

ASSESSING COMMUNITY ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

Asset Mapping in Androscoggin County

A CASE STUDY

by Mara Sanchez, Erica King, & Starsha Schiller

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The background of the page is a photograph of a dense forest of evergreen trees, likely spruce or fir, covered in a thick layer of mist or fog. The trees are dark green and silhouetted against a lighter, hazy background. A solid yellow horizontal bar is at the top of the page. On the right side, there is a yellow rectangular box containing text.

System-Involved Youth

The term system-involved youth includes young people with lived experiences of any of the following: homelessness, educational pushout, the mental and behavioral health system, the child welfare system, and the youth justice system.

Foreword

ABOUT THE PLACE MATTERS PROJECT

The places in which we live, learn, and grow influence our trajectory in life. The transition from childhood to adulthood is often a challenging experience for young people. Leading research tells us that this important developmental phase, typically defined as ages 14 to 24, is significantly impacted by the community in which young people live and the resources to which they have access.¹ Yet communities are not equally resourced and many young people lack access to the support and services they need to thrive as young adults.

■ **System-Involved Youth** are a vulnerable and underserved population for whom the transition to adulthood is often marred with obstacles. At age eighteen, many of these young people age out of child-serving systems and are often left to navigate this difficult transition on their own. Youth with criminal records stemming from involvement in the justice system face additional barriers to employment, education, housing, and other essential resources.² This is further compounded by persistent opportunity gaps experienced by youth of color, girls, LGBTQ+, and gender nonconforming youth who often make up a disproportionate percentage of these system populations.^{3,4}

The relationships among demographics, system involvement, and subsequent outcomes are often referred to as “pipelines.” Some examples are the “school-to-prison pipeline,”^{5,6} the “child welfare-to-juvenile justice pipeline,”⁷ and even the

1 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2019. *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25388>

2 Hawes, S., King E., Sanchez, M., & Shaler G. (March 2017). *Unsealed fate: The unintended consequences of inadequate safeguarding of juvenile records in Maine*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2Ek6SCG>

3 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2014). *Race for results: Building a path to opportunity for all children*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/resources/race-for-results/>

4 Movement Advancement Project, Center for American Progress, and Youth First. (2017). *Unjust: LGBTQ youth incarcerated in the juvenile justice system*. Retrieved from <http://www.lgbtmap.org/criminal-justice-youthdetention>

5 Petteruti, A. (2011). *Education under arrest: The case against police in schools*. Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute. Retrieved from http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/educationunderarrest_fullreport.pdf

6 Whitaker, A., Torres-Guillen, S., Morton, M., Jordan, H., Coyle, S., Mann, A., & Sun, W. (n.d.). *Cops and no counselors: How the lack of school mental health staff is harming students*. American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved from https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf

7 Herz, D.C., Ryan, J.P., & Bilchik, S. (2010). *Challenges facing crossover youth: An examination of juvenile-justice decision making and recidivism*. *Family Court Review*, 48(2), 305–321. doi:10.1111/j.1744-1617.2010.01312.x

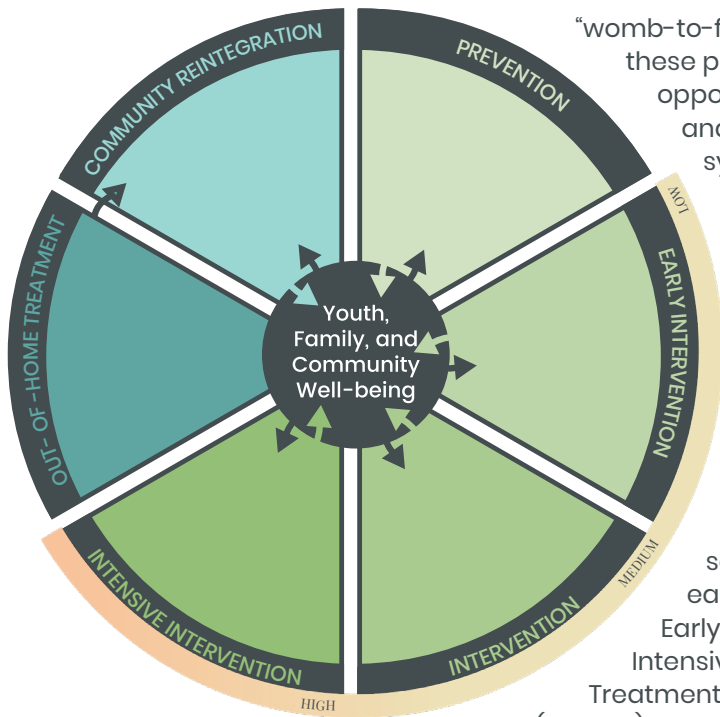


FIGURE 1
Community-based
Continuum of Care

of the Place Matters Community-Based Continuum of Care, refer to the *Place Matters: Aligning Investments in a Community-Based Continuum of Care for Maine Youth Transitioning to Adulthood*¹⁰ report which is available on our [website](#).¹¹

Recognizing the need for consistent and targeted services to support systems-involved, transition-aged youth, the Place Matters project aims to support the state of Maine and its communities in redesigning, implementing, and evaluating a community-based continuum of care through systems innovation, data resources, and community inclusion. Our work focuses on translating data and innovative practices into community-based solutions that are both responsive to local needs and supplement existing assets so that **all transition-aged young people in Maine thrive into adulthood**.

Housed under the Justice Policy Program at the University of Southern Maine's Cutler Institute, the Place Matters team is a collaboration of researchers, policy advisors, data visualization experts, and directly impacted young people. The Place Matters project has received support from the following funders: the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rocking Moon Foundation, the Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, and the Maine Economic Improvement Fund.

“womb-to-foster care pipeline.”⁸ Disrupting these pipelines represents a critical opportunity to reduce the negative, and often cyclical, impacts of system involvement on young people. **A significant body of research points to strategic investment in a community-based continuum of care as the most effective and efficient way to achieve this disruption.**⁹ Such a system of care would be shaped by the community and include a range of evidence-based, data-informed programs and services to support youth through each phase of care: Prevention, Early Intervention, Intervention, Intensive Intervention, Out-of-Home Treatment and Community Reintegration (Figure 1). For a more detailed description

Our Three Core Values

SYSTEM INNOVATION

We are committed to working towards universal goals and targeted reinvestment into a community-based continuum of care based on analysis of underlying indicators of economic and social well-being.

DATA RESOURCES

We are informed by and accountable to the best available data across systems and communities, including the underlying factors and forces of place that shape outcomes.

COMMUNITY INCLUSION

We engage and activate community assets and accountability in local problem solving and adaptation.

8 Ketteringham, E.S., Cremer, S., & Becker, C. (2016). *Healthy mothers, healthy babies: A reproductive justice response to the “Womb-to-Foster-Care Pipeline.”* CUNY Law Review, 20(1), 77-125 Retrieved from <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/clr/vol20/iss1/4/>

9 Heilbrun, K., Sevin, N., Redding, R. (2005). *Juvenile Delinquency: Prevention, Assessment, and Intervention*. Oxford University Press.

10 Sanchez, M., King, E., & Ward, J. (2019). *Place matters: Aligning investments in a community-based continuum of care for Maine youth transitioning to adulthood*. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine. Retrieved from <https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/cutler/Place%20Matters%20CoC%20FINAL.pdf>

11 <https://justicepolicyprogr.wixsite.com/imagineanewfuture/place-matters>

PLACE MATTERS REPORT SERIES

Place Matters has produced a series of reports summarizing our research, community engagement and policy recommendations. The reports in this series are intended to inform and support the work of policy makers and community members dedicated to improving outcomes for Maine’s youth. As our work continues, additional reports and resources will be added to the series. All published reports can be accessed in full on our [website](#).

Reports in the PlaceMatters series include:

Aligning Investments in a Community-Based Continuum of Care for Maine Youth Transitioning to Adulthood¹²

The first report in this series examines the influence of place on our developmental experiences, and how the resources and supports we have access to shape our pathways into adulthood. Citing national research and state level statics, this report highlights how Maine’s transition-aged, systems-involved youth are negatively impacted by inconsistently available community-based interventions and supports, particularly in rural areas. It further argues that these gaps in services are exacerbated by state reductions in services and fluctuating government contributions to the social safety net, leaving many of our most vulnerable young people without the support they need to thrive in their communities.

In response to this growing need, Place Matters calls on policy makers and community members to work collectively across our systems of care to align resources and efforts into a community-based continuum of care that is responsive to the needs of the diverse communities across Maine’s 16 counties. The second half of this report outlines Place Matters’ vision of such a continuum of care. It defines each of the six phases of care included in the continuum and provides examples of promising community-based programs from around the country. Finally, this report identifies six recommendations for policy makers, youth advocates and community members to ensure all Maine transition-aged youth experience a fair, equitable, and responsive system of care that contributes to positive youth outcomes (Figure 2). **In particular, community asset mapping was highlighted as an important first step in assessing a community’s assets and needs.**

Justice Reinvestment

The concept of justice reinvestment is central to the strategies of resourcing a community-based continuum of care and informs the work of the Place Matters project. The Urban Institute defines justice reinvestment as a system wide process designed for local leaders who want to rethink how they allocate resources throughout their criminal justice and social service system.



