

# Understanding Community Attitudes and Experiences –

## A Foundation to Responding to Rural Mental Health

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## Background – Sustaining Hoosier Communities






# Sustaining Hoosier Communities Year 1 (2017-2018)

- Year 1 (2017-2018) – Lawrence County
  - 45,000 residents
  - Rural
  - Bedford & Mitchell, major communities
  - 14% living below poverty
  - 20% senior citizens
- Identified approximately 30 projects
  - Community-wide survey of citizen experiences & attitudes

# Process/Model





So What did  
They Want to  
Know?

Prevalence of  
mental illness &  
substance use

General “air”  
about the  
community

Awareness of  
available resources

Barriers to  
accessing  
resources

Likelihood of  
supporting  
community efforts

# Survey Instrument

- **50 items across 9 domains:**

- demographics
- quality of life
- personal behavioral health
- community resources
- barriers to treatment
- community solutions
- beliefs about behavioral health
- 1 open-ended item for additional thoughts re: mental health/substance use

**Available on paper & online!**



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## Demographics of Survey Respondents (1,303)

- 72% women, 28% men
- 67% from Bedford, 18% from Mitchell
- 51% work in Lawrence County, 23% Work out of the county, 23% are not working (retired, disabled, unemployed)
- 62% had a close relationship with someone who had an addiction

## Survey Respondents vs. Lawrence County

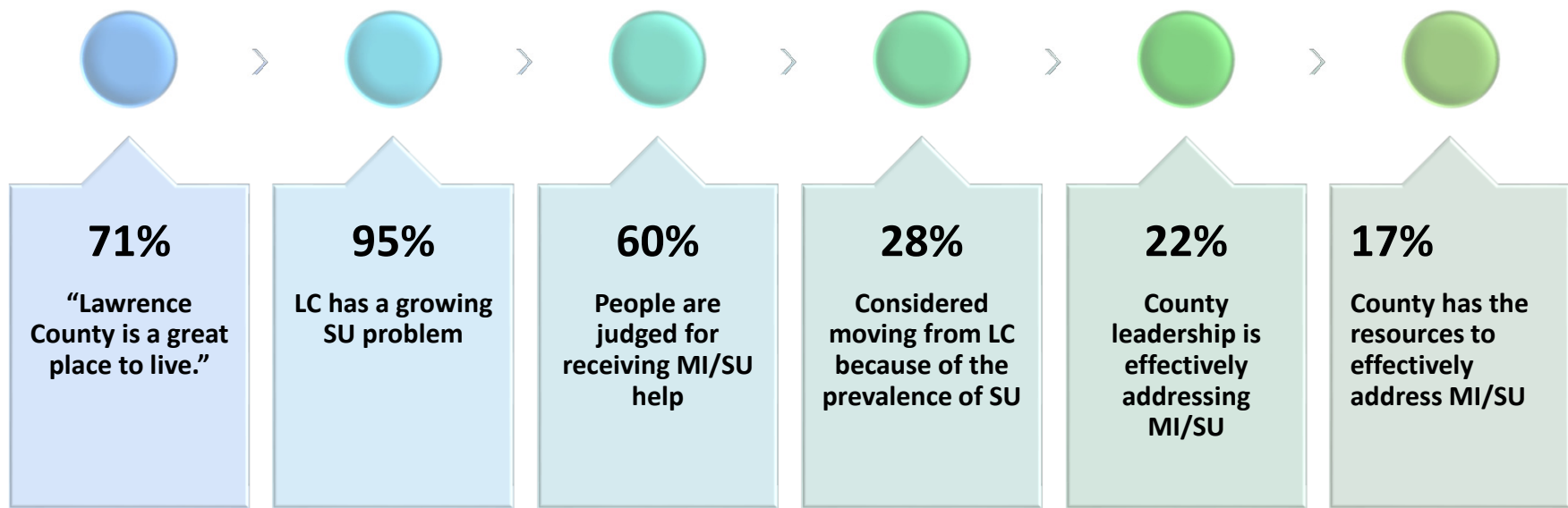
Demographic	Survey Respondents	Lawrence County Census
Married	63.4%	55.3%
High School Graduate or Higher	95.9% (aged 18+)	88.4% (aged 25+)
Per Capita Income	\$27,001 - \$42,000 (Mode)	\$36,969
Poverty Rate	13%	13.7%
Seniors	19.1% (Retired)	19.7%
Health care/Social Service Profession	15.6%	13.9%



## Survey Respondents vs. United States

Demographic	Survey Sample*	United States
Mental Illness	17.6%	18.3%
Substance Use	17%	10.2% (aged 12+)
In recovery	9%	10% (aged 18+)

