

# Finding Tomorrow's Talent Today

RECONNECTING YOUTH TO OPPORTUNITY



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## Methodological Note

The data from this report come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics American Community Survey ACS 1-Year, 3-Year, and 5-Year Estimates of the Public Use Microdata and Career Source Tampa Bay’s Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth program enrollment data from program year 2020 – 2022. The research team also used other sources (cited) for context.

# Executive Summary

The issue of disconnected youth, encompassing individuals aged 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor employed, is a pressing concern across the United States. These young people, numbering over 4.5 million, serve as a stark symptom of broader societal and economic challenges.

This report emphasizes the importance of recognizing disconnected youth as a crucial economic and societal opportunity. Addressing the challenges they face and implementing targeted interventions and policies are essential not only for their individual well-being but also for the overall health and prosperity of our communities and nation.

The following section overviews provide the key takeaways and highlights from the report:

## **Section 1: A Decade of Declining Youth Disconnection in Hillsborough County**

- Disconnected youth have dropped by 10,000 in the last decade in Hillsborough County, but still comprise 1/10 of the county's youth, a cost that will compound over time
- Disconnection is typically 5-8 percent higher than the county's unemployment.

## **Section 2: Demographics and Youth Disconnection**

- Most disconnected youth are between the ages of 22-24 (47 percent), or 19-21 (36%)
- Black youth are the most likely to be disconnected, making up 14 percent of county youth, but 25 percent of opportunity youth
- Nationally, more males are disconnected, but in Hillsborough 52 percent are female, 37 percent are mothers and 8 percent married

## **Section 3: Poverty, Place and Youth Disconnection**

- Hillsborough PUMA sub-counties with higher than average disconnection rates include Central (18.18 percent), Central Tampa City (13.59 percent), and Northeast (11.15 percent)
- WIOA Youth enrolled 65 percent over the last 3 years within the 3 highest areas, however, focus is needed in South county region (7 percent of WIOA Youth enrollees vs 13 percent of OY)

## **Section 4: Education Level of Hillsborough County Opportunity Youth**

- 31 percent of Hillsborough OY have education beyond high school vs 24 percent nationally
- OY with low levels of education require different services, including dropout recovery, and are a priority for CSTB's program (46 percent of WIOA Youth enrollees over the last 3 years)
- 68 percent of OY have a high school diploma (50 percent) or some college (18 percent), suggesting the need for programs around dual enrollment, post-secondary education navigation and counseling, and earn-and-learn opportunities (e.g., apprenticeships)

## **Section 5: Youth and the Labor Force**

- Underemployment in youth is connected to underemployment 5 years later, and poor quality (low pay, part-time, unpredictable schedules or hours) contribute to vulnerability and instability and make education and childcare more difficult

## **Section 6: Recommendations**

- 5 recommendations include increasing awareness, amplifying youth voices, expanding and segmenting OY service delivery system, placing deeper/intentional priority on places with highest youth disconnection, and focusing on 5 youth success factors
- Five Youth Success Factors: Coaching, Mentoring & Parental Support, Career Exploration & Training, Life Skills, Academic Success, and Financial Literacy

## SECTION 1: A DECADE OF DECLINING YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

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Across the United States over 4.5 million young individuals (16-24-year-olds) fall into the category of “disconnected”, meaning they are neither in school or employed. These disconnected youth are a symptom of wider societal and economic problems and analysis often reveals connections back to broader well-known inequities. Above all else, these groups should be considered an economic and societal opportunity.

In 2010, 14.7 percent of 16–24-year-olds were not employed or enrolled in school. Between 2010 and 2019, the national rate fell to 10.7 percent<sup>1</sup>, driven by a combination of factors. Younger workers saw increasing employment rates, but those between the ages of 16 and 24 were also far more likely to be full time students than in years prior<sup>2</sup>. COVID-19 bumped the national rate back up above 12 percent as many young adults were employed in jobs hit hardest by the economic disruption caused by the pandemic (food service, retail, and hospitality). Youth and young adults are among the groups most impacted by economic ups and downs. During both the Great Recession and the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people across the country were often the first to lose job opportunities and the last ones to reenter the labor force when hiring picked back up.

In 2021 there are an estimated 2.25M 16-24-year-olds living in the State of Florida,<sup>3</sup> and of those, 265,527, or 11.8 percent were disconnected. Florida ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 50 states in youth disconnection, with Nebraska home to the lowest youth disconnection rate (7.8 percent) and New Mexico showing the highest rates (19.6 percent). Like the national trend, statewide youth disconnection rates have been declining for the last decade, down from a high of 15.8 percent in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

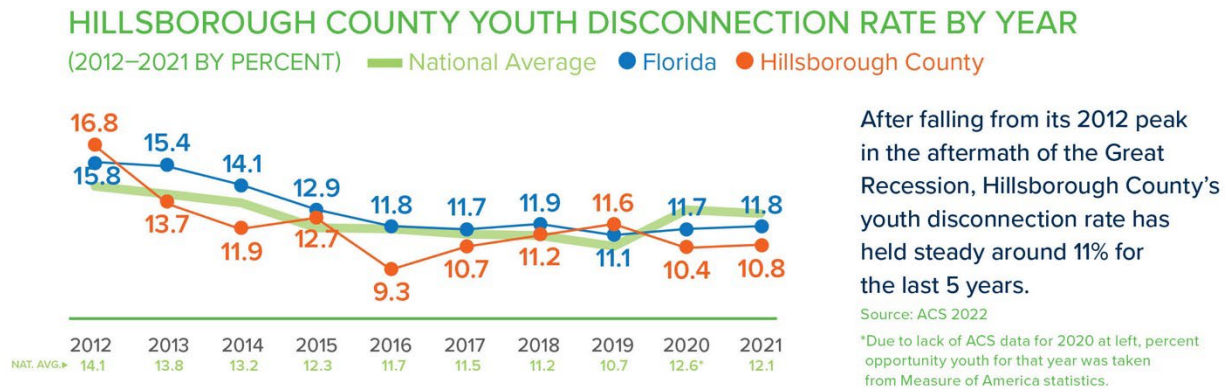
### Youth Disconnection In Hillsborough County

Between 2012 and 2021, the number of total 16–24-year-olds living in Hillsborough County has held nearly constant. In 2021, 165,393 youth and young adults residing in the County, 314 less than the estimate for 2012.