FIGURE 2
Six Recommendations for Positive Youth Outcomes

¹² Sanchez, M., King, E., & Ward, J. (2019). Place matters: Aligning investments in a community-based continuum of care for Maine youth transitioning to adulthood. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine. Retrieved from <https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/cutler/Place%20Matters%20CoC%20FINAL.pdf>

From Pipelines to Informing Place-Based Strategies for Maine’s Older Youth¹³

The second report in this series uses county and state level data to illustrate the structural, placed-based risk factors at play in communities across our state which negatively impact youth outcomes. Building on research that identifies social and economic factors as influential in shaping a young person’s predisposition for both risk and protective patterns of behavior, this report challenges the notion that individual choices drive delinquent or criminal behavior. Rather, key community characteristics have been consistently identified as determinants of youth vulnerability, risky behavior, and poor outcomes. Examples of these community level determinants include concentrated poverty, housing stability, school quality, and social capital.

This report asserts that understanding youth outcomes as a product of place is critical for both policy discussions and informing investments in strategies. Furthermore, we must have a clear, comprehensive, and data-informed understanding of the challenges young people face in our communities in order to create population level change. By analyzing the current trends in youth outcomes, we can accurately identify where young people are succeeding and where we need to redesign and reinvest our efforts. To that end, this report provides in-depth analysis of 14 place-based economic and social determinants of youth outcomes, comparing trends across counties using a specific population data point selected to measure each determinant (Figure 3). For example, the median family income was used to compare the determinant of Household Economic Well-being across counties as well as at the state level. In addition to exploring these key determinants of youth outcomes, the report also includes “snapshots” for each of Maine’s 16 counties providing a deeper look at each county’s strengths and opportunities to inform the level and type of investments needed in a community. Further, these determinants provide a baseline of population level indicators against which to measure subsequent progress.

 Household Economic Well-being	 Community Financial Security
 Economic Inclusion	 Housing Affordability
 School Quality	 Community Security
 Social Belonging	 Area Economic Growth
 Human Capital	 Youth Homelessness
 Youth Justice Involvement	 Child Welfare System Involvement
 Educational Pushout	 Mental & Behavioral Health Care

FIGURE 3
Economic and Social
Determinants of Youth
Outcomes

13 Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine’s older youth. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2ce1a22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf



Assessing Community Assets & Opportunities – A Case Study of Asset Mapping in Androscoggin County (Current report)

The third report in the Place Matters series provides a case study of asset mapping in Maine's communities. Turning to Androscoggin County as a community in which to pilot this grassroots approach, the report explores existing assets and needs in the county. It looks at how this information can inform investments in a community-based continuum of care that is responsive to both population level data as well as the voices of youth and individuals who live and work in that community.

Drawing on the comprehensive data analysis conducted in the second Place Matters report, this report first examines Androscoggin County's strengths and opportunities regarding the social and economic determinants previously outlined. The second part of this report synthesizes this information with local expertise and experiences gained by engaging young people and adults in asset mapping and community dialogues. The report provides analysis of this important qualitative data, highlighting common themes that emerged from community insights on existing assets and opportunities for investment. The report concludes with recommendations to further efforts to improve youth outcomes in Androscoggin County stemming from both the community's insights and best practices identified through research from around the nation.

Transitioning From Youth to Adulthood – Mapping the Impact of Systems & Places on Youth Pathways (Forthcoming)

The fourth report in this series seeks to lift up the voices of Maine's youth and place their lived experiences at the center of public discourse and decision-making. This study elicited life stories from 36 youth (age 14–24) using art-based narrative inquiry methods to map their journeys from childhood to adulthood. This forthcoming report will offer a deeper look at the firsthand experiences of Maine's systems-involved youth and explore how their stories can and should inform the development of a community-based continuum of care.

A Toolkit for Community Asset Mapping (Forthcoming)

The fifth report in this series offers a guide for policy makers, community organizers, and youth advocates wanting to conduct asset mapping in their communities. The report will walk users through the steps of analyzing population level data, engaging youth expertise, eliciting cross-systems feedback and using the information gathered to elevate community action in order to improve youth outcomes. It will share best practices and recommendations as well as results-focused tools and resources to support this important foundational step in developing a community-based continuum of care.



A Note on Terminology

The terms “asset” and “opportunity” may be utilized in this report in ways that are unfamiliar to certain readers. For the Place Matters project, an asset is any program, service, organization, individual, or other resource that contributes positively to a community in some way. The term “opportunity” or “opportunities” is used, at times, where some readers may expect a word like “challenge.” This is done in the interest of taking a strength-based approach to this analysis.



Introduction

Every community or place has positive elements, referred to in this report as **assets**, whether they be programs, institutions, organizations, or people.¹⁴ They also have place-based structural risk factors and service gaps that represent **opportunities** for community level investments. To understand where and how to best direct resources within a community it is necessary to be informed about the current landscape of that community's assets, needs, and opportunities. Community members are often the best source of information about their community. Aligning population and system data with the experiences and expertise of community members develops a clearer picture of what services currently exist, what services should exist, and what steps are needed to build an effective community-based continuum of care.¹⁵

■ **Community Asset Mapping** is a strength-based approach to gathering information about community resources in order to guide solutions within that community through a combination of population level data analysis and community stakeholder engagement. This report provides a case study of asset mapping in Maine's communities. Turning to Androscoggin County as a community in which to pilot this grassroots approach, the report explores existing assets and needs in the county. It also looks at how this information can inform investments in a community-based continuum of care that is responsive to both population level data as well as the voices of youth and individuals who live and work in that community.

¹⁴ Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research.

¹⁵ This toolkit is not being offered as a complete accounting of every program, service, or organization focused on older youth in Androscoggin County. There are programs, services, and organizations that are doing beneficial work in Androscoggin County that were not captured by this process.

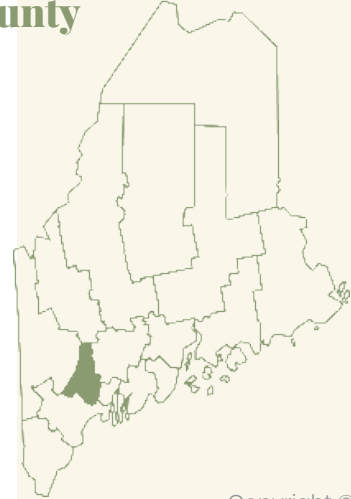
WHY ANDROSCOGGIN COUNTY

In many ways Androscoggin County is a microcosm of the assets and opportunities at play in the state of Maine at large. The data on social and economic determinants of wellbeing contained in Place Matters: From Pipelines to Informing Place-Based Strategies for Maine's Older Youth¹⁶ presented a county facing nearly all of the issues and barriers present in the state as a whole. Embodying both the complex obstacles facing young people who are transitioning to adulthood as well as the resilience found within Maine's communities, Androscoggin County is a place with strong assets. This is especially true within the Lewiston-Auburn area where there has been a resurgence of community building and commerce. It is also a place where data shows significant challenges for young people attempting to grow and thrive. Because of the unique makeup of Androscoggin County and the parallels it has with Maine as a state, much of the discussion, themes, and recommendations made in this report will resonate with other counties in Maine. **That is one of the intentions behind this report: to be used by individuals both in Androscoggin County and throughout other counties in Maine to work towards better outcomes for young people and communities.**

ABOUT ANDROSCOGGIN COUNTY

In 2018, Androscoggin County's population was estimated at 107,679,¹⁷ which is roughly 8% of Maine's population. Lewiston is the most populous city in Androscoggin County and the second largest city in Maine. Lewiston and its twin city of Auburn, Maine's fifth largest city, are situated on the Androscoggin River and are home to an increasingly diverse and vibrant population. One out of three of the county's residents are age 24 or younger¹⁸ and out of all the cities in Maine, Lewiston has the highest percentage of the population that speaks a language other than English due to an influx of refugees, immigrants, and migrants from Somalia and other countries.¹⁹ Most organizations in Androscoggin County are headquartered in the Lewiston and Auburn area, including five higher education institutions: Central Maine Community College, the University of Southern Maine's Lewiston-Auburn College, Bates College, Maine College of Health Professionals, and Kaplan University. The area surrounding Lewiston and Auburn is considerably more rural, making Lewiston and Auburn a center for organizations and programs that serve the county. This relationship between urban and rural areas in Androscoggin County is similar to the relationship between Southern Maine, including the greater Portland area, and the mostly rural rest of the state.

Androscoggin County



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1 in 3

ANDROSCOGGIN
RESIDENTS

are age

24 or younger

¹⁶ Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine's older youth. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2c0a22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf

¹⁷ United States Bureau of the Census. (2019). *American Community Survey 5 year estimates*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2YB4v7z>

¹⁸ United States Bureau of the Census. (2019). *American Community Survey 5 year estimates*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2YB4v7z>

¹⁹ United States Bureau of the Census. (2019). *American Community Survey 5 year estimates*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2YB4v7z>. The county in Maine with the highest percentage of the population 5 years or older who speak a language other than English is Aroostook County. Androscoggin is the second highest, but Lewiston has the highest percentage for any city in Maine.

