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## **Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County, Florida**

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COUN 6785: Social Change in Action:

Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy:

Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County, Florida

**Social Change Portfolio**

Patrick Storer

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## OVERVIEW

**Keywords:** Advocacy, At-risk, Authoritarian Parenting Style, Disconnected Youth, Early College High School, Florida, High School Drop Out, MTSS model, Parents and Youth in Schools, Pasco County, Prevention, School Attendance, Self-efficacy, Social Cognitive Theory, Teens

**Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy: Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County, Florida**

**Goal Statement:** Enable more students to cross the achievement gap between high school and college.

**Significant Findings:** The development of this portfolio emphasized issue of teens from 16 to 19 years of age that are not enrolled in school. Pasco County touts a 91% graduation rate for high school seniors during the 2020-2021 school year. Although this percentage represents a vast majority of teens graduating, it undermines not the percentage, but the actual numbers of teens who do not. When crunching the numbers there are over 2,000 teens not enrolled in high school *and* not employed. The state, nor the Pasco County school system provides specific demographic information surrounding these youth to discern causality. However, a similar study in Seattle, WA, Hooven, Pike, and Walsh's (2013) findings may equate to similar circumstances in Pasco County. In the Seattle study, it was discovered these teens typically fall under a minority or marginalized group, however, a sub-group emerged. The parents of the teens played a large part in their teen's sustained enrollment. Behind this, it was learned the majority of the parents held an authoritarian parenting style. With this finding, it was recommended to design a prevention program(s) that included the parents as key participants. It was witnessed the more the parent and teen were at odds, the more likely the parent dropped out of the program with their teen

discontinuing as well. When the parent/teen were able to work in concert together, there was a significant increase in sustained participation in the program and school attendance.

### Objectives/Strategies/Interventions/Next Steps:

This portfolio will introduce several near and longer term objectives, strategies to implement and reach those objectives, the prevention/intervention theories and programs to implement, and what takes place next.

#### **Short-term Objectives**

1. Identify the at-risk teens
2. Identify why they are dropping out of school
3. Identify possible short-falls in education level vs comprehension, life skills

#### **Long-term Objectives**

Based on findings from the short-term objectives:

1. Implement program strategies
2. See increased participation and duration of parent involvement
3. Increase participation and duration of students in program and school curriculum/attendance

#### **Strategies**

To reach our objectives the following strategies will be enacted:

1. Coordinate with school/school board for admittance of program into the school using presentation methods that allow for visual aids to 'see' the scope of the problem
2. Conduct a school assessment
3. Solicit at-risk teens' parent involvement using fliers, short afterschool meetings, telephone consults

4. Coordinate with school counselors, principle(s), teachers, and other vested parties; solicit buy-in from colleges to provide college level courses for classes taken in high school that garner college credits prior to high school graduation.

### **Goal Strategy**

To meet our goal which is to enable more students to cross the education gap between high school and college, and to facilitate our objectives, the following prevention/intervention methods will be used:

- Early College High School (EC)
- Multi-tier System of Support (MTSS)
- Parents and Youth in Schools (PAYS)
- Social Cognitive Theory / Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

### **Next Steps**

The following next steps will take place to commence the activation of this portfolio.

- Create surveys, questionnaires, interview questions for parents and teens
- Identify demographics for cultural diversity inclusion
- Request approval from the Institutional Review Board

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy: Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County**

“Idle hands are the devil’s workshop” (Prov 16:27). It is common knowledge teens tend to get in trouble when they do not have anything to do. In 2022, the County Health and Roadmaps (CHR&R) data reported that 8% of Pasco County, Florida’s youth 16 to 19 years old,

fell into the ‘disconnected youth’ category (2022). This data set describes these youth as not being in school or working and is a full percentage higher than both the state and the country. Further dissection of this statistic shows that these youth are at greater risk of drugs and alcohol use/dependency, violent crimes, jail, mental health disorders, and dying younger, just to name a few. On the surface, these issues appear absolutely preventable. However, if that were the case, why is there a problem? The intent of this portfolio is to dissect the conditions behind the 8% and field preventive options.

