

ENHANCING YOUTH VOICE AND IMPROVING CARE

Year 1 Implementation of the “My View” Screening Tool
within the Camp Community

February 2024

I BELIEVE THIS COLLABORATIVE PROJECT WILL ENABLE CAMPERS TO BE SEEN, FEEL HEARD, AND FIND CONNECTION TODAY, WHILE THE RESULT OF THIS INNOVATIVE PROJECT WILL RESHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE SUMMER LEARNING INDUSTRY FOR YEARS TO COME.

**JOHN HAMILTON
CHIEF STRATEGY AND ENGAGEMENT OFFICER, ALLIANCE FOR CAMP HEALTH**

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WE ARE THRILLED TO PARTNER WITH ACH AND CLEMSON UNIVERSITY TO SUPPORT THE SUMMER CAMP COMMUNITY WITH THIS MESH (+) INITIATIVE. ACH REALIZES THE CHALLENGES OUR CHILDREN ARE FACING AND HOW THIS IMPACTS THEIR SUMMER LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

DR. SANDY WHITEHOUSE, TICKIT HEALTH, FOUNDER AND CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

THE TICKIT HEALTH DIGITAL EMPATHY™ PLATFORM IS PROVING TO BE AN ESSENTIAL TOOL TO GAIN YOUTH VOICE IN AN EFFORT TO EMPOWER, SUPPORT, AND VALIDATE YOUTH LIVED EXPERIENCE. WE ARE EXCITED ABOUT THE POTENTIALS THIS TOOL PROVIDES AND HOW IT CAN PROMOTE HEALING-CENTERED ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CAMP.

TRACEY GASLIN, ACH CEO

HIGH QUALITY CAMP EXPERIENCES ARE FOUNDED ON ACCURATE AND UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF YOUTH ATTENDING CAMP. WE'RE EXCITED TO PARTNER WITH SELECT SUMMER CAMPS AND TICKIT HEALTH TO IMPLEMENT THE MY VIEW CAMPER SCREENING TOOL THIS SUMMER.

DR. BARRY GARST, CLEMSON UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR



WRITTEN BY

Barry A. Garst and Alexandra Skrocki
Clemson University

John Hamilton and Tracey Gaslin
Alliance for Camp Health

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Alliance for Camp Health expresses sincerest gratitude to the youth, staff, and administrators at these participating camps for their innovative spirit, support, and active participation to enhance youth care within the camp community through the implementation of the "My View" screening tool. Specifically, we recognize:

Maine Teen Camp, Sanborn Western Camps, YMCA of San Diego, Carolina Creek, YMCA of Northern Utah, Cheley Camps, Camp Fire Inland Northwest, Camp Fire Columbia, and Roundup River Ranch.

This project would not have been possible without our partners Tickit Health and Clemson University for their invaluable collaboration on this project. Their commitment, expertise, and support have been critical to the successful launch of this impactful initiative.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This 2023 pilot study explored implementation of a youth mental, emotional, and social health (MESH) screening tool called My View in summer camps. The research, conducted through a collaboration between the Alliance for Camp Health, TickIt Health, and Clemson University, involved nine camps and aimed to assess the tool's usefulness in supporting youth care and engagement. Informed by digital empathy, youth engagement, and implementation science principles, the study collected pre- and post-camp data from 1,442 youth participants and 27 staff members.

Results indicated high engagement in the pre-camp survey, declining post-camp survey responses, and positive outcomes related to youth perceptions of engagement and care, staff awareness of camper needs, and improved intentional communication.

The study emphasized the potential of screening tools like My View to enhance camper care by providing valuable information about camper needs and perceptions. While the findings highlight positive aspects, the study suggests areas for improvement, such as strengthening camp provider adherence to implementation procedures and enhancing staff orientation to My View.

