become a confident, compassionate, and resilient individual. They play a critical role in shaping their child's identity, values, and future success, laying the foundation for a strong and loving parent-child relationship built on trust, mutual respect, and unconditional love. Portrait of a Supportive will be developed with input from those in our community, including employers, educators, students, parents, social service providers, government officials, and more. Listed are some descriptives of what a supportive parent might look like:

- Active Listening and Empathy: They listen attentively to their child's thoughts, feelings, and concerns, demonstrating empathy, validation, and understanding without judgment or criticism.
- Open Communication: They maintain open and honest communication with their child, creating a safe and trusting environment where the child feels comfortable expressing themselves and seeking guidance or support.
- Positive Reinforcement and Encouragement: They offer praise, encouragement, and positive reinforcement to acknowledge their child's efforts, achievements, and progress, fostering confidence, self-esteem, and a growth mindset.
- Setting Boundaries and Consistent Discipline: They establish clear and reasonable boundaries, rules, and expectations for behavior, providing structure and consistency to help their child develop self-discipline, responsibility, and respect for others.
- Supporting Emotional Regulation and Coping Skills: They teach their child healthy ways to manage emotions, cope with stress, and navigate life's challenges, modeling effective coping strategies and providing guidance and support when needed.
- Respect for Autonomy and Independence: They respect their child's autonomy and individuality, allowing them the freedom to make age-appropriate choices, explore their interests, and develop a sense of independence and self-reliance.
- Advocacy and Support for Growth: They advocate for their child's needs, interests, and well-being, collaborating with educators, healthcare providers, and other caregivers to ensure they have access to appropriate support, resources, and opportunities for growth and development.
- Leading by Example: They lead by example, modeling positive behaviors, values, and attitudes that they want to instill in their child, such as kindness, compassion, resilience, integrity, and a commitment to lifelong learning.
- Unwavering Support and Presence: They provide unwavering support and presence in their child's life, being available and attentive to their needs, triumphs, and challenges, and demonstrating their love and commitment through their actions and words.
- Unconditional Love and Acceptance: A supportive parent unconditionally loves and accepts their child for who they are, recognizing and valuing their unique qualities, strengths, and vulnerabilities.



### ***Addressing families with antisocial behavior.***

Addressing families with antisocial behavior requires a comprehensive and compassionate approach that addresses the complex interplay of individual, familial, and environmental factors contributing to the behavior. By providing support, intervention, and resources, families can be empowered to overcome challenges, strengthen relationships, and foster positive growth and development for all members. Addressing families with antisocial behavior involves a multifaceted approach that focuses on understanding the underlying causes, providing support and intervention, and promoting positive change.

- Family therapy and counseling offer family therapy and counseling to address underlying conflicts, communication breakdowns, and dysfunctional patterns of interaction within the family. This provides a safe and supportive environment for family members to express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns, and work collaboratively to identify and address areas of difficulty.
- Skill-building and coping strategies teach family members healthy coping strategies, conflict resolution skills, and emotion regulation techniques to manage stress, anger, and impulsivity effectively. provide education and training on parenting skills, boundary-setting, discipline strategies, and positive reinforcement to promote prosocial behavior and strengthen family relationships.
- Individualized interventions tailed interventions to meet the unique needs of each family member, taking into account their developmental stage, strengths, challenges, and personal goals. Offering individual therapy, counseling, or support services for family members who may be struggling with mental health issues, substance abuse, or trauma-related symptoms.
- Community resources and support connect families with community resources and support services, including mental health services, substance abuse treatment programs, parenting classes, financial assistance programs, and social support networks. Collaborate with community organizations, agencies, and faith-based groups to provide holistic support and wraparound services for families in need.

### ***Families that do not have faith in existing behavioral health, authoritative or professional resources or systems.***

Supporting with families that do not have faith in existing behavioral health, authoritative or professional resources or systems requires a thoughtful and empathetic approach to addressing their concerns and building trust. By adopting a collaborative, culturally sensitive, and person-centered approach, families can be supported in overcoming their reservations and accessing the behavioral health resources they need to promote healing, resilience, and well-being.

- Listen and Validate Concerns: Take the time to listen actively to the family's concerns and experiences with behavioral health resources. Validate their feelings and perspectives, acknowledging any past negative experiences, stigma, or barriers they may have encountered.

