Report of Community Readiness Assessment

May 2023

Executive Summary

In December 2019, Center for Safe Alaskans contracted with the Goldstream Group, a consulting firm located in Fairbanks, Alaska that is dedicated to helping non-profit community organizations including school districts, tribes, universities, and health and social service providers improve the lives of Alaskans. The Goldstream Group was contracted to assist in assessment and evaluation activities related to its Anchorage Youth Development Coalition (AYDC) Wellness Initiative.

As part of these activities, a community readiness assessment was conducted in March 2023 to gain an understanding of the current attitudes, knowledge, and resources of Anchorage leadership and community members related to using a shared youth protective factors approach[1] to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth. The 2023 community readiness assessment was intended to provide a comparison to a community readiness assessment conducted in 2020, in addition to providing a current snapshot of the community's level of readiness. The community readiness assessment was conducted using the Community Readiness Model developed by the Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research at Colorado State University.[2] The guiding question used for the community readiness assessment was *"How ready is the community to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth using a shared youth protective factors approach?"* The Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Model's process for conducting a brief assessment was used. Two focus groups were held remotely in March 2023 using Zoom videoconferencing (https://zoom.us/). A total of ten key informants identified by Center for Safe Alaskans participated in the focus groups and represented the following community sectors: Alaska Native organizations/Tribes, behavioral health providers, businesses, Division of Juvenile Justice, healthcare, law enforcement, parents, school district/schools, spiritual/religious community, and youth-serving agencies.

The overall community readiness score was 4.59 and places the level of community readiness to use a shared protective factors approach to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth at functionally the same level as in 2020 (the overall score in 2020 was 4.66). When examining the average scores for each of the five dimensions of readiness, scores for leadership and community climate both increased slightly from 2020 to 2023, while the scores for knowledge about efforts and for resources both dropped slightly. The score for community knowledge stayed relatively stable.

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[1] In a shared youth protective factors approach, public health efforts focus on multiple protective factors that are shown to impact multiple behaviors (https://srpfalaska.org/).

[2] Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research, Colorado State University (2014). Community Readiness for Community Change: *Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Handbook.* https://tec.colostate.edu/communityreadiness/.

There are several areas which stood out when analyzing the focus group discussions:

1) The issue of collaboration appeared as a thread throughout both focus groups, including in discussions of multiple dimensions of readiness. In particular, participants noted that there are many efforts in the community which could align more to improve their effectiveness, and that agencies or groups could collaborate better to create a more coordinated effort to fill gaps.

2) Focus group participants particularly highlighted the needs of LGBTQ youth, citing a lack of understanding for calling youth by their preferred names and pronouns, as well as the need for a stronger voice representing these youth.

3) Focus group participants noted a need to involve more youth in leadership roles.

4) Focus group participants described a discrepancy between the commitment of organizational leadership and of elected leadership, particularly pointing out state leadership and its importance due to the representative size of Anchorage's population. While participants described a lower level of commitment from the elected state leadership, they also described the passion and dedication of organizational leadership as well as of "the movers and shakers" in the community.

5) Focus group participants highlighted several misperceptions about a shared protective factors approach including a lack of understanding that this approach provides benefits for all youth and not just those youth who are at-risk, and that the well-being of youth affects the entire community.

6) While participants expressed concern about the stability of funding, they also expressed a general sentiment that there are a number of viable resources in Anchorage, but these resources are not necessarily being allocated towards using a shared protective factors approach.

Based on the findings and limitations of this community readiness assessment, we recommend that Center for Safe Alaskans and AYDC continue to monitor aspects of community readiness over time to evaluate the impact of AYDC's activities. The ideas and themes that emerged in this community readiness assessment should also be used by Center for Safe Alaskans and AYDC to inform the continued planning and implementation of coalition activities. We also recommend conducting individual key informant interviews for the next iteration of the community readiness assessment. This would allow Center for Safe Alaskans and AYDC to gain a greater depth of knowledge about particular issues and themes that appeared in this community readiness assessment, and to develop a more detailed understanding of how they appear in the various sectors of the community.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In December 2019, Center for Safe Alaskans contracted with the Goldstream Group, a consulting firm located in Fairbanks, Alaska that is dedicated to helping non-profit community organizations including school districts, tribes, universities, and health and social service providers improve the lives of Alaskans. The Goldstream Group was contracted to assist in assessment and evaluation activities related to its Anchorage Youth Development Coalition (AYDC) Wellness Initiative.

As part of these activities, a community readiness assessment was conducted in March 2023 to gain an understanding of the current attitudes, knowledge, and resources of Anchorage leadership and community members related to using a shared youth protective factors approach[3] to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth. The 2023 community readiness assessment was intended to provide a comparison to a community readiness assessment conducted in 2020, in addition to providing a current snapshot of the community's level of readiness. The results of this community readiness assessment can be used along with other data collected to inform the continued planning and implementation of AYDC's activities in the coming years.

Methods

The community readiness assessment was conducted using the Community Readiness Model developed by the Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research at Colorado State University.[4] This model engages key informants representing a variety of community sectors (e.g., municipality leadership, education, health and social service providers, law enforcement, business community, etc.) and uses an established scoring rubric to measure knowledge, attitudes, efforts, and resources of community members and the community's leadership to assess the community's readiness to engage in prevention. The model includes nine stages of community readiness, with each stage corresponding to recommended prevention and capacity-building activities that are intended to build on the community's existing level of readiness. The model is based on the premise that if a prevention strategy or activity does not match the community's current level of readiness, prevention efforts are more likely to be met with low levels of enthusiasm in the community, resistance by community members and/or leadership, lack of action by community leaders, and/or a lack of resources and overall ineffectiveness. The model's nine stages of community readiness and corresponding example actions are summarized in Table 1.