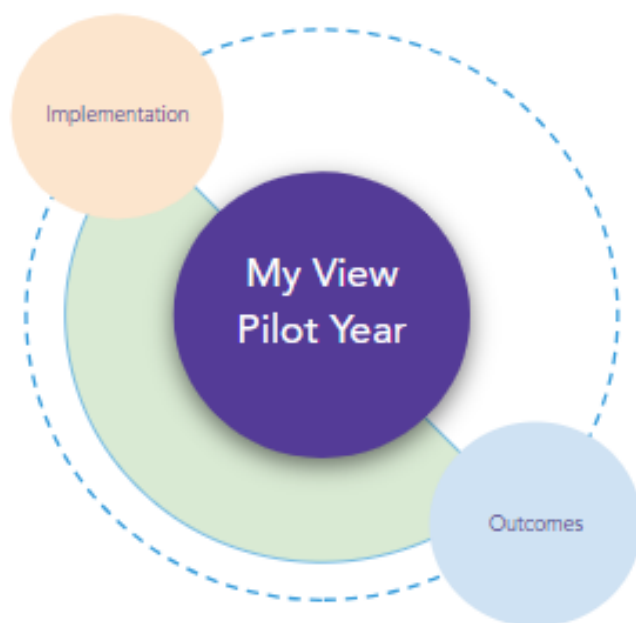
Overall, the study underscores the value of pre-camp screening tools in preparing staff to address camper MESH needs and improve overall camper care during camp.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Camps serve as a highly effective environment for addressing the mental, emotional, and social health (MESH) needs of youth. When these needs are appropriately catered to, and youth receive the necessary care, their camp experiences become more enriching, resulting in elevated levels of well-being upon departure. The goal of this initiative was to bolster support for campers by comprehensively understanding their social and emotional needs before camp, facilitated through a virtual tool named "My View."

Developed with a foundation in digital empathy principles, "My View" empowers campers to share critical information regarding their MESH needs that could impact their camp stay. Well-informed camp staff are able to adjust the camp experience and their care approach to meet individual camper needs, ensuring that each participant has the essential elements for a successful and fulfilling experience. During the inaugural year, the program focused on the successful implementation of "My View," fostering camper engagement, and assessing the tangible outcomes of this innovative approach.

YEAR 1 EMPHASIS AREAS



Implementation Fidelity

Did organizations implement My View with youth as intended?

Participant Engagement

Were youth and staff engaged in My View and the post-camp survey?

Outcomes

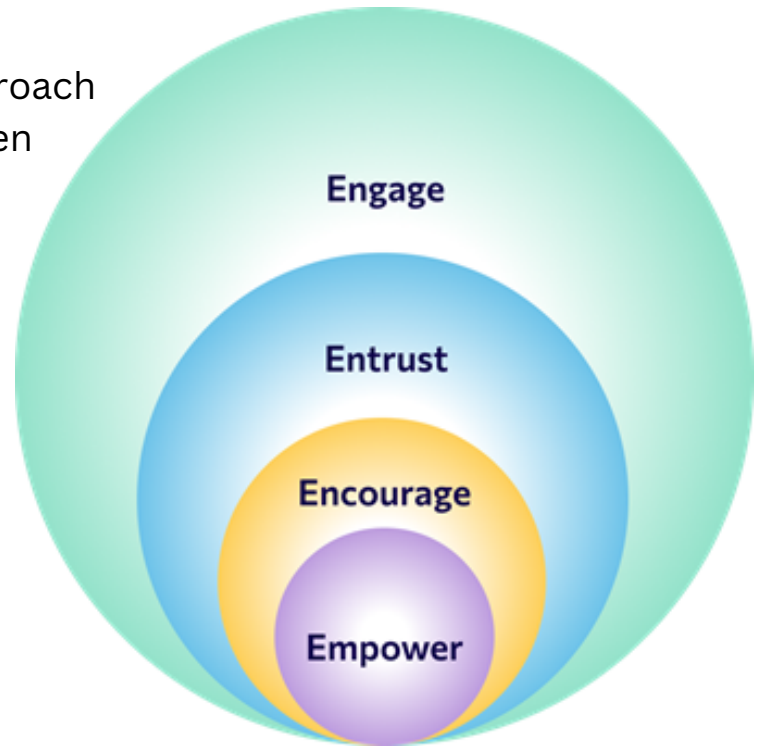
Did My View promote targeted outcomes of youth engagement, youth voice, and youth care?

