

Executive Summary of People Under 25 Focus Group

Awareness of Services

As with the seniors young people on the Island are aware of a variety of human services available such as the Boys & Girls Club, Helpline, Bainbridge Youth Services (BYS), the Teen Center, and the Big Kids program. Most of them had used one of these services, but many agreed that better publicity of services available would be helpful. Many of the teens agreed that having these kinds of services available was beneficial to the Island, by encouraging diversity and a sense of community that seemed "real".

Access to Services

If they needed help most of the young people agreed that they knew they could go to the BYS or to Helpline. However many mentioned that they felt that confidentiality was a problem. Either you can't trust the person you go to for help (particularly school counselors) or others can see you are seeking help. For example, many felt that the windows to the counseling offices at BYU needed to be covered so others couldn't see that you were in there.

Services that are needed include suicide prevention help, better drug counseling and education, and in general more things for young people to do on the Island. And in regards to transportation the teens agreed with the seniors that there is not enough bus service. The current service caters to commuters not to the people who live and work on the Island. Making the Island more "bicycle friendly" with better bike paths would also be helpful.

Many in this group brought up some very important cultural factors about receiving services and living on the Island. There was overall agreement that if you receive any of these services then "you can't do it or make it." Everyone is labeled on the Island as being wealthy so when you need help you get labeled as a "looser". Living on the Island is difficult if you don't fit this stereotype.

Another important point made was that many of the young people felt they were harassed by the police for very minor offenses. However, after much discussion many agreed that this harassment might be due to the fact that most of the police officers do not live on the Island (because they can't afford to) and so they see many of the youth as "spoiled rich kids." The police do not feel a community connection to the youth.

Unmet Needs

Like the senior group, the younger group also stressed the importance of better accessibility to health care and family planning types of services on the Island. Currently many of them have to go off Island for medical services. Other services that are needed on the Island are more places to obtain anonymous birth control and a place to go if you have been raped or assaulted.

As for housing the younger group also felt that most of the housing on the Island is too expensive and that there is not enough housing for people with low-incomes. And what little housing is available for low-income families often gets torn down to make way for more expensive housing developments. This group also stressed the need for emergency housing and shelters for the homeless on the Island.

Another important need stressed by this group is the availability of vocational training. The high school is currently designed for a college track and many in the group felt there was too much pressure to fulfill this track. Having more vocational training, apprenticeships, or better career education would be helpful. Many also felt that in order to make a decent living you have to get a job off the Island.

Everyone in the group felt that the Island had serious youth drug problems. This is mostly due to the fact that there is nothing else to do, many young people can afford the drugs, and because accessibility is easy. Many in the group thought this drug problem was getting worse, especially since education programs like DARE are no longer available. They also felt that many young people on the Island have a serious problem with drugs, but there is really no place to seek help especially if you want to retain confidentiality.

Overall there was general consensus that if you do not fit the Island stereotype of being wealthy, smart, or college bound then it is very difficult to live there. Getting help is looked down upon because people on the Island "don't need help."