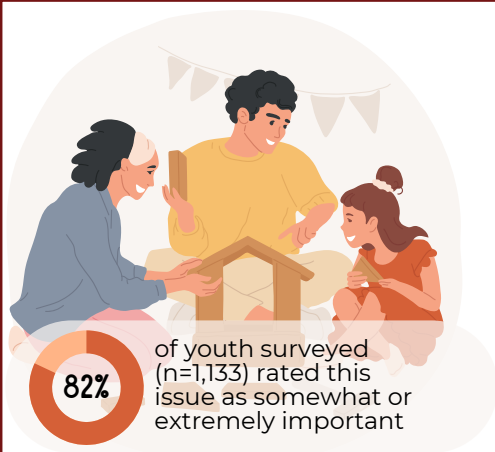




Youth Perspectives on:

Cost of Living



Overview

Cost of Living emerged over 500 times during 94 listening sessions with Alexandria students. Students described financial stress as a central concern affecting their families and peers. Rising prices, housing costs, healthcare inaccessibility, and visible poverty emerged as common themes. Youth highlighted a strong desire for a community where no one experiences homelessness or has to struggle to meet their basic needs.

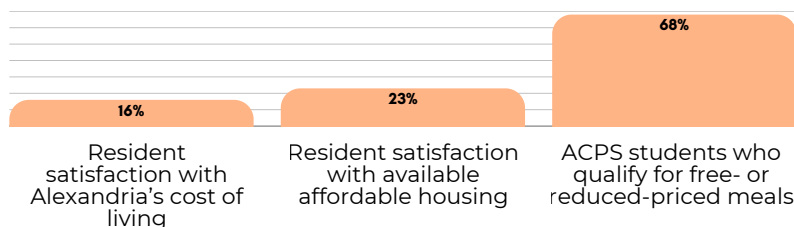
WHY IT MATTERS

When basic needs go unmet, such as food, housing, healthcare, and transportation, young people face significant challenges in learning, connecting, and planning for the future. Youth described how economic hardship and unreliable transportation create daily stressors that impact their well-being and development.

WHAT THE DATA SAY

Economic Conditions

Sources: 2024 Alexandria Resident Survey & VA Department of Education (2024)



WHAT YOUTH WANT

150+ mentions

Economic Stability

"A community in which everybody has access to the things they need."

A fairer economy where wealth and resources are distributed equitably and everyone gets their basic needs met and can thrive.

55+ mentions

Housing for All

"Housing for everyone (affordable housing)"

Housing costs are fair and everyone has access to safe, quality, and affordable housing/rent.

30+ mentions

Food Justice

"Healthy organic food that is affordable"

Everyone has access to healthy, affordable, and abundant food and no one goes hungry.

45+ mentions

Greater Healthcare Access & Well-being

"Access to great healthcare for free"

Everyone has access to high-quality, affordable, and compassionate healthcare and health and well-being are prioritized for all.

20+ mentions

More Social Services

"More free resources for youth."
"Help poor people."

Everyone has access to the support they need, including safe places to stay, help with basic needs, and programs that uplift low-income and unhoused individuals.

WHAT YOUTH EXPERIENCE

90+ mentions

Economic Disparities

"It is very expensive just to live here."

"A lot of people don't get paid much and can't afford a lot of things."

Students point to rising prices and inflation, stagnant wages, the financial strain their families experience, and a heavy tax burden as stressors.

50+ mentions

Housing Instability

"Rent is too high."

"High rates of people experiencing homelessness."

Many young people see their community as struggling with unaffordable housing, rising homelessness, unsafe living conditions, and a cost of living that makes it hard for families and youth to stay and thrive.

15+ mentions

Food Insecurity

"The prices of food are very high."

"Not enough food."

Many students experience food insecurity due to high grocery prices and limited access to enough food, leaving families unable to meet basic nutritional needs.

25+ mentions

Healthcare Inaccessibility

"Expensive healthcare."

"People don't have healthcare."

"The Teen Wellness Center is not accessible and needs more funding."

While the Teen Wellness Center was named as a valuable resource, many youth in our community struggle to access affordable, reliable healthcare, leaving their physical and mental health needs unmet and putting their well-being at risk.



