



Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan

A Mental Health Learning Community For Detroit's Youth Providers



Connect Detroit



Executive Summary

The Building Emotional and Mental Strength Coalition (BEAMS) emerged in 2024 as a coordinated, community-driven response to Detroit's growing youth mental health needs. Convened by Connect Detroit, the coalition started with an advisory committee of ten youth-serving organizations representing mental health providers, educators, and community-based programs across the city. Over an eight-month process of shared learning, landscape analysis, and joint planning, the advisory committee developed a unified strategy to strengthen mental health outcomes for Detroit youth, a population often overlooked yet deeply impacted by emotional and behavioral challenges. This collaborative work culminated in the creation of the BEAMS Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan and the BEAMS Youth Engagement Summit.

Held on October 18, 2025, the Summit brought together more than 100 youth, adult allies, presenters, and community partners for a full day focused on mental health awareness, healing, and resilience. Participants engaged in six culturally responsive workshops on suicide prevention, emotional regulation, bullying, anxiety, identity, and family engagement, facilitated by community members, licensed professionals, and trained peer leaders. The Summit not only offered immediate tools and emotional support but also revealed a deeper need for ongoing, structured spaces where adult allies can continue learning, sharing resources, and strengthening their capacity to support youth. This insight led to the committee's recommendation to establish a Youth Mental Wellness Learning Community as the next phase of the work.

The proposed Learning Community is designed as a sustainable, six-session annual series blending in-person and virtual meetings, professional development opportunities, peer sharing, and youth-driven insights. Its purpose is to equip teachers, mentors, youth workers, and community leaders with practical tools, crisis-response strategies, family engagement approaches, and system navigation skills. Supported by meaningful incentives, strategic budget priorities, and partnerships with organizations such as Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network (DWIHN), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Michigan, and Listen4Good, the Learning Community will create long-term infrastructure for coordinated youth mental wellness across Detroit. By investing in this Action Plan, partners will be helping build a compassionate, culturally grounded ecosystem where both youth and the adults who serve them feel supported, prepared, and connected in their commitment to mental health and resilience.



About the BEAMS Advisory Committee

In 2024, Connect Detroit convened a committee of ten youth-serving organizations in response to a growing call for coordinated, community-based approaches to youth mental wellness. The group—now known as the Building Emotional and Mental Strength Committee (BEAMS)—was intentionally selected to represent a cross-section of Detroit’s youth service ecosystem including, mental health providers and community-based organizations. The coalition’s logo was created by a young person in the Detroit ecosystem to bring a youthful aesthetic and draw. The organizations include Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network, Wayne Metro Community Action Agency, Centers for Family Development, Inc., The Children’s Center, Central Michigan University TRIO Detroit, Urban Neighborhood Initiatives, Michigan Roundtable for Just Communities, The Youth Connection, Caleb’s Kids, and Detroit Horse Power. The committee was created to ensure that youth mental health was not addressed in silos but through a collective strategy grounded in community wisdom, data, and collaboration.

Connect Detroit’s History



Connect Detroit

Connect Detroit was created by local nonprofit, business, and philanthropic leaders to strengthen collaboration and increase equitable investment in Detroit. Its mission is to bring nonprofits, government, business, and funders together to advance community solutions and mobilize resources that address racial, economic, health, and social inequities. With a focus on amplifying community voice and collective decision-making, Connect Detroit designs initiatives that respond to service gaps and support children, youth, families, and community health.

Since 2001, Connect Detroit has served as a catalyst for change, facilitating 56 community initiatives, employing 77,000 youth over the last 15 years, and raising more than \$218 million for collaborative work. Today, the organization continues its backbone role through efforts like Grow Detroit’s Young Talent, the Detroit Youth Employment Consortium, Detroit Excellence in Youth Art, and the Culture Pass Detroit program.

Community Initiatives

56

Youth Employed

77,000

Serving Since

2001

Funds Raised

\$218 M

Process Overview

Over an eight-month convening period, ten organizations came together with a shared commitment to improving mental health outcomes for Detroit youth. During this time, partners participated in a series of facilitated sessions designed to create mutual learning between organizations, planned a youth mental wellness town hall (the BEAMS Youth Engagement Summit), explored the feasibility of establishing a youth mental wellness Learning Community, and co-created a comprehensive Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan. This was not just a planning process, it was a relationship-building journey where organizations pooled their expertise, experiences, and hopes for our young people.