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[4] Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research, Colorado State University (2014). Community Readiness for Community Change: *Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Handbook.* https://tec.colostate.edu/communityreadiness/.

Table 1: Stages of Community Readiness and Example Actions to Raise Community Readiness

Level of Readiness		Example Actions *(Example actions for each stage also assume continuation of actions from previous stages)*
1	No Awareness	One-to-one outreach with community members and leaders, outreach to small groups, outreach to individuals in social networks, collection of local stories
2	Denial and/or Resistance	Provide information in newsletters and bulletins, publish media articles, strategic communication with community influencers and leaders
3	Vague Awareness	Present information at local events and community groups, post flyers and posters, initiate engaging and fun informational events, publish newspaper articles with local data and information
4	Preplanning	Conduct focus groups, review existing prevention efforts in the community, increase media exposure and presentations
5	Preparation	Hold public forums, encourage community leaders to speak out, sponsor community events to kick-off new efforts or revitalize existing efforts
6	Initiation	Conduct training for professionals, publicity efforts for new activities, provide updates at meetings, identify service gaps, begin seeking additional resources and funding, begin evaluation efforts
7	Stabilization	Hold community events to maintain support, provide training for community members, hold regular meetings to review progress and modify strategies, hold recognition events for supporters and volunteers, publish media articles detailing progress, evaluation efforts and future plans, networking among community providers and systems
8	Confirmation and Expansion	Formalize networking with MOAs or MOUs, initiate relevant policy changes, conduct media outreach on data trends, utilize evaluation data to modify efforts, publish a local program services directory, develop list of local speakers
9	High Level of Community Ownership	Solicit financial support from local businesses and organizations, diversify funding sources, provide advanced training to professionals, re-assess the issue as progress is made, utilize evaluation and feedback for program modification, track outcomes data, continue to provide progress reports to community leaders and local sponsors

The guiding question used for the community readiness assessment was *"How ready is the community to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth using a shared youth protective factors approach?"*

To answer this question, the Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Model's process for conducting a brief assessment was used. Two focus groups were held remotely in March 2023 using Zoom videoconferencing (https://zoom.us/). A total of ten key informants identified by Center for Safe Alaskans participated in the focus groups and represented the following community sectors: Alaska Native organizations/Tribes, behavioral health providers, businesses, Division of Juvenile Justice, healthcare, law enforcement, parents, school district/schools, spiritual/religious community, and youth-serving agencies. Additional participants were invited representing the youth sector and city and borough government sector; these participants either cancelled or did not show at the scheduled meeting time. Six participants attended a focus group held on March 22, 2023, and four participants attended a focus group held on March 23, 2023.

Both focus groups were recorded and transcribed, with verbal permission provided by all participants. Prior to each focus group, participants were provided with an agenda, a copy of a short PowerPoint presentation, and a copy of a scoring rubric or anchored rating scales. Participants were instructed to have the anchored rating scales available electronically or in print during the focus group. Participants were asked to keep their video cameras turned on for the full length of the focus group to facilitate discussion unless they were experiencing issues with low bandwidth.

At the beginning of each focus group the facilitator reviewed the PowerPoint presentation and provided an overview of what shared youth protective factors are, community readiness assessment, and the process for the remainder of the meeting time. Staff from Center for Safe Alaskans were present during both focus groups to provide additional context on shared youth protective factors and the work of AYDC.

Key informants discussed the five dimensions of community readiness that are included in the Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Model. These dimensions are: 1) community knowledge of the issue; 2) community knowledge of prevention efforts; 3) leadership; 4) community climate; and 5) resources. These are summarized in Table 2.

Table 1: Dimensions of Community Readiness

Dimension	Description
Community Knowledge of the Issue	How much does the community know about the issue?
Community Knowledge of Efforts	How much does the community know about the current programs and activities?
Leadership	What is leadership's attitude toward addressing the issue?
Community Climate	What is the community's attitude towards addressing the issue?
Resources	What are the resources that are being used or could be used to address the issue?

Discussion and scoring for each of the five dimensions of readiness followed the same process that was collaboratively pre-determined by the Goldstream Group and Center for Safe Alaskans for the 2020 community readiness assessment. This process is outlined below:

1) The facilitator shared a screen summarizing the dimension of community readiness and key questions to consider in scoring that dimension.

2) Participants were given instructions in applying the anchored rating scale for that dimension of community readiness in determining their score. Participants were reminded that there are no right or wrong answers and that their score should be based on their own knowledge and perceptions of the community.

3) Participants were given two minutes to review the anchored rating scale and identify their own score for that dimension.

4) The facilitator called on each participant and asked them to share their score and key reasons that factored into their decision with the group. The facilitator typed out each person's score and key reasons on the screen so that participants could visualize the combined input and knowledge of the entire group.

5) The facilitator called on each individual a second time to see if they would like to change their score based on what others in the group had discussed. Any changes made by participants to their original scores were noted on the screen.

6) The facilitator asked the full group again whether any individuals would like to make any final changes to their score. Any final changes made by participants to their scores were noted on the screen.

7) Steps 1-6 were repeated for each of the remaining dimensions of readiness.