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## PART 1: SCOPE AND CONSEQUENCES

### Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy: Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County

#### **Target population**

The target population of this social change portfolio, initially, are teens that are considered disconnected youth between the ages of 16 and 19 years old as identified by the County Health Ranking and Roadmaps (CHR&R) (2022). Those that are no longer in school covers both those who have graduated high school and those who have dropped out. To narrow the scope, this proposal does not include those who are in jail, in a jail diversion program, or any other type of treatment/counseling that would provide similar psychoeducation/psychotherapy, nor does it include the unemployed part of this group. It is hypothesized that should the group not in school change, that positive change will then bleed over and start to correct the unemployed portion of this target group. Due to the high risk of degrading health factors of the target population, it is the hope of this portfolio to intervene in their lives to thwart those life eroding conditions and put them on or back on track to realizing their potentials.

## **Scope of the problem**

Pasco County reports high school graduation rates at 91% for the 2020-21 school year (Florida Dept of Health, n.d.). Considering the target group is as young as 16, it is unlikely they are high school graduates while many who are in the 19 year old range may be. For both, the problem lies in this question, what are they doing now? Further, why are they not in school, such as the 16 year olds, and why are the 19 years olds not employed? According to the Pasco County Community Health Assessment for 2019 and revised for 2022, the population of Pasco is over 510,000. This report shows the age range of 15 to 19 years old as 5.6% of the population. Doing the math, our target group of 8% makes up 2,284 adolescents (minus an unknown amount due to the age difference of 15 to 16). That is over 2,000 adolescents seemingly roaming the county with idle hands.

The Florida Dept of Juvenile Justice shows that of the age group of 15-16 year olds, there were 410 arrests in FY 2021-22 (2022). That number increases when including the rest of the target group ages (minus the 15 year olds). Pasco County specifically reported for fiscal year 2021-2022, that of over 43,000 K-12 students, 320 had school related arrests; 7.3 arrests for every 1,000 students. For high school alone, there were 153 felony/misdemeanor arrests (Florida Dept. of Juvenile Justice, 2022).

## **Consequences of problem**

As stated by the CHR&R, adolescents in this category face significant health concerns, both mentally and physically. As health concerns mount, so to does the cost of care and the burden of the cost of care. The youth that commit crimes and are prosecuted also put more burden on infrastructure of the judicial system. If our target group included 15 year olds, then 15 to 16 year olds arrested (as mentioned) make up 69% of our 8% target group! If the growth of



communities rely on its youth, then the consequences of our youth being impacted in such a negative and harmful way reduces our community's ability to prosper through age related attrition.

The University of Florida's (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS, together is UF/IFAS) Extension office provides several bullet points that highlight the positive effects of youth involvement in community development. The health of youth and the health of their community, through their involvement, is reciprocal. The UF/IFAS's positive contributions list will be flipped to show the inversesly proportional negative effects without youth in community involvement:

- lack of or no ability to effectively plan and evaluate resources
- limit provisions to help as long-term community members
- may not become aware of issues that affect youth and what they can do
- lack the ability as active community members to "confront serious social problems" (2012).

This short list shows the negative consequences of youth not becoming involved in their community. It is likely that the target population and the community will be negatively impacted should they not continue their education in high school and beyond.

### **Goal Statement**

Enable more students to cross the achievement gap between high school and college.

## **PART 2: SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL**

### **Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy: Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County**

For the purpose of this portfolio, social-ecological risk and protective/preventive factors will be drawn and combined from four sources: the "Framework for Prevention" (Center for

Disease Control (CDC), 2022), “Strategic Prevention Framework” (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2019), Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (McLeod, 2023), and youth.gov. These are compared to Maslow’s original 5-tier model of the Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2023).

Each source identifies various aspects of people’s lives, their systems, and the interaction within and between systems and their lives, but all with the same common scope. These interactions can either be risks or protective factors, some of which may overlap within the risk/protection factor categories. The following is a list of those factors as applied to the target population of disconnected youth in Pasco County, Florida. This list is not all inclusive but contains some of the more recognized components of each and may be added to as factors are recognized.

