

SOS Insights

from my desk to your heart

Now that kids have started back to school, I thought I would devote today's SOS Insights to the feedback we received from residents of District 69 on our recent **Take Stock Survey** that pertains specifically to children & youth.

First of all, if you were someone who took a few minutes to let us know your thoughts, please know how grateful we are. As we plan the restart of many of the programs that children, youth and families have relied on for years, your opinions are extremely timely. Not just for what and how we deliver programs this year but on how we plan for relevant programs and services that meet the needs of our community in a very different looking future.

This is what we learned.



Our Take Stock Survey asked a number of questions on subjects such as mental health and our resident's current economic state, as well as what they thought were other pressing issues.

When we asked specifically about mental health, 63.96% of respondents told us that the mental health needs of children have become worse because of COVID-19, and 71.07% said they were worse for youth. 77.89% said that mental health has become worse for families.

When we asked what the most pressing issues facing children are today because of COVID-19, the top three were: the lack of affordable recreation and social opportunities at 65.22%, anxiety/depression at 51.69%, and poverty (hunger, housing etc.) at 51.21%.

In the youth category, there were six issues that ranked over 35% for each need as follows: concerns about education at 69.08%, anxiety/depression at 63.77%, concerns about job prospects at 57%, affordable recreation and social opportunities at 56.04%, poverty (hunger, housing etc.) at 37.69% and lack of positive mentors at 37.20%.

And because we are talking about the needs of children and youth, we can't leave out what respondents felt are the most pressing issues facing families because of COVID-19.

The top four are: job loss/employment insecurity at 87.38%, lack of affordable housing at 59.22%, anxiety/depression at 56.80% and lack of affordable family recreation at 46.60%.

That's a brief summary of the highlights of our survey. Much of what we discovered really wasn't that surprising given what we already knew in conversations with clients who were really struggling. But there were three key gifts that came as result of this survey.

The first gift was that we were able to get a better sense of how our community was feeling about things during COVID-19 and how pervasive the issues are. Research like this can often validate assumptions and that in itself can be very useful.

The second gift is that we received so many great suggestions for programs and services that are either missing or could be expanded when physical restrictions are relaxed, and funding is available. SOS has a proud legacy of filling the gaps. You're helping us better define what they are.

And the third gift is that so many of you took the time to tell us why SOS programs and services are so important to you. It's always gratifying to know that we're making a difference and I thank you for sharing.

Here is just a sampling of some of the comments we received about our children, youth and family programs:

"I am an essential worker and have had a hard time paying for day camps for my 6 year old twins in order to continue working as many hours. The program is so helpful to those who can't afford childcare."

"I know many single young moms who only have support thru tic tac and family night, their kids can interact, especially as school might not be an option for them."

"The financial assistance allows my children to take part in an activity that we otherwise would not be able to afford. That activity allows them to have less stress, better connected to the people around them, responsibility, and something to look forward to every single week."

"Teen night is something my daughter absolutely loves. She look forward to it every week and as do I. We really value the services that you offer and have been using your services for 14 years on and off. My children would not have the opportunities, the appreciation, the manners, if it was not for the SOS programs that you offer and the funding that you offer."

Thank you everyone. Your feedback matters. We know we have much yet to do, but it's residents like you who help make our community so resilient. And that's what fuels our efforts!



Susanna Newton
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