Throughout these eight months, the BEAMS Committee moved through a thoughtful and layered process grounded in community building, reflection, decision making, and honest dialogue about what young people truly need. The work began with developing a shared vision and clear goals for both the Summit and the Action Plan. Committee members broke into small groups, engaged in reflective questioning, and participated in collaborative decision-making to ensure every voice and perspective shaped the foundation of the work.

Early in the process, the group recognized the power of naming and identity. They wanted a name that reflected the heart of this work: uplifting youth, illuminating pathways, and offering guidance and support. From that collective intention, the name BEAMS was born—a symbol of light, connection, and shared responsibility for youth wellness.

To understand the current landscape, the committee conducted a landscape analysis activity. Members gathered information on youth mental health programs across Metro Detroit and shared the resources available within their own organizations. By pairing this information with data on the most pressing mental health challenges facing youth, the committee identified key gaps in services and opportunities for stronger alignment and support.

With a unified purpose, a shared knowledge base, and a clear vision, the committee determined that hosting a Youth Mental Wellness Engagement Summit would be the most impactful first step. The Summit would address identified challenges while connecting middle school students and their adult allies with culturally relevant tools, resources, and community-based support systems.

Below is an outlined graphic representation of the steps taken during this process.



Process Steps

01

Convened

Connect Detroit formed the advisory committee, comprised of ten organizations, who worked together over eight months on a shared commitment to improving youth mental health in Detroit.

02

Built Community

Committee engaged in facilitated sessions focused on relationship building, mutual learning, and setting the tone for authentic collaboration.

03

Set Vision and Goals

The committee co-created a shared vision for both the Youth Mental Wellness Summit and the Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan, ensuring every voice shaped the direction.

04

Named the Work

The committee defined the identity of the initiative and collectively chose the name BEAMS to represent light, guidance, and connection.

05

Analyzed the Landscape

Members gathered data and mapped existing youth mental health programs, resources, gaps, and needs across Metro Detroit.

06

Identified Priorities

Using the data, the committee selected middle school youth as the focus due to their unique and often unmet mental health needs.

07

Activated the Plan

The committee determined that launching a Youth Mental Wellness Summit would be the most impactful first step toward meeting youth needs and building a long-term Learning Community.

Committee Feedback

“ I enjoyed connecting with other people and organizations. We were able to get work done that made an impact. I look forward to future work!

“ Meeting new people, organizations, and just the value of being with like minded individuals in this shared space. It really has been amazing.

“ We can come together to get work done. We completed ambitious goals with minimal time. Collaboration is key for success, if everyone is willing and passionate anything and everything can be accomplished.

“ We can accomplish great things working in collaboration with one another.

“ 100 percent of committee members feel connected and trust other BEAMS members more now than after the first meeting.



The Work - BEAMS Youth Engagement Summit

Summit Vision

We envision an event rooted in connection, where young people feel supported, welcomed, heard, and free from judgment as they navigate their mental health journeys.

90%

of youth agree or strongly agree they felt welcomed and included at the event.

90%

of youth agree or strongly agree they learned something new or useful at the event.

79%

of youth agree or strongly agree the summit was entertaining.

89%

of youth agree or strongly agree they had good interactions with youth and adults.

78%

of youth agree or strongly agree the summit was a good way to spend their Saturday.

Summit Overview

The BEAMS Youth Engagement Summit was held on October 18, 2025, and brought together more than 100 young people, adult allies, community partners, youth volunteers, and presenters for a full day dedicated to mental health and resilience. The summit was free to all attendees and intentionally designed to create a supportive, youth-centered environment. Throughout the day, participants engaged in six mental health and wellness workshops facilitated by community members, licensed professionals, and trained peer leaders. Sessions explored critical topics such as suicide prevention, emotional regulation, bullying, and anxiety, offering practical tools and space for honest reflection. There were also sessions offered specifically for parents and adult allies. The participants also had the opportunity to hear from our youth panel. A panel of 4 youth who discussed their mental health journey and provided tips for the middle school adult allies and youth.

