

Description of LA Teen Center Concerns (from Sylvan Argo)

We can go into more depth on points at the meeting, but per your request for highlights from the Los Alamos Teen Center perspective:

Issues we see (in no particular order) include, but are not limited to:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Stress (often but not exclusively related to academic stress or definitions of “success”)
- Self-harm behaviors (high rates, normalization of the issue – part of every-day youth culture)
- Suicide / Suicidal ideation / Suicide attempts (how youth get to that point)
- Substance use/abuse (includes vaping)
- Bullying (lack of respect, empathy, compassion)
- Harassment (again, lack of respect, empathy, compassion; issues with consent)
- Physical and sexual violence in all kinds of relationships (again, lack of consent)
- Teens being over-planned/worked/scheduled
- Lack of sleep

Our main concerns:

- All of the issues listed above (and more)
- All youth need a place to just “be” – a place outside home & school (and work) where they belong, build healthy relationships, decompress, seek support/guidance/mentorship and nourishment of mind/body/spirit; (Not all youth have access to a place like this (Middle School youth need their own space)
- Youth need to be truly heard; if we are speaking about them, but not listening to them – or asking them what they need – then we are missing the point. Youth report that they do not feel heard or that their reports of incidents/issues are not taken seriously. Sometimes what youth report is dismissed/not followed up on. We recognize that due to the nature of confidentiality/reporting in certain settings, often times reporters cannot or do not know what is done with information (and can be left with the perception that nothing is done).
- Prevention (and culture change) involves the WHOLE community (family, school, wider community, youth-serving agencies) Scapegoating any one group for any of these issues/concerns is counterproductive.
- Adults are modeling many of these issues/areas of concern for our youth.
- Stigma in the community re: seeking out mental health services or asking for help/support
- Need to redefine “success” as a community

What we offer:

- A (supervised) place for teens to be
- A space where teens can be celebrated, supported, encouraged, heard
- Mentorship

- Healthy relationship modeling with adult staff/volunteers
- Opportunities to explore & develop new ideas, skills, interests, talents
- Opportunities to lead and participate in teen-driven initiatives
- A space to pool resources & collaborate with other youth-serving organizations

What we suggest/request:

- A space specifically for Middle Schoolers (similar to the YAC & LATC spaces)
- Increased County support towards all Youth Activity and Teen Center spaces
- Continued support for existing programs
- Continued support for JJAB Youth Resource Specialists
- Increased support for prevention/asset-based programming
- Increased support for restorative justice-model programming
- Unified community efforts & conversations
- Increased resources/support for the Social Services Division (Can be a hub for collaboration, leveraging resources)
- County Council strongly lend support towards convening/encouraging conversations and leveraging resources re: the issues/concerns listed above
- County Council makes these identified areas of concern a priority for funding/resources/discussion/evaluation