WHAT IS DIGITAL EMPATHY?

Digital Empathy™ is a design system that uses a unique approach to support the respondent when doing a screening assessment.

It works by:

- **engaging** people
- building **trust**
- **encouraging** people to share
- **empowering** people to get the help they need



Digital Empathy™ embeds core principles of **empathy – compassion, cognition, and emotion** - in designing technology that enhances the user experience.



WHEN EACH VOICE IS **HEARD**, POPULATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS **THRIVE**.

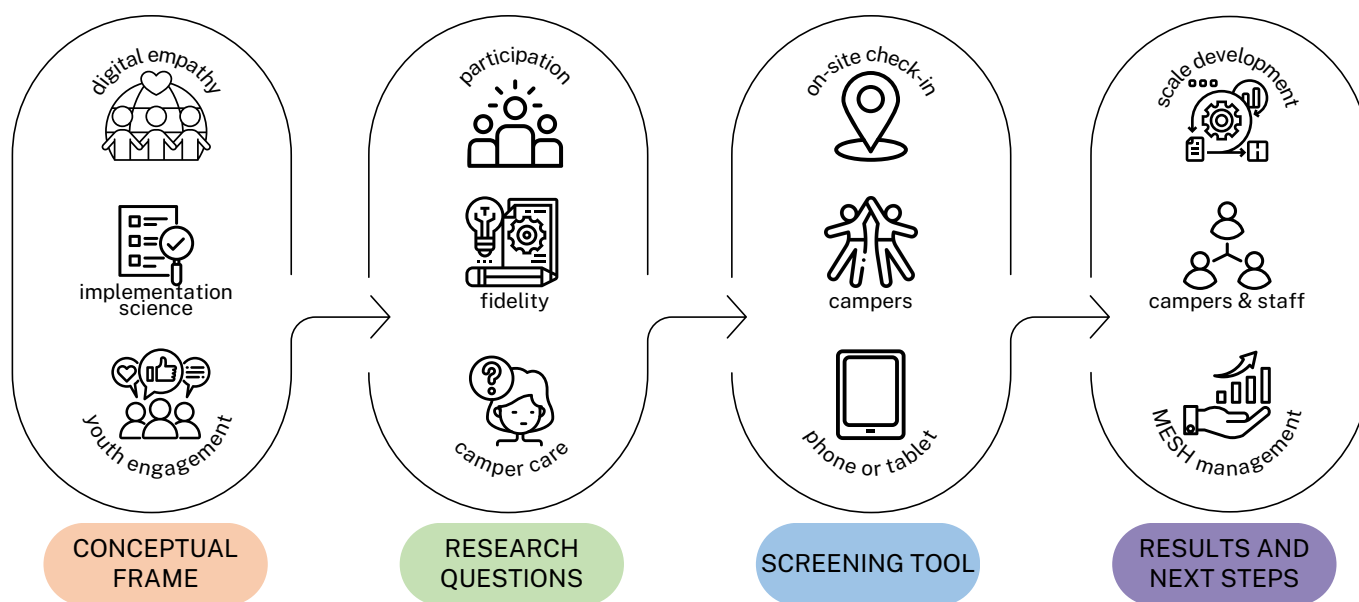
DATA COLLECTION

The 2023 pilot of My View was **approved by Clemson University's Institutional Review Board** and all participants provided informed consent.

Youth aged 7-18 from participating camps completed questions before (N=1,442) and after (N=206) camp using the **youth-friendly**, virtual My View screening tool on a provided tablet or their personal device.