**While the total number of youth has remained the same the last decade, the number of opportunity youth has decreased by more than 10,000.**

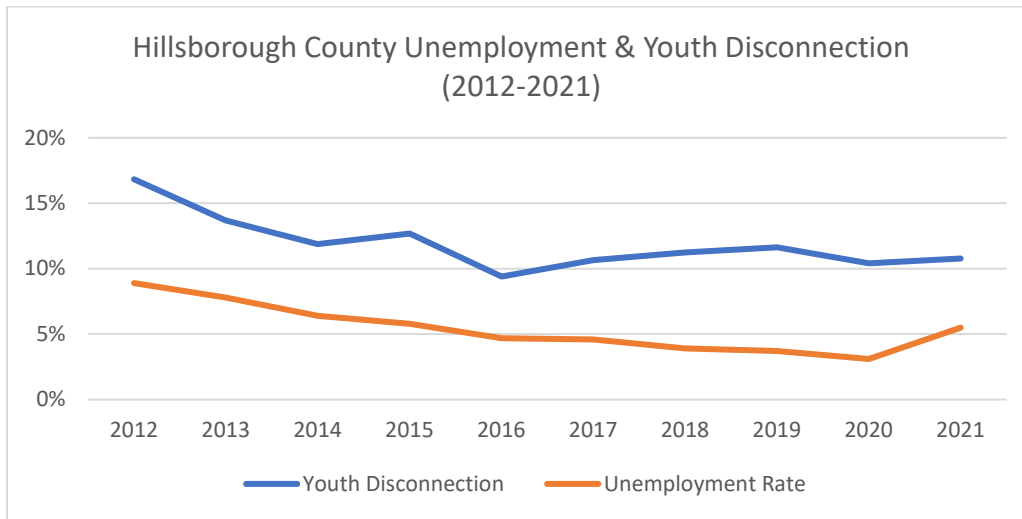
In 2021, there is an estimated 17,830 disconnected youth, or 10.8 percent of all youth living in the county. Despite having a higher disconnection rate in 2012 than both the state and nation, Hillsborough County has seen a faster and more consistent decline in opportunity youth over the last decade.

Figure 1: A Decade of Declining Youth Disconnection in Hillsborough County



On June 3, 2023, Hillsborough County's unemployment rate stood at 3 percent, a tenth of a percentage below the pre-pandemic measurement in January 2020. This tight labor market is helping drive youth disconnection downward; over the last decade, youth disconnection rates have been between 5 percent and 8 percent higher than the county's unemployment rate (see figure 2).

Figure 2: A Decade of Declining Youth Disconnection in Hillsborough County



As employers continue to report worker shortages, there is a significant opportunity for CareerSource Tampa Bay (CSTB), the United Way Suncoast (UWS), and other community organizations and leaders to continue pushing youth disconnection down. To help guide efforts in this area, the following sections explore who these young people are, where in the county they live, and discuss strategies to reduce youth disconnection in the Tampa Bay area.

## Section 1 Takeaways

- **10,000 Success Stories:** While the total number of youth living in Hillsborough County has been flat over the last 10 years, the number of opportunity youth has decreased by more than 10,000. This has dropped the county's disconnection rate from 16.8 percent in 2012 to 10.8 percent using 2021 data.
- **Setting the pace:** Hillsborough County outpaced the national and state averages in reducing youth disconnection over the last decade. At 10.8 percent, the county's disconnection rate is a full percentage point below the statewide average.
- **Last in, First Out:** Youth disconnection is typically 5 – 8 percent higher than the county's unemployment rate. Young people often feel the negative effects of economic downturns more quickly, more severely, and it takes longer for them to get opportunities generated during the recovery.
- **17,830 Reasons:** While the last decade of youth disconnection data shows a promising trend, more than 1 in 10 youth living in the county are not in school or work. The longer these 17,830 young people don't work or attend school, the social, family, financial, and economic costs of youth disconnection on individuals, families, businesses, and the local economy compound.

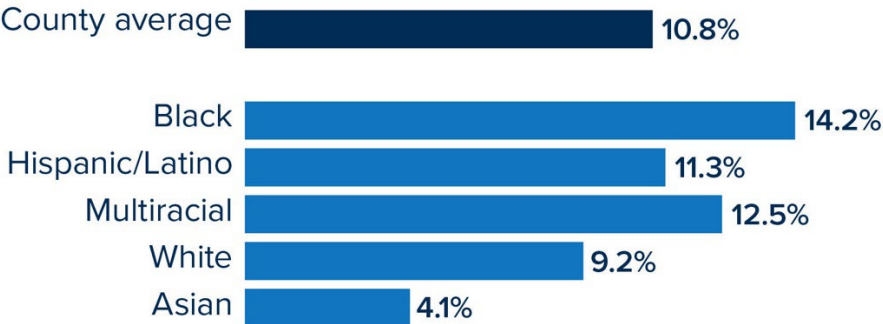
# SECTION 2: DEMOGRAPHICS OF YOUTH DISCONNECTION

Youth disconnection is not evenly distributed across America’s young people. Native American and Black youth have the highest disconnection rates at 23.4 and 19.6 percent respectively. Males are more likely to be disconnected than females, although the differences vary by race/ethnicity. In Florida, 16.9 percent of Black youth, 12.1 percent of Hispanic/Latino youth, and 10.2 percent of white youth are disconnected. Older youth are also more likely to be disconnected than younger youth.<sup>5</sup> Within Hillsborough, 15.52 percent of opportunity youth are between the ages of 16 – 18, 37 percent between 19 – 21, and 47 percent between 22-24 years of age<sup>6</sup>.

## Race and Youth Disconnection in Hillsborough County

Black youth in Hillsborough County have the highest disconnection rate (14.2 percent), followed by youth that identify as Multiracial (12.5 percent) and Hispanic/Latino (11.3 percent). White youth had a disconnection rate of 9.2 percent and Asian youth had the lowest rate of youth disconnection in the county.

Figure 3: Youth Disconnection Rates by Race and Ethnicity, Hillsborough County



More than 60 percent of youth enrolled in CSTB WIOA Title I Youth Programs identified as Black / African American (546 out of 898 total program enrollments). Twenty-three percent were White, and 13 percent race/ethnicity was not available. In the data provided, there was no indication of whether a (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth enrollee identified as Hispanic/Latino. Given there are thousands of youth in region that identify as Hispanic/Latino, understanding the number of youth in the program that identify as Hispanic/Latino will be important going forward.

