



FOCUS GROUPS WITH OHIO VOTERS ON THE ABC INITIATIVE

Prepared for Public Children Services Association of Ohio

By Triad Research Group

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SUMMARY

A total of four focus groups were conducted in Cuyahoga, Butler, Allen and Franklin Counties. The purpose of the focus groups was to learn more about Ohio voters' perceptions of issues relating to behavioral health care. Additionally, various materials were tested in the groups in order to gain a better understanding of how to communicate with the public about the ABC Initiative.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Unaided, the most commonly mentioned major problems facing children and families were: *"Poor parenting"* (very strong in all the groups); Parents don't spend enough time with their children (parents are working/ single parent households); *"Problems"* with the public schools (very strong in Cuyahoga County); Loss of *"community"*; Lack of money/ poverty; Poor role models; Child care (mentioned only in Cuyahoga County); and Adults *"aren't allowed"* to discipline children (mentioned only in Butler County).

It's very important to note that problems relating to mental health and substance abuse were not, for the most part, foremost in participants' minds. That is, when asked to spontaneously define the most serious issues facing children and their families, most did not mention mental health or substance abuse problems.

Many participants in the four groups strongly agreed that children and their families face more problems today than they did ten or twenty years ago. Some participants said the amount of problems is about the same as twenty years ago, it's just the type of problems that has changed.

Participants were asked to read a list of nine serious problems and select the three that concern them most. In all four groups, two problems clearly emerged as the most serious in participants' minds: Child abuse and neglect by parents or caregivers (selected by 33 of the 41 participants as one of the most serious problems); and Abuse of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs (30/41).

Participants in all four groups spontaneously mentioned the *"stigma"* of having mental health and/or substance abuse problems and the stigma of addressing these problems.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT RESOURCES

Most participants said they think their community is doing a *"so-so"* job of addressing the problems they'd been discussing. However, there were at least a few people in every group who said their community is doing a *"good job"* or their community is doing a *"poor"* job.

Despite the fact that many participants said their community is doing at least a so-so (or even good) job of addressing mental health and substance abuse problems, almost no one could name resources or services in their community that address mental health or substance abuse

problems. Instead, participants conveyed the perception that they “*assume those services are out there.*”

When asked what they’d do if their own child had a mental health or substance abuse problem, participants tended to say they’d turn to their family doctor, “*a professional counselor,*” family members, or their church (mentioned most frequently in Butler County, but brought up in other groups as well).

Most participants agreed they “*have no idea*” if there are enough resources in their community to address the types of problems they’d been talking about. Many participants appeared to agree with the sentiments of one parent who said, “*...If you’re a good parent, you figure out a way to [get help].*”

Participants said they don’t know if the various agencies and organizations that address the problems they’d been talking about do a good job of coordinating services, but a number of them “*guessed*” they do.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

Most participants had not heard the term “behavioral health care.” The few who said they had heard it weren’t able to define it, other than to refer to “*counseling.*”

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ABC INITIATIVE

Participants in all four groups were given a one-page description on the ABC Initiative and asked to react to it. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of how to communicate about the ABC Initiative.

Generally, participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups reacted differently to the one-page description of the ABC Initiative than participants in the Butler and Franklin County groups. While Cuyahoga and Allen County participants tended to embrace the description of the ABC Initiative, Butler and Franklin County participants reacted with more skepticism toward the description.

In the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups participants voiced the following overall reactions to the description of the ABC Initiative: This is “*necessary*”; The emphasis on prevention and early intervention is important; The concept of easy access is very important; This is an important use of taxpayer dollars; The description is comprehensive; The statistics are “*shocking*”; There’s emphasis on making better use of existing funds; “*A lot of words, but no specifics*” (mentioned only in Cuyahoga County); and The ABC Initiative may mean “*more government*” (mentioned in Allen County only).

In the Butler and Franklin County groups participants voiced the following overall reactions to the description of the ABC Initiative: It doesn’t explain why the program is necessary; It isn’t clear what the ABC Initiative will do, or how it will do it; It doesn’t say what it’s going to cost, but “*it’s got to be expensive*”; Previous programs “*haven’t seemed to be effective*” (very strong in Franklin County); There’s “*nothing new here*”; The numbers are “*staggering, but are they true?*”;

The government should be running less programs, not more/ It appears that this will create a new agency (mentioned only in Butler County); Faith based initiatives should be used to address these problems (mentioned only in Butler County); and There is a stigma attached to mental health and substance abuse problems (Butler County only).

Most participants in all four groups didn't strongly care what the name of the Initiative is. However, they tended to agree that the name "ABC Initiative" is "*simple as pie*" and "*it reminds me of kids.*"

Participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups agreed the definition of "behavioral health care" is clear. Most participants in the Butler and Franklin County groups said they still weren't sure what the term means after reading the definition, and several said they "*didn't get*" how the definition relates to the rest of the one-page description.

Some participants in the Cuyahoga, Allen and Franklin County groups agreed that there's "*less stigma*" attached to "behavioral health care" than "*mental illness*" or "*substance abuse.*"

Participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups reacted favorably to the ABC Initiative's mission. Participants in the Butler and Franklin County groups tended to react to the mission statement with phrases such as "*sounds nice.*"

Despite the fact that participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups reacted differently to the ABC Initiative than participants in the Butler and Franklin County groups, participants in all four groups tended to agree on the two most important goals for the ABC Initiative: Emphasize prevention and early intervention to catch problems before they become serious (26 of 41 participants selected this as one of the two most important things to accomplish); and Provide services in your community that are easy for parents to access (22/41).

