

Notes from City of Chandler

Teen Violence Listening Session

Monday, April 29, 2024

Below are notes taken from the small group discussions that took place at the Chandler Listening Session: Addressing Teen Violence and Behavioral Health in our Community Event, held on Apr 29, 2024, at the Chandler Nature Center from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

To access Dr. Paula McCall's presentation, please use this link:

■ **Youth Violence Chandler Session April 2024.pdf**

1. What are aspects of your life and community that make you feel safe? What makes you feel unsafe?

GROUP 1

- Safe has to do with a couple of perceptions ... "Is someone threatening my life specifically?"
- The physical threat of an action can make a person feel unsafe
- "The mental part of being safe too, do I feel like I am being bullied? Do I feel like I am being heard?"
- "With every action there is a reaction"
- Is there a safe space? Where is the safe space?
- The environment - sensory aspect
- Triggers and ACEs create unsafe spaces
- Safe space gives us groundedness, comfort, relaxation, the ability to have a clear mindset vs just reaction - mental awareness
- Feeling of validation that you are being heard or seen - sensory aspect, it all goes back to feeling
- If there are no consequences, how do we correct the problem?
- The community has to be careful how they talk to law enforcement

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- Where is the transparency from the PD, the council, from the SRO?
- Accountability with mandatory reporters
- How can we help the teachers manage so we [teachers] could help the children?
- Are we understanding that there could be action, but just not at the pace that we want? (E.g. government)
- People don't know the policy or procedures to report a complaint - lack of awareness
- We have to address the awareness and education before we get to the next step
- Everyone has to be able to come to the table
- "Don't put teen violence in a zip code, bring everyone together collectively." (E.g. Divided between Gilbert, Chandler, etc.)
- "The division has to stop"
- More collaboration - state and federal legislators, resources (what do resources look like?)
- This is affecting all of Arizona and globally
- How do you get everyone to get on the same page?
- We collectively need more people to say "I am ready to serve"
- From a teacher "How can we support the student?"
- City governments are all run differently, which makes things complicated for the generally concerned citizen
- The kids are hearing all of this
- Would like to see more county involvement in regard to this issue (Maricopa, Pima, Pinal)
- Would like to see more listening sessions like this
- Open discussion with the community with the city council and school board - also trauma-informed education at all levels, training on human trafficking and gang unit within LE, digital safety and prevention

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- Combined education for parents and teens
- Education on technology and safety
- How do the police departments interact with one another? E.g. Chandler and Gilbert
- LE is “supposed to be” communicating effectively, but it's the community pressure that forces them to bring certain things to light
- Macro level - these big agencies don't communicate very well with one another

GROUP 2

SAFE

- Sense of community, neighborhood feel, togetherness.
- Awareness and knowing your neighbors.
- Community support – law enforcement presence – security cameras
 - Protecting your own property
- Safety in diverse spaces – large community events
- Predictability – sense of community – diversity within the community – safe for everybody.
- Cultural acclimation to diversity
- Libraries – safety spaces
- Law enforcement – more interactions with youth at younger ages
 - New version of the DARE program
- More programs for mental health need to be developed
 - Some of that depends on the ability to create – access to music, access to art
- A safe space for children to be able to go similar to when children used to go to Skateland by themselves.

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- Village approach and how communities could develop good role models in the community
- More mental health education in the schools – really scary stuff is going on – self-harm, education earlier, more SRO, more crisis response.
- More educational opportunities for parents to go to like children.
- Parents need to make their children a priority
- If I can have one takeaway, it is something that is beneficial for me.
- Chandler is the first city to speak up and they are now a model in the East Valley.
- Your police department is only as good as your community thinks it is.

UNSAFE

- Ineffective communication, being in an out-group
- Lack of transparency
- More community policing

GROUP 3

SAFE

- Police
- Fire Department
- Hospitals
- Family/Friends
- Strong community
- Good neighbors
- Safe place to stay.
- Familiar surroundings

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- Being able to communicate with family.
- Being able to call, text, and reach out to family and friends.
- Church and faith

UNSAFE

- Sketchy people
- Unfamiliar area, city, and people
- Protests
- People that don't listen are not really paying attention to you.
- Erratic people
- Random people approaching you in the parking lot.
- Uncertainty
- Lack of consistency (parenting, work, places to live)
- Being alone

GROUP 4

- Affirmation makes me feel safe / people around me that have my back
- Close community no matter the size
- Gut feeling / People = safe / unsafe
- Technology; unknown = unsafe
- Head of operations
- Access to resources
- Presence Police / Visibility
- Questions answered.
- Transparency

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- Communication/knowledge
- How do we mitigate things that happen?
- If people have done something that made me feel unsafe, I am skeptical of them.

