

Hillsborough County/City of Tampa, FL

Demographic Information

- ★ Self-reported suburban area with population of 1,157,738
- ★ Poverty rate: 12.8%
- ★ Race and Ethnicity breakdown:

Non-Hispanic White	74.0%
Non-Hispanic Black or African American	16.0%
Non-Hispanic Asian	3.0%
Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaskan Native	0%
Non-Hispanic Other	0%
Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%
Non-Hispanic Other race	5.0%
Non-Hispanic Multiracial (two or more races)	2.0%
Hispanic or Latino	22.0%

- ★ Graduation Rate (%): 77%

Overview

Hillsborough County Florida has an abundance of positive resources that exemplify the qualities of America's Promise 100 Best Communities for Youth. Our community recognizes the value that young people hold in our County as exemplified by the variety of initiatives that have been mentioned and the great number and diversity of partners working at all levels within the County. The critical components that support HC's consideration for the 100 Best Communities for Young People are:

- On-going Coordinated Collaboration: Children's issues have been the cornerstone of activism beginning with early efforts mentioned with the Early Childhood Council. HC was represented at the America's Promise initial event in Philadelphia and that inspiration initiated new conversations and partnerships. The trust built among collaborating partners allows our community to respond effectively to emerging community issues and deploy community resources efficiently.

The community is coming together in November for a Children's Summit to develop a comprehensive community-wide agenda to move our efforts forward. Ultimately, the plan will have the components embraced by our current collaborations: family-centered, following system of care principles, respectful of diverse cultures, and dedicated to improving outcomes for youth.

- Dedicated Source of Revenue: The voters of HC approved the referendum that created the Children's Board in 1988. The entire annual budget of the Children's Board (\$40 million) is dedicated to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. Every \$1 is leveraged into approximately \$5.54 to benefit the community. This is accomplished through match grants and capacity building activities. Children's Board dollars are also used to draw down federal Medicaid funds. Finally, Children's Board funds have supported nonprofits to identify, create, and implement sustainable business initiatives through social enterprise endeavors. The funds earned become a new resource for organizations to accomplish their mission.
- Quality Education: Efforts are ongoing to be sure that all children and youth receive a quality education and are prepared to become productive citizens. Important strides have been made to be sure children are born healthy; the Healthy Start Coalition has led efforts to be sure all partners in prenatal care are systematically effective. School readiness efforts have reached out to neighborhoods across the County to engage families in activities. In addition to efforts already mentioned, Born to Read, Parents as Teachers and HIPYPY are active initiatives at capacity. School readiness activities seem to be effective - assessments of kindergarteners have indicated steady improvement in their readiness scores. The School District is recognized as a parent friendly, child centered organization dedicated to quality. The District has made steady improvements measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test and was recognized just this year as having the highest graduation rate among the 25 largest metropolitan areas. In addition, 77% of high school graduates indicate they intend to continue their education beyond high school. A myriad of community providers support the school's activities through supplemental tutoring, mentoring, and other enrichment activities.

Youth voice: Building on a tradition of youth mentorship and leadership, the newly formed Youth Action Collaborative has a dedicated cadre of youth working to engage other youth and adults in recognizing the value youth voice brings to community decisions. In addition, children and youth have many opportunities in their neighborhoods and schools to become active in the community. Many entities including the Children's Board, City of Tampa, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and others have engaged youth in meaningful leadership roles within their organizations. Hillsborough County is growing, vibrant community. There are endless opportunities for youth to connect with resources and develop their skills and talents for the future. The environment embraces diverse cultures and backgrounds allowing young people to develop their own identities and ideals. The Five Promises of America's Promise are at work here everyday.

Commitment, Collaboration, Awareness, Data and Advocacy

- ★ The Early Childhood Council (ECC) was established in 1983 to increase community awareness and access to services for young children with special needs. Today ECC continues advocacy, education, and innovation for children birth through age eight with 30 partners. A noteworthy program of ECC includes Developmental Screenings, free to any child birth to five, and recognized as a best practice by Florida's Department of Education.
- ★ Youth Agency Council (YAC) is an informal partnership that has existed since the mid 1980's. Made up of representatives from the youth serving agencies such as Parks and Recreation, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, church-based providers, museums, zoos, and small organizations, YAC originally began as a networking group. In the 1990's, YAC developed specific youth development initiatives that grew into funded programs, including one federally funded Youth Opportunity Program that have served thousands of youth and drawn in over \$28 million in local, state, and federal funds.
- ★ Building on a tradition of youth mentorship, leadership development and participation among organizations in HC, the Children's Board in 2006 launched an initiative to coordinate all under one umbrella. The Youth Action Collaborative is an open membership consortium of youth, ages 14-21, and adults who meet monthly to develop a series of youth action summits, to educate and inspire children and youth to honor and activate the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, and to give youth an active voice in deliberations and decisions that affect their lives. As a result of this initiative, several key organizations in have inaugurated youth councils to advise on policies and programs.