Barriers to Improvement

When asked about the challenges of addressing cost of living issues, students highlighted a range of systemic, economic, and political barriers that make meaningful change difficult.

Systemic and Economic Barriers

Low-Wage Jobs and Cost of Housing

Students noted that even when people are working, “jobs often don’t pay enough to support a family - especially with Alexandria’s high housing costs.” A significant portion of income goes toward rent or mortgages, leaving little for other necessities like food, healthcare, and childcare.

Cycle of Poverty

Many students emphasized that poverty is self-perpetuating - once people are struggling financially, it becomes increasingly difficult to break free without significant economic resources. One student put it simply: “Poverty is expensive and breeds more poverty. The only way to escape is with money.”

Rising Costs and Inflation

Students acknowledged the impact of “rising inflation and high property values,” which make it even harder for lower-income families to afford basic needs.

Political and Structural Challenges

Political Resistance and Corruption

Some students saw “political opinions and systemic corruption” as major obstacles to addressing cost of living issues.

Taxes and Government Policies

Students identified “high city taxes, low-paying jobs, and enforcement policies” as factors that contribute to the financial burden on residents.

Wealth Disparities and Structural Inequities

The Influence of the Wealthy

Some students pointed to “the rich” as a barrier, suggesting that those in positions of power benefit from maintaining the status quo.

Expensive Childcare and Healthcare

The rising costs of “childcare and healthcare” were also flagged as significant challenges for families trying to stay afloat financially.



Youth Recommendations for Expanding Affordable Housing

Build More Affordable Homes

Build and preserve more affordable housing. Students recommended increasing public funding for affordable-housing construction, developing more city-owned, subsidized, and otherwise affordable units, preserving existing affordable homes, and requiring newly created units to remain affordable over the long term.

Sources: Hawkins and Mobley, [Housing Affordability in Alexandria](#), 2026; Michael G., Abdul S., and Mustafa K., [Affordable Housing](#), 2025; sortocruzsheilyn, [Affordable Housing](#), 2025; Gonzales, [Cost of Living](#), 2025; and Elyas, [Cost of Living](#), 2025

Include affordable homes in new developments. Students recommended using inclusionary zoning, promoting mixed-income housing, partnering with developers to reserve homes for low-income families, and offering developers incentives to include affordable units in new projects. They also called for more affordable housing to be included as Alexandria continues to develop.

Sources: Hawkins and Mobley, [Housing Affordability in Alexandria](#), 2026; Michael G., Abdul S., and Mustafa K., [Affordable Housing](#), 2025; sortocruzsheilyn, [Affordable Housing](#), 2025; Gonzales, [Cost of Living](#), 2025; and Elyas, [Cost of Living](#), 2025

Make it easier to build affordable housing. Students recommended speeding up zoning and approval processes so affordable homes can be created more quickly. They also supported local policies that make it possible to develop more affordable housing in Alexandria.

Sources: diazgerman, [Affordable Housing](#), 2025; and sortocruzsheilyn, [Affordable Housing](#), 2025

“At the state level Virginia can provide more funding for affordable housing programs, support developers who build low-income housing, and pass laws that can support tenant protection like limits on rent increases.”

At the national level the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development can increase funding for housing vouchers, support the construction of quality affordable housing through grants, and strengthen nationwide programs that make housing more accessible.”

~ Kylie Hawkins and Taelor Mobley, 2026



“At the local level the City of Alexandria can expand on policies like inclusionary zoning which would invest in the preserving of existing affordable housing while also creating more.”

~ Hawkins and Mobley, 2026



“Incentive developers to include affordable units in new projects”

~ Jonathan Gonzales, 2025

“Zoning and processing zoning contracts faster is something the city government could do and people could rent.”

~ diazgerman, 2025





Youth Recommendations for Expanding Affordable Housing

Help Families Afford and Keep their Homes

Help families stay in their homes and avoid sudden housing cost increases.

Students recommended rent control or rent stabilization to limit large rent increases, rental and utility assistance for low-income families, and property-tax relief. One student specifically recommended waiving condominium fees for people earning less than 30% of the area median income so unexpected increases do not make housing unaffordable or force people to move. Students also recommended expanding eviction-prevention efforts, rental assistance, utility assistance, and tenant protections so families receive help before losing their housing.