After completion of both focus groups, the final scores of each of the 10 participants were analyzed to arrive at an average score of all participants for each dimension of readiness.[5] These five scores were then averaged to arrive at an overall community readiness score.

Transcripts of focus group discussions were then analyzed for themes using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative analysis software program. Participant comments from both focus group discussions were combined and assigned to the relevant dimensions of readiness (each comment could apply to one or more of the five dimensions of readiness). For each dimension of readiness, relevant comments were then examined to identify themes contributing to the scores within that dimension.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered in interpreting the results of this community readiness assessment:

1. The 2023 community readiness included representatives from 10 of the 12 sectors that were represented in the 2020 community readiness assessment. When interpreting the results of this assessment, consideration should be made that the youth and the city and borough government sectors are not represented in the 2023 results.

2. In the first focus group held on March 22, time ran out before the final dimension of readiness (resources) could be discussed by the six focus group participants. The participants were provided with an opportunity to share their score and rationale for this dimension of readiness via email after the focus group concluded; however, only two of the six participants in this focus group provided a score for resources. Therefore, the community readiness score for resources only reflects the opinions of a total of six of the 10 focus group participants.

3. The Tri-Ethnic Center's model for community readiness is designed to assess a community's level of readiness to address a specific issue within the community, including efforts to implement programs and activities that change behaviors. While a shared youth protective factors approach is prevention, it is not focused on addressing any one issue in particular (e.g., bullying, alcohol use, suicide, etc.). The structure of the Tri-Ethnic Center's model may therefore not be as well-suited to capturing the community's attitudes and knowledge about using a shared youth

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[5] The Tri-Ethnic Center Community Readiness Model recommends that when conducting an assessment in a group setting, consensus is reached on the score for each dimension of community readiness (https://tec.colostate.edu/communityreadiness/). However, because each focus group had a time limitation of two hours, if after two opportunities for each participant to change their score consensus was not reached, it was determined that the final scores from each participant would be averaged to arrive at a group score for that dimension of readiness.

protective factors approach to improving the well-being of youth as it may be to capturing the community's attitudes and knowledge about preventing a specific behavior in the community.

Community Readiness Scores

The overall community readiness score was 4.59 and places the level of community readiness to use a shared protective factors approach to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth at functionally the same level as in 2020 (the overall score in 2020 was 4.66). When examining scores for each dimension of readiness, the scores for leadership and community climate both increased slightly from 2020 to 2023, while the scores for knowledge about efforts and resources both dropped slightly. The score for community knowledge remained relatively stable between 2020 and 2023. This is shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 displays the low score, high score, and average score of all focus group participants for each dimension of readiness in 2023.
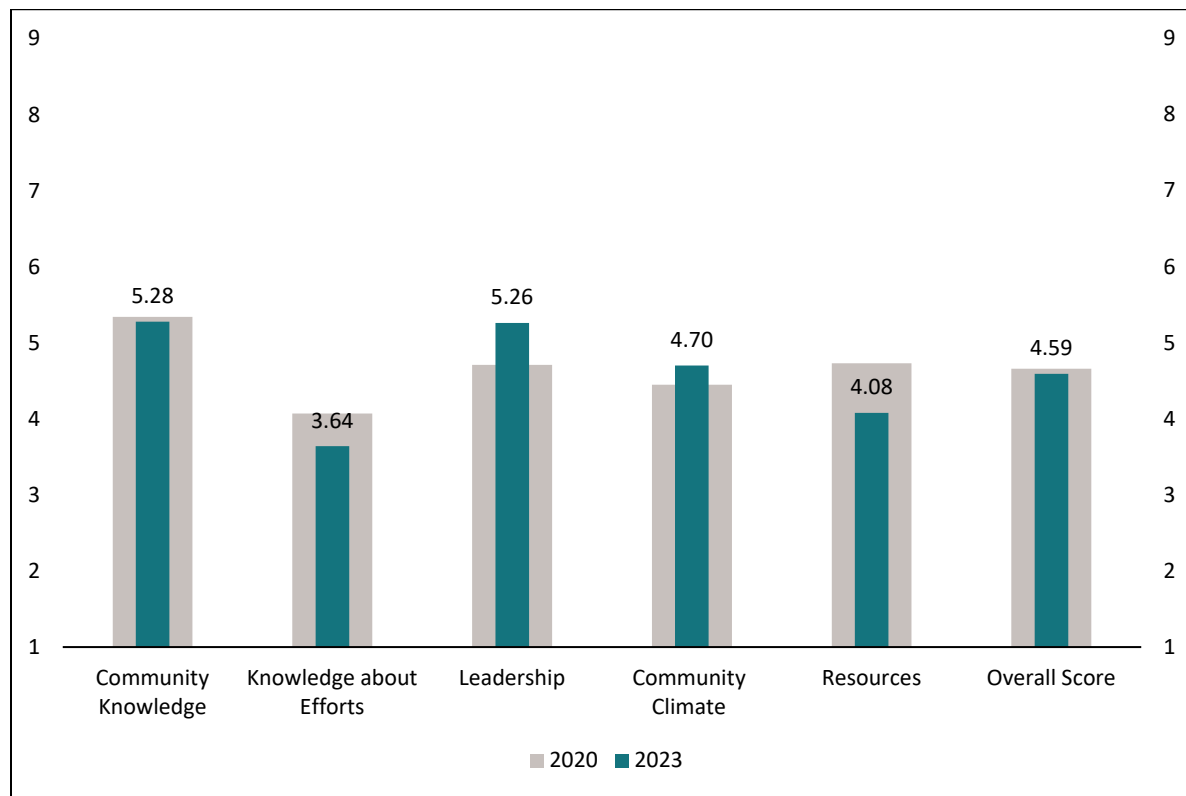