GROUP 5

SAFE

- Lighting in the community.
- Close Neighbors
- Accessibility to support and resources (Police, fire, mental health resources)
- Family
- School ambassador program for new students, lunch buddies, when you know your classmates
- School culture and climate where it's positive and how the principal is leading
- Relationships with elected officials and feeling like they have your interests.
- You don't have to agree all the time but there's a feeling of trust
- Connections

UNSAFE

- No lighting
- Family
- Lack of accessibility to support and resources (Police, fire, mental health resources)
- Social Media
- School culture and climate and how the principal is leading
- Abuse of authority

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GROUP 6

- COMMUNICATION
- HONESTY
- FRIENDSHIPS
- RELATIONSHIPS
- NOT FEELING INVISIBLE
- RESOURCES

2. How do you know that you are safe? What does that mean?

GROUP 1

- N/A

GROUP 2

- Safe feeling is relaxed, breathing is nice and slow, deep and core. The psychological feeling of relaxation.
- Needs are met, feeling safe (Maslow's hierarchy)
- Core/basic needs are met – authentic/belonging
- Safety to speak up and express uncertainty
- Sometimes it's not safe to have that conversation with family, sometimes it needs to be someone else, and that is totally ok.
- Safety includes balance – enrichment of life
- Youth have the right to feel empowered and have their choice to say something positive – empowerment.
- Practicing connections

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- Opportunities that are child-led

GROUP 3

- Don't feel threatened.
- With people you trust
- Not scared
- Speak freely without fear.
- Means you can go to school, work, and activities without fear.
- You can sleep at night.
- You have a safe place to come home to.
- Food to eat and a place to sleep.
- Being open and honest with communication.

GROUP 4

- Intuition inside my body and how it makes me feel.
- Hairs on the back of my neck stand up when I don't feel safe.
- Someone that is home to talk to; parents family, close friends
- Active listening / no judgment / mental space of being heard

GROUP 5

- There's a feeling of confidence
- Trust
- Gut instinct
- History at location or is it new?
- Feeling welcome

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- If there's other people around you
- Daytime vs. nighttime
- Location – can you get to a safe place quickly or is it someplace open?
- Are you with friends or by yourself
- Are there lights? Environmental factors
- Breathing heart rate regulated
- Sense of calm
- Sense of community

GROUP 6

- WHEN YOU CAN GO TO BED AT NIGHT AND NOT WORRY THAT SOMEONE WILL BREAK-IN, OR THAT YOUR PARENTS/FAMILY WILL LEAVE YOU, OR THAT YOUR FRIENDS ARE NOT ANGRY WITH YOU, OR THAT SOMETHING BAD WILL HAPPEN ETC.
- IF OUT LATE AT NIGHT, DOWNTOWN, PARK AREA, ETC., WANT TO FEEL SAFE AS WALK AROUND, ESPECIALLY IN AREAS THAT HAVE BEEN KNOWN FOR “ISSUES” IN THE PAST. CHANDLER DOES A GREAT JOB MAKING PLACES SAFE
- SAFETY IS BOTH PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL – SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXPRESS IDEAS, THOUGHTS, CONCERNS WITHOUT PEOPLE JUDGING WHAT YOU ARE SAYING
- SAFETY IS ALSO NEEDED IN A SPIRITUAL ASPECT, BEING ABLE TO HAVE YOUR OWN BELIEFS, WORSHIP, SING, PRAY, ETC., WITHOUT PEOPLE CRITICIZING, ETC. SOMETIMES THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE PARK HOLDING THEIR PRAYER MEETINGS, ETC., SO NICE THAT THEY FEEL SAFE ENOUGH TO DO THAT.
- CHANDLER FOSTERS SAFETY FOR THESE AREAS THROUGH THEIR DEI DEPARTMENT, AND HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION, HAVE A SERIES WITH ALL DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS LEADERS, ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS, CLASSES, ETC

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- HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU ARE NOT SAFE? IT IS A FEELING, LIKE AN EXTRA "SENSE", WHETHER IT IS A PERSON/PEOPLE OR ENVIRONMENT THAT WE DO NOT FEEL SAFE IN OR AROUND.
- WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT "SAFETY" MEANS TO CHILDREN OF ALL AGES.
- I HAVE SMALL CHILDREN, BIG SAFETY IS ENVIRONMENTAL AT THEIR AGES RIGHT NOW, SAFE AT SCHOOL, ETC.
- I HAVE 9 GRANDCHILDREN, OF DIFFERENT AGES, WHEN TALKING WITH THEM I GET FEEDBACK THAT CLASS/SCHOOL IS CRAZY AND THEY FEEL OVERWHELMED, TOO MANY KIDS IN THE ROOM, TOO MUCH GOING ON, NOBODY NOTICES THEM, AND THEY ARE INVISIBLE.
- IN CHILD CARE RATIO IS 1 STAFF MEMBER TO 20 KIDS, THE SCHOOL RATIOS ARE MUCH MORE STUDENTS PER TEACHER.
- IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO HAVE AN ADULT WHO REALLY KNOWS THEM. ALSO IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO HAVE A FRIEND THEY CAN TRUST. BE HONEST WITH THEM, THAT IF THEY WANT TO "TELL YOU A SECRET", IT MAY BE SOMETHING YOU NEED TO GET HELP FOR THEM.
- WE NEED TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE STAFF AND STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED AND ABLE TO HAVE CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS WHERE IT FOSTERS COMMUNICATION AND THE FEELING THAT THEY ARE KNOWN AND NOTICED, AS WELL AS HAVE SOMEONE TO TALK TO WHEN NEED HELP.
- AS ADULTS, SOMETIMES IF OUR KIDS DON'T WANT TO TALK TO US, INSTEAD OF GETTING UPSET/HURT FEELINGS, HELP THEM FIGURE OUT WHO THEY COULD FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING TO,
- WHEN ABUSE IS HAPPENING (MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, SEXUAL) THERE IS A LOT OF FEAR, HARD TO TELL OTHERS WHAT IS HAPPENING, AND A LOT OF TIMES THE PERPETRATORS HAVE GROOMED THEM WITH FEAR OF HURTING A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER OF THEIRS, ETC.
- CHANDLER EXCHANGE GROUP RECENTLY DID A VISUAL OF CHILD ABUSE (175 CHILDREN IN 2023) WITH A FLAG REPRESENTING EACH CHILD WHO HAD BEEN ABUSED AND KILLED. THEY DO THIS EVERY YEAR.