\*14% used medications > than prescribed or not prescribed for them



## Quality of Life

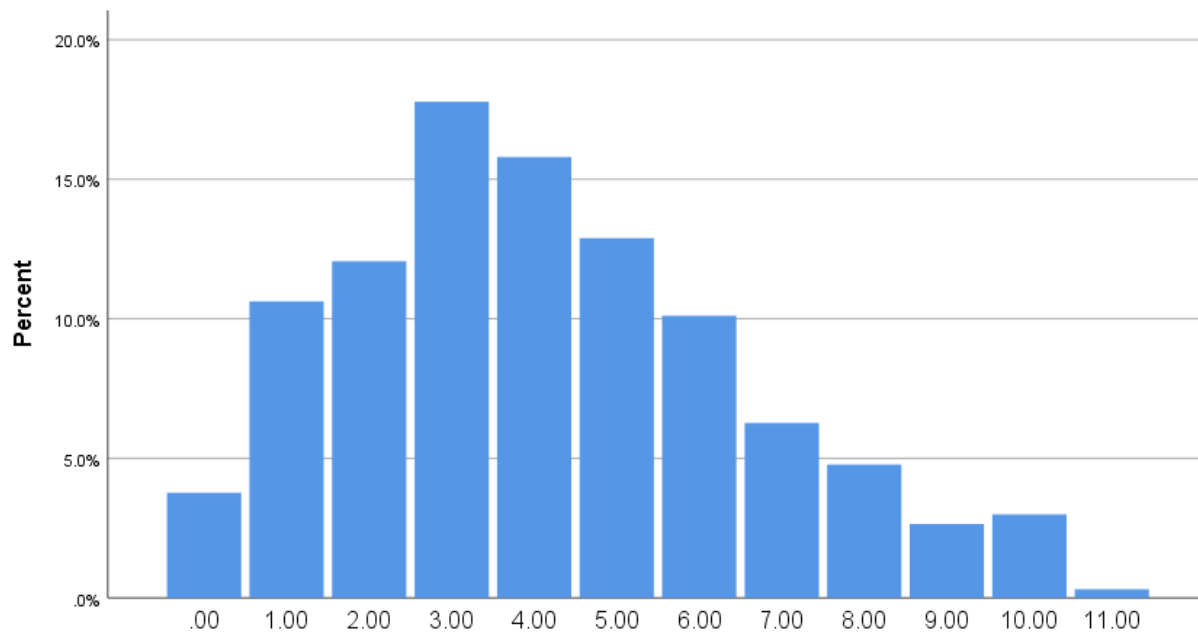
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Community  
Resources

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## Total Number of Known Community Resources



26% were only aware of 2 or fewer resources for mental health/addictions.



# Needed Treatment

- 84% agreed Lawrence County needs transitional housing for men *and* were comfortable with its development
- 63% agreed that a needle exchange program can reduce the spread of disease
  - 42% believed that it increased drug use
  - 49% were comfortable with a needle exchange program in the county
- 79% agreed county needs an inpatient treatment facility
  - 82% would be comfortable with such a facility in Lawrence County