Figure 1: Community Readiness Scores in 2023 Compared to Scores from the 2020 Community Readiness Assessment
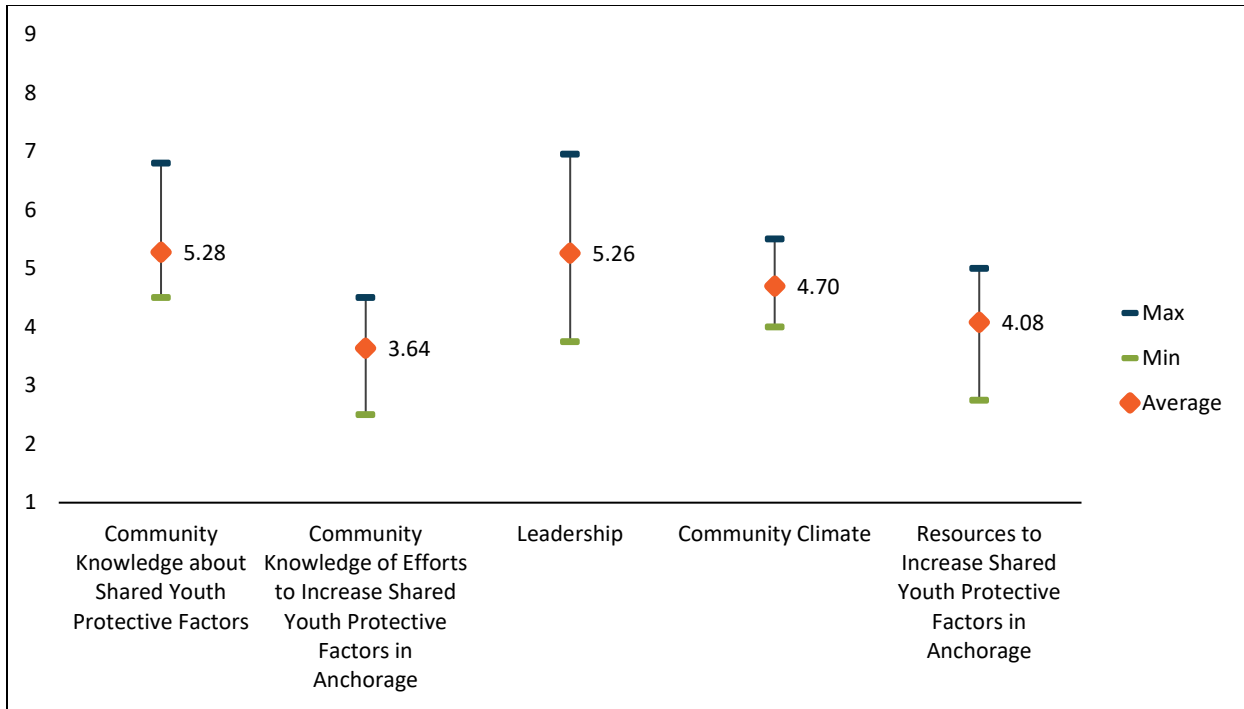
Figure 2: Average Scores in 2023 for All Focus Group Participants in Comparison to the Lowest Score and the Highest Score Given by Individual Focus Group Participants for the Five Dimensions of Community Readiness

Interpretation of Scores

The overall community readiness score of 4.59 is higher than the Tri-Ethnic Model's Stage 4 of community readiness "Preplanning," yet slightly lower than Stage 5 "Preparation." At this level of readiness, the model suggests actions such as holding public forums, encouraging key community leaders to speak out, and sponsoring community events to kick-off new efforts or revitalize existing efforts in order to raise community readiness. Other strategies that are recommended may include increasing media exposure, conducting focus groups, distributing information about shared youth protective factors through flyers or posters, collecting stories of local people who have been impacted by shared youth protective factors or the work of AYDC, giving presentations to established and unrelated groups about shared youth protective factors, or conducting one-on-one visits with community leaders about shared youth protective factors.

✓ ***Community Knowledge about Shared Youth Protective Factors Approach (Average Score = 5.28)*** At least some community members know some about youth shared protective factors, including what they are and how they positively impact youth; and at least some community members are aware of ways to build youth shared protective factors.

✓ ***Community Knowledge of Efforts to Increase Shared Youth Protective Factors (Average Score = 3.64)*** At least some community members have heard of local efforts to increase youth shared protective factors and are familiar with the purpose of these efforts.

✓ ***Leadership (Average Score = 5.26)*** At least some of the leadership is participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts to increase youth shared protective factors in Anchorage, possibly by being a member of a group that is working towards these efforts or being supportive of allocating resources to these efforts.

✓ ***Community Climate (Average Score = 4.70)*** Some community members believe that increasing youth shared protective factors is a concern in Anchorage and that some type of effort is needed to address it; and at least some community members are participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts to increase youth shared protective factors in Anchorage.

✓ ***Resources to Increase Youth Shared Protective Factors in Anchorage (Average Score = 4.08)*** There are some resources identified that could be used for further efforts to increase youth shared protective factors in Anchorage; and some community members or leaders are actively working to secure these resources to increase youth shared protective factors in Anchorage.