WHOLE POPULATION

All Transition Aged Youth (ages 14–24) in Androscoggin County

CROSS SYSTEM POPULATION

**Justice Reinvestment Strategy Population:*

All System Involved Transition Aged Youth in Androscoggin County by system population (schools, homelessness, child welfare, children's behavioral health, juvenile justice) (#/%)

AGENCY POPULATION

All System Involved Maine Transition Aged Youth Served by Provider X (#/%)

PROGRAM POPULATION

All System Involved Maine Transition Aged Youth Served by Program X in Maine (#/%)

FIGURE 4

Place Matters Strategy Population

Each program serves part of the system population which serves part of the whole population. In order to improve population level outcomes, each program, agency, and system makes a contribution. Informed by *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*, Friedman, Trafford Publishing, 2005

There are 14,397 youth aged 14–24 who are transitioning to adulthood in the **whole population** (Figure 4) of Androscoggin County.²⁰ Within that population are a number of **system populations** that can be supported by a community-based continuum of care. Examples of early indicators of involvement in these system populations in Androscoggin County include approximately 2,441 youth who were disconnected from school, 1,324 were referred to Maine's behavioral health system, 1,938 youth who were referred to child welfare, 268 youth who were referred to the juvenile justice system, and 160 youth who have experienced homelessness.²¹ Furthermore, many of these youth are involved in multiple systems. Although a lack of data sharing across systems makes quantifying multiple system involvement challenging in Maine, national data shows substantial numbers of youth who experience multiple system involvement, often with inadequate supports amplifying poor outcomes.²² Additionally, as system-involved youth transition to adulthood, their outcomes impact and are impacted by the well-being of the broader community²³ illustrating the reciprocal effects of place.

Androscoggin Youth

EARLY INDICATORS OF INVOLVEMENT IN SYSTEM POPULATIONS

2,441 disconnected from school

1,938 referred in child welfare

268 referred to the juvenile justice system

160 have experienced homelessness

20 Population data source OJDP – <https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>

21 Homeless counts and counts of youth disconnected from school come from the Maine Department of Education. Counts of youth receiving behavior health services and youth involved with the child welfare system come from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. Counts of youth involved with the juvenile justice system come from the Maine Department of Corrections.

22 Currie, J., & Tekin, E. (2006). Does child abuse cause crime? NBER Working Paper No. 12171. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w12171>

23 As was demonstrated in Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine's older youth. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2cela22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf





Methods

EXAMINATION OF POPULATION LEVEL QUANTITATIVE DATA

Data gathering in Androscoggin County began with an examination of population level quantitative data. Drawing on the comprehensive analysis conducted for the second Place Matters report,²⁴ this report uses the social and economic determinants previously outlined by the Place Matters project to explore Androscoggin County's youth outcome trends and identify areas of strength and opportunities for investment. This foundational information provided critical context and baseline data from which to launch our community stakeholder engagement. For a complete description of the methodology behind those indicators, please refer to that report.

COMPILATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA

The qualitative phase of our research sought to synthesize the current population level data with local expertise and experiences by engaging young people and adults in asset mapping, community dialogues, focus groups and key informant interviews. Sampling prioritized two stakeholder groups: (1) community stakeholders representing a wide variety of youth-serving organizations and agencies, and (2) youth and families who are directly involved and impacted by those systems and organizations. In total, more than 150 people were engaged in this process and helped to build upon prior research done by Androscoggin County organizations over the past several years.²⁵

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES & ASSET MAPPING

Community assets and opportunities for investment were gathered from stakeholders through community dialogues and asset mapping done at two large convenings, a Restorative Justice "Think Tank" summit and a Place Matters summit.

Restorative Justice "Think Tank" Summit

A Restorative Justice "Think Tank" summit was held at Bates College in November of 2018. This event was coordinated by the Restorative Justice Institute of Maine. During this event, nearly 100 participants provided data about assets and opportunities in Androscoggin County through guided round table discussions. The summit also included a 90-minute workshop featuring an overview of the Place Matters project and a deeper exploration of what investments are needed to expand Androscoggin's community-based continuum of care.

24 Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine's older youth. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2c61a22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf

25 These prior assessments include St. Mary's Community Health Assessments, Lewiston Youth Advisory Council youth survey results, and the Healthy Neighborhoods "Growing Our Tree Streets" qualitative data.

Place Matters Androscoggin Summit

A Place Matters summit was held in Androscoggin County in December of 2018. This event included individuals from multiple systems and community organizations who live and work in that county, including state caseworkers and supervisors, corrections staff, nonprofit service providers, advocates, legal professionals, educators and legislators. The Maine Department of Corrections Region 2 staff, who are located in Androscoggin County and have knowledge of the people and organizations within that community, provided the initial list of organizations targeted for engagement in the Place Matters summit.²⁶ Through this initial list, outreach continued in a snowball sampling style, growing the list to 125 potential guests. From that list, 53 participants attended a summit coordinated by the Place Matters team, which was held at the University of Southern Maine's Lewiston-Auburn campus. Demographic information was not gathered from summit attendees, which is a limitation of this report.

FOCUS GROUPS WITH DIRECTLY IMPACTED YOUTH & FAMILIES

Five focus groups were held with several groups of young people in various locations to gather qualitative data regarding assets and opportunities in Androscoggin County. Some of the participants were from other towns and cities, but the majority of young people interviewed live in Lewiston-Auburn. Fifty-two youth were asked questions about their community using various

methods. Twenty-one of these young people identified as non-white. Though gender identity and sexual orientation questions were not asked, several focus groups were held with youth at organizations that primarily serve young people that identify as LGBTQ+ or gender nonconforming. Youth who participated were asked about what assets existed in their communities, along with questions like, "What would you do if you had \$250,000 to invest in building your community?" Additionally, youth provided life course narratives using arts-based journey mapping methods, guided by the question, "How has your journey been shaped by the place that you live and the experiences you have had with systems (schools, child welfare, mental/behavioral healthcare, homelessness, and justice systems)?"

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Over a dozen key informant interviews were conducted to supplement and expand upon data gathered at the Place Matters and Restorative Justice "Think Tank" summits. Interviewees represented a wide range of regional and community leaders from across Androscoggin County including public sector administrators, nonprofit program directors and other youth and community stakeholders. In addition to these formal interviews, a number of informal conversations were held with stakeholders to identify additional organizations and potential partners to contact.

²⁶ The Justice Policy Program at the University of Southern Maine has a history of partnership and collaboration with the Maine Department of Corrections.



CODING & ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

All qualitative data gathered for the purposes of this report were analyzed using NVivo software to identify and explore common themes that emerged from the insights provided by community stakeholders. The project employed open-ended content analysis techniques to remain open to themes emerging from the data, rather than limiting findings to those laid out in the initial research protocols. This report shares the findings from this analysis and provides several recommendations to further efforts to improve youth outcomes in Androscoggin County stemming from both the community's insights as well as best practices identified through national research.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH & REPORT

The qualitative research conducted for this report identified **72 assets** including dozens of programs, services or organizations identified by name (see [Appendix A](#), page 36, for a list of named assets). However, Place Matters acknowledges that this list is not exhaustive and that **there are programs, services, and organizations doing beneficial work in Androscoggin County that were not captured by this process**. This report intends to present a picture of the assets that were frequently named by community members who were reached by these methods, which is a basic level of evaluation and all that was feasible within resource limitations.

It should be stated that this report is not intended as an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs identified, since establishing effectiveness for all populations, especially for those defined by race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation is complex and not possible within the resources available for this report. Additionally, Maine's efforts to study the effectiveness of programs on these populations are hindered by the small number of subjects available in any given study. That said, the programs listed in this report were identified by community members and stakeholders as contributing to improved outcomes for the general youth population, and these approaches could be replicated throughout Maine.



By the Numbers

PLACE MATTERS' MEASURES OF SOCIAL & ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS

The population level data analysis conducted for the *Place Matters: From Pipelines to Informing Place-Based Strategies*²⁷ report served as the starting point for a closer look at Androscoggin County's youth outcomes. Based on a diverse body of research, that report identified nine community indicators that shape outcomes for youth and families²⁸ along with five indicators of system involvement for a total of 14 place-based social and economic determinants of youth outcomes. These determinants provide a framework for assessing population level factors and outcomes at the county level and comparing these trends across counties by using a specific population data point selected to measure each determinant. For example, the median family income was used to compare the determinant of Household Economic Well-being across counties as well as at the state level. The chart on the following page (Figure 5) lists all 14 determinants along with a short description and the population data point selected to measure each. Place Matters acknowledges that the measures summarized here have limitations. Together they serve as a starting point and highlight what is needed in terms of a data-informed understanding of underlying factors and root causes that often are precursors to systems involvement for Maine's youth. For more information on how these determinants were developed, and to review Place Matters' analysis of state and county youth outcomes, please refer to the *Place Matters: From Pipelines to Informing Place-Based Strategies*²⁹ report, which is available on our [website](#).