Sources: Hawkins and Mobley, [Housing Affordability in Alexandria](#), 2026; Morales & Furnari, [Low-Income Rent Solutions](#), 2026; Fite, Silman & Romero, [Cost of Living](#), 2026; Patrick, [Equitable Rent](#), 2025; sortocruzsheilyn, [Affordable Housing](#), 2025; Gonzales, [Cost of Living](#), 2025; and Elyas, [Cost of Living](#), 2025

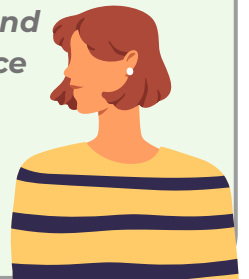
Expand housing support for families who are struggling to afford or keep their homes. Students recommended increasing funding for housing assistance and supportive housing programs, expanding rental support, and providing utility assistance to low-income families. They also identified legal-aid organizations as important resources for renters facing eviction or unfair housing practices

Sources: Hawkins and Mobley, [Housing Affordability in Alexandria](#), 2026; Michael G., Abdul S., and Mustafa K., [Affordable Housing](#), 2025; sortocruzsheilyn, [Affordable Housing](#), 2025; and [Cost of Living](#), Elyas 2025

“...waive condominium fees for those who make under 30% of the AMI (Area Median Income) so that there are minimal cost fluctuations that would cause someone to be unable to make rent...This is especially important for those who cannot afford to pay unexpected and rising costs, since these fees have gone up in recent years.

My other recommendation is to have rent controlled properties. This is so that rent increases and higher property fees won't force people to leave their homes because they don't have the money to pay it.”

~ Sally Patrick, 2025



“Support rent control or rent stabilization policies [and] increase funding for housing assistance programs.”

~ sortocruzsheilyn, 2025;

“...help individuals directly through rental assistance, down payment support, eviction prevention programs, and help with utilities or home repairs. These efforts are often targeted using Area Median Income (AMI) to ensure lower income households receive the most support.”

~ Hawkins and Mobley, 2026





Youth Recommendations for Expanding Affordable Housing

Invest in Long-Term Housing Solutions

Follow through on the Housing 2040 Master Plan.

One student recommended better supporting and enforcing strategies that are already part of the plan while adding new policies where needed. The Report emphasized looking at what has and has not worked, since rents and housing burdens have continued to rise and the plan has not yet achieved its intended results.

Source: Patrick, [Equitable Rent](#), 2025

Create reliable funding for affordable housing.

One student recommended using housing trust funds supported by developer contributions and loan repayments. This would provide more money for affordable housing and help people who cannot afford rent on their own (Patrick, 2025).

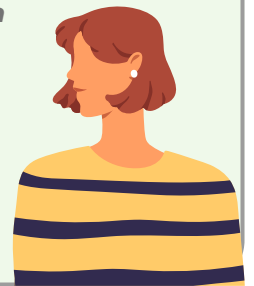
Increase public awareness of housing affordability and encourage community advocacy

Increase public awareness of housing affordability and encourage community advocacy. Students recommended helping residents better understand housing insecurity, displacement, and the need for affordable housing in Alexandria, while creating opportunities for community members to support affordable-housing solutions through civic engagement and advocacy.

Sources: Micheal Clark, [Cost of Living and Education](#), 2026; sortocruzsheilyn, [Affordable Housing](#), 2025.

“There are several strategies and ideas that would be beneficial in helping solve this problem. Some of them have already been implemented in the 2040 Housing Master Plan and just need to be supported and enforced more, while others could be a valuable addition to the plan...such as trust funds to help financially support affordable housing through developer contributions and loan repayments. This would allow more money to people who can’t afford rent on their own.”

~ Sally Patrick, 2025

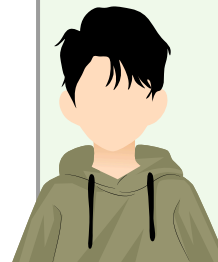


“By teaching citizens how to hold property owners accountable through the city’s Code Administration, the initiative protects lower-income earners from exploitation.”

