

## Focus: Disconnected Youth

Bridges to Prosperity St. Lucie (B2P), the Economic Sufficiency Network (ESN) of the Roundtable of St. Lucie County, is focusing on identifying and developing strategies to address the needs of disconnected youth (those ages 16-24 who are unemployed and out of school). This multi-year project begins in year one (2019-2020) with studying the issue; designing outcome measures; and starting the development of strategies that will achieve success.

The objective is to reduce the percentage of disconnected youth ages 16-24 living in county census tracts with at least 25% of individuals at or below 100% of the poverty level by December of 2022.

B2P welcomes your interest and participation. The network meets monthly on the third Wednesday of the month from 12-1:30 at United Way of St. Lucie County, 4800 South U.S. Highway 1, Fort Pierce, FL 34982. Please email Wydee'a Wilson at [wydeea.wilson@djj.state.fl.us](mailto:wydeea.wilson@djj.state.fl.us) for more information and to confirm your participation.



## Why Addressing Disconnected Youth Matters

- \* 4.6 million youth in the U.S. ages 16-24 are disconnected (2016).
- \* Concurrent problems for disconnected youth include criminal behavior, mental health problems, drug abuse and early pregnancy (before age 22).
- \* The damage of disconnection can last over a lifetime. Youth tracked from 1993 to 2003 who were disconnected for a year or more earned about \$44,000 a year 15 years later. Those not disconnected were earning about \$78,000 a year by that time.

## Some things we know from research:

- \* In communities where the poverty rate was above 21%, 1 in 5 youth were disconnected. In communities where the poverty rate was below 6%, only 1 in 14 were disconnected.
- \* Disconnection happens over the course of a lifetime not just between the ages of 16 and 24.
- \* Successful programs targeting already disconnected youth recognize that one-size does not fit all and are comprehensive - encompassing academics, employment, social, personal, family and life skills components. Programs also work across systems and funding streams; include prevention, intervention, and long-term support.
- \* Successful community efforts span a continuum from universal and targeted prevention through intervention and post intervention support.