Pre-camp questions were scaled from 1-5, (where 1= "not at all true for me" to 5= "very true for me") and covered diverse topics including **personal information** (e.g., demographics, likes/dislikes, strengths/assets), **home and school life** (e.g., free time use, emotions related to school, and technology perceptions), **dietary habits** (e.g., allergies, favorite foods, eating habits), **activities** (e.g., preferences, sleeping habits), **emotional well-being** (e.g., emotions, coping strategies), and **camp experiences** (e.g., worries, information for counselors).

Post-camp questions were also scaled 1-5 (where 1= "not at all true for me" to 5= "very true for me") and included adapted measures of **youth engagement**, **belonging**, and **care competency** (Tiffany et al., 2012; Whitehouse et al., 2013). In addition, three open-ended questions asked campers what they liked best about my view, whether My View seemed to improve their camp experience, and what they believed was the most helpful information campers shared through My View.





2023 FINDINGS

HIGHLIGHTS

100%

of participating camps had youth complete My View before camp. 66% had youth complete the tool after camp.

1,442 CAMPERS

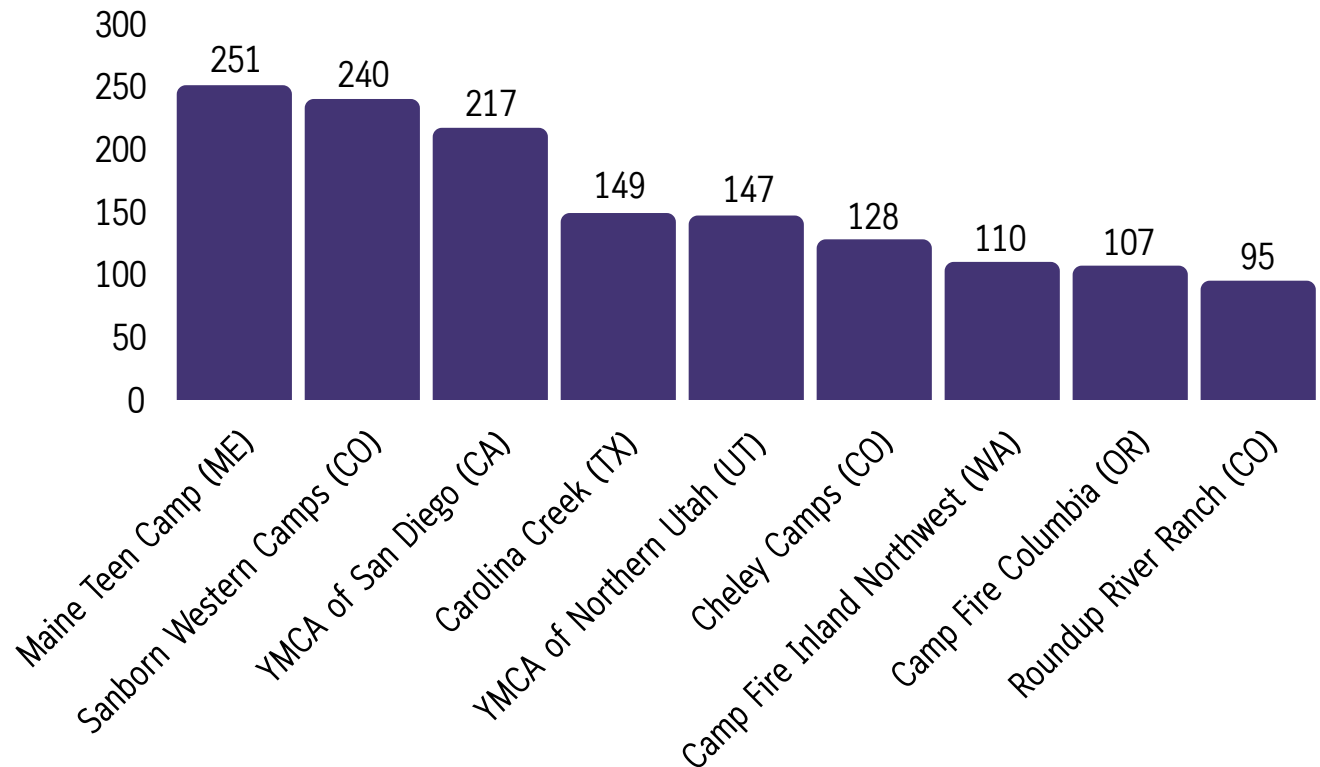
were engaged through My View.