~ Micheal Clark, 2026

“Address Alexandria’s high cost of living by establishing a financial literacy course starting in elementary school & extending to adulthood. For households earning under \$100k, the program moves residents from survival to stability by embedding practical skills, like budgeting for local rent and understanding tenant rights.”

~ Clark, 2026





Youth Recommendations for Strengthening Household Financial Stability

Increase Wages and Access to Good Jobs

Raise wages so families can better afford basic needs.

Students recommended raising the minimum wage and advocating for fair wages.

Sources: Jonathan Gonzales, [Cost of Living](#), 2025; and Elyas, [Cost of Living](#), 2025

Strengthen worker protections and encourage large employers to offer affordable healthcare. One student recommended improving protections for workers and giving large employers incentives to increase wages and provide healthcare their employees can afford (Gonzales, 2025).

Create more jobs that pay a livable wage. One student recommended working with local employers and businesses to create more job opportunities that pay enough for families to live on (Elyas, 2025).

Expand Education and Career Pathways

Offer free college courses and vocational training to community members. One student recommended making these learning opportunities available as part of a broader effort to help families manage Alexandria's high cost of living (Gonzales, 2025).

Provide Direct Financial Support to Families

Provide more funding for programs that give families direct financial support. Students pointed to ARISE, which provided monthly payments to participating residents, as an example of a program helping families manage high living costs. They recommended investing more money in efforts like this so the community can continue moving toward greater affordability.

Source: Alora Denby and Ethan Sinor, [Cost of Living's Effect on People of Color](#) (2025)

Build Financial Knowledge and Skills

Provide practical financial and housing education beginning at a young age and continuing through adulthood. Students recommended education on budgeting, tenant rights, leases, grocery shopping, utilities, emergency savings, and other everyday financial skills through schools, workshops, and multilingual community programs to help youth and families navigate Alexandria's high cost of living.

Source: Clark, [Cost of Living and Education](#), 2026

"...increase funding for public and affordable housing construction, raise the minimum wage, subsidize childcare, expand healthcare access..."



"Incentivize large employers to increase wages and offer affordable healthcare"

~ Jonathan Gonzales, 2025

"...work with local employers to create more liveable wage jobs."

~ Elyas, 2025



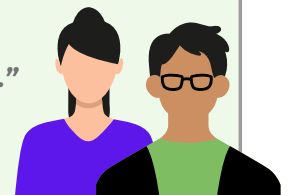
"...and provide free college courses or vocational training for community members."

~ Gonzales, 2025



"Policies such as ARISE and 2040 Master Plan is the start to an affordable cost of living though to keep the ball rolling more money is needed."

~ Alora Denby & Ethan Sinor, 2025



"Address Alexandria's high cost of living by establishing a financial literacy course starting in elementary school & extending to adulthood. For households earning under \$100k, the program moves residents from survival to stability by embedding practical skills, like budgeting for local rent and understanding tenant rights."



~ Micheal Clark, 2026



Youth Recommendations for ensuring that families can meet their basic needs (food, utilities, etc.)

Meet Students' Food Needs During and Beyond the School Day

Provide free food for students throughout the school day. Students recommended creating a free student pantry at ACHS and offering free, healthy snacks for students who need them. Suggested snacks included fruit, granola bars, crackers, water, and juice

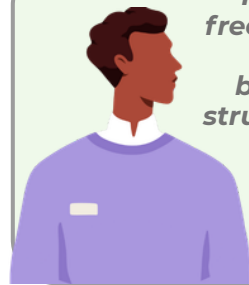
Sources: Jeffrey Quinteros Fuentes, [Free Snacks in School](#), 2026; Barahona-Yanez, [Student Hunger at ACHS](#), 2026; Daniel Rivera, [Food Costs and Food Access](#), 2026; and Mahdi Payam, [Food Pantry for Students](#), 2026.

Provide take-home food for students who may not have enough to eat after school or on weekends. Students recommended creating a take-home food program at ACHS and offering weekend bags with easy meals and snacks for students and families who need them

Sources: Emilson Velasquez Hernandez, [Take Home Food Options](#), 2026; and Rosmery Quintanilla, [Cost of Living](#), 2026.