27 Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine's older youth. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2c1a22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf

28 In looking at population outcomes, it is beyond the scope and resources of this report to prove a causal relationship between underlying social forces, the assets that mitigate them, and the system outcomes that youth experience. But an examination of these indicators side by side suggests a relationship between population conditions and early system involvement in Androscoggin County.

29 Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine's older youth. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2c1a22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf















	Determinant	Description
ECONOMIC & SOCIAL WELL-BEING	 HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC WELLBEING	Economic stability is directly tied to the ability of individuals and families to access quality school systems, housing, healthcare, and participate fully in the workforce and economic life of their communities.
	 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY	Having access to quality, affordable housing has a profound impact on individual and family well-being.
	 AREA ECONOMIC GROWTH	Area economic growth and opportunity is a crucial component of community well-being. The ability of community members to obtain work and a livable wage has great bearing on the financial security of individuals and families.
	 FINANCIAL SECURITY	Young people who grow up in communities affected by poverty experience negative outcomes such as: less economic mobility over the course of a lifetime, worse health outcomes, increased exposure to and participation in crime and delinquency.
	 ECONOMIC INCLUSION	In communities where economic opportunities and income are unequal, families and individuals who have a lesser share in the community's economic prosperity suffer worse outcomes.
	 SCHOOL QUALITY	School quality refers to a variety of measures including student and teacher engagement, access to advanced curriculum, readiness for college, and a safe school environment.
	 COMMUNITY SECURITY	Exposure to crime, violence, and social disorder decreases perceived and actual security in homes and communities.
	 SOCIAL BELONGING	Youth sense of belonging entails having access to full participation in community life, being respected at a basic human level, and feeling "part of" the community such that one can co-create that community and rely on the community for support.
	 HUMAN CAPITAL	Human capital can be described as the capabilities and understanding that exist in a community that can be used in a productive way. A community's education level is a major component of human capital.
SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT	 EDUCATIONAL PUSHOUT	In-school and out-of-school suspensions are a form of exclusionary school discipline and are an early indicator of educational push-out.
	 MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT	Research has consistently demonstrated the importance of early community level responses to youth with emerging emotional, behavioral and developmental challenges.
	 YOUTH HOMELESSNESS	It is known nationally that there is significant overlap between youth experiencing homelessness and the justice system, as well as with the child welfare system, and disproportionality in how homelessness impacts Black/ African Americans.
	 YOUTH JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT	Youth justice involvement can be understood as an outcome of adverse community environments, as well as a determinant of a community's well-being in terms of community members' health, economic prosperity, and public safety.
	 CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT	Similar to juvenile justice involvement, involvement in the child welfare system is both an outcome of adverse community environments and a determinant of community well-being.

FIGURE 5
14 Place-based Social and Economic Determinants of Youth Outcomes

Measure	ANDROSCOGGIN RATE	MAINE RATE
Household Income The midpoint of income distribution.	\$49,538	\$53,024
Housing Cost Burden Housing burden rates.	32%	31%
Unemployment Percentage of civilian labor force that is unemployed.	5.2%	5.3%
Poverty The percent of families below the poverty line.	9.5%	8.4%
Income Inequality The Gini Coefficient is a measure of income inequality that can range from 0 to 1. The higher the Gini Coefficient (closer to 1) the more uneven the income distribution of a given community.	0.425	0.453
4 Year High School Graduation Rate The percent of freshmen who graduate in four years.	74%	87%
Crime The number of reported violent crime offenses per 100,000 population.	19.1	16.3
Social Belonging Answers of agree or strongly agree from the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) in 2017.	53.2%	57.3%
Education Level The percent of the population with a BA or higher in 2017.	22%	30%
Suspension Rates Rate of suspensions for every 100 students in 2017.	14.5	5.2
Individualized Education Program (IEP) and 504 plans Percent of student population with an IEP or a 504 plan in 2018.	21.0	21.3
Targeted Case Management (TCM) Behavioral Services Percent of youth who receive TCM behavioral services in a community as the result of a confirmed diagnosis in 2017.	4.73	2.56
Targeted Case Management (TCM) Developmental Services Percent of youth who receive TCM developmental services in a community as the result of a confirmed diagnosis in 2017.	9.2	7.5
Student Homelessness Rates The percent of student population who report homelessness in 2018.	0.94%	0.72%
DOC Referrals from Law Enforcement Rate per 100 of population age 14-24 referred to corrections in 2017.	5.24	4.34
DHHS Referrals Rate per 100 of appropriate reports to child protective services in 2018.	8.3	6.5

ANDROSCOGGIN'S YOUTH OUTCOMES & DETERMINANTS

Using the social and economic determinates outlined in the previous section we are able to gain a better understanding of the placed-based risk factors at play in Androscoggin County. The previous chart (Figure 5) provides a "County Snapshot" comparing Androscoggin's social and economic determinant measurements with state averages. This analysis ranks Androscoggin County unfavorably in seven out of the nine social and economic determinants as well as in four out of the five early system involvement indicators when compared to state averages.

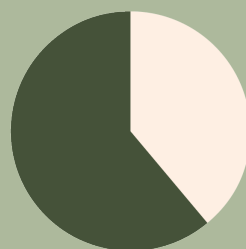
Areas where Androscoggin County fared well compared to the rest of the state were income inequality and unemployment. In 2017, Androscoggin had one of the lowest rates of income inequality in the state (.43) as well as lower unemployment than most of the state (5.2%). Additionally, housing affordability in the county was only slightly higher than the state rate with 32% of households paying 30% or more of their income toward rent or a mortgage. However, the median household income in Androscoggin County in 2017 (\$49,538) was lower than the state average (\$53,024). Combined with a higher rate of families living below the poverty line (9.5%) than the state rate (8.4%), this data indicates that many young people in Androscoggin County are likely experiencing economic insecurity at the household and community level.

Social and educational focused determinants present additional challenges for youth. This data shows **Androscoggin had the lowest rates for high school graduation (74%), the highest rates of suspensions (14%), and the highest violent crime rates (19.1 crimes per 1000 persons) across all Maine counties. Furthermore, youth in Androscoggin County are referred to juvenile justice, child welfare and behavioral health systems at a higher rate than most other counties in Maine.**³⁰ Youth in Androscoggin County are also more likely to be homeless than youth living in other parts of Maine.³¹

Additional data from the Maine Department of Education show that not only are youth more frequently suspended in Androscoggin County, but they are also more frequently expelled than in any other county in Maine. From 2015 to 2017, there were 6,712 behavioral incidents in Androscoggin County (an average of 2,237 per year) and 17,008 incidents in all the remaining counties in Maine (an average of 5,669 per year). This means that 39% of behavioral incidents tallied in Maine occurred in Androscoggin County, though only 8% of the state's youth population live there.³²

A disproportionate percent of Maine's behavioral incidents reported to the DOE occur in Androscoggin County.

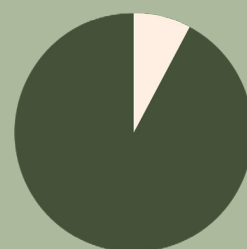
FROM 2015–2017



39%

OF MAINE'S
BEHAVIORAL
INCIDENTS

occurred in
**Androscoggin
County**



8%

OF MAINE'S
YOUTH
POPULATION

live in
**Androscoggin
County**

³⁰ At 7.1%, Androscoggin's referral rate to DOC is statistically significantly higher than the rate of the remaining counties, at 5.1%. At 8.3%, Androscoggin's report rate to OCFS is statistically significantly higher than the rate of the remaining counties, at 6.3%. At 0.85%, Androscoggin's youth homeless rate is statistically significantly higher than the rate of the remaining counties, at 0.64%.

³¹ At 13.6%, Androscoggin's suspension rate is statistically significantly higher than the rate of the remaining counties, at 3.8%.

³² According to OJJDP data, (OJJDP - <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>) 8% of the state's population aged 14–24 live in Androscoggin County.

Currently there are 105 young people between the ages of 18 and 25 on probation and 61 young people between the ages of 18 and 25 incarcerated in the state of Maine. It is not possible to verify how many of these incarcerated young people are from Androscoggin County, but the best estimate is 12.³³ In 2018, an average of 64 youth per month were on probation in the juvenile system in Region 2, which includes Androscoggin County.³⁴ In 2019, there were 69 young people from Androscoggin County who were detained at Long Creek Youth Development Center, and an additional four who were committed.³⁵ In 2018, there were 160 homeless youth in the Androscoggin County school system.³⁶ Between November 2018 and November 2019, an average of 45 young people in Androscoggin County were receiving residential treatment every month in the state of Maine and an average of seven youth residents of Androscoggin County were receiving residential treatment out of state every month.³⁷

Available data suggests that youth of color in Androscoggin are referred to the youth justice system at a higher rate than white youth. For every 100 youth in Androscoggin County, 5.3 white youth are referred to the juvenile justice system, whereas that rate increases to 9.7 referrals for youth of color. Male-identifying youth are referred to corrections at higher rates (8.3 referrals for every 100) than female-identifying youth (3.4 referrals for every 100). Male-identifying youth are also treated in the behavioral health system at higher rates.³⁸ While there was no apparent

gender difference in Child Protective Service (CPS) reports in the DHHS data, too many records were missing race data to get a clear picture of whether youth of color are referred to the DHHS system at higher rates than white youth. Because of limitations in how Department of Education and DHHS data were provided,³⁹ it not possible to analyze racial, gender or economic patterns that precede youth justice involvement in this report.