7.5 MINUTES

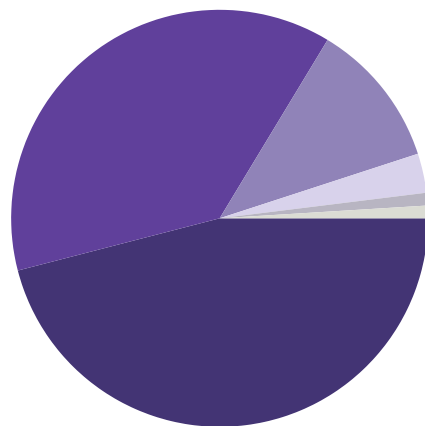
was the average time it took a camper to complete My View before camp.

PARTICIPATING CAMPS

A diverse group of camps across six U.S. states participated in the My View pilot, representing nonprofit, independent, and agency camps.

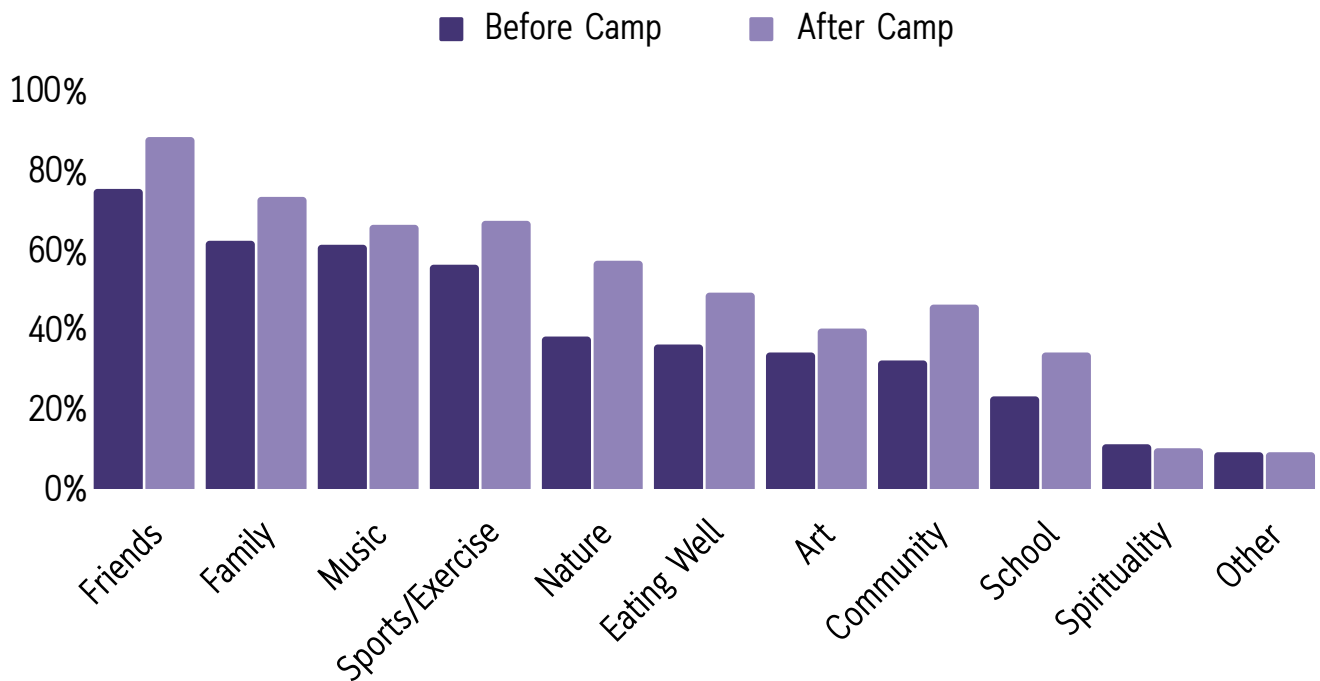


CAMPERS WHO RESPONDED



Female - 45%	Non Binary - 3%
Male - 38%	Something else fits - 1%
Blank/Missed - 11%	Prefer not to Answer - 1%