Make sure food support includes healthy choices. Students suggested fruit, granola bars, crackers, water, and juice, as well as fresh produce and other nutritious foods

Sources: Barahona-Yanez, [Student Hunger at ACHS](#), 2026; Jeffrey Quinteros Fuentes, [Free Snacks in School](#), 2026; and Richard Reyes, [Affordable & Healthy Food Choices in Alexandria](#), 2026.



"The actions schools are taking like free breakfast and lunch are helping more students eat during the day but a large number of children still struggle with hunger. ...there is still a clear need for improvements like more consistent free snacks during the school day."

~ Jeffrey Quinteros Fuentes, 2026

Provide free snacks during lunch or after lunch. Offer healthy options such as: Granola bars Crackers, Fruits, Water/Juices

~ Barahona-Yanez, 2026

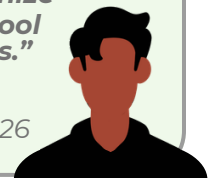


"Providing more free food options or meal support would help create a healthier and more supportive school community."

~ Mahdi Payam, 2026

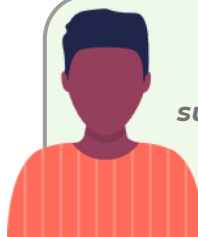
"Alexandria City high school should create a free student pantry and organize more school food dives."

~ Daniel Rivera, 2026



"I think ACHS should provide more weekend food take out bags for students after school on Fridays. These bags could include easy meals and snacks."

~ Rosmery Quintanilla, 2026



"ACHS should create a take-home food program for students in need. Survey responses showed that many students support take-home food options because they would help families outside school hours."

~ Emilson Velasquez Hernandez, 2026

"Students who can't afford healthy meals often skip lunch or choose cheaper, less nutritious foods."

~ Richard Reyes, 2026





Youth Recommendations for ensuring that families can meet their basic needs (food, utilities, etc.)

Expand Access to Food, Utilities & Essential Supplies

Offer food distributions more often and in more convenient locations. One student recommended expanding ALIVE! food distributions, adding distribution locations, and focusing on neighborhoods identified as having the greatest need.

Source: Richard Reyes, [Affordable & Healthy Food Choices in Alexandria](#), 2026.

Strengthen partnerships to expand food access and distribution. Students recommended coordinating with ACPS Nutrition Services, ALIVE!, food banks and pantries, grocery stores, faith communities, local farmers, nonprofits, volunteers, and other community partners to collect, donate, and distribute food to students and families who need it, including through food drives and school-based efforts.

Sources: Emilson Velasquez Hernandez, [Take Home Food Options](#), 2026; Rivera, [Food Costs and Food Access](#) 2026; Barahona-Yanez, [Student Hunger at ACHS](#), 2026; Reyes, [Affordable & Healthy Food Choices in Alexandria](#) 2026.

Organize regular donation drives and create school- and community-based resource centers for essential items. Students recommended collecting food, hygiene products, clothing, shoes, school supplies, electronics, and other household essentials through recurring donation drives. They also proposed creating permanent resource centers within schools where students and families could access donated items throughout the year.

Sources: Ashlyn Perez, [High Cost of Living & It's Impact](#), (2026); Paramee Watchareudomkarn, [Donation Box](#), 2026; Marya Ghazi, Liyana Getachew, Ruth Tewodros & Estefani Bonilla, [Easing the Cost of Living by Expanding Access to Essential Resources](#), 2026; and Daniel Rivera, [Food Costs and Food Access](#) 2026.

"Increase the frequency and locations and the way that people get the news about the help of all food, ALIVE! food distributions, focusing on neighborhoods identified as having the greatest need in the survey."

~ Richard Reyes, 2026



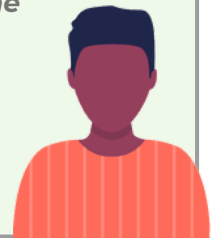
"ACHS should create a free student pantry and organize more school food dives. ALIVE can provide food donations, volunteers, and support food drives. [DCHS] can help spread info and support."

~ Daniel Rivera, 2026



"The school has offered free breakfast and lunch programs to students. These programs help, but more support is still needed after school and on weekends. Survey results showed that many students think take-home food options would help families and students in need. ACPS Nutrition Services can help create and manage take-home food programs and Catholic Charities Food Pantry can provide food donations and support."