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- AS A CITY, AND COMMUNITY, WE CANNOT PHYSICALLY GO INTO PEOPLE'S HOMES, WE MUST BE PROACTIVELY WORKING ON RESOURCES/TOOLS FOR FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS.
- SAFETY IS ALSO CULTURAL, WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL UNSAFE MAY NOT MAKE SOMEONE ELSE FEEL UNSAFE.
- ALSO IMPORTANT, 3 PLACES FOR MOST (HOME, WORK/SCHOOL, ????) WHERE IS THAT 3RD PLACE? FRIEND'S HOME, AFTER-SCHOOL CARE, YOUTH GROUP, SPORTS, OR SOME OTHER ACTIVITY)
- SOME KIDS ARE BETWEEN TWO HOMES – ESPECIALLY ONE WEEK W/ONE PARENT AND ONE WEEK WITH ANOTHER PARENT, PARENTS NOT CO-PARENTING, DIFFERENT RULES/DIFFERENT CONSEQUENCES. THIS CAN LEAD TO A CHILD LEARNING ABILITY TO MANIPULATE/CONTROL DUE TO A LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADULTS,
- KIDS FEEL SAFE WHEN THEY HAVE POSITIVE PEER INTERACTION REGULARLY, THEY HELP EACH OTHER.

3. For youth, you are told to report concerns and talk to trusted adults. Do you have access to those? And if not, how could that be better developed?

GROUP 1

- N/A

GROUP 2

- School resource officers – promoting safety and talking about choices
 - How do students get access to SRO – being out in the community, being out and not in a classroom? Make sure that you are reachable, and not “officer-like”.
- Knowing your resources – (seven seconds, curriculum for 6-12 to correct)
- Asking children, who do you feel safe talking to?

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- Knowing who to speak to, being aware that people can handle situations that are bigger than one?
- Are there any ways for youth to reach out and have them be confidential – when kids are in school, they do not want anyone to know anything about them. Who is going to see them and make them feel safe?
- They want the confidentiality of conversations. Sometimes it's not true, it is just a feeling.
- Allowing youth to have the choice of the car they want to see – feeling of helplessness, reframe
- Belonging and asking for help.

GROUP 3

- Not always – not present in your life, not mentally, emotionally, or physically available to you.
- Adults have a hard time relating to a younger generation.
- Teachers not able to relate; staff not listening.
- Accountability
- Am I really safe to tell you things, will you judge or help me?
- Parents/staff not trained to be a trusted adult and sometimes want to be a friend.
- Administrators in school to have clear guidelines on behavior and school discipline.
- Hold everyone to the same guidelines.
- NO preferential treatment.
- Mandatory 1:1 of realistic school expectations and what their plan will be and what resources they have.

GROUP 4

- Yes, I have deans that actively engage with students
- Friendships

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- Scared of telling parents what is being seen on social media for fear of having the app taken away.
- Social Media Monitoring
- Proactively engaging adults
- Social and emotional dean for students

GROUP 5

- Do kids know about a trusted adult?
- The kid tells an adult at recess and the adult doesn't listen so the kid doesn't feel listened
- Too much tattlet-telling and then they don't develop the skills to cope with their issues.
- Sometimes the kid who tells becomes a target for being a rat - retaliation
- Adults need to learn how to become a trusted adult.
- It's hard when there is a crime but there's not a victim willing to come forward.
- Victims don't feel safe sharing
- Ask students who can be your trusted adult
- This is one of the most important questions that need to be answered. How are the teachers or people that are in the children's lives trained?
- Awareness is very important.
- Educate and training
- Be an upstander.
- Practice what you preach.

GROUP 6

- FEEL UNSEEN
- DON'T BELONG

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- CLASSROOMS ARE CROWDED AND NEED MORE ADULTS SO RATIOS ARE BETTER FOR KIDS TO HAVE STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS
- NEED TO BE NON-JUDGMENTAL AS ADULTS, HELP THINK PROBLEMS THROUGH WITH KIDS, ASK WHAT THEIR THOUGHTS ON POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS MIGHT BE AND OFFER SOME POSSIBLE CHOICES IF THEY NEED