In addition to the workshops and panel guests, attendees received lunch and thoughtfully curated wellness gifts to help reinforce the day's teachings beyond the summit. The atmosphere was warm, accessible, and affirming, centering the voices and lived experiences of Detroit youth. Below, you will find data that captures the impact of the summit and reflects the experiences shared by both young people and their adult allies.



Wayne Metropolitan
Community Action Agency
COMMUNITY 101



Connect Detroit



Next Steps - Implementation of the Learning Community

Following the Summit, the BEAMS Committee recognized that one powerful event was only the beginning. While the Youth Mental Wellness Summit created an immediate space for connection, learning, and support, the committee understood that sustainable change requires ongoing engagement. From this insight came a strong recommendation: to design and implement a Youth Mental Wellness Learning Community.

Vison of The Learning Community

We envision a compassionate, inclusive, and empowering learning community where young people and adults feel safe, supported, and understood. Our goal is to foster an environment where mental health is openly discussed, resources are accessible, and every individual is equipped with the knowledge and skills to navigate challenges.



The committee identified that adult allies play a critical role in shaping the mental health experiences of young people. Teachers, mentors, youth workers, program coordinators, and community leaders are often the first line of support, yet many do not have consistent spaces to learn, share, and grow together. The Learning Community would fill this gap by providing a structured, ongoing forum where adult allies can come together to deepen their knowledge and expand their toolkit.

The purpose of this Learning Community is fourfold. First, it would allow adult allies to learn best practices in youth mental health from experts as well as one another. Second, it would create a space to share effective strategies, challenges, and real-time solutions that support young people's mental wellness. Third, it would encourage organizations to exchange resources, strengthen partnerships, and build a more coordinated ecosystem of care for youth across Detroit. Fourth, it would serve as a space for adult allies to enhance their self-care and mental health practices.

By recommending the creation of this Learning Community, the BEAMS Committee affirmed their belief that youth mental wellness is a collective effort. Lasting impact requires ongoing collaboration, continued learning, and a shared commitment to supporting young people long after the Summit. The Learning Community represents the next step in that journey and a key strategy within the broader Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan.

Learning Community Design

1.

Rhythm & Duration

The BEAMS Committee designed the Learning Community with long-term sustainability at its center. This is not a one-year initiative, but an ongoing community intended to grow, adapt, and respond to the evolving needs of Detroit's youth and the adults who support them.

To maintain consistency without overwhelming participants, the committee recommended that the Learning Community meet six times out of the year. Four of the sessions will be in person, and two of the sessions will be virtual. This rhythm allows members enough time to apply new learning within their organizations while still engaging regularly with the collective wisdom of the group. Each session will run for 2 hours and be offered in a hybrid format to ensure broad accessibility for partners with varying schedules and capacities.

Recognizing that true learning continues between formal sessions, the committee also outlined several engagement strategies to support continuous connection. Between meetings, members will receive curated newsletters, participate in peer-sharing spotlights, and engage with optional homework and practice activities that reinforce key skills. In addition, organizations will have the opportunity to join subcommittees or youth advisory circles, creating dedicated spaces for deeper exploration and innovation.

This structure reflects the committee's belief that sustainable youth mental wellness work requires long-term commitment, shared leadership, and a flexible but intentional rhythm. The Learning Community is designed to be a living, breathing ecosystem where adult allies can grow together over time while strengthening the support system available to young people across the city.



2. Topics



The BEAMS Committee identified a set of core learning topics that will anchor the Youth Mental Wellness Learning Community. These topics were selected to strengthen the knowledge, confidence, and skill set of adult allies who support Detroit youth. Each topic reflects a critical area where adults often need deeper guidance, shared practices, and consistent support.

The Learning Community will focus on improving access to care and helping adult allies navigate mental health systems so they can better assist young people and their families. Participants will also learn effective crisis communication and response strategies to use when youth are experiencing emotional distress.

Recognizing the power of youth voice and connection, the curriculum includes sessions on peer support and empowerment, ensuring adults understand how youth influence one another and how to uplift healthy peer networks. The Learning Community will also explore the root causes

and environmental factors that contribute to mental health challenges, such as school climate, community conditions, and daily stressors.