Participants did not agree on the importance of providing state funding, however. Of the 16 participants who selected this as one of the two most important things to accomplish, a total of only 3 of these "votes" came from Butler and Franklin County participants combined.

Participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups agreed the ABC Initiative is important. Participants in the Butler and Franklin groups said they thought the problems are important, but they tended to agree that the description of the ABC Initiative isn't clear enough, or detailed enough, to be able to judge the Initiative's importance.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT FACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION PROBLEMS

The purpose of giving participants facts to review and rate was to better understand how to communicate with the public. While there was no substantive difference in the way the facts were rated by the four groups, the reactions to the facts varied. In the Cuyahoga and Allen groups, participants tended to describe the facts as "*shocking*" and "*terrible.*" In the Butler and Franklin groups, many participants questioned if the facts are "*true.*"

The largest number of participants (28/41) selected the fact that “An estimated 20 percent of infants and young children are either the victims of or exposed to violent behavior...” as a fact that concerned them most. There was no other fact that half or more of the participants agreed on as Concerns Me Most.

FUNDING FOR CHILD/ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Most participants agreed they don't know if there's adequate funding for child and adolescent behavioral health services. In the absence of information, some said they “*assumed*” there is adequate funding, and others “*guessed*” there isn't.

Many participants said the way to increase funding for child and adolescent behavioral health services is a levy (although certainly not every one was in favor of that). A surprising number of people suggested that funding could be increased through “*federal grants*.”

Quite a few participants agreed money could be made available for this at the state level “*if they didn't waste so much*.”

About half of the participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups said they'd be willing to pay a small (undefined amount) tax increase to augment funding for behavioral health services. The other half of the Cuyahoga and Allen County participants were unwilling to pay a tax increase for this purpose. Most of the Butler and Franklin County participants said they didn't want their taxes raised for this purpose.

When told the amount could be as small as \$5 a household per year, everyone in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups said they'd pay that amount, several participants in the Butler County group said they'd pay that amount, and a few participants in the Franklin County group said they'd pay that amount.

When asked if paying some money now for behavioral health care services decreases the amount that might have to be paid in the future, most participants in all groups strongly agreed the answer is “yes.”

I. INTRODUCTION

The following report presents the findings from four focus groups with Ohio voters. The focus groups were conducted by Triad Research Group on behalf of Public Children's Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO).

The purpose of the focus groups was to learn more about voters' perceptions of issues relating to behavioral health care. Additionally, various materials were tested in the groups in order to gain a better understanding of how to communicate with the public about the ABC Initiative.

A total of four focus groups were conducted. One focus group was held with Cuyahoga County voters in Cleveland on January 17, 2005. The second focus group was held with Butler County voters in Hamilton on January 18, 2005. The third focus group was held with Allen County voters in Lima on January 19, 2005. The fourth focus group was held with Franklin County voters in Columbus on January 24, 2005. Each focus group was appropriately stratified by race/ethnicity, gender, area of residence and age.

II. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

TOP-OF-THE-MIND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT PROBLEMS

At the beginning of each group, participants were asked their opinions about the major problems facing children and families who live in their community. **Unaided, the most commonly mentioned major problems facing children and families were:**

“Poor parenting” (very strong in all the groups) -- “...Proper guidance...just isn’t there....” -- “Lack of family structure and discipline....” -- “...A lot of it comes down to how children are disciplined at home....” -- “...I see a lot of people today that apparently didn’t give it much thought before they made that decision, and they are parents but they don’t indicate by their behavior that they’re much interested in being parents.”

Parents don’t spend enough time with their children (Both parents are working/ Single parent households) -- “...They don’t know how the children are occupied after school...and they don’t have the time to spend with children.” -- “...That’s what’s creating a lot of the problems we’re seeing....” -- “They’re not home enough with their children.” -- “...They don’t have time to attend to all their [children’s] needs.”

“Problems” with the public schools (very strong in Cuyahoga County) -- “Operating funds....Class size....” -- “...The classes are way overcrowded....” -- “...They’re laying off teachers.” -- “...We’re not giving them enough [money]....”

Loss of “community” -- “...When we were coming up, you were taught by your Mom, but you also learned things from society....People were close-knit....[Now] children aren’t being guided right.” -- “I think there’s a real lack of community. I grew up in a small town. Everybody knew me, and everybody knew who my parents were. I got away with nothing because everyone was watching out for me....Now, I don’t let my kids leave the block because there’s bad people out there. You don’t know your neighbors, and they don’t know you....”

Lack of money/ poverty -- *“Being able to have these kids do the things that they should be able to do.”* -- *“...I think there’s a lot of people who don’t have enough money to raise their kids properly, get them a good education....”*

Poor role models -- *“Role modeling from the adults, sports figures, music....”*

Child care (mentioned only in Cuyahoga County) -- *“...People that are working, they can’t afford child care.”*

Adults “aren’t allowed” to discipline children (mentioned only in Butler County) -- *“...A lot of the power’s been taken away from adults, at home and in school, from governmental policies....”* -- *“...I have to be very careful when I do substitute teaching how I correct a child....There’s a lot of schools that won’t even let you send them to the office.”*

It’s very important to note that problems relating to mental health and substance abuse were not, for the most part, foremost in participants’ minds. That is, when asked to spontaneously define the most serious issues facing children and their families, most did not mention mental health or substance abuse problems.