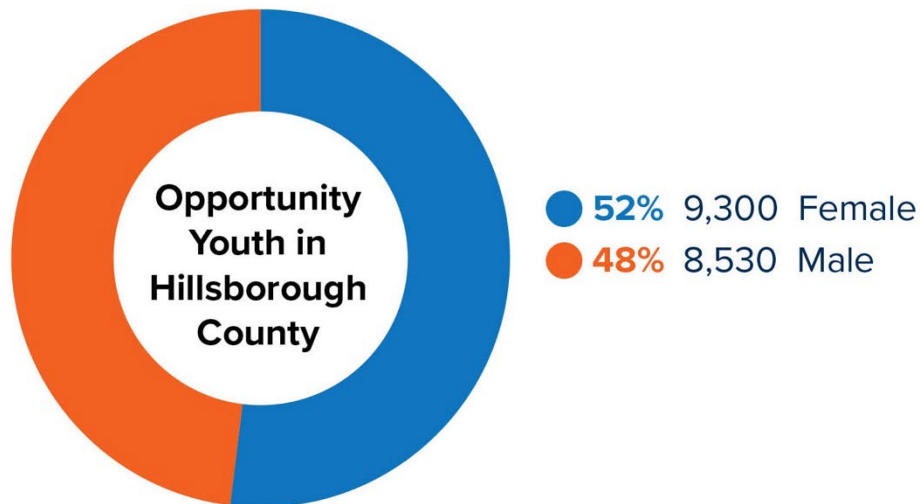
Figure 4: Race and Ethnicity of WIOA Youth Enrollees at Career Source Tampa Bay (2020-2022)

Race	CSTB WIOA Youth Enrollees	% of WIOA Youth Enrollees
African American/Black	546	61%
White	207	23%
Not Available / Did not say	121	13%
Asian	14	2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	6	1%
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	4	0%

### Gender and Youth Disconnection

Hillsborough county was home to 165,393 16-24-year-olds as of 2021. Of those, 83,397 were male (50.4 percent) and 81,996 female (49.5 percent). Contrary to national level data, more females (11.3 percent) in Hillsborough County are disconnected from work and school than males (50.4 percent).

Figure 5: Opportunity Youth by Gender in Hillsborough County



One explanation for this difference is dynamics related to motherhood, marriage, and military service. Parents make up 3,475 (19.5 percent) of all female opportunity youth compared to 1,820 (10.2 percent) male opportunity youth. The cost and availability of childcare, societal norms around household roles (i.e. tendency for women to stay home with children) and pay gap could all play a part. Opportunity youth are much less likely to be married in Hillsborough County than connected youth. Fifteen percent of all 16-24 years olds in the county reported having been married, compared to 8 percent of opportunity youth. Nationally, single parents are more likely to be mothers, making parenting and attending work and school challenging. Finally, military employment may help in part explain the lower rate of opportunity youth in males for the Hillsborough region. When limited to ONET occupations specific to military employment (55-0000), 85 percent of occupation were



held by men in Hillsborough county as of 2023, and 38 percent aged 24 and younger<sup>7</sup>. It's important to note that this occupation code is one of the lowest ranked in terms of the actual number of jobs provided, however it does have a uniquely high proportion of 19 – 21-year-old men.

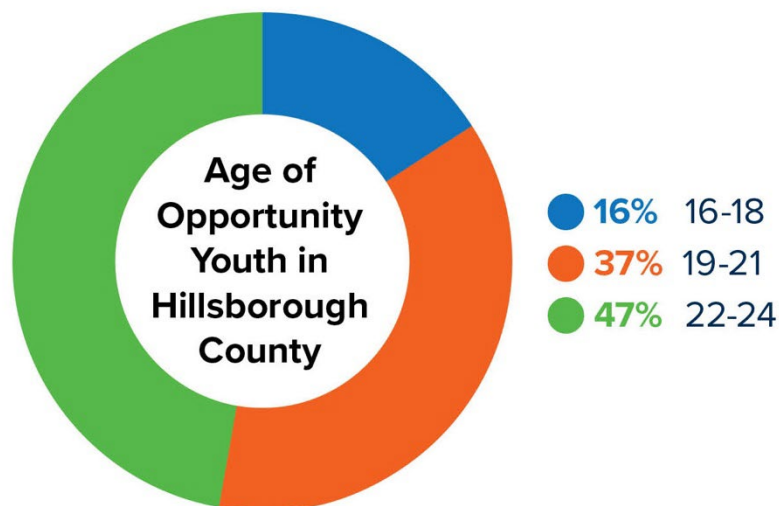
Of the 894 young people enrolled in the CSTB WIOA Youth program between 2020 and 2022 that specified gender, 506 (57 percent) were female and 388 (43 percent) were male, which aligns with the population data closely.

### Age and Youth Disconnection

While the defined age range of 16 to 24 years old is widely used to understand youth and young adult disconnection, there are significant differences in the life choices, service needs, growth and development, and priorities of 16-year-olds compared to 24-year-olds. These are the eight years when young people are expected to become independent, self-sufficient adults. Youth and young adults in their first few years of this “coming of age” journey is often much different themselves and face a much different set of circumstances than young adults at the end of this eight-year journey. For a community working on reducing youth disconnection through policy and programming, it is important to understand which age groups have the largest number of disconnected youth to target interventions.

In Hillsborough County, there are 8,456 22-24-year-olds not working or in school, nearly half (47.4 percent) of all opportunity youth. 6,607 (37 percent) opportunity youth are aged 19-21. The smallest age group is 16–18-year-olds, making up 15.5 percent of all opportunity youth with a total of 2,767.

Figure 6: Age of Opportunity Youth in Hillsborough County



While most of the disconnected youth in the region are age 19 and above, the majority of CSTB WIOA Title I Youth enrollees from program year 2020 to 2022 are aged 16-18.

Figure 7: Age Range of WIOA Youth Enrollees at Career Source Tampa Bay (2020-2022)

Age Range	% of Disconnected Youth in Hillsborough County	CSTB WIOA Youth Enrollees	% of WIOA Youth Enrollees
16-18	16%	488	54%
19-21	37%	235	26%
22-24	47%	174	19%

## Section 2 Takeways

- **Black Youth Disconnection:** Black youth in Hillsborough County are more likely to be disconnected from work and school than other races/ethnicities. Of the 36,065 Black youth living in Hillsborough County, 4,495 are disconnected from work and school (14.2 percent). While black youth make up 14 percent of all youth in the region, they make up 25 percent of all opportunity youth.
- **Female Disconnection:** Contrary to national level data, more disconnected youth in Hillsborough County are women. Of the 9,300 female opportunity youth in Hillsborough, 3,475 are mothers, and 8 percent are married. Targeted programs that integrate childcare subsidies and other motherhood supports can give many of these young women the option to begin work or school and reduce the region’s overall disconnection rate.
- **Segmenting Interventions by Age:** Nearly half of all disconnected youth are aged 22-24. These 8,456 young adults may not identify as “youth” and likely have very different service needs than the 2,767 16–18-year-old opportunity youth. CSTB and other partners should consider segmenting their youth programs by age to build specialization in outreach, case management, and supportive service delivery for these older youth.
- **Career Source Tampa Bay WIOA Enrollment Demographics:** Based on a review of CSTB’s WIOA Title I Youth program enrollment demographics over the last three years, we found the following:
  - **Effective Black youth engagement:** Over 60 percent of youth enrolled in CSTB WIOA Title I Youth programs identified as Black / African American (546 out of 898 total program enrollments). This suggests that CSTB and its partners are effectively prioritizing, engaging, and enrolling youth from the racial/ethnic group most in need of youth workforce development services.
  - **Young women and WIOA Youth:** In Hillsborough County, there are more female opportunity youth than male. Of the 894 WIOA Youth enrollments with an identified gender, 506 (57 percent) were female. 118 of these youth also reported being pregnant or parenting. WIOA

Youth integration with publicly funded childcare resources and support will continue to be an important element of service design to effectively serve these women.

