

SUPPORTING ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH IN WEST BALTIMORE

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INTRODUCTION: Stressors in urban communities are detrimental to adolescents' psychological health. Key factors for successfully meeting the mental health needs of urban dwelling adolescents are a community-academic partnership having researchers and stakeholders working together on program development and research practices. This study elicited students', parents', and teachers' perceived needs for psychological well-being in urban dwelling adolescents.

METHODS: Focus groups were conducted with teachers, family members, and students in an urban middle school. Exclusions were made if individuals did not speak English. Focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed, and underwent content analysis to identify key themes. Two investigators independently reviewed and coded the data with a third expert available if there was disagreement.

RESULTS: Six focus groups, two from each stakeholder group, were conducted with a total of 29 participants. Approximately 70% of participants were female, ranging in age from 11 to 68 years old. Participants were primarily African-American (n=22), and the remainder multi-racial (n=4), Caucasian (n=2), and Latino (n=1). Emergent themes were educational support, social skills, and community landscape.

DISCUSSION: Participants identified gaps and approaches to education and clinical care, strengthening social skills, and changing the community landscape that may be effective targets for future interventions.