Many participants in the four groups strongly agreed that children and their families face more problems today than they did ten or twenty years ago. -- *“More guns on the street. There was never the guns on the street twenty years ago like there is now.”* -- *“Drugs.”* -- *“More family stress as a whole.”* -- *“More single parents.”* -- *“I think a lot of people leave their kids alone too much now....They’re going to get in trouble.”* -- *“...The internet. That’s very disturbing....Technology has actually created more problems....”* -- *“The internet is a very negative influence....”* -- *“...It’s sex, sex, sex....Back when my kids were growing up, it was Captain Kangaroo....”* -- *“All the violence on TV, and the video games....”*

Some participants said the amount of problems is about the same as twenty years ago, it’s just the type of problems that has changed. -- *“Different problems, different times. Twenty years ago, we still had problems....”* -- *“...You could talk to somebody twenty years ago, and I think they would have had the same concerns in terms of the direction society was headed, how their kids were doing, how their family life was....”* -- *“I think every generation goes through its own cycles and problems that are related to what the situation is at the time....”*

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS

Participants were asked to read a list of nine serious problems and select the three that concern them most.

In all four groups, two problems clearly emerged as the most serious in participants' minds:

Child abuse and neglect by parents or caregivers (selected by 33 of the 41 participants as one of the most serious problems)

Abuse of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs (30/41)

MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS THAT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES CAN HAVE TODAY		
	Number of Participants Who Said This is One of Three Most Serious Problems (N=41)	Participants' Reasons for Selecting This As One of the Three Most Serious Problems
Child abuse and neglect by parents or caregivers	33	<i>"When the child's primary caregiver...is lacking, I don't know how you compensate for that...Any kind of abuse or neglect for a child, is the most damaging, horrendous thing that can happen....It's a root cause of so many other problems that happen later in life...." -- "...A lot of these kids are more or less raising their selves." -- "Both parents are working. There's what they call latchkey kids nowadays. There's no supervision...." -- "...I've heard there's a huge increase in the number of children that are being abused....And then the problems multiply and multiply...." -- "...I ran across a lot of females when I went to college that had been sexually abused by a family member or a caregiver...." -- "There's a lot of parents that are irresponsible...."</i>

**MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS
THAT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES CAN HAVE TODAY**

	<p style="text-align: center;">Number of Participants Who Said This is One of Three Most Serious Problems (N=41)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Participants' Reasons for Selecting This As One of the Three Most Serious Problems</p>
<p>Abuse of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">30</p>	<p><i>"That sometimes causes a lot of the other problems." -- "Kids <u>and</u> parents." -- "...It basically ruins their lives....It's a downward stream." -- "They think it's cool...." -- "You don't know your kids are doing it most of the time." -- "It can lead to more serious criminal activity, or even death." -- "...The problem seems to be starting younger and younger...." -- "...I suffered from it...."</i></p>
<p>Teens with emotional or substance abuse problems that get them in trouble with the law</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">17</p>	<p><i>"They start with these drugs and alcohol, and then they're emotionally crippled....There goes their life...." -- "...They get to that place, and they do have those problems, and I don't think there's a whole lot of places for them to go, or for their parents to go...." -- "...I think the parents become frustrated and it leads to abuse, because they can't control the kids. I don't know what the answer to it is...." -- "By the time a teenager gets in trouble with the law, or even a pre-teen, usually the parents, or parent, is so frustrated by that time they want to just throw up their hands...." -- "To me, that's where the pattern starts....Drugs...Jail...."</i></p>
<p>Kids who can't learn in elementary school because of social and emotional problems that weren't addressed in their early years</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">15</p>	<p><i>"...I think a lot of what they have at home comes with them to school, and they're not prepared to learn." -- "But I think this is one of the toughest ones to address, because how do you know what the problems are when children are real young?...." -- "...And it's something that carries through your whole life...." -- "I used to teach school...and it seemed to me that so many problems were so obvious, but they weren't being addressed, either at home or at school....And as you watch them grow up, it turns into the alcohol, the drugs, the disrespect, the suicides...." -- "I'm into the root causes...and I think it's more effective if we could attack the problem earlier...."</i></p>

**MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS
THAT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES CAN HAVE TODAY**