### **Risk Factors**

*Individual:* Drug/alcohol use/addiction, truancy, depression, criminal activity, declining overall health, sexually transmitted diseases/teen pregnancy, low self worth, lack of skills/knowledge/abilities, lack of good moral character and values, low self-regulation

*Relationships:* divorced parents, ACEs (child abuse), drug/alcohol dependent parents and or peers, parental income/expenses, lack of extended family availability, misguided ideas of love/lack of love

*Community:* living conditions/location, poor education/teacher involvement, lack of living wage work, cultural influences, lack of public transportation, ethnicity, lack of trust

*Society:* historical events (i.e. COVID), relaxed laws, racism, ‘law of the land’ ideology, lack of support systems such as clinics/job placement assistance, unaffordable auto insurance

rates, lack of infrastructure to support population, large rural areas, structural racism

### **Protective Factors**

*Individual:* good grades, street smarts, positive attitude, strong spiritual/religious faith base, healthy lifestyle choices, understanding of emotions/feelings and self-control, good moral character and values

*Relationships:* supportive family/education system, positive peer support, availability of supportive extended family, parents with stable work, stable peer relationship(s), sense and understanding of being loved, and loving others

*Community:* availability of health care (physical/mental), religious/faith based involvement and community outreach, acceptance of culture, race, ethnicity in their neighborhood, age appropriate activities and services available (Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, etc), organized community events, perception of safety

*Society:* acceptance of culture, race, ethnicity, in surrounding community, protective laws, availability of government assistance, positive community growth/influx of businesses, housing, contingency plans for adapting to emergencies (i.e. COVID), affordable higher education/community colleges, stricter laws on influx of drugs/trafficking, appealing/maintained infrastructure

### **Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs**

All of the listed risk and protective factors can be summed up in comparison with Maslow's original 5-tier Heirarchy of Needs pyramid (McLeod, 2023). In short, physical survival needs must be met first, then comes more psychological type needs. If a lower tier is not met, the person cannot attain the next one up. The risk and protective factors listed can be injected into this pyramid to show where intervention can/needs to take place to help an individual or group

attain the needed tier requirements to move up. Although this helps to identify where intervention is needed, this can be translated into the design of prevention to cater to the needs of our target group.

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## **PART 3: THEORIES OF PREVENTION**

### **Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy: Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County**

#### **The Role of Theory in the Practice of Prevention**

The National Cancer Institute's monograph on theories explains how properly developed theories address a personal or community health issue which then enables an executed program to be more successful than if a theory was not used (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Although this monograph is more specific toward health itself, it does declare health services saw the framework from social and behavioral science, then tailored it for health (2005). Its application here is simply tailoring it back so to speak. In short, to apply a theory is to research and attain specific information on a target population, a specific issue pertaining to said population, and to show relationships between the information gathered (variables). In doing so, it enables those wanting to enact preventive measures the ability to "step back and consider the larger picture", which in turn highlights the "why, what and how" (2005, p. 8) something is taking place. Specific measures can be formulated to address problematic areas which then can be assessed whether or not they are working. Using a properly formulated theory allows for empirical data to be amassed; that which is observable, consistent, and preferably has roots in past research and programs. This should minimize any harm to the target population done by guesswork and misapplied concepts. If successful, the empirical data allows for continued

duplication and dissemination. It enables “making the leap from facts on a page to understanding the dynamic interactions between behavior and environmental context” (2005, p. 43). Although the monograph talks more about *intervention* surrounding health promotion and health behavior, the reasoning is still sound for *preventive* purposes as is the case with this portfolio.

### **Analyzed Theories of a Community Problem**

Note: this portfolio lists the target population as teens from 16 to 19 years old both not in school and not employed. Some of the not employed teens may have graduated. In concentrating on *prevention* measures, this portfolio will analyze those teens who are not in school. Lack of employment is not evaluated. Again, it is hypothesized that successful prevention measures will naturally address the employment issues.

To ascertain proper theories for use in this portfolio, we need to know what information is already known that identifies specific reasons for the issue. However, finding that information is proving to be elusive. The theories presented are chosen based on reviewed studies that corroborate each other regarding the issue at hand, but on a larger scale.

Studies on issues with school attendance and absenteeism by Kearney and González (2022) and Kearney, et al., (2019) show that school attendance problems (SA/P) and behavior are linked to how the system tallies absenteeism as absolutes. Children are either in school, or they are not, children have an approved absence or not. There are many different lenses these categories are viewed through depending on the particular place of interest (academic, behavior specialists, etc). These methods do not allow explanation of external factors for absenteeism such as needing to care for a family member, self-preservation from bullies, transportation problems, safe ways to and from school, just to name a few. In short, the traditional way schools mark and track attendance and absenteeism leaves no room for the child to have any control over

the appearance of their school record. This could be detrimental to a senior in high school looking to go to college. The University of Chicago states that “Attendance contributes more than any other factor to course failure and low grades” (University of Chicago, n.d.). They continue to say high school students who achieve a 98% attendance rate have the best chances of attending a more prestigious school (n.d.).