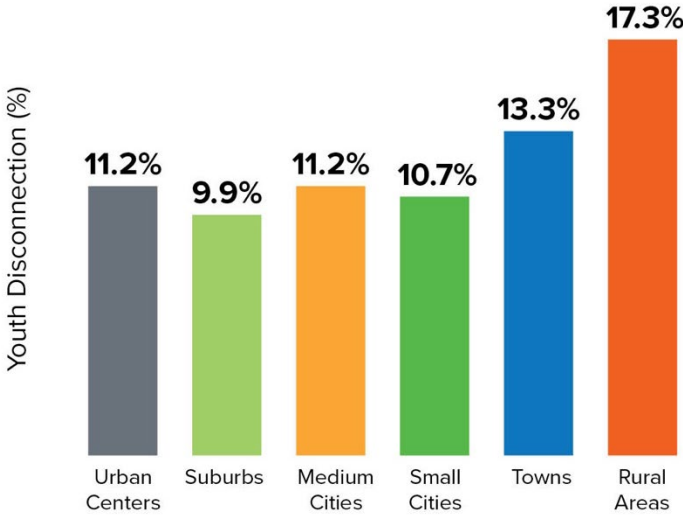
- **Mismatch in age:** The majority (54 percent) of the 897 WIOA Youth enrollees over the last three years were aged 16-18. However, 16–18-year-olds only represent 16 percent of all disconnected youth. CSTB may want to consider new referral partners, segmented branding and program design for older youth, and specialized contracts for youth 19-24 to better target the more than 15,000 19-24 years not in work or school in Hillsborough County.

# SECTION 3: POVERTY, PLACE, AND YOUTH DISCONNECTION

In a series of studies beginning in 2014, the economist Raj Chetty and a team of researchers have been using decades of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax record data, linked with other sources, to show the neighborhoods in which children grow up shape children’s outcomes in adulthood. Social mobility, or the concept that a child will make a higher income than their parents, varies widely across cities and neighborhoods. On average, a child from a low-income family raised in San Jose (CA) or Salt Lake City (UT) has a much greater chance of reaching the top than a low-income child raised in Baltimore (MD) or Charlotte (NC). But there are neighborhoods within Baltimore and Charlotte, for example, that children have higher rates of upward mobility than the average neighborhood in San Jose or Salt Lake City.<sup>8</sup> In the words of the researchers, neighborhoods matter for children and youth.

Where youth live impact the likelihood of youth disconnection for 16-24-year-olds. In 2020, rural counties in the United States had a youth disconnection rate of 17.3 percent, on average, compared to 11.2 percent in urban centers and 9.9 percent in counties in the suburbs.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 7: National Youth Disconnection Rates by Place



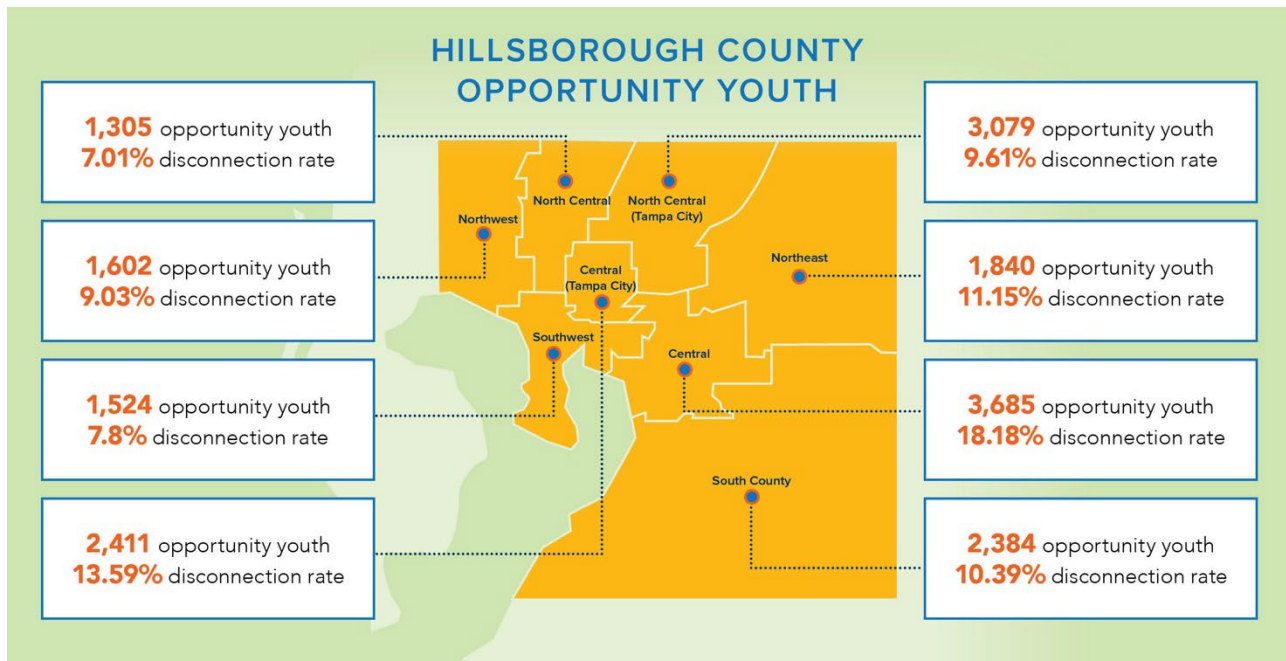
## Hillsborough County and Youth Disconnection

A metropolitan area is a central city, like Tampa Bay and its surrounding towns, suburbs, and exurbs. Metro areas are a key unit of analysis for understanding youth disconnection rates, as they frame labor markets and higher education systems, which can be more aligned with metro areas than state or county lines. We break

Hillsborough County and the Greater Tampa Metro Area down into eight different geographic areas using the Census Bureau’s Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs).