	Number of Participants Who Said This is One of Three Most Serious Problems (N=41)	Participants' Reasons for Selecting This As One of the Three Most Serious Problems
Frequent angry outbursts, temper tantrums or aggressive behavior	10	<i>"...I come across kids, and they have so much anger....When they get around other people, they take it out [on them]....I've witnessed it, throwing chairs and tables just because 'I'm mad'...." -- "I have a seventeen-year-old. He has one emotion, anger. And he shows it frequently. And I don't understand it, because he gets angry for absolutely no reason at all....It's extremely aggressive behavior, and I don't know why...."</i>
Children suffering because of their parents' mental health problems	7	<i>"You can't teach a kid to think properly or act properly if you yourself have violent thoughts or misguided thoughts. Things that you shouldn't pass on to your children...." -- "I saw people who had this problem when I was growing up...and it was so hard on them...."</i>
Chronic depression and teen suicide	7	<i>"I just think that there's a lot of kids out there, nobody knows that they're suffering from depression....And if nobody knows, nobody helps them." -- "I know a few people who have lost children to that...." -- "I work in a juvenile jail, and I see a lot of suicides because of depression...."</i>
Lack of health insurance coverage for mental health illnesses or addictions	3	<i>"...They don't address the problems. Without health insurance, you can't do it." -- "...Kids may not get the treatment they need...."</i>
Young children suffering because of their mothers' maternal depression	1	<i>"You hate to see young kids suffering...because of their parents...."</i>

Participants in all four groups spontaneously mentioned the “*stigma*” of having mental health and/or substance abuse problems and the stigma of addressing these problems.

-- “...*There’s a stigma about counseling for teenagers....A stigma about having your child counseled.*” -- “*Nobody wants to think they’ve got a problem kid.*” -- “*Parents don’t want to deal with it.*” -- “*Maybe [the parents are] scared that it’s something they’re doing, and they don’t want it to come out.*” -- “*You don’t want people thinking less of you....They say, ‘Oh, this kid’s having mental problems,’ and right away they say, ‘Well, it must be a family problem.’*” -- “*...Everybody tries to keep it hidden, so you think you’re the only one....*” -- “*Sometimes the parents, they’re in denial....*”

III. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT RESOURCES

Most participants said they think their community is doing a “so-so” job of addressing the problems they’d been discussing. -- *“I think the communities try. I have to give them something for effort. They got Y programs and youth programs and different things going on after school. I can’t begin to name them all....”* -- *“Like in my community they have the YMCA, and I think that’s a good step on the community’s part....”* However, there were at least a few people in every group who said their community is doing a “good job” or their community is doing a “poor” job. -- *“The government thinks whatever it is, throw money at it. I don’t think anyone really sits down and takes the time to figure out what needs to be done....”* -- *“...They don’t get to the root of the problem. Like they have a big campaign against drugs. Which is great, don’t get me wrong. But is that really going to stop the kid from doing drugs. Why are they doing the drugs? And then attack that problem.”*

Despite the fact that many participants said their community is doing at least a so-so (or even good) job of addressing mental health and substance abuse problems, almost no one could name resources or services in their community that address mental health or substance abuse problems. Those who tried to name programs typically mentioned after-school programs or “the Y.” Instead, participants conveyed the perception that they “assume those services are out there.” -- *“You see those 800 numbers for help lines....”* -- *“...There’s an agency for almost any problem that can come up....All you have to do is call the United Way, and they can give you a referral.”* -- *“Probably the biggest problem is lack of awareness...not that [the programs aren’t] out there....”*

When asked what they’d do if their own child had a mental health or substance abuse problem, participants tended to say they’d turn to their family doctor, “a professional counselor,” family members, or their church (mentioned most frequently in Butler County, but brought up in other groups as well). -- *“I’d like to see more faith based initiatives...and less push on government....”*

Most participants agreed they “*have no idea*” if there are enough resources in their community to address the types of problems they’d been talking about. Some guessed no, and others guessed yes. Many participants appeared to agree with the sentiments of one parent who said, “*...If you’re a good parent, you figure out a way to [get help].*”

Participants said they don’t know if the various agencies and organizations that address the problems they’d been talking about do a good job of coordinating services, but a number of them “*guessed*” they do.

IV. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

Most participants had not heard the term “behavioral health care.” The few who said they had heard it weren’t able to define it, other than to refer to “*counseling*.” -- “*I just have a vague sense of it...*”

Not surprisingly, participants were unable to name any services or programs that might be considered to be behavioral health care. Some participants in Butler County “*guessed*” the term refers to treatment that is offered by the MRDD system.

V. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ABC INITIATIVE

Participants in all four groups were given a one-page description on the ABC Initiative and asked to react to it. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of how to communicate about the ABC Initiative.

OVERALL REACTIONS

Generally, participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups reacted differently to the one-page description of the ABC Initiative than participants in the Butler and Franklin County groups. While Cuyahoga and Allen County participants tended to embrace the description of the ABC Initiative, Butler and Franklin County participants reacted with more skepticism toward the description.

In the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups participants voiced the following overall reactions to the description of the ABC Initiative:

This is “necessary” -- “It never hurts to continue to try....”

The emphasis on prevention and early intervention is important -- “It stresses the fact that if you catch problems earlier, they will be less expensive later on....” -- “It reduces long term problems and costs.” -- “Get to the root of the problems early.”

The concept of easy access is very important -- “Easy access, which I think would be great. They can get the help when they need it, right then and there. Not have to wait for months.”

This is an important use of taxpayer dollars -- “They could just stop passing all these MetroPark levies and take the money that you would get there and put it onto Mental Health. MetroParks are so rich....Give it to Mental Health, where they really need it.” -- “...If every person could sit down and read something this straightforward and uncomplicated, it would make their decision a lot easier....This would be a very convincing argument.”