### **Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**

Social Cognitive Theory is derived from Social Learning Theory and because of that, combining the two for our target population might be most beneficial. However, for simplicity, this portfolio is limited to SCT. In very simple terms, SCT is where “people are active agents who can both influence and are influenced by their environment” (Nickerson, 2023). The American Psychological Association (APA) takes it further by describing an interplay of personal factors, environment, and behavior, where one influences the other in something of a chain reaction “which in turn inform and alter subsequent behavior” (APA, 2023). Nickerson (2023), as with others, call this *reciprocal determinism*.

SCT is a chosen theory due to its strong cognitive base which is also what separates it from Social Learning Theory. People make choices for various reasons. The influence of others and the environment around them and how the person reacts, influences their choices which influences behavior. Understanding their reasoning for not attending school leads to understanding their behavior and to a deeper root cause. In uncovering root causes, the constructs of SCT can be applied. One of the main constructs that differentiates SLT from SCT is the addition of self-efficacy (cognitive) (2022, p. 20, 21). The monograph explains that the lack of control a group has over their health, equates to the lack of motivation to change (2022, p. 20). In this case, we substitute *health* for SA/P reasons. Initially, this theory presents itself as more

intervention than prevention. However, if it can be determined from those already affected, why their choices are made, that can then become a benchmark, a crystal ball foreseeing future issues and applying SCT as a preventive measure rather than a reactionary one. If children can be taught self-efficacy earlier on, seeing goals reduced in size so as to appear attainable, and having people around them modeling behavior that promotes the aforementioned, the target population will then have a sense of agency. The success of this theory is that it is more holistic, it accounts for the environmental effects on the target population, and not solely on the individual. The National Cancer Institute's monogram places SCT in the middle a *change strategy spectrum*. This theory affects change in people's behaviors and a change in the environment (2022, p. 46).

This theory is appropriate for our target population for several factors. First, the adolescent brain is still developing in maturity, processing priorities, comprehension, it absorbs the behaviors of others like a sponge and can be trained and retrained (Broderick & Blewitt, 2020). Second, combined with the right program, the constructs behind this theory can be powerful tools to thwart the issue if implemented before a problem starts. It examines the intrapersonal and crosses cultural and other demographic boundaries. By providing this target group the education and learning this theory has to offer, the target population can learn to navigate not just their own behaviors and actions, but the environment around them and learn to adjust to change.

An evidence based program also found within the studies from Kearney and González (2022) is what they call a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). This approach corroborates a postmodern philosophy of individualizing education over the standard methods. Moving "away from memorization and standardization and toward a more personalized skills-based" (2022). It is based on multiple tiers, the first being listed as a preventative.

Within tier 1, they take a dimensional approach. It looks at different aspects that cause SA/P and lack of graduation. Recalling some of the reasons the target population is not in school is addressed proactively. Due to the means SA/P is recorded, this approach give some attention to the recording of SA/P, but more attention to the manner in which education is executed. It will put “greater emphasis on a spectrum of personalized instructional formats” (2022), which includes incorporating more technology for remote learning over the standard ‘butt-in-seat’ in the classroom itself. It also suggests tailoring the graduation timeframe for individuals, including more college level course work to coincide with high school requirements, thereby providing the student with greater accomplishment toward degree programs post high school graduation, It considers learned work experience, provides better individualized mentorship (behavioral role models as mentioned earlier), and many more mechanisms. These all accumulate to address individual *functional impairment*. In this, cultural differences and other demographic boundries are breached.

The MTSS approach, in short, addresses external, behavioral, and cognitive factors regarding a students funtionability. It provides a means for students to take more control of their circumstances, to gain scholastic accomplishment and nurture positive self-efficacy. The Florida Department of Education with the University of South Florida add that it is “designed to increase the academic, behavioral, emotional, and life skills of students” (2022).

It stands to reason if these methods are productive, they reduce SA/P numbers, and increase graduation rates, it should in turn positively affect the top end (age) of our target population of unemployed. Correct the lower half (those who should still be in school), and the top half numbers should decline. More students or teens, graduated or not, will be employed. This model can easily be tied together with the social cognitive theory.