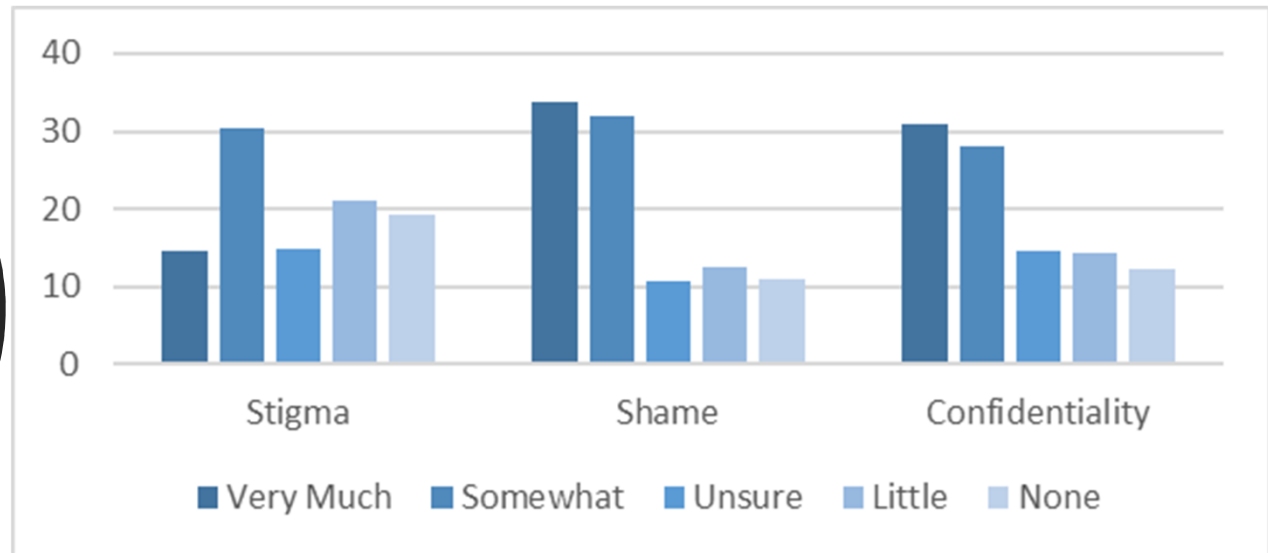
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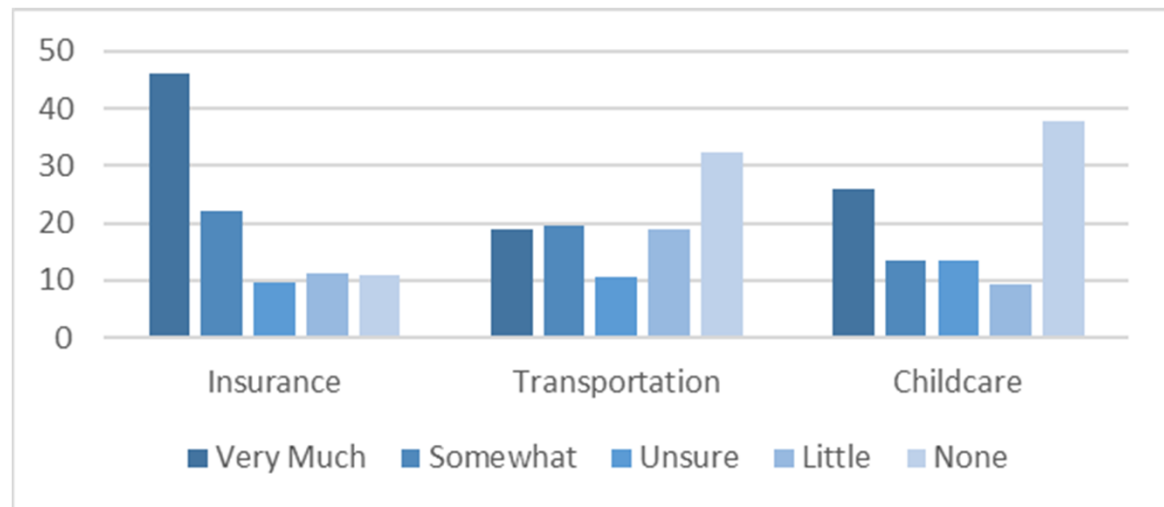
Barriers to Seeking  
Treatment if Ever Needed

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## Image-related Barriers



## Cost-related Barriers





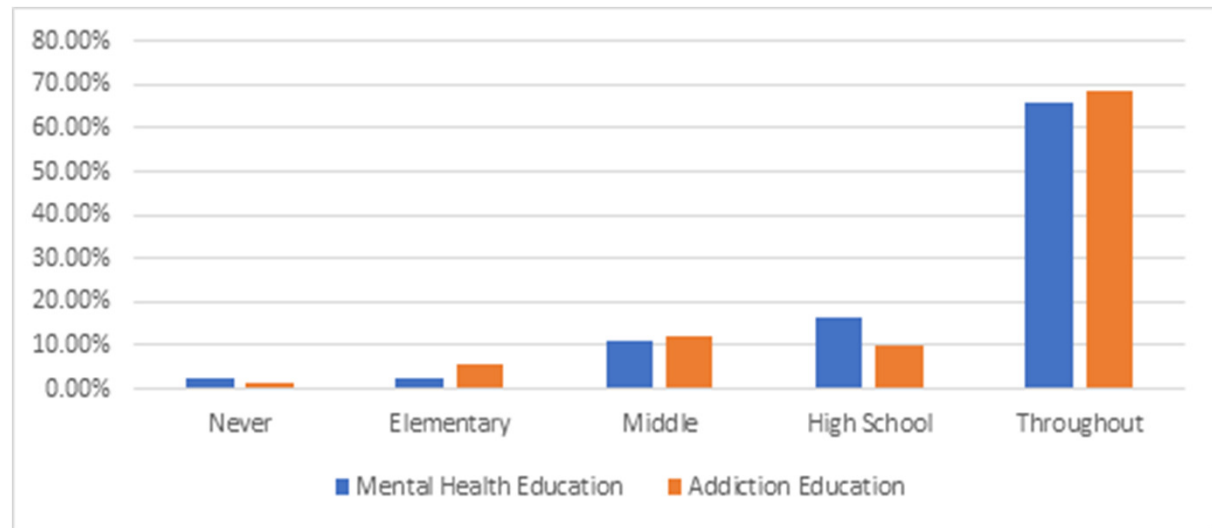
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Education