Context Provided by Focus Group Participants

Summaries of key discussion points and illustrative quotes made by focus group participants for each dimension of community readiness are included below.

Community Knowledge about Shared Youth Protective Factors

The average score for this dimension for all focus group participants was 5.28, relatively stable when compared to the average score of 5.34 in 2020.

Participants made a number of references to misperceptions about shared youth protective factors. These included a lack of understanding that shared protective factors are important for the wellness of all youth and not just youth who are at risk or are experiencing problems, and that people do not always make the connection between the wellness of young people and the impact on the entire community. Participants also referenced misperceptions around the needs of LGBTQ youth, including the importance of calling youth by their preferred names and pronouns. One participant also noted that that people may think of intervention and prevention as protective factors.

Participants also described that many community members and some professionals may be aware of the idea of shared protective factors, but aren't necessarily familiar with the term or share the same language when talking about the subject. They also noted that those who work with youth are much more likely to have knowledge about shared protective factors than the community at large, and that the COVID-19 pandemic likely had a negative impact on the knowledge of community members about the subject.

"I don't think there are enough people people that make the connection between how shared youth protective factors impact the community. I think it's sometimes seen as an isolated problem, and I think people have a harder time seeing that young people doing poorly definitely does impact the whole community. Because […] it's going to affect them potentially for the rest of their lives if it's not addressed."
   - Focus Group Participant 3

"If I was to go out on the street and ask somebody what shared youth protective factors are, I question how many people would know what that phrase is. But if I were to tell them what that means, I do believe they'd be aware of what those main items or factors might be. I don't believe that most people who are not doing work with youth have any idea of what this phrase, or what these things are. But when that's shared with them, they would say, 'Well, of course having a positive school climate would impact young people. Being connected to their family would impact young people.'"
   - Focus Group Participant 1

"I do think there's some misperceptions out there. The governor wanting to prevent teachers from calling youth by their preferred names and pronouns, I think is a misperception of what youth need. And then I think some people think of intervention and prevention as a protective factor, but I think those actually are separate from protective factors."
   -Focus Group Participant 4

Community Knowledge of Efforts to Increase Shared Youth Protective Factors

The average score for all focus group participants for this dimension was 3.64, a slight decrease of 0.43 from the average score of 4.07 in 2020.

Focus group participants discussed that there are misperceptions about efforts in the community, and in particular a misperception that efforts to promote shared protective factors are only for troubled or at-risk youth, rather than beneficial for all youth in the community. Participants also referenced a need for greater collaboration in promoting shared protective factors, noting that in many cases organizations or programs still operate within their silos. One participant specifically mentioned feeling there is a lack of understanding about the impacts of efforts around shared protective factors, and that this lack of understanding can negatively impact future support for these programs.

"I think there's a perception that some of the efforts in the community are only for at-risk youth or for certain youth, and not a way to proactively build protective factors for all kids. I also think our efforts are so disjointed. We're working on it, but especially across the community I find I have no idea. I don't even know what the people in this group are doing, and I just think there's not necessarily intentional efforts to share that. I think about when I talk with my friends or my husband who are not in this field, they have no idea. They're like, 'Wow, you guys are doing that? I had no idea.' I think they might have heard of some of these efforts, but really don't even know what it is for, and they think it might just be to keep youth busy or keep them out of trouble, but not necessarily in a positive, proactive manner."
    - Focus Group Participant 8

"We're not a united effort, I guess. And I do think there are misconceptions. When you look at how kids in Anchorage end up in, for example, a summer camp versus some other program, there's often this...'Well, that particular program would be for an at-risk kid,' but it's not. But that's often where I think the discussion with parents goes, 'Well, my child is not considered at-risk, so they wouldn't be eligible for that.' And I think that's a misconception in most cases."
    - Focus Group Participant 10

"Even if people know about programs, who they're for and their purpose, I don't believe many know about or understand the program's effectiveness. Once a program is implemented, there's not necessarily communication or an understanding of the impact or change that happened as a result. As a result, there's an incomplete picture of how future support of such programs impacts the community."
    -    *Focus Group Participant 7*

Leadership

The average score for all focus group participants for the Leadership dimension was 5.26, an increase of 0.55 over the average score of 4.71 in 2020.

Participants referenced that the level of engagement among leadership differs between that of local elected and state leadership, and that of local organizational leadership. Specifically, they described that organizational leaders don't have anything to lose so are more willing to speak out than elected leadership. While at least one participant described that organizational leadership tends to delegate due to being busy, several participants described that organizational leadership are dedicated and passionate on the issue.

Two individuals described a need to involve more youth in leadership around shared protective factors, and one described that LGBTQ youth are currently being targeted at the state level. Speaking positively about the impacts of a workforce shortage, one focus group participant felt that this has helped facilitate the engagement of leadership in prevention work.