The University of Colorado Boulder's *Early College High School (EC)*, (2023) program is similar to parts of the MTSS where it provides high school students the ability to “earn associate's degree or up to 2 years of transferable college credits toward a bachelor's degree during high school at no or low cost to the students” (2023). It addresses a college attainment gap, which is not bound by culture, race, ethnicity or other diversities. The program introduces college requirements to high school students so as to help them continue in higher education post high school. This program is designed for a target group age range of 15 to 18 year-olds, fitting within this portfolio's target population.

### **The Evidence**

A report from Condliffe, et al., (2022) shows both positive and negative findings in the use of MTSS. The negative findings appear to center more around in-classroom parameters while the positive findings center around our target population. All in all, the results shown in this report suggest MTSS is a plausible model.

A study by Freeman, et al., (2016) reports on School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), a model of MTSS that has mixed reviews in some areas, but significant improvement in others. Although it is stated that much of the research in this study was done at levels lower than high school, it does show improvements in areas of attendance, behavior, and sometimes academics. High school level is said to take more time and needs to be modified in specific areas. It concludes “Despite some of the difficulties of SWPBIS implementation at the high school level, evidence suggests positive relationships between SWPBIS implementation and outcomes in behavior and attendance for high schools that implement with fidelity” (2016).

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development website lists three separate studies on EC

with their results. Each study supported this model showing the positive outcomes for providing early college-level attention to high school students. Overall, high school graduation rates increased, college-level courses were undertaken, college-level credits if not a degree, were earned while still in high school, attendance rates increased, suspensions decreased, and several other data points are listed (University of Colorado Boulder, 2023).

### **Risk and Protective Factors**

Although it is best to summarize, the risk factors listed by Kearney and González does more justice being quoted. The risk factors they list are:

developmental disorder, poor health, substance use (child-based); ineffective caregiving style, low school involvement, psychopathology (parent-based); conflict, residential movement, stressful transitions (family-based); low social support; proximity to deviant peers, victimization (peerbased); exclusionary discipline, lack of safety and academic support, poor climate (school-based); lack of access to care, school closures, neighborhood violence (communitybased); education deprivation, migration, structural economic inequalities and racism (broader-based) (2022)

Also listed are food insecurity, exclusionary discipline, arrests, court diversions, other mental health issues. Positive factors include engaging teachers, community service projects, supportive peers and parents, and the school itself (as both).

The Blueprints website for information on the EC categorized EC as a *universal prevention* program and lists 3 separate studies. Each study listed risk and protective factors. The following is combined from the three: greater on-time high school graduation, better school attendance, fewer suspensions, greater college credits earned while still in high school, more college preparatory courses taken, and pro-social involvement. As for risk factors, some are

combined protective/risk such as earned college credits during high school and the school itself (2023).

Some of the more significant take-aways regarding risk/protective factors is that without these programs, students may be more likely to feel unsuccessful, lack self-efficacy, feel a lack of no control of their lives, all of which may lead to issues of abuse of substances/addictions, teen pregnancy, lack of proper physical and mental health (in action and knowledge/awareness of), and juvenile crimes. All of the possibilities add additional burdens to the community regarding use of resources or lack thereof, justice system, insurance rates for auto, home, and unemployment/homelessness.

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## PART 4: DIVERSITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy: Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County

In the course of researching the requirements for this section based on the target population, the questions of why, what and how, as previously mentioned in section 3, paragraph 1, have yet to be discovered regarding the specific community in question. Pasco County, nor the state of Florida, has provided a demographic breakdown further than race and gender regarding those root questions. *Why*, are teens dropping out/ have poor SA/P? In looking for specific subgroup information and root causes to address, theorize for, and implement preventive methods against, reaching outside county lines was necessary. Further information was found but from a study of parents and teens in Seattle, Washington. It may stand to reason the study results from Seattle may reflect Pasco County as well. This new information ties into the original intent and can be added in as a factor to attach another preventive measure(s).

