



North Hartford Ascend

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods Grant Program

August Community Conversation

Wednesday, August 19, 2026



**Por favor levante la mano si necesita
interpretación al español**

Spanish interpretation services are available. Please
see our translator for help.

Agenda



- Welcome & Guidelines
- Featured Topic: Growing Up Digital
 - Level Set
 - Breakout Group Conversation
 - The Essence Behavioral Health
- Next Steps and Closing Remarks
- **Next Meeting: September 16th, 2026**

Discussion Guidelines



- Everyone deserves to be heard. Listen and respond respectfully. Successful dialogue is the responsibility of all participants.
- Let's stay on topic– time is limited, so let's value each other's time.
 - Please use the index cards provided to submit questions at any time.

Incentive Available to Hartford Residents

North Hartford Ascend: Overview

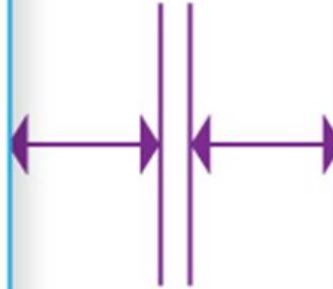


Connect children and families, prenatal through career, living in the
North Hartford Promise Zone to the programs, services and other resources they need to **reach their full potential.**

Current State

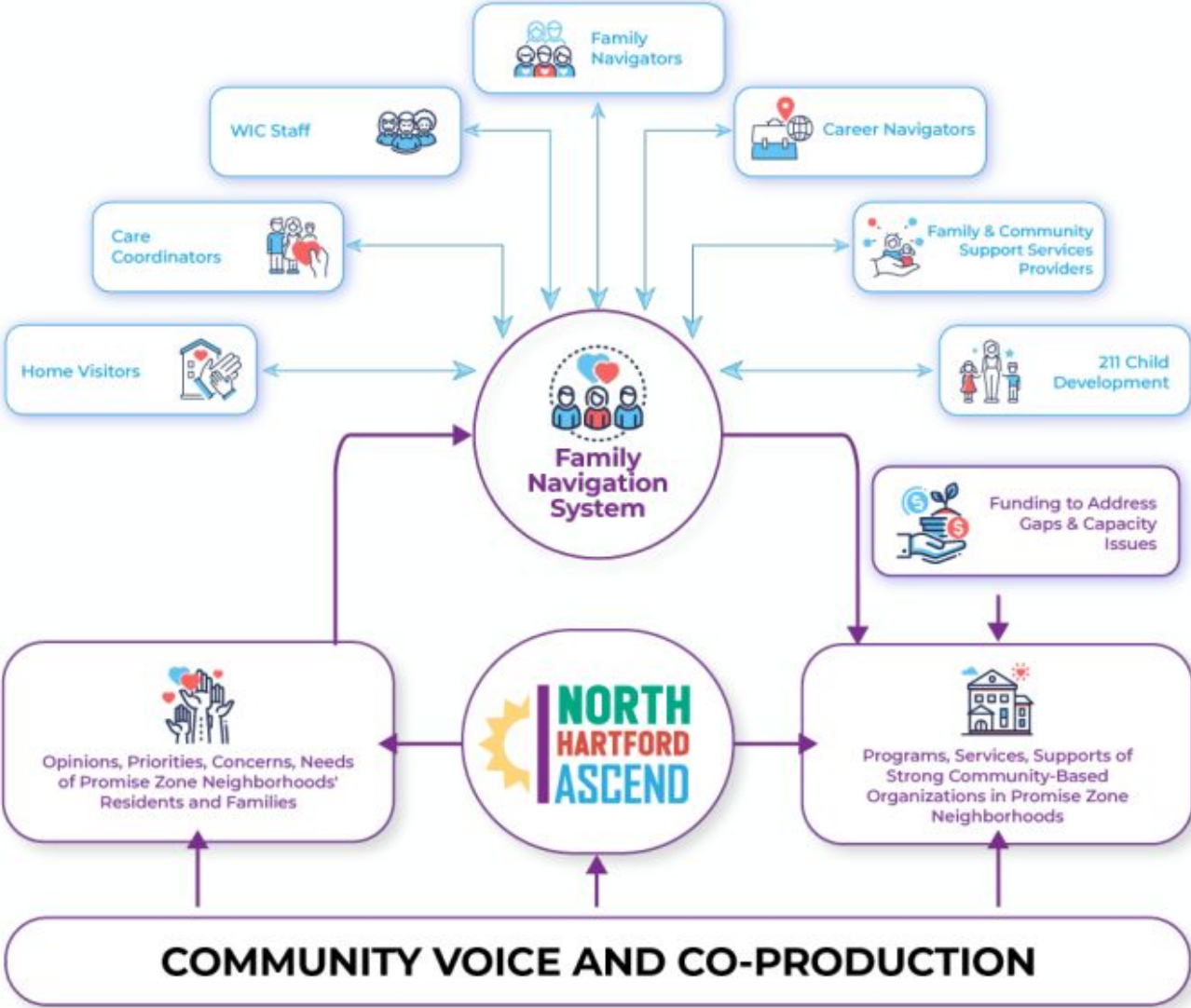


Opinions, Priorities,
Concerns, Needs of Promise
Zone Neighborhoods'
Residents and Families