The three subcounty regions that had higher youth disconnection rates than the 10.8 percent county average were the Central Hillsborough County PUMA (18.18 percent), Central Tampa City PUMA (13.59 percent), and the Northeast PUMA (11.15 percent).

Figure 8: Hillsborough County Youth Disconnection by Geography



### Opportunity Youth and Poverty

Youth from households living below the poverty line are more likely to be disconnected from work and school than from youth living in households with incomes above the poverty line. Nationally, 30.9 percent of disconnected youth are living in poverty, compared to 16.5 percent of connected youth.<sup>10</sup> In Hillsborough County, 26 percent of disconnected youth are in households at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level<sup>11</sup>, compared to 17.8 percent of all youth. In Central Tampa, where the poverty rate is 26 percent, nearly half (47 percent) of all opportunity youth are living below the poverty line.

Figure 9: Hillsborough County Subregions, Poverty, and Youth Disconnection

Subcounty Region	Population	Poverty Rate (2020)	Opportunity Youth	Disconnection Rate	% of OY Living in Poverty
Central (Hillsborough County)	210,505	12.10%	3,685	18.18%	41%
Central (Tampa)	162,279	26%	2,411	13.59%	47%
Northeast	134,358	15.90%	1,840	11.15%	24%
South County	247,377	10.10%	2,384	10.39%	8%
North Central (Tampa)	177,440	18.90%	3,079	9.61%	35%
Northwest	165,310	10.30%	1,602	9.03%	Insuf. data
Southwest	181,033	12.40%	1,524	7.80%	16%
North Central	173,056	9.54%	1,305	7.01%	5%

### WIOA Youth Enrollments by Subcounty Regions

Using CSTB WIOA Title I Youth enrollment data from 2020-2022, the research team looked at the zip codes of 899 WIOA Youth program enrollments. Most youth enrollments came from Central Tampa City, North Central Tampa and Central Hillsborough County.

Figure 10: Disconnected Youth and WIOA Title I Enrollments, by Hillsborough County Subregions

Subcounty Region	Zip Codes	Opportunity Youth (#)	% of OY in County	WIOA Youth Enrollments (#)*	% of WIOA Youth Enrollments (PY 2020-2022)
Central (Hillsborough County)	33510, 33511, 33527, 33578, 33584, 33594, 33610, 33619	3,685	21%	266	18%
Central (Tampa City)	33602, 33603, 33604, 33605, 33610, 33612, 33617, 33619	2,411	14%	358	25%
Northeast	33592, 33527, 33540, 33550, 33563, 33565, 33566, 33567, 33584, 33592, 33594, 33610, 33810	1,840	10%	157	11%
South County	33534, 33569, 33578, 33579	2,384	13%	96	7%
North Central (Tampa)	33617, 33559, 33584, 33592, 33610, 33612, 33613, 33617, 33620, 33637, 33647	3,079	17%	312	22%
Northwest	33556, 33558, 33615, 33624, 33625, 33626, 33634, 33635	1,602	9%	80	6%
Southwest	33606, 33607, 33609, 33611, 33616, 33621, 33629	1,524	9%	37	3%
North Central	33548, 33549, 33558, 33559, 33612, 33613, 33618, 33624, 33625	1,305	7%	145	10%

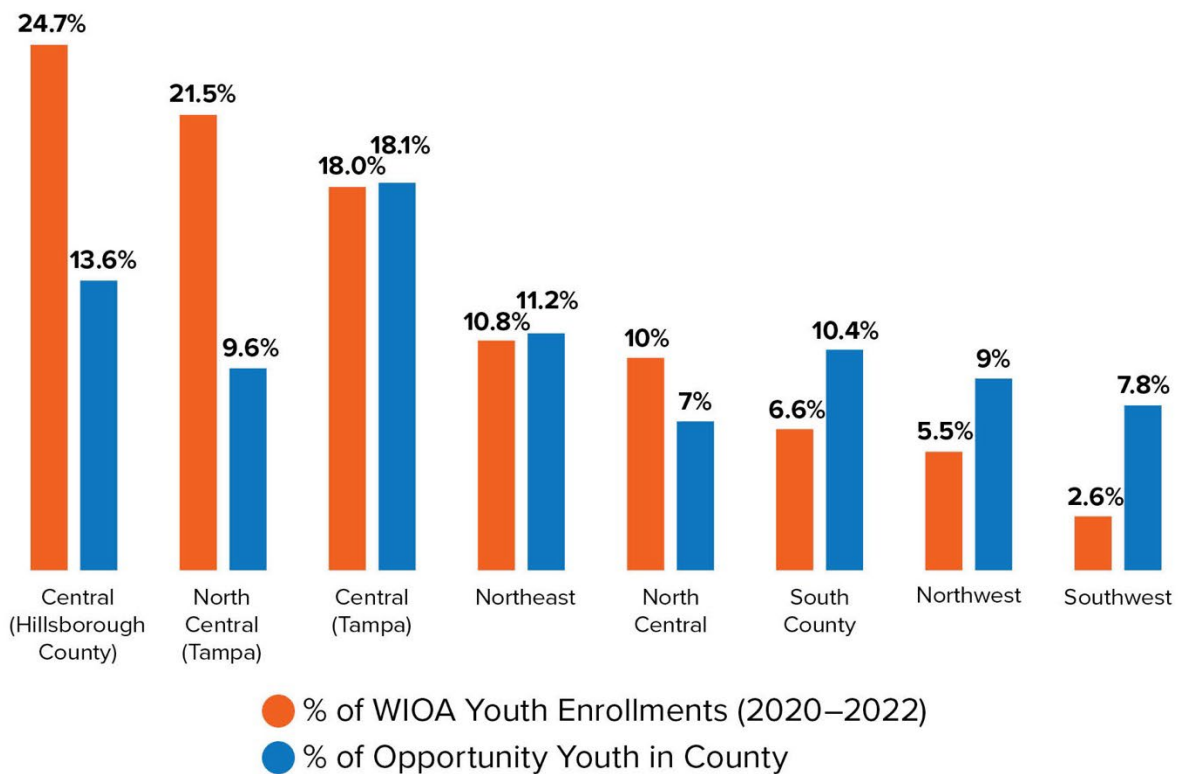
\*Some zip codes cross over multiple PUMAs. In these cases, the research team included a WIOA enrollment in both subcounty regions the zip code overlapped with to give an approximation for trends of WIOA Youth enrollment.

In general, CSTB is enrolling more youth in WIOA Youth programs in the subcounty regions with the highest levels of youth disconnection.