■ **Viewed collectively this data suggests that young people who live in Androscoggin County are more likely to grow up facing challenges such as housing insecurity, poverty, and crime than young people in other counties in Maine, which significantly impacts their ability to thrive as they transition to adulthood.** They are less likely than young people in other parts of the state to graduate high school, be supported by adults who have graduated college, or to feel that they matter in their communities. They are also more likely to become involved with the juvenile justice, child welfare, and behavioral health systems indicating a considerable need for a full range of supportive programs and services addressing each phase of care identified in Place Matters' community-based continuum of care.

Androscoggin county youth are more frequently suspended and expelled from school than youth in any other county in Maine.

IN ANDROSCOGGIN COUNTY

Youth of color are referred to the Juvenile Justice System at a higher rate than white youth

For every 100 youth,

5.3 white youth are referred

9.7 youth of color are referred

33 Provided by the Maine Department of Corrections.

34 Maine Department of Corrections. (2018). 2018: Juvenile division overview. Provided by the Maine Department of Corrections.

35 Data provided by the Maine Department of Corrections.

36 Data provided by the Maine Department of Education.

37 Data retrieved from <http://mainegov.informe.org/dhhs/ocfs/dashboards/childrens-behavioral-health.shtml>

38 For both Targeted Case Management (TCM) behavioral and TCM developmental services, there are 4.3 treatments for every 100 female-identifying youth and 6.0 treatments for every 100 male-identifying youth for TCM Behavioral Services and 0.5 treatments for every 100 female-identifying youth and 1.3 treatments for every 100 male-identifying youth for TCM Developmental Services.

39 Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). *Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine's older youth*. Page 9. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2ce1a22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf



Local Expertise & Experience

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY ASSETS

Qualitative data on community assets and opportunities for investment were gathered from young people and adults in Androscoggin County through asset mapping, community dialogues, focus groups, and key informant interviews. Analysis of this data revealed several common themes and frequently identified assets as important resources for youth and the community. These included:

- Access to **health care at area hospitals** is a valued resource.
- **Local schools and colleges** play an important role in the community.
- **School-based restorative justice programs** are seen as an impactful alternative.
- **Cultural and economic diversity** is viewed as a community strength.

Heath Care

Both of the major area hospitals, Central Maine Medical Center and St. Mary's Hospital, were mentioned as assets. St. Mary's Hospital is one of the most frequently identified assets throughout the research, possibly due to St. Mary's Nutrition Center, which provides services addressing multiple phases of care included on the Place Matters' community-based continuum of care. Since youth respondents were mostly from the Lewiston-Auburn area, it is not possible to conclude whether health care is seen as an asset by youth in more rural parts of Androscoggin County. More in-depth analysis in Androscoggin County has been done on health care needs by several organizations, including the community health assessment regularly conducted by St. Mary's Hospital⁴⁰ and the thorough work of the Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment.⁴¹ The latest Needs Assessment Report identified several community health top priority areas including mental health, substance use, access to care and tobacco use.⁴² That report also includes community resources to address each of these priority areas.

⁴⁰ See <https://www.stmarysmaine.com/community-health/community-health>

⁴¹ See <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/phdata/MaineCHNA/documents/county-reports/2019/Androscoggin-Report-Web.pdf>

⁴² Maine Shared Community Health. (2019). Androscoggin County: 2019 Maine shared community health needs assessment report. Retrieved from <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/phdata/MaineCHNA/documents/county-reports/2019/Androscoggin-Report-Web.pdf>

Schools & Colleges

Education and school were frequently mentioned as both an asset and area of opportunity. Many young people listed school as an asset and as one of their 'favorite things' about their community. One young person stated, "One of my favorite things about living in Lewiston is the schools here." Bates College was named multiple times as an educational asset that contributes to the region educationally, culturally, and economically. Several young people expressed an interest or intention in attending college either at Bates or in the Lewiston area. People also brought up a need for more funding for local public schools and higher pay for teachers. One stakeholder stated, "The most important thing is schools funded at appropriate levels. They spend the most time with kids, yet they do not have the funds to respond to kids' needs." A youth participant suggested, "Pay teachers better."

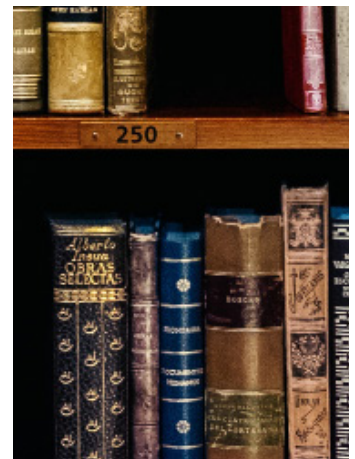
School-Based Restorative Justice Practices

One of the most frequently cited assets across stakeholder groups was school-based restorative justice practices (RJP). Many community members spoke enthusiastically about the emerging use of RJP in their communities and especially within the schools. Acknowledging the challenges facing local schools, the community actively sought out alternative discipline approaches aimed at decreasing the number of young people entering the juvenile justice system. Chief among

these alternatives was RJP. Participants frequently cited the positive impacts these programs have had where they have been implemented and expressed a desire to see an increased investment in these types of programs in schools and communities across the county. Several nonprofits were mentioned by participants as partnering with systems to support this innovative work, primarily the new Restorative Justice coordinator within the Lewiston schools, Restorative Justice Institute of Maine and Maine Youth Court.

Economic and Cultural Diversity of the Lewiston Community

The diversity of the Lewiston community was brought up frequently as an asset. Many participants expressed a sense of pride when speaking about this diversity and the vibrant culture it has created in the area. When asked "What is your favorite thing about Lewiston?" one young person stated, "I love our diversity and the growth we've accomplished as a city." This sentiment was shared by many community members as they discussed Lewiston's transformation over time. While participants primarily highlighted the positive impacts of the community's diversity, some felt that this asset was not being fully utilized. While many systems and organizations in the area are taking steps to be more inclusive and ensure that their workforce and leadership more accurately reflect the community's diversity, several community members felt there was more work to be done in this area.



HIGHLIGHTED ORGANIZATIONS

Individuals who live and work in Androscoggin County identified **72 assets over the course of qualitative data gathering for this report.** (see [Appendix A](#), page 36, for a list of named assets). The most frequently named assets were Tree Street Youth, New Beginnings, Restorative Justice programs (with Restorative Justice Institute of Maine being the most commonly named organization), the Take2 Youthbuild program at Goodwill of Northern New England, St. Mary's Hospital, and Tri-County Mental Health Services.

Many stakeholders spoke with pride about existing work and emerging local innovations occurring within the Lewiston–Auburn area and across the county. For example, Healthy Androscoggin – which focuses on increasing physical activity, improving nutrition, and decreasing substance misuse and lead poisoning – has contributed to positive changes in tobacco use, healthy eating, and most significantly, increasing lead testing and decreasing lead poisoning rates in Androscoggin County.⁴³

The following programs and organizations were named by individuals who contributed asset data for this report and are listed here in alphabetical order and grouped by phase of care according to the Place Matters Community-based Continuum of Care (see [Figure 1](#), page 2) as examples worth considering for expansion or replication throughout Maine as we work to redesign our systems of care.

PREVENTION

Lewiston 21st Century

Lewiston 21st Century organizes afterschool and summer programs in Lewiston that provide academic support and enrichment to elementary, middle, and high school students in the community. Afterschool programs that utilize evidence-based practices are associated with positive outcomes for participants.⁴⁴

Lewiston Area Adult Promise (LeAP)

The Lewiston Area Adult Promise Collaborative is a group of partner organizations working together to increase the number of adult learners completing degrees and credentials of value, which is a target with potential impact on community well-being. LeAP was funded as a pilot project in 2018 to demonstrate the value and power of supporting adults seeking a credential of value. LeAP is currently facing funding insecurity, making the collaborative's future uncertain. However, a collaborative like LeAP whose purpose would be to work towards targeted strategies for young people in a way that would meaningfully incorporate multiple voices and perspectives in an ongoing, creative process is essential to Androscoggin County's future success.

Interactive Asset Map

For an interactive map of the assets that were named in Androscoggin County, see tinyurl.com/r5bc6r6

⁴³ See <https://healthyandroscoggin.org/about-us>

⁴⁴ Durlak, J., and Weissber, R. (n.d.). Afterschool programs that follow evidence-based practices to promote social and emotional development are effective. Retrieved from https://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/Durlak&Weissberg_Final.pdf

EARLY INTERVENTION

Lewiston Youth Advisory Council

The Lewiston Youth Advisory Council⁴⁵ (LYAC) was established by the Lewiston City Council in 2001. LYAC consists of up to 15 youth annually, who are chosen through an application and interview process, to be a voice for Lewiston youth and work on civic-minded projects to benefit the City of Lewiston. LYAC is a model of how local governments can support young people to contribute to and lead within their communities, one that could be replicated across the state to empower more young people to engage in pro-social, service-oriented activities, and projects that have real local impact. LYAC is currently sponsored by the Lewiston Firefighters Association.