Alliance Priorities: Dropout Prevention/School Readiness and the National Action Strategies

- ★ HC has made prevention for underserved children efforts one of the key priorities to achieve. Efforts at school readiness have been stressed so that all children enter kindergarten ready to learn and are successful in school. Some of these efforts include: • United Way book drive – begun in 2006 and grew in 2007 by over 11% to collect 38,774 books that were used in 24 schools. • Imagination Library – a partnership between United Way, Children's Board, HC Library, Healthy Start, and the Dolly Parton Foundation to get books into children's home. It allows parents to register their baby at birth and the child will receive a new book each month until they are five. There are 1,100 children in the program.
- ★ The School District has a "Parent Involvement Bus" that travels to school and community locations providing supports such as child development, nutrition, homework help, and parenting information to support the children's families in optimizing their development and success.
- ★ The School District has worked hard over the past few years to develop collaborative strategies to prepare middle schoolers for high school and life. All middle schools have required career and high school transition activities and parent involvement components: 6th grade: Students complete the "Career Cruiser Interest Inventory". The results are discussed in class and relate to career clusters and potential occupations. Parent Information Nights to share middle school transition, goal setting, and future planning. 7th grade: Students complete "Choices Planner" and electronic Personal Education Planner (ePEP) to identify a high school major. Parent Information Nights to review ePEP, discuss high school transition. 8th Grade: Student review and update ePEP, choose high school courses.

Resources Youth Receive: The Five Promises

- ★ **Caring Adults:** The Mayor of Tampa also has the "Mayor's Mentoring Program" to provide city employees the opportunity to mentor children during the work day. USF has a mentoring program, "Enlace" for Latino students where USF students and staff work with Latino students through mentoring and tutoring to encourage them to stay in school and pursue college.

- ★ **Safe Places:** The Partnership for Out-of-School Time (POST) includes over 100 individuals and organizations dedicated to expanding the quantity and improving the quality of out-of-school time activities for all youth. In April 2007, POST with funding from the Children’s Board developed an RFP and selected providers to add over 1,000 new OST year-round on-going opportunities for youth 5-12.
- ★ **A Healthy Start:** The School District offers every student free breakfast each day – providing every child and youth a nutritious beginning to every school day. All students in schools also receive nutrition and health education at regular intervals through an innovative health education provider – More Health. More Health has been recognized nationally for its model program. HC has worked systematically to increase enrollment in Florida KidCare. Through a collaborative effort in 2007, 13,600 new applications were made to KidCare from HC. Efforts continue to add more children.
- ★ **An Effective Education:** To meet the diverse needs of students and families, the School District implemented “Choice Options” in 2004. Choice is a program that allows families to make educational options. Options include magnet schools, School Choice, special assignment, charter schools, McKay scholarships (for exceptional education students), and home schooling. Families have embraced Choice and at least 20% of all students exercise Choice options.
- ★ **Opportunities to Help Others:** Youth have many opportunities to participate in leadership opportunities through organizations and schools. The Youth Action Collaborative mentioned in details that activity. On an individual basis, the Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCA have longstanding youth leadership programs serving more than 1,500 youth. The Mayor’s Youth Corps connect high school students to public service and youth voice. The Ophelia Project/Boys Initiative and the Centre for Girls use gender specific training to develop leadership skills and volunteerism.

Media Issues/Challenges Identified:

During the past year the media has focused on two key issues that relate to young people. The first is the education system, particularly our public school system, and the potential loss of services due to decrease in tax revenue for publicly funded projects. Over the past several years, the public has demanded that schools are held accountable for educational outcomes. Mandatory statewide testing has accentuated disparities among schools’ performance. Our community has bonded together to become a partner with the schools to bring resources that provide enhancements to the educational services delivered at schools. Much press coverage has been devoted to documenting the successes, and in some cases failures, of the schools to achieve universal excellence. Challenges with teacher credentials and personal integrity, transportation, curriculum issues, and healthy school environments have all been cited by the media this year as stressors in schools that affect the schools’ ability to provide quality education. The School District has dealt with all issues openly and honestly – in the media and in community forums. Other organizations within the community have provided support when available or tried to assist in negotiating positive community and student outcomes. Property tax reform is one of the key issues in the media this year that has a tremendous effect on young people. All entities such as cities, counties, and special taxing districts have had significant budget reductions due to mandatory rollbacks in property tax rates by the State Legislature. As a result services reductions were made. In many cases, the City and County avoided service reductions by freezing new hiring or reducing staff positions in areas that did not negatively impact young people. Our City and County Parks and Recreation department have taken large budget reductions and will likely increase fees. Head Start has cancelled planned expansion. Both entities have reduced the grants contracted to community service providers for youth services. The Children’s Board was able to maintain all contractual agreements, but will have very little funding available for new projects. Addition revenue reductions are possible due to a referendum that is to be decided on by the voters state-wide in the January 29th primary election. To shore up key community services and to provide accurate information regarding the reductions currently know and anticipated, two Town Hall Meetings were held in August by a collaboration among governmental entities, United Way, and others. Community organizations and citizens were invited and provided accurate information and the opportunity to develop strategies to (1) communicate the implications of the tax reform to their constituents and (2) develop plans and strategies to maintain core services for young people and families. Good progress has been made to get the information regarding the potential results of property tax reform, the process is still in motion and results will depend upon the voters’ results in January and future advocacy efforts with legislators.