Because families are central to a young person's well-being, the Learning Community will provide tools for family and community engagement, offering strategies that strengthen collaboration between adults, caregivers, and community partners. Participants will also learn about long-term crisis intervention, equipping them to support young people beyond the initial moment of crisis.

To reinforce learning and create pathways for continued professional development, the Learning Community will offer certification opportunities, including Mental Health First Aid certification through DWIHN, and a Community Mental Support certificate for those who attend five sessions.

These core topics ensure that adult allies receive practical, relevant, and culturally grounded tools that directly support the mental wellness of Detroit's youth.



3.

Incentives & Budget Priorities

To ensure strong participation and sustained engagement, the BEAMS Committee identified a set of meaningful incentives for members of the Learning Community. These incentives are designed to honor participants' time, deepen their professional development, and reinforce the value of ongoing learning. Members who complete five sessions will receive completion certificates, providing formal recognition of their commitment and growth. The Learning Community will also incorporate raffles and wellness-focused giveaways to encourage continued engagement and support personal well-being.

Where possible, the committee intends to offer CEUs and professional development credits, pending approval from the appropriate credentialing bodies. In addition, stipends will be provided to committee members and guest facilitators to compensate them for their expertise, preparation, and leadership throughout the program.

The committee also established clear budget priorities to guide implementation. Funding will support facilitator stipends and speaker honoraria, ensuring high-quality instruction and fair compensation. To create an inviting and accessible learning environment, the budget includes costs for food and refreshments, as well as venue and accessibility supports such as transportation assistance. Resources will also be allocated for materials and marketing, ensuring participants have the tools they need and that the Learning Community remains visible and well-communicated. Finally, a portion of the budget will support evaluation and reporting, allowing the committee to measure progress, document outcomes, and continuously improve the program.

These incentives and budget priorities reflect the committee's commitment to building a Learning Community that is equitable, sustainable, and supportive of both youth and the adults who champion their mental wellness.

Category	Amount (\$)
Incentives & Accessibility	6,000
Committee, Youth Advisory, Speakers & Facilitators	45,000
Staffing & Consultants	40,000
Venue, Food & Supplies	12,000
Communication & Marketing	3,000
Evaluation & Reporting	7,000
Management System (i.e. attendance, certificates, etc.)	10,000
Youth Engagement Summit	12,000
Indirect Costs	15,000
Total	150,000

4.

Potential Partnerships

The success of the BEAMS Youth Mental Wellness Learning Community relies on strong, collaborative partnerships. These partners bring expertise, resources, and connections that strengthen the overall impact of the initiative. Below is a list of current and potential core community partners. Connect Detroit and the BEAMS committee will be responsible for planning and executing the learning community.

BEAMS Committee Members

Youth United

National Alliance on Mental Illness Michigan

Local Schools (DPSCD, Charter)

Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network (DWIHN)