Maine Youth Court (MYC)

Maine Youth Court uses a restorative justice approach to address disciplinary and criminal issues involving young people. MYC recognizes the resources and abilities present in young people and empowers them to act as advocates and facilitators in a process that strives to reduce youth involvement in the criminal justice system. An organization that operates in many communities in Maine, MYC is tracking outcomes and is an example of a diversion intervention that could be replicated statewide. Though MYC potentially benefits the court system by diverting young people, it is not funded by the courts. Sustainable state funding from potential beneficiaries such as the Judicial Branch and the Department of Education could help address needed evaluation and expansion for this program.

St. Mary's Nutrition Center

St. Mary's Nutrition Center, housed at St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston, is more than a food pantry. Emphasizing community outreach and engagement, the Nutrition Center facilitates youth participation in programming that provides compensation, training and leadership opportunities. Hospitals are the largest employers in Androscoggin County, and St. Mary's demonstrates how these institutions can be a larger part of the continuum of care for transition-aged youth through programming like the Nutrition Center's youth leadership approach.

INTERVENTION

Tree Street Youth

Tree Street Youth was the most frequently named asset among participants in nearly every category of the continuum, which speaks to the variety of services and supports offered by this organization. Tree Street prioritizes creating pathways for program participants to become program staff, which has resulted in greater diversity among staff than at similar organizations in Maine, as well as high levels of community engagement and empowerment. Tree Street is an example of an organization that recognizes the importance of incorporating those who are closest to the issues facing the community into design, evaluation, and leadership of the organization.

⁴⁵ More info can be found at www.lewistonmaine.gov/lyac

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

Analysis of qualitative data gathered from individuals who live and work in Androscoggin County also provided insight into some of the challenges young people may be facing in that community and opportunities for investments that may answer some of those challenges. Several themes emerged from this data including:

- **Education** is both a pipeline into and a pathway out of system involvement.
- More **gender and culturally responsive programming** is needed.
- Youth want investments in **accessible, inclusive, safe spaces** to be a priority.
- There is a need for **youth-focused reintegration** support programs and services.
- Community members want more **youth programs and alternatives to institutionalization**.

Relationship Between Education & System Involvement

School discipline policies and practices were cited by participants as factors that lead to deeper system involvement for youth. Both young people and adult stakeholders repeatedly mentioned or discussed discipline policies in schools, suspensions, and expulsions as areas of concern. One stakeholder stated, “When students are kicked out of class, suspended, or expelled, it’s hard to turn that around.” A young person reported, “I’ve been kicked out of three schools this year.” This qualitative data corroborates the quantitative data, which showed the overall suspension rate across districts in Androscoggin County are higher⁴⁶ than the overall rate in Maine and the rates in each of the other 15 counties. Many community stakeholders, already aware of these data, spoke with optimism about the advocacy, systems, and community change happening to develop more restorative, responsive educational alternatives to practices of exclusion and punishment.

More Gender & Culturally Responsive Programming Is Needed

Equity and inclusion across racial, cultural, and gender lines was another prominent theme that emerged from the data collected for this report. Many community members cited identity including gender, race, and sexual orientation as a factor that impacted young people’s journeys into systems of care. Participants frequently expressed a need for more gender and culturally responsive programming. They also recommended finding strategies to increase inclusion for people of color, the refugee, asylum seeker, and immigrant communities, and young people in general in the staffing of programs. One stakeholder suggested greater efforts are needed to “bridge cultural and language gaps between families, youth, and providers.” Another wanted to see “more programs directed specifically towards supporting and empowering girls.” Outright L-A, an organization focused on supporting LGBTQ youth in Androscoggin County, along with several immigrant-led, community-based organizations like Maine Community Integration Services and New Roots Cooperative Farm, were highlighted by community members as working to meet this community need.

⁴⁶ These findings were statistically significant.

Access to Inclusive & Safe Spaces for Youth

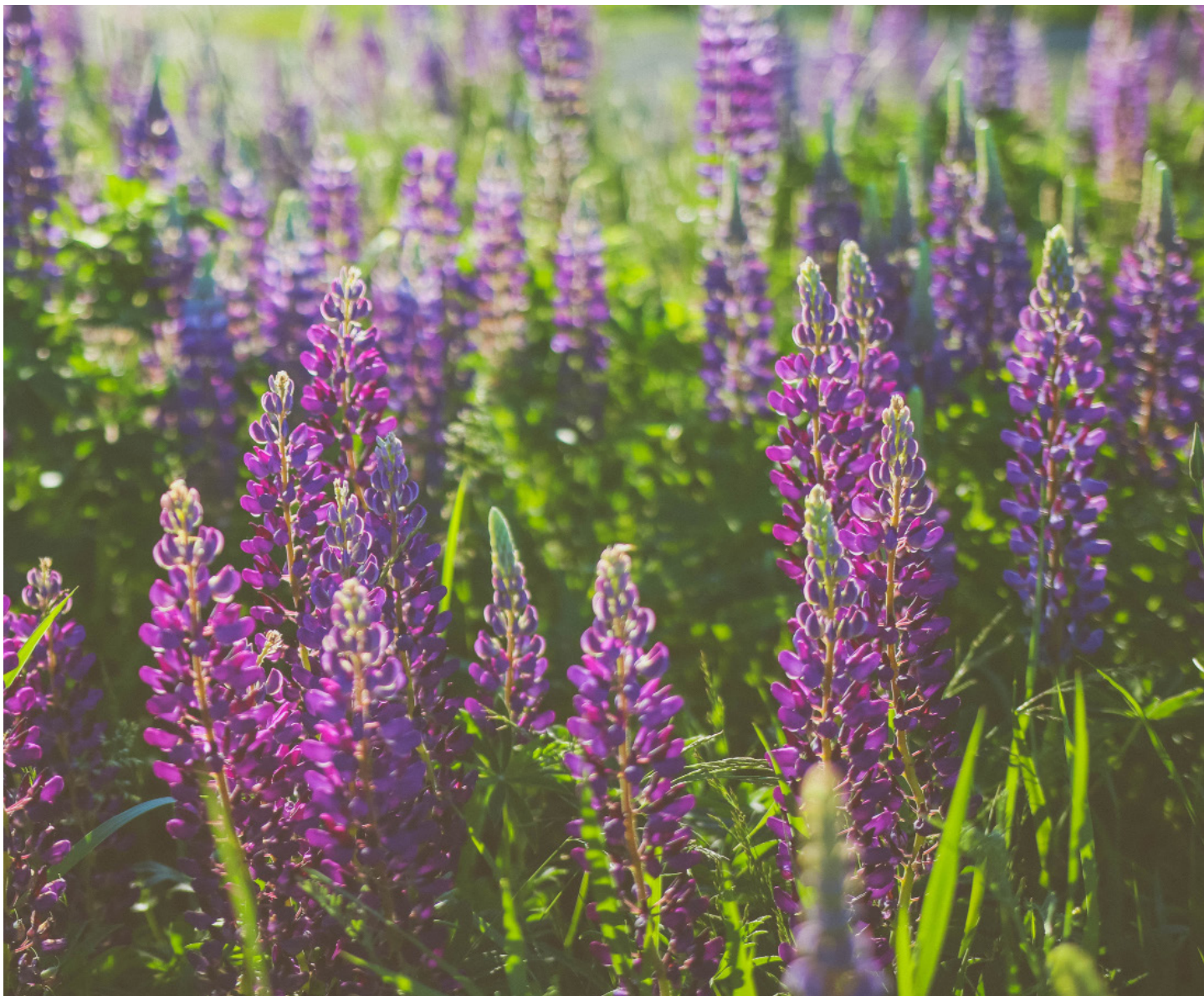
Participants raised public spaces repeatedly, both as assets and as areas of opportunity for growth. Kennedy Park in Lewiston was the most often named asset in this category. Many participants expressed a need for “more parks and better-looking parks,” as well as the need to address issues of litter and cleanliness of public spaces. “Litter needs to be cleaned up,” was a typical youth response. The topic of safety came up independently and in connection with the theme of public spaces. Some participants expressed feeling safe in their neighborhoods, public spaces, and community, and others reported safety as an issue that needs to be addressed. One young person stated, “Compared to bigger cities, it’s safe,” while another young person countered, “I want to feel safe but it’s not safe at night.” Participants both praised the crime rate as low, and contributing to safety, and criticized it as being too high, making the community less safe. Deeper exploration on the topic of safety is currently underway by other organizations and groups, including the Healthy Neighborhoods Planning Council. This group, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) *Choice Neighborhoods Initiative*, is currently working on a transformation plan for the Tree Street neighborhood as a part of their “Growing Our Tree Streets” project.⁴⁷ One of the goals of that initiative is to “grow a new narrative for the Tree Streets as a safe and beautiful neighborhood,” including increasing safety and perceptions of safety.⁴⁸ This project is an example of a data and community-informed process to strengthen neighborhoods that could be replicated in other communities across Maine.