**65 percent of WIOA Youth enrollments over the last three years have been from the three highest areas of youth disconnection.**

These include Central Hillsborough County with 18 percent of all WIOA Youth enrollments, North Central Tampa with 22 percent, and Central Tampa, with 25 percent. The only major outlier is in the Southwest subregion: 13 percent of the overall OY population lived in this area but only 7 percent of WIOA Youth enrolled between 2020 and 2022 were from the area.

Figure 11: Share of Opportunity Youth Subcounty Regions Compared to CSTB WIOA Youth Enrollments, 2020 - 2022



### Section 3 Takeaways

- The three subcounty regions that had higher youth disconnection rates than the 10.8 percent county average were the Central Hillsborough County PUMA (18.18 percent), Central Tampa City PUMA (13.59 percent), and the Northeast PUMA (11.15 percent).
- In general, CSTB is enrolling more youth in WIOA Youth programs in the subcounty regions with the highest levels of youth disconnection. Sixty-five percent of WIOA Youth enrollments over the last three years have been from the three highest areas of youth disconnection. These include Central Hillsborough County with 18 percent of all WIOA Youth enrollments, North Central Tampa with 22 percent, and Central Tampa, with 25 percent.
- Deeper penetration of CSTB's WIOA Youth program may be needed in South County. This subregion is home to 13 percent of the overall OY population but only 7 percent of WIOA Youth enrolled between 2020 and 2022 lived in zip codes in the subregion.
- CSTB and its partners should discuss whether their strategy and priorities are related to relative parity of program enrollments across county subregions or if a specific, place-based concentration in the subregions with the highest youth disconnection is preferred. A tightly focused place-based strategy to reduce disconnection in the two or three highest subregions would have impacts on fundraising, partner selection, physical infrastructure, staffing, and procurement decisions.

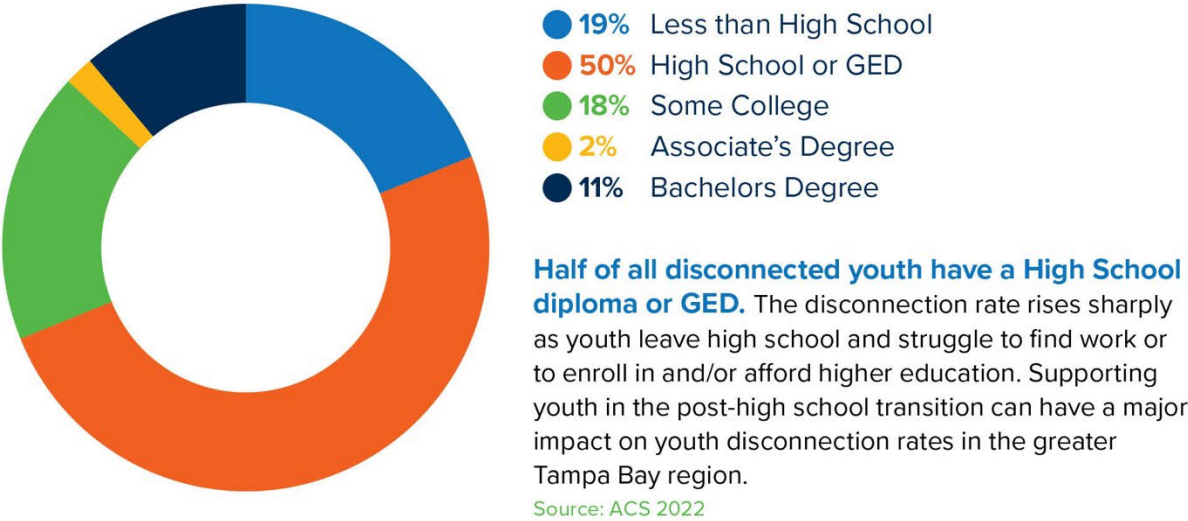


# SECTION 4: EDUCATION LEVEL OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Understanding the education level of disconnected youth can help narrow in on the right investments and interventions. For example, a 23-year-old with a bachelor’s degree needs a different set of services than a 17-year-old who has recently dropped out of high school. Nationwide, 23.8 percent of disconnected youth did not complete high school and 52.3 percent have a high school diploma with no further education. Only 5 percent have bachelor’s degree.<sup>12</sup>

In Hillsborough County, disconnected youth as a group have higher rates of educational attainment than these national averages. Nineteen percent of Hillsborough County Opportunity Youth (OY) have less than a high school diploma and 50 percent completed high school or their GED but have no other education. Eleven percent have bachelor’s degrees and 2 percent have an associate degree.

Figure 12: Education Level of Opportunity Youth in Hillsborough County



Between 2020 and 2022, nearly half (46 percent) of CSTB’s WIOA Youth enrollees had less than a high school education and the other half had a high school or GED (36 percent) or some college (14 percent). A larger percentage of WIOA Youth enrollees have less than a high school diploma than all OY living in Hillsborough County.

Figure 13: Career Source Tampa Bay WIOA Youth Enrollees by Educational Level

Education Level	# WIOA Youth Enrollees (2020-2022)	% of WIOA Youth Enrollees	% of OY in Hillsborough County
Less than High School	433	46%	19%
High School or GED	344	36%	50%
Some College	135	14%	18%
Associate degree	24	3%	2%
Bachelor's Degree	11	1%	11%

As discussed in Section 3, 84 percent of OY in Hillsborough County are 19 – 24 years old, with 37 percent between the ages of 19-21, and 47 percent between the ages of 22-24. This data, taken with the education level data, suggests a major opportunity in the region is to design and invest in programs specifically targeting the high school to work/post-secondary school transition for youth aged 19 and above. Below are examples for stakeholders to consider with the number of opportunity youth in each education level the program would target.

Figure 14: Example of Segmenting Interventions to Target Specific OY by Education Level

Educational Level	# of OY in Hillsborough County	Example Intervention(s)
Less Than High School	3,418	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drop out recovery program with K-12 school district and credit recovery partners</li> <li>Drop out prevention services for youth in the K-12 system exhibiting warning signs (e.g., chronic absences)</li> </ul>
HS or GED	8,956	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer bridge/dual enrollment programs with high schools and community colleges</li> <li>Post-secondary education navigation and financial counseling</li> <li>Summer jobs, internships, apprenticeships</li> </ul>
Some College	3,144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-secondary education navigation and financial counseling</li> <li>Reenrollment program with community colleges that includes barrier removal and financial support</li> <li>Earn-and-learn opportunities (e.g., apprenticeships)</li> </ul>
Associate degree	390	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social capital building</li> <li>On-the-Job training subsidies</li> <li>4-Year School Transfer Services and Financing</li> <li>Job/internship fairs</li> </ul>
Bachelor's degree	1,922	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social capital building</li> <li>On-the-Job training subsidies</li> <li>Job/internship fairs</li> </ul>