## Literature Review

Minority parents of at-risk teens are a specific population affected by the target population. A study by Hooven, Pike, and Walsh (2013) showed parent/family involvement with their children is a risk/protective factor regarding a youth's high school attendance. "There is abundant evidence that preventive intervention programs for parents can be a helpful approach to reducing youth problem behaviors" (2013, p. 1). Regarding at-risk high school teens, if positive parental involvement in programs with their teen equaled greater attendance and graduation rates, then as stated "Lack of participation by parents is a primary reason why parent programs fail" (2013, p. 1). The program highlighted in this study is Parents and Youth in Schools (PAYS) which also coincided with a year-long class called, Reconnected Youth (compare to the title of this portfolio).

There were 162 participants chosen based on certain metrics that identified at-risk youth. The participants, both parents and teens, filled out surveys and other data gathering measures. Results of prior similar studies showed minorities having a disproportionate drop-out rate for these types of programs. For this program, a minority is read as other than White. Table 1 (p. 4) shows a demographic breakdown of the 162 participants as follows:

White (Caucasion): 66%

African-American: 15%

Asian/Pacific Islander: 10 %

Hispanic/Latino: 6 %

Other: 4 %

The male/female student ratio was nearly split, with males making up 54% of the teens. It was also shown that the minority group coincided with an authoritarian parenting style. It was

suggested that this style parenting may have limited their attendance due to an expectation of respect, expectations to be met, their teen's participation, all which in turn, if the teen's behavior was affected negatively, the parent(s) dropped out. Teen surveys showed that if they were not happy with the parenting style, it negatively affected school attendance (p. 3). If their teens' behavior was negative toward the class/program, the parental drop-out rate increased. It reads as successful attendance requires reciprocation between parent and student.

A unique problem that may affect a minority group at different rates was highlighted as the type of parenting style used. Since this study clumped several individual minority groups together and the authoritarian parenting style was highlighted as a barrier to continuance of the program, this portfolio will use that commonality among the listed minority groups as a root cause to address. However, in analyzing the challenges related to evidence-based, culturally relevant prevention for diverse populations, there still remains potential for dismissing or inconsideration of individual minority group cultural differences in how an authoritarian parenting style is presented and received. For example, between the minority groups of Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics, an authoritarian parenting style may be the norm for one group, but not another. It would be unethical to apply a generalized preventive practice across all minority groups if there are cultural differences relevant to parenting styles.

The selected prevention program has a cognitive learning base. The prevention program PAYS, matches with the selection of Social Cognitive Theory and the MTSS program. Although two programs appear to be listed, the MTSS is viewed more as an umbrella that would encompass the PAYS program.

### **Applied Codes of Ethics**

The American Counseling Association's code of ethics (2014) provides standards for

ethics, values, and principles of care. In attempting to execute a program as mentioned, a core value of the ACA, *honoring diversity*, may not be fully met. Likewise, the fundamental principle of *nonmaleficence* may be disregarded. Applying a generalized method that contradicts a minority group's normative parenting style may do more harm than good for that group.

Specifically, the following ethical codes, not all inclusive, apply:

- A.1.d: *Support Network Involvement*

- A.2.c: *Developmental and Cultural Sensitivity*. What was not mention thus far, is the possibility of a language barrier. It is not guaranteed all participants use and understand English in enough of a capacity to comprehend the program.

- B.4: *Groups and Families*

- C.7.a *Scientific Basis for Treatment*

- E: *Evaluation, Assessment, and Interpretation* (vast majority of section E).

- G: *Research and Publication* (in whole)

### **Other Ethical Consideration**

Other ethical considerations surrounding the implementation of theory into a prevention program is that of who will be affected. The *who* can consist of the research financiers, the community itself, the school system, teachers, parents, students, state policy makers for education, juvenile justice system such as courts, jails, law enforcement (i.e. behavioral issues, truency enforcement).

### **Mechanisms to Increase Cultural Awareness**

In an article titled, *Culuturally Relevent Prevention*, Reece and Vera (2007) noted that based on health disparities we “cannot make blanket generalizations about the skills, values, or beliefs of ethnic minority” (p. 3) but continue to say the data can be used as a place to start. The

article continues, “although positive effects were found for the main outcomes, issues related to participation, acceptance of the program, [any program in general] and overall satisfaction were not equivalent” (p. 6.). The goal then, is to find the means to implement this portfolio’s program across all minority groups in such a way as to make it applicable to each, should each, in whole or in part, have different cultural beliefs between them regarding parenting styles.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) file on best practices for modifying evidence-based programs (n.d.) provides a list of several mechanisms that can be used to increase cultural relevance when implementing a prevention program. The following two mechanisms are relevant to this portfolio’s target population and are developmentally appropriate. *Establish the collaborative process.* Because the nature of some of the planned programs involves parents, the times to hold regularly scheduled meetings needs to be coordinated so as to interfere as little as possible with their daily life schedules such as work. Hindering a required responsibility prevents parental attendance.