The description is comprehensive -- *"It's good. It covers everything that you need...."*

The statistics are "shocking" -- *"Those statistics! Those numbers!"*

There's emphasis on making better use of existing funds -- *"It doesn't necessarily need to cost new money. They'll just make better use of [what they have now]."*

"A lot of words, but no specifics" (mentioned only in Cuyahoga County) -- *"How's this going to happen in the neighborhoods?" -- "Is it for anybody? Is it free?...." -- "It doesn't tell me how will it work and what will it cost."*

The ABC Initiative may mean "more government" (mentioned in Allen County only) -
- *"Does this mean another bureaucracy and more taxes?" -- "Is this a new state agency?"*

In the Butler and Franklin County groups participants voiced the following overall reactions to the description of the ABC Initiative:

It doesn't explain why the program is necessary -- *"...It's not getting at the why this is needed....Why are they doing this?" -- "...Is it that the research shows this is a better way to do it?....What's the thinking behind saying this is the way to do it?....Have things in the past not worked? What things, and why?...." -- "...Tell me what the problem is, tell me why the problem exists, and tell me how you're going to fix it...." -- "...I want to know what you're doing now, I want to know why it's not working, I want to know why you need to change it." -- "Why isn't what they're doing working now?"*

It isn't clear what the ABC Initiative will do, or how it will do it -- *"...I don't see a clear approach...." -- "...It's sort of like the Department of Homeland Security. Who's going to do this?....The key points are probably very good, but how do you implement it?" -- "How are they going to do it?"*

It doesn't say what it's going to cost, but "it's got to be expensive" -- *"I think it sounds very attractive, but what is it going to cost?...." -- "We passed a couple of mental health things....Where are those funds?...." -- "I think the thing that's the worst is the dollars involved. 'Tough economic climate.' That's all we're hearing every place. So it's like, hey, this is a really good idea, but how do we fund it?" -- "...My first reaction to*

this is how much is this going to cost me? How are they going to pay for this?....” -- “How much is it going to raise my taxes?”

Previous programs “haven’t seemed to be effective” (very strong in Franklin County) -- *“That money that we voted for [in a mental health levy] doesn’t seem to be doing anything. They probably are [doing something], but it’s nothing we know of....” -- “...To me, it sounds like another government program trying to take the role of parents.” -- “It strikes me as being more of the same old worn-out paradigm, where the focus here is on symptoms and consequences rather than the actual problem....The solution is to prevent that from happening in the first place, and that goes back to Mom and Dad....I’m not saying that we don’t need people to do this sort of thing. You have to be pragmatic about it. Once those problems occur, people have to have help, but that’s not how you whip this thing in the long run....It’s gotta’ start with the parents, not the kids.” -- “...I’m sitting here thinking...it hasn’t worked so far, and you’re telling me give us more money, and we’ll really fix it this time....”*

There’s “nothing new here” -- *“I don’t see anything new....It sounds great, but it sounds like a press release....” -- “It’s just the same old thing in different words.” -- “...Are we just funneling the substance abuse people into a different office door? It’s not real clear.” -- “How’s it different from what’s already out there?”*

The numbers are “staggering, but are they true?” (very strong in Franklin County) -- *“...A quarter million people need mental health treatment. I don’t believe that....” -- “I don’t know where they get this stuff....” -- “...That’s a huge, broad statement, ‘mental health treatment.’ Maybe they’re a little depressed, or maybe they’re psychopathic. They both need mental health treatment....” -- “How can they know this stuff, these numbers?....” -- “It’s not believable.”*

The government should be running less programs, not more/ It appears that this will create a new agency (mentioned only in Butler County) -- *“I think the government needs to back off and start to give more power and responsibility back to the families. I think people in the general society love not to do anything, and so any situation in which we get to turn something loose and not be worried about it, we love it. And that’s a problem.” -- “I think you could sell this more in a blue state than you can in a red state.” -- “I’m skeptical about government programs....” -- “Well isn’t this a new agency?”*

Faith based initiatives should be used to address these problems (mentioned only in Butler County) -- *“I think the faith based initiatives are what provide the most help....I think children are going through systems that are amoral....”* -- *“I agree that [the document] does a good job of presenting the problem, but whether this is the optimal way to address it, I’m not so sure.”* -- *“...It seems like the government takes our money, but it doesn’t give us much of a voice in how we think people should be treated. I just think there should be a place for a Christian perspective, or if you’re of another faith, that perspective....Behavioral problems, that’s a part of life that’s affected by that [faith]....”*

There is a stigma attached to mental health and substance abuse problems (Butler County only) -- *“...People are going to look at mental health and substance abuse, and they’re going to stop. I think they will stop there because of the prejudices, the presuppositions about what that means. And the judgments that go along with that....I think there’s a stigma associated with this....”*

REACTION TO THE NAME OF THE INITIATIVE

Most participants in all four groups didn’t strongly care what the name of the Initiative is. -- *“I probably wouldn’t pay any attention to it.”* However, they also tended to agree that the name **“ABC Initiative”** is **“simple as pie”** and **“it reminds me of kids.”** -- *“I thought of children right away.”* -- *“To me it says starting at the beginning, simplicity.”* -- *“Let’s go for the basics. Get to the heart of the problem.”*

REACTION TO THE DEFINITION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

Participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups agreed the definition of **“behavioral health care”** is clear.