~ Emilson Velasquez Hernandez, 2026



"We want to create a space inside schools where students and their families can easily access these resources [...like food, hygiene products, and other essentials] for free or at low cost. We recommend ACPS open in-school centers where students can collect donated shoes, clothes, supplies, and electronics for themselves and their families to ease financial burdens."

~ Marya Ghazi, Liyana Getachew, Ruth Tewodros & Estefani Bonilla, 2026





Youth Recommendations for ensuring that families can meet their basic needs (food, utilities, etc.)

Youth Recommendations for Making It Easier for Families to Navigate Supports

Make information about assistance easy to find, understand, and navigate. Students recommended creating clear, multilingual, and accessible ways for youth and families to find information about food, housing, utilities, healthcare, childcare, financial assistance, scholarships, public benefits, and other available supports. They suggested using schools, social media, student-friendly websites, hotlines, community outreach, trusted organizations, and centralized information displays to connect people with resources. Students also recommended involving young people in designing and sharing information through student-created materials, peer-to-peer outreach, and regular feedback to make communication more visible, relevant, and easier to understand.

Students also envisioned schools as accessible, reliable hubs where students and families could connect with food, clothing, hygiene products, school supplies, health services, tutoring, housing assistance, and other basic-needs supports in one place.

Sources: Fernando Bonilla Gamez, [Student Financial Aid](#), 2026; Ivy Miralda-Molina, [Rising Costs in the ACHS Community](#), 2026; Reyes, [Affordable & Healthy Food Choices in Alexandria](#), 2026; Elyas, [Cost of Living](#), 2025; Marya Ghazi, Liyana Getachew, Ruth Tewodros, and Estefani Bonilla, [Easing the Cost of Living by Expanding Access to Essential Resources](#), 2026; Trudy Hardman, [Educational Equity in Alexandria](#), 2025.

Reduce barriers to receiving financial assistance and provide help before families reach crisis.

Students recommended simplifying application processes for rental, utility, and other financial assistance; reducing unnecessary administrative and eligibility barriers; increasing awareness of available programs; ensuring fair treatment during the application process; and connecting families with assistance before emergencies such as eviction occur. They also called for greater support for households that struggle to meet basic expenses but earn too much to qualify for many existing assistance programs, including ALICE households.

Source: Ashley Morales and Isa Furnari, [Low-Income Rent Solutions](#), 2026.

"The advertisement. It isn't being advertised as much as it should be....speaking about them on social media (TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) would... help... more families...get...the help and resources they need. 79% of students that took the survey mainly struggle with both rent and buying groceries, which is why I want to help put more information about helpful resources..."



~ Ivy Miralda-Molina, 2026

"The best thing we can do for teens and young adults would be to promote and make the information more accessible and readily available...I suggest ... more student-led and designed posters, stickers, cards, etc. Young people are more receptive to information from peers...a central information table with these creations on display, as well as giving out the stickers to incentivize students to approach the area...fund more into student led creations focused on the student resources..."

~ Fernando Bonilla Gamez, 2026



"Our policy recommendations are that individuals will not have to go through a lengthy process to receive minimum financial assistance....We want to ensure the process for receiving help is easy but still maintains the people's integrity when requesting aid...We want prevent families from receiving eviction notices."

~ Ashley Morales & Isa Furnari, 2026





Youth Recommendations for ensuring that young people and families can receive Health Care, Child Care, & Family Supports

Ensure Young People and Families Can Afford Needed Healthcare

Increase access to health insurance and reduce healthcare costs for patients. One student recommended expanding access to insurance and reducing the costs patients face so that young people and families can afford needed healthcare. The student also called for addressing the root causes of rising healthcare prices.

Source: sanuadama, [Affordable Health Care](#), 2025

Help Young People Prevent Unintended Pregnancies and Access Reproductive Health Support

Strengthen teen pregnancy prevention education and access to reproductive healthcare. One student recommended making reproductive health education and support services in schools and the community engaging, age-appropriate, ongoing, and accessible to teens. The student also recommended increasing access to counseling and reproductive healthcare, involving teens in designing programs and campaigns, partnering with community organizations for outreach and support, and including both girls and boys in pregnancy-prevention efforts.