Youth-Serving Nonprofit Organizations

Community Mental Health Association of Michigan

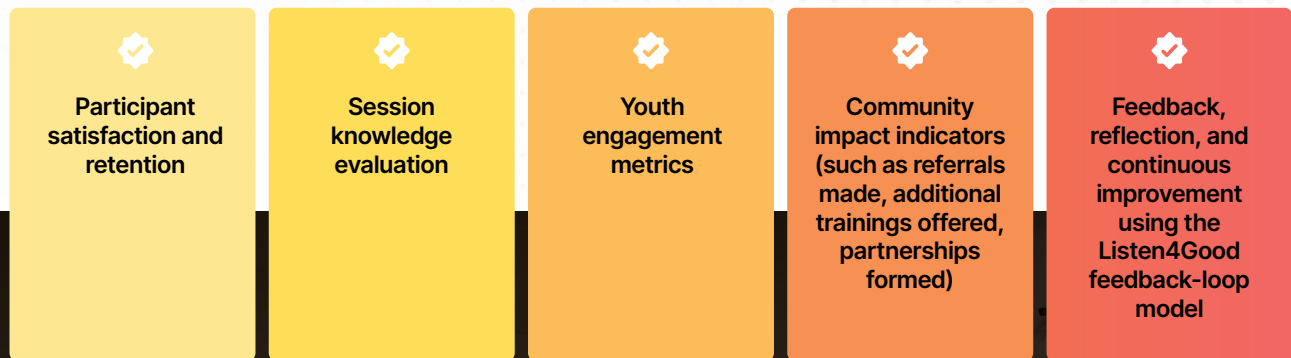
Faith-Based Organizations



Education & Evaluation Strategy

The Learning Community will deliver facilitated training sessions led by adult allies with both lived experience and professional expertise in their chosen disciplines. These sessions will ensure the content is grounded, relevant, and culturally responsive. A Youth Advisory group will continuously inform the content and priorities—giving young people a seat at the table and ensuring the work stays aligned with their realities. To assess impact and guide improvement, the committee will partner with Listen4Good. Listen4Good supports nonprofits in building high-quality feedback systems. This process typically takes up to 1 year -helping organizations gather actionable input from the people they serve, interpret it, and then respond in ways that shift power and drive equity.

In terms of data measurement, the following indicators will be tracked:



By integrating this structured feedback approach, the Learning Community will not only measure what happens—it will learn from it, adapt to it, and stay responsive to the needs of young people and their adult allies.



Challenges and Solutions

Throughout the BEAMS convening process, partners identified several challenges affecting our ability to deliver a high-quality, youth-centered mental health learning experience. The most pressing issues included generational misunderstandings that limit authentic youth participation, frequent turnover of organizational representatives, and logistical barriers such as funding lapses, scheduling conflicts, and inconsistent attendance. Partners also named the need for a coordinated system to track youth participation and certificates, noted that 90-minute sessions often feel too rushed for dense or sensitive content, and emphasized the importance of sustainable funding, equitable pay, and maintaining meaningful involvement from youth-serving organizations.

In response, partners proposed clear, actionable solutions. Recommendations included creating a pooled funding model for stipends and materials, establishing a volunteer review group to strengthen and vet curriculum, and extending selected sessions to two hours with step-by-step facilitator guides. Additional solutions focused on expanding facilitator training, developing tiered learning pathways, improving accessibility through flexible scheduling, and strengthening cross-partner collaboration. Together, these insights offer a focused roadmap for building a sustainable, equitable, and youth-driven mental wellness model that will guide the design and implementation of the BEAMS Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan.

TOP 5 MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

01

Limited time and dense curriculum make 90-minute sessions difficult, especially for sensitive mental health topics

- Expand selected sessions to 2 hours.
- Create clear step-by-step facilitator guides
- Ensure sessions stand alone yet connect to a larger learning arc.

02

Lack of a coordinated system to track youth attendance, certificates, and payments

- Build a centralized tracking system to monitor participation, progress, and completion.
- Assign clear roles for data entry, follow-up, and verification.

03

Funding lapses and sustainability concerns impact capacity, stipends, materials, and partner engagement

- Establish a pooled funding model through community foundations.
- Increase stipends and resource support for facilitators and youth.
- Incorporate sustainability planning and fundraising training.

04

Inconsistent attendance and difficulty maintaining authentic youth engagement due to competing responsibilities

- Offer stipends and incentives.
- Build flexible participation models.
- Strengthen youth leadership pathways and peer-to-peer components.
- Add touchpoints between sessions.

Conclusion

The BEAMS Committee and Connect Detroit envision a coordinated, community-driven ecosystem where youth and adults alike have the tools to nurture mental wellness, resilience, and belonging.

By investing in the BEAMS Youth Mental Health Wellness & Resilience Action Plan and its Learning Community, funders and partners will be supporting a sustainable infrastructure for healing—one rooted in collaboration, cultural responsiveness, and the brilliance of Detroit's youth and communities.



Appendix

BEAMS COALITION PARTNERS



Caleb's Kids is a mental wellness and suicide prevention organization that provides positive youth development programming, holistic wellness and therapeutic services, and health education workshops.



Centers for Family Development, Inc. is a comprehensive, community-engaged, mental wellness and family organization that provides behavioral and mental health services, fosters neighborhood education and empowerment, and builds social support systems.