*Evaluate cultural appropriateness.* This point evaluates the evidence-based practice for meeting the needs of the group participants in respect to possible cultural differences in parenting styles and how that in turn affects the student’s involvement in the other programs. If differences are determined, this point dictates that changes need to be made in program implementation for those groups or parents.

## PART 5: ADVOCACY

### Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy: Reconnecting the Disconnected Youth of Pasco County

This section of this portfolio explains the process of advocacy for the target population and the programs suggested. However, the process of advocacy may face many barriers to

implementation from several levels. The use of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies' (MSJCC) praxis, as described by Ratts, et al., (2016) will enable the detection of possible barriers for our target population and actions that might be effective in overcoming those barriers. The MSJCC assists in 'seeing' sociocultural systems of an individual or group.

### **Barriers to Addressing the Target Problem at Institutional, Community, and Public Policy Levels**

The fourth tier, or domain, of the praxis to be discussed is Counseling and Advocacy Interventions. Within this fourth domain there are three subcategories, or levels to explore: institution, community, and public policy. The following are potential barriers and actions within these three levels.

#### **Institutional**

*Barrier:* According to Ratts, et al., (2016), one potential barrier to counseling/advocacy at this level is the attempt by a counselor/program coordinator to conduct a needs assessment or climate survey of the school. There is a possibility the school will deny an assessment to take place or even communicate with the program coordinators in the execution of the assessment. They may insist on providing the counselor or group leader with their own assessment.

*Action:* The suggested programs are directly involved with the schools and in part, takes place within the school themselves, the counselor/program coordinators may want to conduct a needs assessment of the school in order to determine possible gaps, other competing programs, funding, or staffing requirements of the suggested programs. Communication and coordination with individual schools, the county school board, or the state level education office is a start to putting the suggested programs in place. This may be effected by presenting similar program implementation statistics from other communities via slide presentations or other graphic arts



displays as in doing so, the statistics presented can be visualized which is more impactful (Microsoft, 2021).

## **Community**

*Barrier:* Within this domain, a method to reach the community to disseminate information about the programs being offered for the target population might be that of turning to social media and other social/publicly available and prevalent outlets as did Murray and Crowe (2016) with the construction their *See The Triumph* campaign. In this example, Murray and Crowe found that building a social media platform was time consuming and required some expertise. For many counselors, these two factors may be barriers to carrying out this method of advocacy, as it takes time away from seeing clients, which in turn could be a reduction in pay.

*Action:* Constructing a social media platform that enables the widest dissemination of information about the program out to the community may further garner support for the programs' implementations. Community support may in turn help promote the voice of the community to those whose approval is needed. Since one of the programs requires direct parental involvement, this method may also help promote adult peer support. Even community members without children in the school system, or at all, have a stake in the outcome of the local youth. By implementing this method of dissemination about the program, support from them may be gained as well.

## **Public Policy**

*Barrier:* Delving into this category may require the need to review and advocate for change of state or local laws/statutes that currently mandate the attendance and graduation requirements. If Pasco County does not have its own policy or statutes regarding attendance requirements, graduation, and whether or not college level courses can be introduced, but instead

is reliant on the state's statutes, the process for lobbying changes to allow the inclusion of some aspects of the suggested programs may be a barrier. If not able to be effected at the local county level, then to advocate for university injection into the K-12 system, for example, may have an affect on all counties state wide. That may pose a problem with the state's Department of Education, each county's district school board, and down to each individual school.

*Action:* After determining who or what governs school programs and the implementation of programs within schools, counselors/program coodinators can then build a lobbying campaign to accomplish multiple objectives if needed. An example of an obejective may be to change current laws or statutes that hinder change or addition of programs, or it may be as simple as changing a local policy. If significant changes need to be made statewide, the possibility of attaining buy-in could be fruitful if presented to take place within one school as an exploratory program. Success may yield the opening of other schools to these programs while the state level statutes are being changed.

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