"I think about our current school board, they're really supporting a lot of work that's aligned with this. There are definitely elected members of our assembly who are actively supporting this. I think about things like Prop 14 right now that's trying to allocate money towards quality childcare. [...] But then I think specifically about our LGBTQ youth being targeted right now and the way that they must be feeling about how the state is attacking them. I know that's more of a statewide conversation, but we're half the state. I think it's really important to consider what's happening at the state level because it impacts so much of Anchorage. What I don't think we have in this conversation is youth leadership voices. And I think that's really important."
  - Focus Group Participant 8

"The movers and shakers [...] can really make a difference, and I hope that they continue to do that. And they don't have anything to lose, per se, whereas an elected official, they kind of go with the flow of everyone. Movers and shakers, they have their opinion, and they put it out there, and they don't really veer off of it. [...] I think that there are definitely organizations out in our community that are just in it for the goodness and the change."
  - Focus Group Participant 5

'There's a workforce shortage. And because of the workforce shortage, that is a reason why leadership is engaging and sees the need for the health and wellness of our youth. That's why there's a focus on the prevention factors, or preventative factors."
  - Focus Group Participant 6

Community Climate

The average score for all focus group participants for this dimension was 4.70, a slight increase of 0.25 from the 2020 average score of 4.45.

Overall, participants generally described that there is a passive level of support in the broad community, and that the community has not taken a full level of responsibility for

promoting shared protective factors as a way to improve the well-being of the community's youth. Participants also described that it is typically always the same people speaking out, as well as that some people participate because it is part of their jobs or the mission of their employer.

Two participants described that some community members participate in efforts that may actually work against efforts to increase protective factors among youth, and one participant noted that some people in the community tend to think that issues among youth stem from things such as parents not doing their jobs or that people need to be tougher on kids. However, one participant also described that there are micro-communities within the larger Anchorage community that are doing a lot of good work.

"I also think we have a good chunk of people who think that the problem is other things that are not evidence-based, like, we need to be tougher on kids, that parents aren't doing their jobs, that we're too soft in schools, that we just need to suspend kids. I think that there's a significant portion of our community that recognizes the problem, but believes the solutions are things other than what these efforts would be targeting. I also think there are some communities who are doing a phenomenal job of this. There are certain Alaska Native leaders, or Samoan leaders, or different stakeholder groups that are really making a difference for kids in their micro-communities, which could be impacting the larger thing. I think that has to be recognized."
   - Focus Group Participant 8

"I agree that there are some folks in the community that may be working in opposition to improving and implementing efforts towards shared youth protective factors. More so, I feel like in the community at large, there's a bit of disconnectedness with how to increase shared youth protective factors. […] But I do still see that there are several folks...maybe just a few that are actively participating in developing, improving, and implementing positive efforts. It just seems like there needs to be more people working towards that."
   - Focus Group Participant 3

"I definitely don't feel like the entire community has come to the point of saying we have taken responsibility. I do think there's some really strong youth agency involvement, and I'm glad to hear that there are some employers now stepping up and elected officials stepping up. I need to probably hear some more speaking out publicly in favor of our LGBTQ youth to get me to [score higher]."
   - Focus Group Participant 4

"You see the same faces at the different community meetings. Those are the voices that you're hearing. Originally I thought, 'Oh, we're doing really a lot of this work.' But then I realized it's only a few participating. Also, I think it's a matter of the people who are participating. Part of it's passion, but also part of it could be 'what's in it for me' […] For some of us, it really does matter that our community is healthier because of the outcomes of what's happening. But for some, it's the mission or the goals or the objectives of their job."
   - Focus Group Participant 6

Resources to Increase Shared Youth Protective Factors

The average score for all focus group participants for this dimension was 4.08, a decrease of 0.65 from the average score of 4.73 in 2020.

Comments made by focus group participants primarily centered around the instability of resources with short, grant-funded timelines, and that while Anchorage has numerous resources that could support work to increase shared protective factors, action is not being taken to allocate these resources in that way. In addition, throughout both focus group discussions participants referenced the need for increased collaboration, including a need to coordinate efforts to better fill gaps. One participant specifically noted that information is shared well, but that remembering the information and how to access resources takes more effort.

"Agencies have really great opportunities to share information on a variety of platforms. There are really some great resources available. However, not everyone remembers the resources, how to access them, or what there is, it's really not uncommon. There are some serious gaps. We share information well. But accessing the services takes effort, time, and remembering where to access them."
 - Focus Group Participant 6

"I actually think we have resources available. I think we are probably more resource-rich than we're utilizing, but I see little or no action to allocate. I think that […] funding is not stable or continuing is a major problem. […] Everyone's scrapping for the same money, and it's not stable, it's not prioritized. I think, given the resources in this city, it's there. We just aren't allocating it."
 - Focus Group Participant 8

"Anchorage has a wealth of resources, but it is a matter of allocating them to this effort versus the other competing efforts within the city. I think the question of funding is ... I mean, I also work for a nonprofit, so two years of funding is stable for me. Right now, what I'm seeing is a lot of one-year funding because of the infrastructure bill and the CARES Act funding. All of that is very short-lived."
 - Focus Group Participant 10

"And boy, if our community would collaborate well, that would be a miracle I would be forever grateful for if we could just collaborate a little bit better."
 - Focus Group Participant 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The overall community readiness score of 4.59 places the level of community readiness to use a shared protective factors approach to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth at functionally the same level as in 2020 (the overall score in 2020 was 4.66). When examining the average scores for each dimension of readiness, scores for leadership and community climate both increased slightly from 2020 to 2023, while the scores for knowledge about efforts and for resources both dropped slightly. The score for community knowledge stayed relatively stable. While the overall level of community readiness remained relatively stable from 2020 to 2023, caution should be used in interpreting these scores due to the limitations of the assessment (see page 8 for a description of the limitations), as well as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic which spanned a significant portion of the time period between the two community readiness assessments.