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## When Should Education on Mental Health & Substance Use Begin?



Note: Education at an age-appropriate level



***“I lost a daughter to drugs, and this community is in desperate need of interventions like every community throughout Indiana.***

***I feel the best programs will include prevention [for] our younger children. We must reach them in the schools before the age of experimentation.***

***Once a person starts using drugs, it can be next to impossible to stop”***

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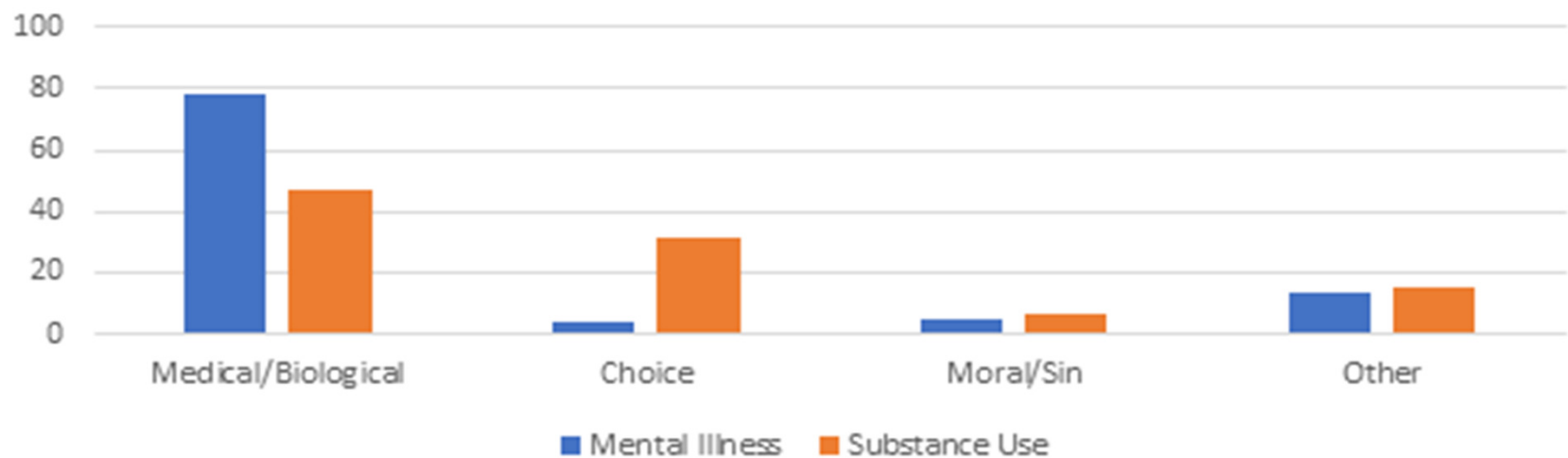


# Causes of Mental Illness & Substance Use

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# What are the Causes of Mental Illness/Substance Use?