Most participants in the Butler and Franklin County groups said they still weren’t sure what the term means after reading the definition, and several said they **“didn’t get”** how the definition relates to the rest of the one-page description. -- *“They only give you one sentence. You can’t really understand it from that.”* -- *“Sounds like politically correct BS to*

me....Everybody's so sensitive today. You can't say the truth or describe things the way they really are for fear of hurting someone's feelings. Everything's got to be warm and fuzzy...." -- "...Is this supposed to be a program that combines mental health and substance abuse?...I don't understand. Why call it something else?...You want to combine the two and call it a third thing. I don't understand the benefit of that." -- "I think when you play with words, people tend to wonder, 'OK, what are you trying to put over on me?'...."

Some participants in the Cuyahoga, Allen and Franklin County groups agreed that there's "less stigma" attached to "behavioral health care" than "mental illness" or "substance abuse." -- "...It sounds better if you say, 'Oh, I'm taking them down to the behavioral health class.' When it's 'Mental,' it's "Ohhhhhh"...."

REACTION TO THE INITIATIVE'S MISSION

Participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups reacted favorably to the ABC Initiative's mission. -- "It's going to save lives." -- "It's going to be right there for you. It's close." -- "Nip it in the bud." -- "I like that the community focuses on the problem." Participants in the Butler and Franklin County groups tended to react to the mission statement with phrases such as "sounds nice." -- "They're trying to get to the root of the problem....That's what it says to me." -- "They're trying to get care to those that need it....But I guess I'm hung up on how they're going to do that...."

REACTION TO THE INITIATIVE'S GOALS

Despite the fact that participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups reacted differently to the ABC Initiative than participants in the Butler and Franklin County groups, participants in all four groups tended to agree on the two most important goals for the ABC Initiative:

Emphasize prevention and early intervention to catch problems before they become serious (26 of 41 participants selected this as one of the two most important things to accomplish)

Provide services in your community that are easy for parents to access (22/41)

Participants did not agree on the importance of providing state funding, however. Of the 16 participants who selected this as one of the two most important things to accomplish, a total of only 3 of these “votes” came from Butler and Franklin County participants combined.

MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FOR THE ABC INITIATIVE TO ACCOMPLISH		
	Number of Participants Who Said This is One of Two Most Important Things to Accomplish (N=41)	Participants' Reasons for Selecting This As One of the Most Important Things to Accomplish
Emphasize prevention and early intervention to catch problems before they become serious	26	<i>“Nip it in the bud.” -- “Catch it as early as possible.” -- “It costs less.” -- “You can get to the source of what the problem really is.” -- “I think that is vitally important.”</i>
Provide services in your community that are easy for parents to access	22	<i>“If you have easy access, you’ll have more people being able to be helped.” -- “...You need that help, you can’t find it... You’re almost begging for that help...” -- “I think a lot of the rest of it falls down if it’s not right there for people to use. They got to know about it, know how to use it...”</i>

MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FOR THE ABC INITIATIVE TO ACCOMPLISH		
	Number of Participants Who Said This is One of Two Most Important Things to Accomplish (N=41)	Participants' Reasons for Selecting This As One of the Most Important Things to Accomplish
Ensure that coordination takes place among all service providers for children and adolescents who have multiple problems	11	<i>"I just think they're probably <u>not</u> too coordinated right now....Maybe they're too separate...." -- "...It's always go here, go there...."</i>
Provide enough state funding so that all children and adolescents in Ohio who are in need of these services can get help	16	<i>"Look at it this way. You can spend a little now, or you can spend thousands to incarcerate them later...." -- "...Families that can't afford it still need the help....You can't do that without state funding...." -- "If you don't have enough funds, it's very difficult to get the results...."</i>
Continue efforts of state government to improve the quality of the services they offer to local communities	7	<i>"Anything can be improved upon."</i>

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF THE INITIATIVE

Participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups agreed the ABC Initiative is important. -- *“Something’s got to be done, the way our society’s going.”* -- *“Kids are our future.”* -- *“Things aren’t getting any better.”* -- *“We have all these problems in our community. We need to have something....”* -- *“These numbers on this sheet are just awful.”* -- *“I’m astounded at the size of the problem.”* **Participants in the Butler and Franklin groups said they thought the problems are important, but they tended to agree that the description of the ABC Initiative isn’t clear enough, or detailed enough, to be able to judge the Initiative’s importance.** -- *“It’s important that the problems be addressed, but I’m not sure this is the way to do it. There’s not enough information here...for me to be able to judge that.”* -- *“...It doesn’t say why this change is important....”*

VI. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT FACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION PROBLEMS

Participants were given 12 cards, each with a fact on mental health and addiction problems, and asked to sort them into three equal piles, a Concerns Me Most pile, a Concerns Me Neither Most Nor Least pile, and Concerns Me Least pile.

The purpose of giving participants facts to review was to better understand how to communicate with the public. While there was no substantive difference in the way the facts were grouped by the four groups, the reactions to the facts varied. In the Cuyahoga group, participants tended to describe the facts as “*shocking*” and “*terrible.*” In the Butler and Franklin groups, many participants questioned if the facts are “*true.*” -- “*I want to know if these facts are the real deal.*” -- “*A lot of it has to do with...how you define these terms....Like ‘mental health,’ that can mean a lot of things.*”

The largest number of participants (28/41) selected the fact that “An estimated 20 percent of infants and young children are either the victims of or exposed to violent behavior....” as a fact that concerned them most. There was no other fact that half or more of the participants agreed on as Concerns Me Most.