There are several areas which stood out when analyzing the focus group discussions:

1) The issue of collaboration appeared as a thread throughout both focus groups, including in discussions of multiple dimensions of readiness. In particular, participants noted that there are many efforts in the community which could align more to improve their effectiveness, and that agencies or groups could collaborate better to create a more coordinated effort to fill gaps.

2) Focus group participants particularly highlighted the needs of LGBTQ youth, citing a lack of understanding for calling youth by their preferred names and pronouns, as well as the need for a stronger voice representing these youth.

3) Focus group participants noted a need to involve more youth in leadership roles.

4) Focus group participants described a discrepancy between the commitment of organizational leadership and of elected leadership, particularly pointing out state leadership and its importance due to the representative size of Anchorage's population. While participants described a lower level of commitment from the elected state leadership, they also described the passion and dedication of organizational leadership as well as of "the movers and shakers" in the community.

5) Focus group participants highlighted several misperceptions about a shared protective factors approach including a lack of understanding that this approach provides benefits for all youth and not just those youth who are at-risk, and that the well-being of youth affects the entire community.

6) While participants expressed concern about the stability of funding, they also expressed a general sentiment that there are a number of viable resources in Anchorage, but these resources are not necessarily being allocated towards using a shared protective factors approach.

Based on the findings and limitations of this community readiness assessment, we recommend that Center for Safe Alaskans and AYDC continue to monitor aspects of community readiness over time to evaluate the impact of AYDC's activities. The ideas and themes that emerged in this community readiness assessment should also be used by Center for Safe Alaskans and AYDC to inform the continued planning and implementation of coalition activities. We also recommend conducting individual key informant interviews for the next iteration of the community readiness assessment. This would allow Center for Safe Alaskans and AYDC to gain a greater depth of knowledge about particular issues and themes that appeared in this community readiness assessment, and to develop a more detailed understanding of how they appear in the various sectors of the community.

Appendix A: PowerPoint Slides Used in Focus Groups

Community Readiness for a Shared Youth Protective Factors Approach to Improving the Well-Being of Young People in Anchorage

March 22, 2023
March 23, 2023

GOLDSTREAM group, inc.

1

Today's Agenda

- Brief overview of shared youth protective factors

- What is community readiness

- Overview of process

- Scoring and discussion for each of the five dimensions of readiness

2

How ready is the community to improve the well-being of Anchorage youth using a shared youth protective factors approach?

Examples of *Internal* Shared Youth Protective Factors:

INCREASE AND PROMOTE

- Youth feel like they matter
- Youth do not feel alone
- Youth perceive risk from alcohol use
- Youth feel comfortable seeking help from adults
- Youth feel safe

Examples of *External* Shared Youth Protective Factors:

INCREASE AND PROMOTE

- Teachers care and give encouragement
- Parent and friend perception of harm from alcohol use
- School has clear rules and consequences
- Parents talk about school

Examples of Outcomes that Improve Well-Being:

- ✓ Reduction in alcohol and drug use
- ✓ Reduction in suicidal ideation
- ✓ Reduction in bullying and violence
- ✓ Increased civic engagement
- ✓ Increased academic achievement
- ✓ Improved physical health
- ✓ Improved career opportunities
- ✓ Improved relationships

3

Anchorage high school students who agree or strongly agree that in their community they **feel like they matter to people** were…

→ **less likely** than those who do not	→ **To seriously consider suicide**
→ **less likely** than those who do not	→ **To drink alcohol**

Anchorage high school students who **disagree that they feel alone in their life** were…

→ **less likely** than those who do not	→ **To seriously consider suicide**
→ **less likely** than those who do not	→ **To drink alcohol**

Anchorage high school students who **feel comfortable seeking help from 3+ adults besides their parents** were…

→ **less likely** than those who do not	→ **To seriously consider suicide**
→ **less likely** than those who do not	→ **To drink alcohol**

Anchorage high school students who **agree that their teachers really care and give a lot of encouragement** were…

→ **less likely** than those who do not	→ **To seriously consider suicide**
→ **less likely** than those who do not	→ **To drink alcohol**

- *Based on 2017 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data for all Anchorage School District high school students (http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/yrbs/default.aspx)*

4

What is community readiness?

The degree to which a community is willing and prepared to take action on an issue:

*"**How ready is the community to take a shared protective factors approach to improving the well-being of young people in Anchorage?"***

5

Why do a community readiness assessment?

- Meeting the community where it's at helps us:
  - ✓ Identify where to target prevention efforts.
  - ✓ Identify strengths and weaknesses in the community that may influence our efforts.
  - ✓ Work within the culture of Anchorage.
  - ✓ Ensure there is community buy-in and support for prevention efforts.
  - ✓ Avoid resistance and obstacles in the community.
  - ✓ Ensure there is action in the community.
  - ✓ Increase the probability of long-term success.