Lack of Reintegration Services

During the process of qualitative data gathering for this report, not one youth, family or professional respondent named a designated resource to support youth in coming back to the county after a period of removal. This is a critical support, particularly for young people who have been placed in institutions or placements and for whom normative adolescent development has been compromised. One young person stated, “There should be something like Tree Street for people who have gotten out of jail,” perhaps speaking to the need for programming to specifically support young people as they reenter communities after incarceration. This gap in reintegration services identified by community members is particularly concerning given the high proportion of youth from Androscoggin County involved in juvenile justice and other out-of-community placements as highlighted in the discussion of Androscoggin’s Youth Outcomes and Determinants earlier in this report.

⁴⁷ See <https://www.lewistonmaine.gov/933/Choice-Neighborhood-Grant>

⁴⁸ Healthy Neighborhoods. (2019). *Growing our tree streets: A Choice Neighborhood transformation plan for downtown Lewiston*. Retrieved from https://www.lewistonmaine.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10291/Draft_ExecutiveSummary_062519



More Youth Programs & Community-Based Alternatives to Institutionalization

Nearly all stakeholders interviewed noted that Androscoggin County needs more programs for young people transitioning to adulthood. The need for more programs, and for community-based alternatives to institutionalized responses was a common thread across the qualitative data gathered in Androscoggin County. One participant responded, “There is a lack of alternatives between home and Long Creek Youth Development Center.” Another added, “Increasing prevention in programming is the best investment that can be made.” Programs repeatedly mentioned as needs include mentoring programs, after school programs, a community center, and transportation services.





Recommendations

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected and analyzed for this report, and drawing on nationally established research and best practices, Place Matters recommends the following investments to advance the development of a community-based continuum of care and improve youth outcomes in Androscoggin County.

INVEST IN A BACKBONE ORGANIZATION TO WORK WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

Implementing reinvestment into a community-based continuum of care that is responsive to locally identified assets and opportunities could lead to transformative outcomes that improve the well-being of youth in Androscoggin County and inform change across Maine. However, it is not possible for any one organization or agency in Androscoggin County to improve the well-being of the county's youth on its own. It takes the aligned contributions of partner organizations and community leaders to move towards that result.⁴⁹ In order to build and sustain a continuum of care in one of the most deeply impacted regions in Maine, an investment must be made in an intermediary, or backbone organization, to align program strategies toward shared results across youth-serving organizations, agencies, and systems.

- **A backbone organization serves as an anchor for further work that needs to be done, such as figuring out the capacity of all the organizations that seek to support young people facing obstacles like homelessness, school disengagement, and justice involvement, calculating the gap, and addressing it with targeted strategies like fundraising, cross systems collaboration, program development, and replication.** It could be a single organization or a collective of organizations working collaboratively to improve youth outcomes at the county level, like Lewiston Area Adult Promise (LeAP) (see page 23), putting a result in the center like “increasing post-secondary attainment for individuals in Androscoggin County,” and then working together to achieve that result.

This work must be collaborative, creative, and ongoing as well as incorporate multiple perspectives and voices in all steps: design, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. Androscoggin County needs a backbone organization to pick up from where this report leaves off and continue the ongoing process of performance measurement and evaluation, which is a critical piece of a functioning continuum of care.⁵⁰ The Place Matters team is working with several designated counties to provide intermediary support to strengthen data-informed decision-making and align contributions across system and community partners to accelerate positive youth outcomes. For example, in Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, and Waldo counties, the

49 Pillsbury, J. (2010). Theory of Aligned Contributions: An Emerging Theory of Change Primer. Sherbrooke Consulting, Inc Retrieved from <http://www.sherbrookeconsulting.com/products/TOAC.pdf>

50 Bergdahl, J., Twill, S., Norris, M., Ream, M. (2015). *Assessing the prevention of juvenile delinquency: An evaluation of a court-based delinquency prevention program*. Family Court Review, Vol 53(4).

Population-level
work of a backbone
organization

A backbone organization can lead the efforts to identify and address existing gaps between needs and capacity in a community at the population level

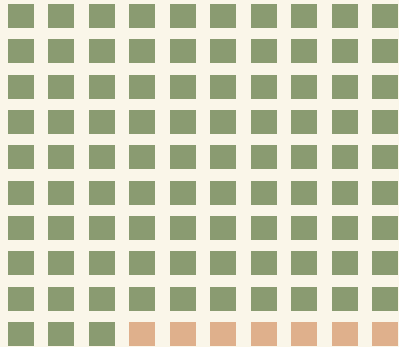
Examples of gaps and needs in Androscoggin County that a backbone organization could address include **Youth Homelessness, School Pushout, and Youth Justice involvement.**

Youth Homelessness



160 YOUNG PEOPLE
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

12 PERSON CAPACITY
AT NEW BEGININGS SHELTER



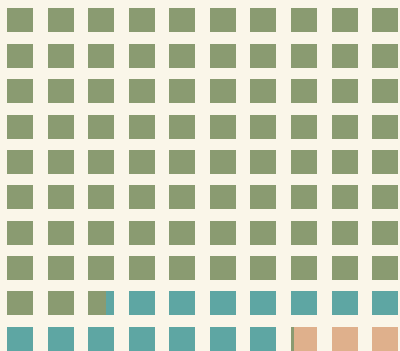
School Pushout



2441 YOUNG PEOPLE
DISENGAGED FROM SCHOOL

70 PERSON CAPACITY
AT TREE STREET

350 PERSON CAPACITY
AT COMMUNITY YOUTH SERVICES



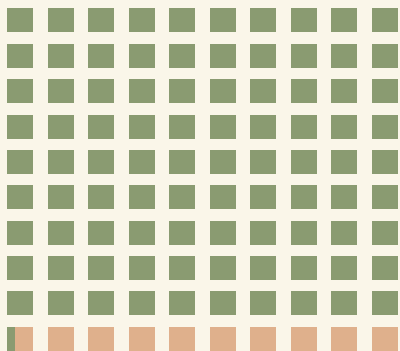
Youth Justice Involvement



268 YOUNG PEOPLE
REFERRED TO THE JUVENILE
JUSTICE SYSTEM

26 PERSON CAPACITY
AT MAINE YOUTH COURT

0 DEDICATED YOUTH
RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS



Place Matters team is working in partnership with Restorative Justice Project of Maine (RJPM) and a collaborative of other stakeholders to plan and implement a model of Community Justice Centers that uses the data included in *Place Matters: From Pipelines to Informing Place-Based Strategies for Maine's Older Youth*⁵¹ as baseline data. Shared results and performance measures will not be possible without a backbone organization to coordinate the work to fill in gaps and strategize across systems and community interests to bring promising programs to scope and scale.

51 Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine's older youth. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2ce1a22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf

DEVELOP ROBUST COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES ADDRESSING EACH PHASE OF THE CONTINUUM OF CARE – PARTICULARLY REINTEGRATION.

Communities can and should provide a continuum of services and opportunities to minimize and eliminate youth involvement in the child welfare and youth justice system, as well as decrease youth homelessness and school disengagement. Often, communities could use help and resources to provide services in every category of the continuum of care. Androscoggin County has services and programs identified as assets by the community, but as this report shows, the continuum is incomplete. The fact that both youth and members of the community in Androscoggin County had such difficulty coming up with organizations or programs that specifically assist youth with reintegration into the community after a period of removal points to the need to develop such supports.⁵² **Androscoggin County needs a robust set of reintegration services to support housing stability, educational/employment pathways, and 21st century skills for youth who are transitioning to adulthood, as well as returning to the community after a period of hospitalization, incarceration, residential treatment, foster care or other factors that fracture community belonging.**

The Maine Prisoner Reentry Network (MPRN) is based out of Lewiston and adopts a community-by-community approach to convene stakeholders and address issues around reentry for the formerly incarcerated. Though this organization primarily addresses adult reentry after incarceration, included within that population are young people ages 18-24, especially those in Maine's jails. MPRN supports a network of monthly meetings in communities across Maine, a direct care reentry program in the Lewiston-Auburn area, a monthly support group for families of people who are incarcerated, and a training program for reentry mentors. MPRN demonstrates the potential for Maine to build a community of practice for organizations and services who are looking to address older youth reentry into communities after a period of removal and/or treatment. MPRN, if resourced and supported, could be a powerful incubator for programs, services, and initiatives to address transition-aged youth impacted by the justice system.

SUPPORT & EXPAND THE QUALITY OF & ACCESS TO COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES.

There is no question that Androscoggin County is home to many promising programs and community-based efforts. However, as other researchers have noted, the accessibility, proximity, appropriateness, quality, and coordination of services varies considerably across Maine's service delivery system.⁵³ Androscoggin is no exception, in that the assets most commonly identified are not universally accessible. There is an opportunity to evaluate and expand the scope and scale of what is working across the county, and eventually other parts of Maine. High quality, accessible, responsive, community-based supports and opportunities can set young people in Androscoggin County on a trajectory that reduces their risk of removal from their communities and mitigates any opportunity gaps that may follow them into adulthood. Housing instability, persistent challenges with substance abuse and

⁵² It should be noted that the local organizations that are attempting to fill this gap may need additional authority and resources to make this a full programmatic focus.