FACTS ABOUT CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN ME MOST				
	Concerns Me Most	Concerns Me <u>Neither</u> Most Nor Least	Concerns Me Least	Participants' Comments About Their Ratings
	Number of Participants (N=41)			
An estimated 20 percent of infants and young children are either the victims of or exposed to violent behavior. Research clearly shows that children who are victims or observers of violence are more likely to be aggressive toward others or to accept the use of violence as a way to deal with problems.	28	8	5	<p>Concerns Me Most: "...If you grow up in a violent environment, that's all you really know about...." -- "Kids are what they learn. If you're in an abusive situation, nine out of ten times probably you become the abuser...." -- "...They become what their environment is." -- "I think it's important to help children as young as we can, because that's where a lot of emotional and psychological problems arise out of, the early years."</p> <p>Concerns Me Least: "I just figured it's not always the case....I think sometimes it works in reverse. 'I'm <u>not</u> going to be that way'...." -- "I just didn't see where this Initiative was going to do anything to solve that particular problem." -- "I'd go with the prevention thing. If you prevent it, you won't have this."</p>

FACTS ABOUT CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN ME MOST				
	Concerns Me <u>Most</u>	Concerns Me <u>Neither Most Nor Least</u>	Concerns Me <u>Least</u>	Participants' Comments About Their Ratings
	Number of Participants (N=41)			
A recent study showed that 73 percent of children in juvenile facilities have mental health and addiction problems that contributed to their delinquency.	19	15	7	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>"...Delinquency, that's a milder form of jail....With that ABC, what kind of...numbers would places like juvenile delinquent programs have then?" -- "...If they take care of it, that would solve some of the other problems...." -- "That's a high number."</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>"I had my four [concern me most] already, so I just put it here." -- "If you get them when they're young, they wouldn't be there. They wouldn't have that problem."</i></p>
Mental health problems are a leading cause of teen suicide. About 12% of 10 th graders report harming themselves or making some type of suicide attempt in the last year.	18	16	7	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>"Percentage-wise...that's horrible." -- "Any young kid killing themselves, that's a serious problem." -- "...We gotta' try and solve it somehow." -- "I think it's an amazing statistic. If true, we've got a real problem...."</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>"I haven't encountered this type of situation...." -- "I guess I went for the ones that dealt with the younger children."</i></p>

FACTS ABOUT CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN ME MOST				
	Concerns Me <u>Most</u>	Concerns Me <u>Neither Most Nor Least</u>	Concerns Me <u>Least</u>	Participants' Comments About Their Ratings
	Number of Participants (N=41)			
Currently, only half of the 240,000 Ohio children who need mental health treatment receive it.	15	14	12	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>“That’s amazing....the number of how many who don’t receive treatment.” -- “And that’s just the ones you know about!” -- “If only half of the people who need it are getting it, then there’s a problem.” -- “You gotta’ have the treatment.” -- “...That’s a big number....It’s significant.” -- “If we’re only reaching half of them, something’s wrong.”</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>“I thought the other ones...were a little more important.” -- “I’d like to know where they’re getting this number from....” -- “I question those numbers....”</i></p>

FACTS ABOUT CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN ME MOST				
	Concerns Me <u>Most</u>	Concerns Me <u>Neither Most Nor Least</u>	Concerns Me <u>Least</u>	Participants' Comments About Their Ratings
	Number of Participants (N=41)			
Most health insurance policies do not cover the services needed by youth and their families for their behavioral health needs.	14	3	24	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>"I think more people would seek help if their insurance paid for it. And I don't think that we should count on the state or government to always provide everything...." -- "...There's people who can't afford it without insurance...." -- "Let's say I got 4 kids, and one needs help. Do I feed the other 3, or get the one help?"</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>"If my health insurance didn't cover it, if it was my children I would pay for it myself. It's as simple as that...." -- "You can buy insurance that will cover that cost...." -- "I think that there's probably programs available for anybody that really needs it and seeks it out...." -- "There's ways to get help for free...."</i></p>

FACTS ABOUT CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN ME MOST				
	Concerns Me <u>Most</u>	Concerns Me <u>Neither Most Nor Least</u>	Concerns Me <u>Least</u>	Participants' Comments About Their Ratings
	Number of Participants (N=41)			
Only 1/3 of the 68,000 youth aged 12-17 with a drug or alcohol problem receive the treatment they need.	14	17	10	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>"Most of crime is committed by the kids 12 to 17. These are the ones most abusing the drugs, too, I think. And alcohol." -- "That's a critical age. If they don't get help then...they're gone." -- "...The younger kids still can be saved....Once they're 12 to 17, now you got a real problem."</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>"I ran out of room for Most." -- "I question whether all the ones who are not getting help are not getting help because it's not available, or because they don't care, or whatever."</i></p>
Parents of children with severe mental health issues have had to make the decision to give up custody of their children because they can't afford mental health treatment services that their children need.	12	14	15	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>"I can't believe someone would have to give up their child because they can't afford help!" -- "I wouldn't want to give up my kids!"</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>"There's programs out there. There's ways to get help. It's going out there and hustling.... You do whatever it takes not to lose your kid." -- "...I don't believe that happens.... What is this, Communist Russia?...." -- "That's one I never heard of."</i></p>