- Provide Education and Information: Offer psychoeducation about the importance of mental health and behavioral health services, as well as the effectiveness of evidence-based treatments. Provide information about the range of available resources, including counseling, therapy, support groups, psychiatric services, and community-based programs.
- Address Misperceptions and Stigma: Address common misconceptions and myths about behavioral health services, such as concerns about confidentiality, stigma, or the effectiveness of treatment. Normalize seeking help for mental health concerns and emphasize that it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to reach out for support.
- Offer Empirical Evidence and Testimonials: Share empirical evidence and research findings about the efficacy of behavioral health interventions and treatments. Provide testimonials or success stories from individuals who have benefited from behavioral health services to illustrate the positive impact they can have on individuals and families.
- Cultural Sensitivity and Tailored Approaches: Recognize and respect the cultural beliefs, values, and preferences of the family, and tailor interventions accordingly. Offer culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services that address the unique needs and perspectives of the family.
- Build Trust and Rapport: Establish a trusting and supportive relationship with the family based on empathy, respect, and authenticity. Demonstrate reliability, consistency, and transparency in your interactions, and follow through on any commitments or promises made.
- Collaborative Decision-Making: Involve the family in the decision-making process and empower them to take an active role in identifying their needs, preferences, and goals for treatment. Collaborate with the family to develop a personalized treatment plan that aligns with their values, strengths, and resources.
- Address Barriers to Access: Identify and address any practical barriers to accessing behavioral health services, such as transportation, financial constraints, childcare needs, or scheduling conflicts. Provide assistance and support in navigating the healthcare system, including assistance with insurance coverage, referrals, and appointment scheduling. Provide ongoing follow-up and support to the family throughout their engagement with behavioral health services. Check in regularly to monitor progress, address any concerns or barriers that arise, and offer encouragement and reinforcement for their efforts.

#### *Program Level Outcomes*

- Increased Awareness: Parents participating in the positive parenting programs to demonstrate increased awareness and understanding of the impact of their attitudes and behaviors on their children's development and behavior.
- Improved Parenting Practices: Parents develop and implement positive parenting practices that promote prosocial behavior and reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviors in their children. This may include setting clear expectations, using positive reinforcement, and modeling respectful communication and conflict resolution.

- Educate parents on model behaviors. their attitudes and behaviors directly influence the behaviors of their youth. By providing parent education focused on model behaviors, Erie County can empower parents with the knowledge, skills, and support they need to create nurturing and supportive environments for their children, fostering healthy development and family relationships. Educating parents to enhance their parenting skills and model positive behaviors is crucial for promoting healthy child development and family well-being in Erie County.
- Supporting and promoting programs working with parents in Erie County can benefit families and communities. Support and promotion of programs that are work directly with parents could provide positive reinforces for good parenting skills. Supporting and promoting programs working with parents in Erie County, empower families become to thrive, strengthen parent-child relationships, and promote positive outcomes for children and communities as a whole.
- Provide and create opportunities to recognize good youth behaviors and participation in conjunction with good parenting. Coupling the recognition could increase positive reinforcers and enhance parent child relationship.

#### *Preliminary Implementation Plans*

- The Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families will utilize current community, school and organizations to partner strategies and outcomes for reaching parents, educating parents, engaging youth to educate parents and behavioral specialists to target message and community organization around positive parenting.

#### **Next Steps**

- The plan will be shared with the public.
- Baseline data and an evaluation process will be identified in order to begin tracking outcomes and progress towards achieving program level outcomes.
- The Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families will convene the Funding Committee to start seeking resources necessary for the implementation of the identified strategies.
- The Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families will convene the key partners identified as instrumental in the implementation of the strategies set forth in the community plan. This may require the establishment of ad hoc subcommittees.
- The release of the 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey data will also result in reconvening of the Data and Assessment Committee to identify if any additional risk factors need to be addressed and strategies amended to the current Community Action Plan. [https://www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/pages/pennsylvania-youth-survey-\(pays\).aspx](https://www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/pages/pennsylvania-youth-survey-(pays).aspx)
- Although not included in the community resource assessment, recommendations regarding planning needs to incorporate building upon priority protective factors including:
  - Community Rewards for Pro-social Involvement
  - School Opportunities for Pro-social Involvement
  - Belief in a Moral Order