⁵³ ME DHHS OCFS | Children's Behavioral Health Services Assessment (2018) Retrieved from <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cbhs/documents/ME-OCFS-CBHS-Assessment-Final-Report.pdf>

mental health symptoms, unemployment, and incarceration in county jails and state prisons are all costly outcomes for youth and community members.

Androscoggin County is the second smallest county in Maine in terms of geographical area, but there is still an imbalance in service availability between the rural and urban parts of the county. Because of the lack of public transportation options, services in the greater Lewiston area may still be inaccessible to many in Androscoggin County. Supporting community-based services in Androscoggin County must include exploring accessibility and investment options for more rural parts of Androscoggin County, including collaborating with local community action partnership agencies that provide transportation to meet the needs of youth and families in more rural areas.

INVEST IN GENDER & CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INTERVENTIONS DRAWING ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE POPULATIONS SERVED.

To reduce race and gender disparities in who becomes involved in child-serving systems, the obstacles to evaluating such disparities must first be addressed. Future data development must include disaggregation based on income, economic status, race or ethnicity in order to inform and assess the impact of patterns that contribute to justice by geography, gender, race, and ethnicity. Once these patterns are identified, targeted investments should be made in gender and culturally responsive interventions, programs and support services to address the disparities identified.

Additionally, any such intervention should hold the directly impacted population at its center, drawing on their expertise and lived experiences to inform program design, implementation, evaluation, and other important organizational decisions. Great effort should be made to bring any leadership group as close as possible to the ideal composition of about one-third systems representatives, one-third community members, and one-third directly impacted individuals. This makeup can balance the power differential that exists when policy and funding decision-makers share a room with community members and those who are directly impacted by issues under discussion. This power differential can interfere with real systems change that may need to occur. While systems stakeholders and funding gatekeepers contribute to the implementation of a new program in terms of policy and funding, their voices must be joined by those who will implement and be directly impacted by the program.

The Place Matters team recognizes the work that is already underway to address these challenges. Expansion of diversion programs that intervene when young people are first experiencing disconnection from school, and evaluation as to the effectiveness of such programs and related strategies, are possible next steps. Grassroots organizations and immigrant-led, community-based assets, such as Maine Community Integration Services, New Roots Cooperative Farm and Outright L-A, could be vital partners to strengthening gender and culturally responsive, community-based alternatives in Lewiston.



EXPAND & EVALUATE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE APPROACHES.

Evaluation of school disciplinary policies with the aim of greatly reducing the use of out-of-school suspension emerged as an area of focus from the data gathered for this report. As discussed in *Place Matters: From Pipelines to Informing Place-Based Strategies*⁵⁴, early system indicators such as suspension rates are concurrently indicators of the level of need that youth-serving systems are encountering, precursors to further system involvement down the line, and determinants of a community's future overall well-being. **As such, school discipline is a critical strategy intervention point to design community level responses that respond to youth needs, system and community capacity, and the need for deepened investment in resourcing alternatives to practices of exclusion and punishment.** The suspension rate in Androscoggin County surpasses that of every other county in Maine and this has detrimental effects for youth and their families. Young people who experience educational disengagement like suspension are more likely to end up in the youth justice system.⁵⁵ **It is not a coincidence that two of Androscoggin County's most frequently cited assets are school-based restorative justice and Maine Youth Court, both of which seek to provide young people with alternatives to exclusionary school discipline.** Additionally, two of the most frequently mentioned needs in Androscoggin County were restorative practices in schools and alternatives to disciplinary processes in schools. Communities are proposing alternative strategies to facilitate school safety, hiring restorative justice coordinators, and implementing restorative justice programs to give schools more effective and less punitive options for responding when students' behaviors are harmful. One example of a successful approach is the Lewiston Public Schools collaboration with Tree Street Youth to develop the Next Step School Program. The creation of the Next Step Program included an equitable balance of voices which shaped curriculum, leadership structure, hiring decisions, and continues to inform how the program operates and grows. In listening to the community, there is a demand for more to be done at the school level to prevent young people from becoming more deeply involved in systems.

54 Sanchez, M., King, E., and Dumont, R. (2019). *Place matters: From pipelines to place-based strategies for Maine's older youth*. Retrieved from https://cec47d12-75a7-45a9-98a1-99f79c71ca5b.filesusr.com/ugd/d5b6af_2ce1a22f71814c94936d1309e4e79198.pdf

55 Mittleman, J. (2018). *A downward spiral? Childhood suspension and the path to juvenile arrest*. *Sociology of Education*, 91(3), 183–204. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040718784603>



Conclusion

Like many counties in Maine, Androscoggin County has a history of collaborating towards shared results. The current Lewiston Adult Promise initiative, for example, can be traced to the College for ME – Androscoggin initiative, both of which focused on increasing and supporting educational attainment in the county. Recently, the Tree Street Initiative in Lewiston brought together multiple partners to focus on the transformation of the Tree Street neighborhood in Lewiston.⁵⁶ **It is this type of community collaboration and development that Place Matters seeks to inform and support to advance measurable outcomes for Maine’s older youth.** There are a number of frameworks for how to advance a continuum of care and improve outcomes. Results-Based Accountability,⁵⁷ Collective Impact,⁵⁸ Social Labs,⁵⁹ Equity and Inclusion,⁶⁰ Targeted Universalism,⁶¹ and others are some examples of frameworks that can be useful guides for communities and have all influenced the conceptualization of the Place Matters project. Each address the need to design and test community level strategies that contribute to positive youth outcomes.⁶²

This complex, shared work requires an understanding that reaching a desired outcome, such as improved educational outcomes for older youth in Androscoggin County, requires aligned strategies at the statewide and community level. State and federal investments in communities must be responsive to the greatest need. Communities must understand how population indicators are influencing the need for specific program level strategies. Investments need to be targeted based on priority of need and a shared understanding of data.⁶³ By working together to implement a targeted continuum of care at the community level with shared strategies and performance measures, the programs, organizations, systems and communities that comprise Androscoggin County can work together to build a better future for young people, and for Maine.

56 See <https://www.jtgfoundation.org/case-study/lewistons-tree-street-initiative/>

57 Friedman, Mark. (2005). *Trying hard is not good enough*. Parse Publishing, 2015.

58 Kania, J., and Kramer, M. (2011). *Collective impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011, Retrieved from https://ssir.org/images/articles/2011_WI_Feature_Kania.pdf

59 Hassan, Z. (2014). *The social labs revolution*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

60 The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). *Race equity and inclusion action guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide/>

61 Powell, J., Menendian, S., and Ake, W. (2019). *Targeted universalism: Policy and practice*. Retrieved from <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeteduniversalism>

62 Layton, D., and Shaler, G. (2018). *Positive youth outcomes in Maine’s juvenile justice system*. Retrieved from <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/wpsites.maine.edu/dist/2/115/files/2019/01/2018PYD-report-lzsephl.pdf>

63 For more on the targeted universalism framework, see <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeteduniversalism>

APPENDIX A

Named Assets in Androscoggin County

21st Century Afterschool	Gay/Straight/Transgender Alliance- Lewiston	Poland Academy
Advocates for children	Healthy Androscoggin Prime for Life	Promise Early Education Center (Head Start)
African Youth Alliance	Hope Haven	Recovery Connections
Alternative Services Northeast, Inc	Immigrant Resource Center	Recreation Department – Lewiston
Androscoggin County Alliance	Jobs for Maine Grads	Restorative Justice Institute of Maine
Androscoggin Learning and Transition Center	Lewiston Public Libraries	Safe Families
Androscoggin-Sagadahoc Counties 4-H	Lewiston Public Schools – McKinney- Vento Homeless Education Program	Safe Voices
Auburn PAL	Lewiston Recreation	Sophia's House
Auburn Recreation Parks Department	Lewiston Regional Technical Center	Spurwink
B Street Health Center	Lewiston Suspension Diversion Program	St Mary's (Substance Abuse Treatment)
Bates (Harvard Center)	Lewiston United for Peace and Hope	St. Mary's (Psychiatric Hospital)
Becket homes residential treatment	Lewiston Workforce Training Initiative	St. Mary's Nutrition Center (Lots to Gardens)
Blue Willow	Lewiston Youth Advisory Council	Star Academy
Boys and Girls Club of Auburn	Literacy Volunteers- Androscoggin	Student Assistance Teams
Catholic Charities – FFT	Maine Community Integration	Sweetser
Community Concepts	Maine Inside Out	Take 2 Youth Build
Community Partnership for Protecting Children (CPPC)	Maine Youth Action Network	The Colisee
Community Youth Services	Maine Youth Court	The Root Cellar
Dingley Alternative School	Margaret Murphy Centers for Children	Tree Street
Facing Change, P.A.	MEIRS	Tri-County Mental Health
Franklin and Merrill Hill Alternative Programs	My Life My Choice Trafficking Prevention	Trinity Jubilee Center
Future Builders	New Beginnings	WMCA WIC Program
Gamache Boxing Club	Opportunity Alliance – High Fidelity Wraparound	YLAT – Lewiston
Goodwill NNE	Outright L/A	YMCA
Grace Street Services, LLC		Young People in Recovery

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PLACE MATTERS