Central Michigan University TRIO Detroit, a college academic preparation program, provides tutoring, advising, test prep, counseling, and cultural and social enrichment to students.



Detroit Horse Power, teaches Detroit students to ride and care for horses to develop critical social and emotional skills that will prepare them for academic, career, and life success.



Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network is a provider network that supports and serves individuals with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbance, people with autism, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and those with substance use disorder.



Michigan Roundtable for Just Communities is a human relations organization that works to overcome discrimination and racism by educating and working across generational, geographic, racial, religious, ethnic, and cultural boundaries.



The Children's Center is home to many specialized clinical services for children who struggle with behavioral, emotional, educational, intellectual, and developmental challenges or may have experienced trauma.



The Youth Connection offers youth and families substance abuse prevention, workforce development, health and wellness education, and family reconnection through programs and support services.



Urban Neighborhood Initiatives, based in Southwest Detroit, builds safe and thriving environments through youth development, land use and economic development, and education.



Wayne Metro Community Action Agency, a large social service provider in Detroit and suburban Wayne County, focuses on early childhood education, afterschool enrichment, workforce development, and financial capability.

CHALLENGES & SOLUTION

Challenges Identified

Older adults underestimate youth expertise or assume young people are “blank slates.”

Frequent turnover of organizational representatives on the planning committee disrupts continuity.

Caregivers and youth struggle with juggling multiple responsibilities beyond BEAMS.

Funding lapses and inconsistent financial resources.

No centralized system to track youth attendance, certificates, or payments.

Not enough training opportunities to meet youth and partner needs.

Curriculum is dense and difficult to fully cover in 90 minutes.

Solutions Proposed

Develop a volunteer review cohort to strengthen proposals, uplift youth voice, and ensure curriculum reflects lived experience.

Create consistent planning structures with clear expectations, review processes, and shared ownership across organizations.

Offer stipends, incentives, and flexible scheduling; expand support services beyond sessions.

Establish a pooled community foundation funding structure specifically for BEAMS stipends, materials, and partner support.

Develop a unified tracking system for participation, progress, and completion data.

Expand training offerings; explore tiered pathways that build toward certificates.

Extend certain sessions to 2 hours; create step-by-step facilitator guides; design sessions that stand alone but connect to a larger learning arc.

Challenges Identified

Concerns about emphasizing the wrong stereotypes or replicating outdated youth programming models.

Youth want holistic, integrated physical and mental health support

Risk of committee burnout and declining participation.

Lack of funding and ongoing sustainability planning.

Solutions Proposed

Use community review of curriculum; incorporate trauma-informed and identity-affirming principles in all sessions.

Bring in college students, professionals, and community partners to expand the wellness ecosystem.

Leverage BEAMS cohort strengths; build clearer support structures and equitable planning time.

Personalized fundraising training; project development coaching; incorporate best practices in sustainability and partnership building.



Challenges Identified

Solutions Proposed

Accessibility challenges for partners like teachers, school staff, and youth-serving organizations.

Improve scheduling flexibility; ensure equitable planning time for all partners; use hybrid engagement strategies when possible.

Capacity challenges: youth balancing jobs, caregiving, school, etc.

Provide incentives, flexible attendance expectations, and multiple ways for youth to engage.

Low wages or undervaluing of expertise can impact facilitator commitment.

Increase stipends, offer professional development, and formalize facilitator support pathways.

Too many experts for limited session time.

Strategically rotate partners; design macro-groups; coordinate cross-partner collaboration instead of stacking experts.

Inconsistent attendance across sessions.

Develop coordinated tracking systems; incorporate incentives; strengthen youth engagement touchpoints outside of sessions.

Hard to maintain authentic youth participation over time.

Create youth leadership pathways, peer-led components, and more opportunities for youth ownership.

Ensuring sessions are meaningful and not just a "check-the-box" experience.

Add structured reflection time; include emotional processing; use trauma-informed facilitation practices.

Ensuring youth-serving orgs have influence in design and implementation.

Build co-creation processes; provide equal planning and facilitation support for community partners.

Need for additional family and community supports outside BEAMS sessions.

Expand resource mapping; build supportive networks; involve more community-based wellness providers.



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