Strong Array of Programs,
Services, Supports of Community-
Based Organizations in Promise
Zone Neighborhoods

Ideal State-Ascend System Building



Ascend & Community Updates

Ascend & Community Updates



Community Workshops: In-Person

Exploring Career Pathways

[Tuesday, August 25](#)

Parker Memorial at 6pm

- Break down what each path takes (time, cost, and who's hiring) and help you pick one that fits your life.

Creating Opportunities in Our Community

[Tuesday, September 8](#)

Parker Memorial at 6pm

- Spot unmet needs and turn one into a small business or side-income idea.

Financial Stability During a Career Transition

[Tuesday, September 22](#)

Parker Memorial at 6pm

- Build a realistic budget for your transition, talk honestly about credit, and point you to free resources across Connecticut.

Workshops





Growing Up Digital

A Community Conversation planned by youth!



Childhood Prosperity Lab



An initiative in Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health that advances social innovation where children and families live, learn, work, play and pray.



Co-Design Sessions

- ❑ Identify goals, needs and priorities of community
- ❑ Collaboratively workshop ideas to co-design solutions
- ❑ Implement the recommendations and next steps with community and partners

Identify Goals, Needs and Priorities of Community

Step 1: Actively Listen

- ❑ Ascend's thematic work groups advocated for more youth voice.
- ❑ Service providers advocated for more youth engagement in March 2026 in a provider-to-provider co-design session.



Collaboratively Workshop Ideas to Co-Design Solutions



Step 2: Develop a deeper understanding to co-create solutions.

A design sprint is a week-long series of thematic conversations.	
June Topics	July Topics
DAY 1: After School Activities, Extracurriculars, & Other Programs & Services	DAY 1: Growing Up Digital 
DAY 2: Participation in Ascend Leadership & Decision-Making 	DAY 2: Planning a Youth-Led Community Conversation 
DAY 3: Social Media, Marketing & Communications	DAY 3: Co-Designing an Ascend Youth Advisory Board
DAY 4: Community & Family Engagement	DAY 4: Co-designing Ascend Narrative

Who Participated

- **21 youth ages 13 - 18** from Clay Arsenal, Upper Albany, and Northeast neighborhoods across the June and July sprints.
- Participants received \$50 per session and a hot meal.
- Located at Parker Memorial Community Center.



Youth Feedback & Impact

Of the total feedback collected:

- **94%** strongly agree or agree that they felt a sense of community, a protective factor for health and well-being.
- **100%** strongly agree or agree that there was ample opportunity for participation.
- **97%** strongly agree or agree that the activities were interactive and engaging.
- **91%** are interested in future opportunities to participate again.
- **2** participants connected with a Family Navigator

A blue speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom right.

**“Very meaningful to have
my voice heard.”
- Youth participant**

Recommendations to Action: Example #1

North Hartford Youth—We Want to Hear From You !

We are looking for youth voices in the Clay Arsenal, Northeast, and Upper Albany neighborhoods in Hartford to shape North Hartford Ascend's work.

Participants will take part in interactive, structured activities with Childhood Prosperity Lab to explore how they might be engaged in shaping North Hartford Ascend. Together, we'll gather community insights to help shape priorities, goals, and future direction within the Ascend system. Please read the registration form in full before signing up.

\$50 gift cards will be provided for your time and to cover transportation costs at each session.

We are offering four sessions the week of June 8th 2026. Please select no more than **two** in the registration form.

Time: 5:30-7:30 PM

Location: Parker Memorial Community Center (Small Conference Room)

SCAN ME



- Participants must be residents of North Hartford
- A meal will be provided
- Registration is limited and will be confirmed via email on a first come, first serve basis

Youth feedback on marketing materials



YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & GROWING UP DIGITAL

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Youth, Parents, & Caregivers Welcome!



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19 | **6-7:30 PM** | **PARKER MEMORIAL COMMUNITY CENTER**

- Discuss youth mental health, social media, and AI.
- Hear directly from youth about growing up with technology.
- Share ideas for healthier digital habits and safer online spaces.

REGISTER TODAY →

Stronger Minds. Safer Spaces. Brighter Futures.

Before

After

Recommendations to Action: Example #2



Step 3: Mobilize insight into meaningful action

Recommendation:

- Facilitate a **Youth-Led Community Conversation** on the topic Growing Up Digital with an intergenerational audience.