FACTS ABOUT CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN ME MOST				
	Concerns Me <u>Most</u>	Concerns Me <u>Neither Most Nor Least</u>	Concerns Me <u>Least</u>	Participants' Comments About Their Ratings
	Number of Participants (N=41)			
One-quarter to one-third of young children are not ready for school—many due to mental or emotional problems. Therefore, many of these children must be placed in expensive special education programs.	11	9	21	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>“Well, the money aspect of it concerns me....”</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>“I don’t quite know if I believe that....”</i> <i>-- “There are programs...in the schools to help with these things already....”</i> -- <i>“There’s the Head Start program....”</i></p>
Many Ohioans are on long—3 month average— waiting lists for help with mental illness or addiction problems.	11	13	17	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>“...If you have to wait three months, you probably would give up on that help.”</i> -- <i>“That’s too long! You shouldn’t have to wait three months. That’s terrible.”</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>“It’s better to be on a waiting list than <u>not</u> on a waiting list....At least it gives them hope....”</i> -- <i>“They’re getting the treatment eventually. In some places they’d never get the treatment....”</i></p>

FACTS ABOUT CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN ME MOST				
	Concerns Me <u>Most</u>	Concerns Me <u>Neither Most Nor Least</u>	Concerns Me <u>Least</u>	Participants' Comments About Their Ratings
	Number of Participants (N=41)			
About 10% of school-aged children overall have a behavioral disorder serious enough to affect how they function in school.	9	19	13	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>"I guess this just strikes home. I have a couple of grandchildren that have a problem in school." -- "...They show up for school, and they've got these issues they're dealing with that down the road can cause all these other things...."</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>"It's a small percentage...." -- "...There's so many factors that affect how children do in school. I'm not sure we can say it's just this." -- "I didn't believe the number." -- "It's not that I don't care about it, but what can I do about it?"</i></p>

FACTS ABOUT CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CONCERN ME MOST				
	Concerns Me <u>Most</u>	Concerns Me <u>Neither Most Nor Least</u>	Concerns Me <u>Least</u>	Participants' Comments About Their Ratings
	Number of Participants (N=41)			
30% to 40% of children in the child welfare system have a mental illness.	9	21	11	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>“Just look at the number of them! And the money that’s going to help these people, it’s not helping them....It’s just supporting them. It’s not doing them any good.” -- “I was a first grade teacher....I know that’s true....” -- “That’s a phenomenal percentage, and if it’s that much of a problem, I think we better be doing something about it.”</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>“It was just that others seemed more important. Not that this isn’t.” -- “It’s just a statistic. I don’t know what it relates to.” -- “It was the word ‘welfare.’ I think the issue there may not be the mental illness so much as the state’s ability to deal with these people....” -- “...‘Mental illness.’ I don’t know what they mean by that.”</i></p>
Young children who act in anti-social ways participate less in classroom activities and are less likely to be accepted by teachers and classmates.	4	15	22	<p>Concerns Me Most: <i>“...It’s disruptive to the other children, hurts their education, too....”</i></p> <p>Concerns Me Least: <i>“I think if some of the other programs were in place, this one would pretty much solve itself.” -- “If they participate a little less, I don’t think that’s all that serious.”</i></p>

VII. FUNDING FOR CHILD/ADOLESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Most participants agreed they don't know if there's adequate funding for child and adolescent behavioral health services. In the absence of information, some said they "assumed" there is adequate funding, and others "guessed" there isn't.

Many participants said the way to increase funding for child and adolescent behavioral health services is a levy (although certainly not every one was in favor of that). A surprising number of people suggested that funding could be increased through "federal grants." -- "We know that there's all kinds of grants at the federal level."

Quite a few participants agreed money could be made available for this at the state level "if they didn't waste so much." -- "...They could streamline things, be more efficient." -- "We all know there's waste."

About half of the participants in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups said they'd be willing to pay a small (undefined amount) tax increase to augment funding for behavior health services. -- "It's a lot more important than some MetroPark." -- "If we can send millions of dollars out the country, why can't we help people here?..." The other half of the Cuyahoga and Allen County participants were unwilling to pay a tax increase for this purpose. Most of the Butler and Franklin County participants said they didn't want their taxes raised for this purpose. -- "I'd have to know a lot more before I'd vote for any tax." -- "I can't afford the taxes I pay now." -- "I think the money's there. It's just not being used wisely." -- "...I don't hear enough about exactly what good comes out of all these services. I'd like to hear more success stories....It's very frustrating. So much money is going to this. Are there people being helped?...What results are we getting?" -- "Why should I pay more money when I see it going to waste?...You're not willing to give, because you're not seeing results."

When told the amount could be as small as \$5 a household per year, everyone in the Cuyahoga and Allen County groups said they'd pay that amount, several participants in the Butler County group said they'd pay that amount, and a few participants in the Franklin County group said they'd pay that amount. -- *"That's a burger."* -- *"That's just the change in your pocket."*

When asked if paying some money now for behavioral health care services decreases the amount that might have to be paid in the future, most participants in all groups strongly agreed the answer is "yes." -- *"That's a no-brainer."* -- *"Jail's expensive."* -- *"It's much more expensive to put somebody in jail than it is to help these kids...."*