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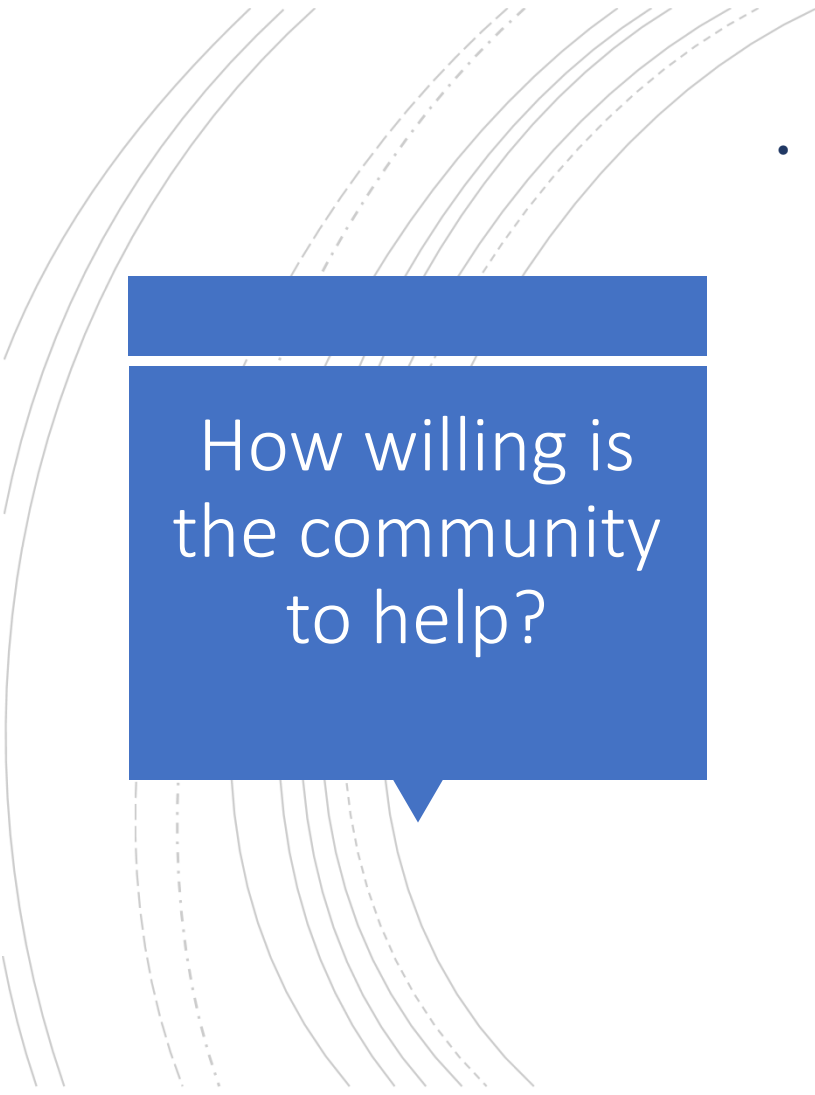


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Willingness to  
Support Solutions

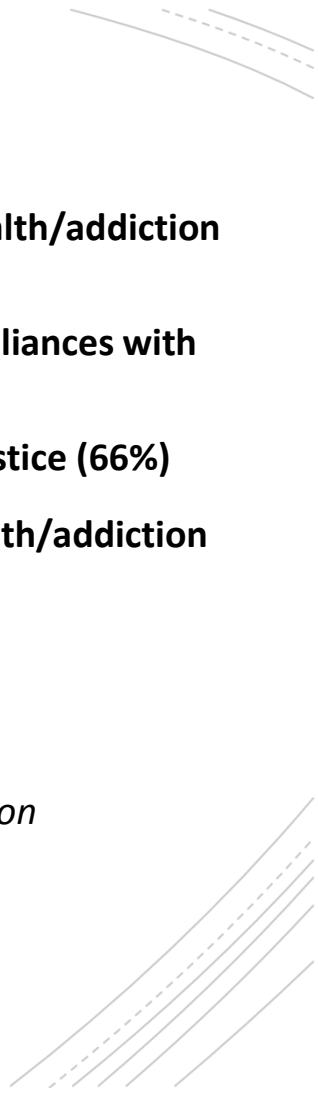
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How willing is  
the community  
to help?

- **More than half of all respondents agreed with:**
  - **increased county spending on mental health/addiction services (77%)**
  - **participating in neighborhood watches/alliances with police to create a safer community (72%)**
  - **increased county spending on criminal justice (66%)**
  - **slight tax increase to support mental health/addiction services (60%)**
  - **willingness to donate money (55%)**

*largely unrelated to income and education*





***“Addiction issues have grown tremendously in the last few years. An increase in crime has been seen to support the addiction. The children of those addicted are hurt in the process.*”**

***This concerns me regarding what the next generation will be like if someone does not intervene.”***



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Pulling It  
Together...

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## University-Community Partnerships: A Win-Win Situation



- Minimal cost
- Capacity building
- Relationship building
- Community service
- Student learning



## Understanding Context

- To be effective, leadership needs to understand community needs and attitudes
- Rather than top-down, community-wide responses to substance use can engage from the bottom up.
- Bottom-up approaches can provide leadership with a diversified understanding of community perceptions and produce solutions that emerge from the community that lend to success and sustainability.
- Bottom-up strategies may be preferred in rural areas given their lack of resources and the need for efforts that are sensitive to the local culture.



***“I would love to see  
...[the] community  
coming together to  
provide support and  
services to children and  
families.”***