Implementation:

- Youth are **co-facilitating breakout sessions!**
- Youth **generated the discussion guide questions** this evening.
- We engaged an **intergenerational audience**.
- **Decor and logistics** were co-designed with youth.

Today's Discussion



- The room is arranged into breakout groups, with each breakout group having 2-3 facilitators assigned:
 - One **youth** facilitator
 - One **Connecticut Children's team member**
- Facilitators will guide the conversation for tonight, using a **discussion guide created by youth!**
- We will be in breakout groups for **30 minutes.**
- We will then come together as a large group to hear from *The Essence Behavioral Health* on Trends in Youth Mental Health & Cyberbullying.

Community Guidelines



- One speaker at a time, please minimize competing conversations.
- Raise your hand if you would like to contribute to the conversation. Facilitators will call on you!
- Be open-minded to other people's lived experiences and perspectives.
- Contribute from a place of respect and curiosity.
- HAVE FUN!



CYBERBULLYING: IT HURTS MORE THAN YOU THINK

*Be kind online. Be strong together. Be **YOU**.*

A GUIDE FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is using digital technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target someone repeatedly and on purpose.

It can happen anywhere.

It can happen anytime.

It can happen to anyone.

HOW CYBERBULLYING CAN AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

- Increases stress, anxiety & depression
- Lowers self-esteem & confidence
- Causes sleep problems & fatigue
- Makes it hard to focus in school
- Can lead to isolation & withdrawal
- In some cases, can lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide

YOU ARE *Not Alone*

Many youth experience cyberbullying, but healing starts with talking, reaching out, and getting support.

Your feelings are valid.

You matter.

Help is here.

WARNING SIGNS PARENTS MAY NOTICE

- ✓ Sudden mood changes or irritability
- ✓ Withdrawing from family and friends
- ✓ Reluctance to go to school
- ✓ Changes in sleep or eating habits
- ✓ Spending more time alone or online
- ✓ Decreased interest in activities
- ✓ Talking about feeling sad or hopeless

CONNECT BEFORE YOU CORRECT

- 1 Listen without judgment.**
Let them talk.
- 2 Validate their feelings.**
Say: "I'm sorry this happened to you."
- 3 Reassure them**
they are not alone.
- 4 Stay calm.**
Your calm helps them feel safe.
- 5 Build trust.**
Keep the conversation open and ongoing.

THE CONTROL WHEEL

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL



5 POWERFUL STEPS TO TAKE ACTION

- 1 STOP** Stop engaging with the person.
- 2 SAVE** Save the evidence (screenshots, messages).
- 3 BLOCK** Block the person on all platforms.
- 4 REPORT** Report the behavior to the platform and/or school.
- 5 SUPPORT** Reach out to a trusted adult or counselor.

CREATE A FAMILY DIGITAL SAFETY PLAN

- Set clear rules and boundaries around screen time and apps.
- Keep devices in shared spaces.
- Talk regularly about online experiences.
- Know their friends and online communities.
- Encourage balance: online life + real life.

WHERE TO GET HELP

- **Talk to a trusted adult:**
parent, teacher, coach, counselor
- **Call or text for support:**
211 | 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline | Text HOME to 741741 (Crisis Text Line)
- **Online resources:**
stopbullying.gov | cyberbullying.org
- **Therapy & support groups:**
We're here to help.

KINDNESS IS POWER. BE THE CHANGE ONLINE.

1

Be kind.

It costs nothing.

2

Speak up.

Don't be a bystander.

3

Support others.

Lift each other up.

4

Protect your peace.

You matter.

Stronger minds. Safer online. Together we rise.

Let's Rise **TOGETHER**

Talk. Support. Protect.

That's how we heal and grow.

We are stronger together.

www.essencebehavioralhealth.com

You are seen. You are heard.

You are enough.



THE ESSENCE
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, LLC.



www.essencebehavioralhealth.com

Contact us: (860) 470-4722



CYBERBULLYING

Join Our Therapy Support Circle

A safe, supportive space for youth to talk, heal, and build confidence — led by our clinicians.

Day and time to be determined based on level of interest.

Interested? Reach out and let us know.

Contact us: (860) 470-4722

www.essencebehavioralhealth.com



Scan to visit our website



Stay Connected

- Follow us on social media to stay connected!

Instagram



Facebook



Thank You!



- **Next Conversations:**

- September 16th, in-person at 6pm
- October 21st, in-person at 6pm

- Please take the [Post Meeting Feedback & Incentive Survey](#) to share your thoughts and feedback and access the incentive for Hartford residents. Use the QR code, or visit the link sent out via email following the meeting.

Feedback & Incentive



Community Workshops



- *Please note: Incentives may take up to one week to process.*

- Contact nhap@connecticutchildrens.org with any questions.