6

Levels of Community Readiness and Example Actions

Level of Readiness		Example Actions *(Example actions for each stage also assume continuation of actions from previous stages)*
1	No Awareness	One-to-one outreach with community members and leaders, outreach to small groups, outreach to individuals in social networks, collection of local stories.
2	Denial and/or Resistance	Provide information in newsletters and bulletins, publish media articles, strategic communication with community influencers and leaders.
3	Vague Awareness	Present information at local events and community groups, post flyers and posters, initiate engaging and fun informational events, publish newspaper articles with local data and information.
4	Preplanning	Conduct focus groups, review existing prevention efforts in the community, increase media exposure and presentations.
5	Preparation	Hold public forums, encourage community leaders to speak out, sponsor community events to kick-off new efforts or revitalize existing efforts.
6	Initiation	Conduct training for professionals, publicity efforts for new activities, provide updates at meetings, identify service gaps, begin seeking additional resources and funding, begin evaluation efforts.
7	Stabilization	Hold community events to maintain support, provide training for community members, hold regular meetings to review progress and modify strategies, hold recognition events for supporters and volunteers, publish media articles detailing progress, evaluation efforts and future plans, networking among community providers and systems.
8	Confirmation and Expansion	Formalize networking with MOAs or MOUs, initiate relevant policy changes, conduct media outreach on data trends, utilize evaluation data to modify efforts, publish a local program services directory, develop list of local speakers.
9	High Level of Community Ownership	Solicit financial support from local businesses and organizations, diversify funding sources, provide advanced training to professionals, re-assess the issue as progress is made, utilize evaluation and feedback for program modification, track outcomes data, continue to provide progress reports to community leaders and local sponsors.

Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research, Colorado State University (2014). *Community readiness for community change: Tri-Ethnic Center community readiness handbook.* Retrieved from https://tec.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CR_Handbook_8-3-15.pdf

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Why do a community readiness assessment now?

Last community readiness assessment was in 2020.

Helps us know whether efforts over the past 3 years have changed the level of community readiness.

Understanding the current level of community readiness will inform planning for prevention efforts over the next 3-5 years.

8

Five topics for discussion

Community knowledge about shared youth protective factors

Community knowledge of efforts to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage

Leadership

Community climate

Resources to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage

Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research, Colorado State University (2014). *Community readiness for community change: Tri-Ethnic Center community readiness handbook*. Retrieved from https://tec.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CR_Handbook_8-3-15.pdf

9

Scoring rubric and process: 15 minutes per topic

1. Overview of topic
2. Individually score topic (1-9)
   - Based on your *own* knowledge and perceptions *of the community*
   - Start with 1, and if you feel the community meets that, then move up to 2 and so on until you are where you think the community is at. Differences may be subtle.
   - 0.25 increments
3. Share scores and reasoning with each other
4. Modify scores as desired based on discussion
5. Average everyone's final score

10

10

There are no right or wrong answers or scores!

✓ You do not need to know all the answers. We are interested in hearing how much and what the sector of the community you represent knows or thinks about a shared protective factors approach.

✓ Your score may be different from others because of the different perspectives you bring. This is why we are talking with many people rather than just one.

✓ We combine everyone's scores together and then average them to arrive at an overall score.

11

11

Community knowledge about shared youth protective factors

Questions to consider:

✓ Do people in Anchorage know what youth shared protectives factors are? How many would you say – none, a few, some, many, all?

✓ Do people in Anchorage have any misperceptions (false information or beliefs) about shared youth protective factors?

✓ Would people in Anchorage be able to name shared youth protective factors?

✓ Do people in Anchorage know how shared youth protective factors can improve the well-being of young people?

✓ Do people in Anchorage know ways to build shared youth protective factors?

12

Community knowledge of efforts to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage

Questions to consider:

✓ Have people in Anchorage heard of existing efforts to increase youth shared protectives? How many have – none, a few, some, many, a lot?

✓ Do people know who the efforts are for? How many know – none, a few, some, many, a lot?

✓ Do people also understand the purpose of these efforts? How many people – none, a few, some, many, a lot?

✓ Do people in Anchorage understand the effectiveness of these efforts for young people? How many people – none, a few, some, many, a lot?

13

Leadership

Questions to consider:

✓ How engaged or motivated are members of Anchorage leadership in increasing shared youth protective factors? Does Anchorage leadership feel that there is a need to increase shared youth protective factors?

✓ How much of a priority is it for members of Anchorage leadership to increase shared youth protective factors?

✓ Do members of Anchorage leadership participate in efforts to increase shared youth protective factors? How many – a few, some, a lot?

✓ To what degree do members of Anchorage leadership participate in efforts to increase shared youth protective factors? Is their participation passive or active? Do they attend, or do they play a key role?

14

Community Climate

Questions to consider:

- ✓ Do Anchorage community members believe that there is a need to increase shared youth protective factors in Anchorage? How many community members – none, a few, some, a lot?

- ✓ How much of a priority is it for community members to increase youth shared protective factors?

- ✓ Do Anchorage community members at least passively support efforts to increase youth shared protective factors?

- ✓ Do Anchorage community members participate in efforts to increase protective factors? How many do? Is their participation passive or active? Do they attend, or do they play a key role?

15

Resources to increase youth shared protective factors in Anchorage

Questions to consider:

- ✓ What resources are there in Anchorage to help support increasing youth shared protective factors? (financial resources, people, in-kind donations such as meeting space or donated advertising space, etc.) Are there only a few resources, some, or a lot?

- ✓ Are these resources long-term, or are they only short-term? Are there multiple resources rather than a single resource?

- ✓ How much action is there to allocate resources to increasing shared youth protective factors?

- ✓ How much action is there to find additional resources to increase shared youth protective factors?

16

Next Steps

- Holding two focus groups – March 22 and 23

- Average all of the individual scores from the two focus groups to arrive at a single score for each of the dimensions of readiness, as well as an overall community readiness score

- Compile a report summarizing the scores and key elements of the focus group discussions

17