## Section 4 Takeaways

- Opportunity Youth in Hillsborough County have higher rates of educational attainment than national averages. 31 percent of disconnected youth in Hillsborough County have some education beyond High School, compared to 24 percent nationally.
- 3,418, or 19 percent of all disconnected youth in the county, did not complete high school or attain their GED. CSTB's WIOA Youth program is currently prioritizing this population, with 46 percent of WIOA Youth enrollees over the last three years. These opportunity youth have very different needs than OY with higher levels of education. This represents an opportunity for CSTB and other partners to engage with K-12 school districts and other drop out recovery and prevention partners to blend WIOA Title I Youth funds with other local education dollars to design targeted drop out recovery interventions for these young people. One program model can be found in the City of Los Angeles. In July 2012, the City of Los Angeles formally approved 13 Youth Source Centers as "Drop-Out Recovery Centers" with a certified LAUSD Pupil Services and Attendance counselor co-located in each Center. Learn [more here](#).
- The majority (68 percent) of OY in Hillsborough County have a high school diploma or GED (50 percent) or some college (18 percent). These 12,100 OY represent the largest population of disconnected youth. Evidenced-based interventions related to dual enrollment, post-secondary education navigation and counseling, and earn-and-learn opportunities (e.g., apprenticeships) may be important investments to reach this segment of OY as they navigate the post-high school world.
- 1,922, or 11 percent of OY in Hillsborough County youth have Bachelor's degree. This is nearly double the national average. These youth might benefit from specific interventions such as job/internship fairs or on-the-job training subsidies.

## SECTION 5: YOUTH AND THE LABOR FORCE

While connection to education is one way to reduce youth disconnection, another is increasing youth labor force participation and reducing youth unemployment.

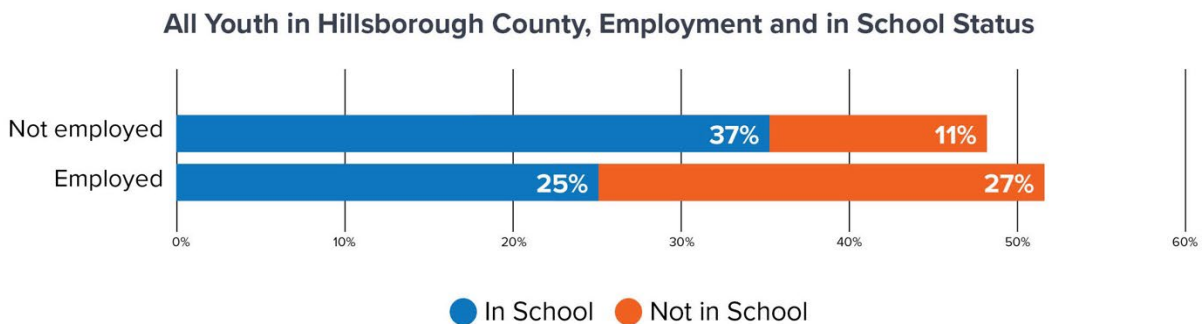
- **The youth labor force participation rate** is defined as the proportion of the 16–24-year-old civilian noninstitutional population that is employed or unemployed. To be classified as unemployed, a person must either be looking for and available for work or on temporary layoff.
- **The youth unemployment rate** is the proportion of 16–24-year-olds that is not working but either looking for and available for work, or on temporary layoff.

Nationally, youth labor force participation rate peaks in July of each year as large numbers of high school and college students search for temporary or permanent employment. In July of 2023, 55 percent of youth were employed nationwide and 8.7 percent were unemployed, over double the national unemployment rate for all adults.<sup>313</sup> In Hillsborough County, 52 percent of youth are employed, split between those in school (25 percent) and those not in school (27 percent). Of those not working, 37 percent are in school. The remainder (10.8 percent) are the region’s 17,830 disconnected youth. The figures below show these breakdowns by counts and percentages.

Figure 15: School and Employment Counts of All Youth in Hillsborough County<sup>14</sup>

	Employed	Not Employed	Total
In School	40,985	61,832	10,2817
Not in school	44,746	17,830	62,576
<b>Total</b>	<b>85,731</b>	<b>79,662</b>	<b>165,393</b>

Figure 16: All Youth In Hillsborough County, Employment and In School Status



## Section 5 Takeaways

A young person's first job matters. According to The Strada Institute, workers underemployed in their first job are five times more likely to stay underemployed when examined five years later.<sup>15</sup> High quality jobs also will pull more youth into the workforce, increasing the region's overall youth labor participation rate and larger labor pool for employers. Youth often are limited to part-time jobs with no benefits, an unpredictable schedule and variable hours, keeping workers in a state of vulnerability and instability. They also make it difficult for young adults to blend work with education or childcare. Below are major factors that influence young people's ability to participate, stay connected to, and advance in a local labor market.

- **Improve wages and benefits for jobs and internships**

Low wages and benefits mean that youth need to work more hours to cover their expenses, which in turn means fewer hours are available for school or training. Higher wages are also a major draw for youth considering whether to enter or re-enter the workforce in the first place. CSTB and other partners can help employers offset the costs of higher wages through wage subsidy programs.

- **Keep hours predictable**

Like low wages, schedule unpredictability can make it hard for young adults to blend work and education, while also making it difficult for young parents to arrange childcare. Unpredictable hours also lead to uneven income, which contributes to financial instability. Key elements to predictable schedules include:

**Stability:** Employers provide a good faith estimate of an employee's schedule at time of hire.

**Predictability:** Employers provide employees seven-day schedules 14 days in advance. Employers provide "predictability pay" for short-notice changes and allow workers to decline short-notice requests.

**Reliability:** Employers do not employ "on-call" scheduling.

**Rest:** Employers pay time-and-a-half for any hours worked between closing and opening shifts separated by less than 11 hours.

**Opportunity:** Employers offer any needed hours to current, qualified part-time workers before hiring new workers or using contractors or staffing agencies.

CSTB and its partners can work with employers committed to keeping hours as predictable as possible for young people as they transition to adulthood, increasing the chances they are able to stay connected to school and the workforce long term.

- **Add "springiness" to jobs**

When entry level jobs offer options for promotion and/or provide support for education and training, they are said to be "springboard jobs." Springboard jobs help young workers launch careers. It is especially important for employers in retail, hospitality, and food service to consider how they can make their jobs "springboard jobs" for young workers since 45 percent of 16–24-year-olds work in these sectors nationally.

## SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

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While this report is aimed at helping organizations, leaders, and youth program practitioners in Hillsborough County better understand who, where, and what the 17,830 opportunity youth in the region are experiencing, we also have five recommendations to be discussed at an upcoming regional summit.

### Recommendation 1: Increase Awareness

There are 17,830 disconnected youth in Hillsborough County. While the last decade of youth disconnection data shows a promising trend, more than 1 in 10 youth living in the county are not in school or work. As local employers continue to struggle to find workers amidst historically low unemployment, this presents an opportunity for CSTB and its partners to launch a regional opportunity youth summit to gather key education, business, government, philanthropy, and youth leaders to share report findings and discuss solutions to better support, educate, and employ this large population of young people who are currently sitting on the sidelines of the local economy. A concerted effort to increase awareness would include:

- An annual conference with 300-400 key stakeholders and youth to discuss the report findings, repeated each year to track trends and discuss progress and challenges toward reducing youth disconnection in the region.
- Media opportunities to discuss disconnected youth data and regional partnerships, investments, and solutions to address them.
- Engagement with local elected officials committed to policy and practice change to better help young people transition to adulthood in Hillsborough County.
- Building a countywide community of practice of individuals working on youth issues that can become knowledgeable of the latest OY data, networked with each other across organizations and sectors, brought together by a common vision and goal for reducing youth disconnection, and committed to evidenced-based practices proven to reduce youth disconnection. Building on the event, this could include local webinars, trainings on the latest practices, a regular newsletter, and other touchpoints throughout the year to keep the community engaged between annual events.

### Recommendation 2: Amplify Youth Voices

Center the event and any action plans on the voices and experiences of the experts: Hillsborough County's youth and young adults. This report used quantitative data to help community leaders get a better understanding of who the 17,830-opportunity youth are, where they live, and their educational and employment experience. However, this report is only part of the story. The stories, voices, and experiences of youth and young adults should be one of the cornerstones of a multi-year initiative to reduce youth disconnection. Incorporating this experiential qualitative data can be done through:

- Ensuring a large portion (50-75) of the event attendees are young people and are given authentic opportunities to share their story, provide input on solutions, and react and respond to the findings in this report.
- Identify one or more advocacy agencies to identify, train, compensate, and support a network of youth advocates that actively and effectively promote local policies and funding priorities that will reduce youth disconnection. CSTB, UWS, and other partners can help identify youth and provide stipends or other support to youth advocates.

- Provide youth with print, digital, and video media opportunities through interviews, storytelling, and stakeholder newsletters. This will provide youth and young adults a larger platform to share their perspectives and stories with community leaders, employers, funders, policymakers, and social service organizations about what they want and need to stay connected to work and school.

**Recommendation 3: Expand and Segment Opportunity Youth Service Delivery System.**

Through a combination of fundraising and program design, CSTB and its partners have an opportunity to expand the reach and impact of their WIOA Youth service delivery system. CSTB’s WIOA Youth program is currently prioritizing younger youth with less than a high school diploma. This segment of youth represented 46 percent of WIOA Youth enrollees over the last three years. CSTB and its partners have an opportunity to expand the reach and size of its youth system to reach additional young people through:

- Raise and identify \$5M over the next five years to serve 1,000 additional youth through the CSTB system to continue the downward trend of youth disconnection.
- Prioritize evidenced based practices in its program funding decisions. This could include procurement requirements and incentives. The Texas Workforce Commission, for example, includes preference points for high, medium, and low evidence levels for program designs submitting under their WIOA Youth RFPs.<sup>16</sup>
- Segment programs, partners, and investments by education level to organize this service expansion and enlarge the broader youth service delivery system in a way that meets different young people where they are in their journey towards adulthood. Below are examples for stakeholders to consider with the number of opportunity youth in each education level the program would target.

**Figure 17: Example of Segmenting Interventions to Target Specific OY by Education Level**

Educational Level	# of OY in Hillsborough County	Example Intervention(s)
Less Than High School	3,418	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop out recovery program with K-12 school district and credit recovery partners</li> <li>• Drop out prevention services for youth in the K-12 system exhibiting warning signs (e.g., chronic absences)</li> </ul>
HS or GED	8,956	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer bridge/dual enrollment programs with high schools and community colleges</li> <li>• Post-secondary education navigation and financial counseling</li> <li>• Summer jobs, internships, apprenticeships</li> </ul>
Some College	3,144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-secondary education navigation and financial counseling</li> <li>• Reenrollment program with community colleges that includes barrier removal and financial support</li> <li>• Earn-and-learn opportunities (e.g., apprenticeships)</li> </ul>

Associate degree	390	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social capital building</li> <li>• On-the-Job training subsidies</li> <li>• 4-Year School Transfer Services and Financing</li> <li>• Job/internship fairs</li> </ul>
Bachelor’s degree	1,922	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social capital building</li> <li>• On-the-Job training subsidies</li> <li>• Job/internship fairs</li> </ul>

**Recommendation 4: Consider a Deeper and Intentional Priority on the Places with Highest Youth Disconnection**

The three subcounty regions that had higher youth disconnection rates than the 10.8 percent county average were the Central Hillsborough County PUMA (18.18 percent), Central Tampa City PUMA (13.59 percent), and the Northeast PUMA (11.15 percent). In general, CSTB is enrolling more youth in WIOA Youth programs in the subcounty regions with the highest levels of youth disconnection.

CSTB and its partners should discuss whether their strategy and priorities are related to relative parity of program enrollments across county subregions or if a specific, place-based concentration in the subregions of youth disconnection is preferred. A tightly focused placed-based strategy to reduce disconnection in the two or three highest subregions would have impacts on fundraising, partner selection, physical infrastructure, staffing, and procurement decisions.

**Recommendation 5: Focus on 5 Success Factors from the Youth Success Project in Partnership with the United Way Suncoast (UWS)**

Require and/or incentivize publicly funded youth education and workforce programs to focus on the five youth success factors identified in the United Way Suncoast: Youth Success Project Phase I Report. This research was funded by United Way Suncoast and conducted in partnership with CSTB.

**5 Youth Success Factors**



Source: Youth Success Project Phase 1 Report, United Way Suncoast (2023). This research was funded by United Way Suncoast and conducted in partnership with CareerSource Tampa Bay.



These factors can be highlighted at the annual youth summit. They can also serve as a common language and focus for publicly and privately funded youth and young adult education and workforce grants and contracts that drive alignment across funding streams and program models. Ultimately, these well-researched success factors can serve as the regional roadmap for the types of service interventions that are needed within youth programs to reduce youth disconnection (or prevent it in the first place) for youth serving organizations. To learn more about the 5 Youth Success Factors, please see the [United Way Suncoast Youth Success Project Phase 1 Report](#).

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