



THRIVE YOUTH COALITION

RESTORING RESILIENCE & TRANSFORMING LIVES IN KANE COUNTY

Executive Summary: THRIVE Youth Coalition & Partnership with LEAD

Introduction:

Amid the persistent challenges sparked by the relentless waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, the THRIVE Parenting Project, Inc., emerges not just as an organization but as a beacon of hope and resilience. As a dedicated 501(c)(3) nonprofit deeply invested in improving the lives of parents and families, we stand acutely aware of the mounting mental health and drug abuse concerns engulfing families in the heart of Kane County, Illinois. In this crucible of uncertainty, we recognize the urgency to rise to the occasion, fostering not only a response but a profound, transformative initiative.

The canvas of our response is painted with the strokes of data-driven wisdom, guiding us toward a comprehensive understanding of the intricate challenges faced by our local community. It is in this context that we unveil the **THRIVE Youth Coalition**—a forward-thinking, proactive endeavor meticulously crafted in collaboration with the venerable **LEAD (Linking Efforts Against Drugs)**. Together, we set out to not merely address but to recalibrate the delicate equilibrium of mental health and substance abuse dynamics that impact our community.

This collaboration is not just about bridging gaps; it is about building bridges to a future where families in Kane County thrive despite the challenges that threaten to cast shadows on their well-being. Through this initiative, we aspire not just to meet the needs of the moment but to shape a resilient foundation that withstands the tests of time.

THRIVE Parenting Project Overview:

THRIVE Parenting Project, Inc., committed to improving the lives of parents and families, has developed the "THRIVE Parenting Support Groups." This unique program offers a confidential space for parents to connect, access peer-to-peer guidance, and

find resources to navigate the complexities of raising children with mental, emotional, and behavioral challenges. Our mission is to empower parents to become resilient caregivers while creating a supportive community.

THRIVE & COVID-19 Impact:

In navigating the enduring effects of the pandemic, data from 211 counts for Kane County reveals a substantial increase in mental health support requests, nearly **doubling** pre-pandemic levels. Unmet mental health requests have also risen, emphasizing the critical need for comprehensive support in our community. (*See Table 1*)

Using Data to Make Informed Decisions:

Table 1

Kane County's Mental Health and Addiction Requests Over Time

Time Period	Overall Mental & Addictions	Substance Abuse & Addictions	Crisis Intervention & Suicide	Mental Health Services	Unmet Requests
Pre- Pandemic (JUN 2019 – FEB 2020)	5.4 %	30.4%	27.5%	38.2%	8%
State of Emergency Pandemic (MAR 2020 - MAY 11, 2023)	6.6%	22.0%	24.4%	44.4%	6%
Post- Pandemic (MAY 12, 2023 – OCT 2023)	10.6%	27.5%	15.3%	39.7%	13%

Note. This data was derived from 211 counts. The data supplies a snapshot of community-specific needs based on 211 call centers intakes and completion of requests. Not all requests were met. (<https://uwaypath.211counts.org/>)

Increased Demand for Mental Health Resources:

Nationwide, there is a heightened demand for mental health resources. Recognizing this, THRIVE Youth Coalition aims to fill this gap by partnering with LEAD, leveraging evidence-based programs, and tailoring support initiatives to the specific needs of our community.

LEAD Overview:

Collaborating seamlessly with THRIVE, LEAD has served communities, including Lake Forest, Lake Bluff, and Knollwood, for nearly 30 years. Nationally recognized for its impact, LEAD conducts trainings, workshops, and presentations for both youth and adults. Focused on supporting parents and teens in building healthy relationships, LEAD employs prevention, education, speaking engagements, and advisory services to involve entire communities in addressing youth substance abuse. LEAD manages the Speak UP! Prevention Coalition, actively reducing alcohol and drug use since 2006. Additionally, TextForHelp.app, a youth-focused mental health crisis text hotline managed by LEAD, operates 24/7, offering immediate support for various issues, including substance abuse.

LEAD Initiatives:

- **Speak UP! Prevention Coalition:** Active since 2006, LEAD manages the Speak UP! Prevention Coalition, reducing alcohol and drug use by youth. Funded by a federal Drug Free Communities grant, Speak UP! Strategically focuses on reducing alcohol, marijuana, and prescription/over-the-counter drug use through community engagement.
- **TextForHelp.app:** Managed by LEAD, this unique youth-focused mental health crisis text hotline operates 24/7. Ensuring accessibility, full anonymity, and staffed by licensed mental health counselors, TextForHelp.app offers immediate support for various issues, including substance abuse, contributing to a holistic approach to youth well-being.

THRIVE Youth Coalition Objectives:

The THRIVE Youth Coalition, in collaboration with LEAD, seeks to:

1. Increase Community Collaboration and Awareness:

- Raise awareness of the extent of underage drinking and drug use in Kane County.
- Communicate the risks and consequences of substance use for youth and parents.

2. Entire Community:

- Foster collaboration among parents, government entities, churches, schools, athletic organizations, clubs, and civic groups.
- Form a united front to significantly reduce underage drinking, illicit drug use and prescription drug misuse.

3. Reduce Usage and Availability of Substances:

- Collaborate with local law enforcement to learn ways to support their substance availability options to local youth.
- Implement strategies to curtail the accessibility and usage of alcohol and drugs to youth in Kane County.

4. Create Collaborative Engagement within Various Saint Charles Youth Communities:

- Collaborate with D303 and surrounding school districts, utilizing existing student clubs/organizations and groups to create a youth-led leadership group within the THRIVE Youth Coalition.
- Listen to and engage with THRIVE's local youth leadership group to learn about their unique needs and concerns.

5. Provide Educational Resources:

- After listening to local youth input, develop and provide expert yet relatable resources.
- Provide opportunities for local youth to engage in peer-to-peer support as an additional resource.

6. Promote Healthy Lifestyles:

- Increase community support for youth to embrace alcohol and drug-free lifestyles.
- Encourage pursuits of healthy alternatives to substance use as well as provide opportunities for local youth to have authentic interactions.

Conclusion:

As we stand at the intersection of challenge and opportunity, the THRIVE Parenting Project, Inc. embarks on a transformative journey with the THRIVE Youth Coalition and LEAD. Our collective commitment extends beyond a mere response; it is a pledge to usher in a new era of resilience, empowerment, and holistic well-being. Fortified by the invaluable support and expertise of LEAD, we envision a community where every parent, teen, and child is not merely surviving but thriving.

Together, we invite you to join us in creating a ripple effect of positive change. Hand in hand, let us turn challenges into opportunities, uncertainties into triumphs, and dreams into realities. THRIVE Parenting Project, Inc. is not just an organization; it is a commitment to the potential that resides within each family, each teen, and each child in Kane County.

We eagerly anticipate the positive transformation that our collaborative efforts will bring to our community and extend our heartfelt invitation for your partnership in this impactful journey.