Sources: Author unknown, [Teen Pregnancy](#), 2026; and Sabia Samus and Ashley Juarez-Osorio, [Cost of Baby Food for Teen Parents](#), 2025

Help Pregnant & Parenting Teens Meet Everyday Needs

Make baby food affordable and connect teen parents with resources for themselves and their children. Students recommended affordable baby food and free resources for children. Their Report Card identified WIC, food resources, childcare services, diaper distributions, clothing, economic assistance, and other community supports as resources that can help teen parents and their children. The students also emphasized improving WIC access and recognized that language, transportation, limited knowledge of services, lack of trust, and other barriers can make support harder to access.

Source: Sabia Samus and Ashley Juarez-Osorio, [Cost of Baby Food for Teen Parents](#), 2025.

“Affordable health care matters because it impacts their financial stability, health, and future well-being. Without access to affordable health care, young people may delay or forgo needed medical treatment.”



~ sanuadama, 2025

“My solution is to expand and normalize youth reproductive health education and support services in schools and the community. This includes:

- *Making health education engaging, age-appropriate, and ongoing*
- *Increasing access to counseling and reproductive healthcare*
- *Involving teens in designing programs and campaigns*
- *Partnering with community organizations for outreach and support.*

~ Author unknown, [Teen Pregnancy](#), 2026

“...it's reasonable to assume that teen parents may be particularly vulnerable to food insecurity due to financial constraints and limited resources. This alarming trend threatens infant health, strains state resources, and limits economic potential. Our initiative tackles this crisis through expanded WIC access, community support programs, and policy reformation aligned alongside Virginia's child health goals.



~ Sabia Samus & Ashley Juarez-Osorio, 2025



Youth Recommendations for ensuring that young people and families can receive Health Care, Child Care, & Family Supports

Expand Access to High-Quality Early Care

Increase public investment in early care and education. Students recommended increasing funding for childcare subsidies, educator and provider compensation, and facilities, noting that high-quality care can be unaffordable for families while providers face financial challenges.

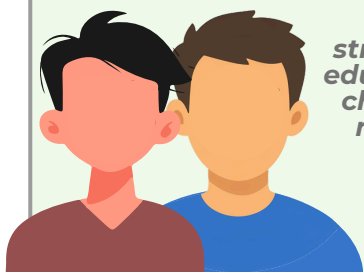
Expand childcare spaces for infants and toddlers. Students recommended investing in new facilities or adapting existing public buildings for childcare and providing grants and technical assistance to providers that expand infant and toddler capacity.

Increase compensation for early childhood educators. Students recommended bringing early educator compensation closer to that of K-12 teachers, noting that low wages contribute to staff turnover and can affect the quality of care.

Source: Chase McKnight and Viggo Viira, [Early Childhood Education in Alexandria](#), 2025

"Families currently face a confusing, fragmented process to access care...High-quality programs are unaffordable for most families, and providers struggle to survive financially. When families can find affordable, quality childcare, parents, especially mothers, are more likely to work, support their families, and contribute to the local economy. We intend to see every child in Alexandria with a strong start in life and education. Meaning all children regardless of race, background, or income."

~ Chase McKnight and Viggo Viira, 2025



Make Early Learning Easier to Access and More Equitable

Create a coordinated enrollment system for early learning programs. Students recommended a universal, citywide application system to make it easier for families to navigate enrollment across childcare, preschool, Pre-K, and other early learning programs.

Prioritize early childhood investment in underserved communities. Students recommended using data to target investment in historically underserved neighborhoods and prioritizing funding for programs serving Black, Latinx, immigrant, and low-income families.

Make early learning culturally and linguistically responsive. Students recommended using materials and strategies that reflect the cultures and languages of the families programs serve and providing ongoing professional development to support culturally responsive practice.

Strengthen Family Partnerships and System Coordination

Give families a meaningful role in early learning programs. Students recommended involving parents in decision-making and education and providing programs with training and resources to build authentic relationships with families.

Strengthen coordination and accountability across early childhood programs. Students recommended creating a unified governance structure with clear responsibility for coordinating and overseeing early childhood programs across public agencies and community-based providers.