AVERAGE AGE (N=1442)
13 YEARS

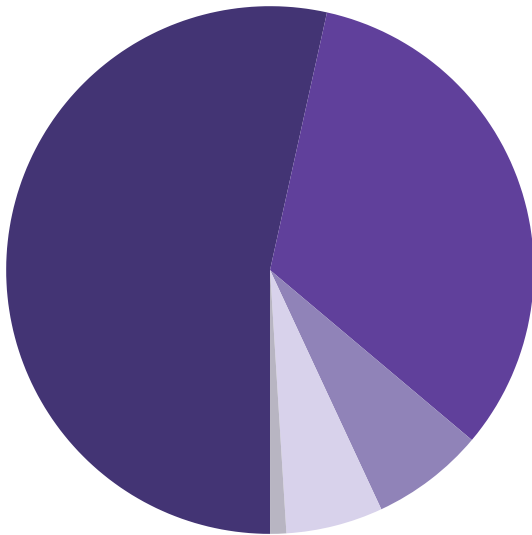


YOUTH STRENGTHS

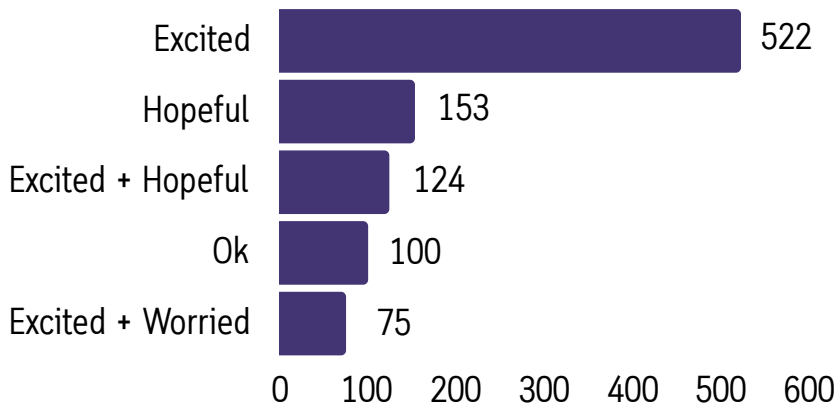
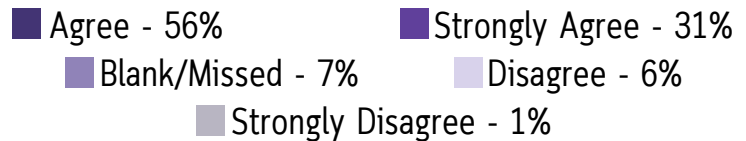
Before and After Camp

My View was designed to capture important information about youth perspectives, including youth strengths. Understanding youth strengths (sometimes called “**sparks**”- those things about which youth are most passionate) is central to providing a **positive youth development context in which young people can thrive**. By asking campers to share things that “keep them strong”, camp staff are better able to build on those strengths through the supports and opportunities offered at camp. For example, a camper identifying a “nature” strength could be offered more time in outdoor activities, and a camper identifying “sports/exercise” as a strength could be engaged in athletics. **Before camp, the top three strengths were “friends”, “family”, and “music.”** After camp, “**sports/exercise**” emerged in the top three along with “**friends**” and “**family**.”

FEELINGS OF BELONGING AT CAMP



Fifty-six percent of youth agreed with the following statement: **I feel like I will really belong at camp**. As camp staff it is important to acknowledge that it is not uncommon for campers to feel like they do not belong, especially at the start of their camp experience.

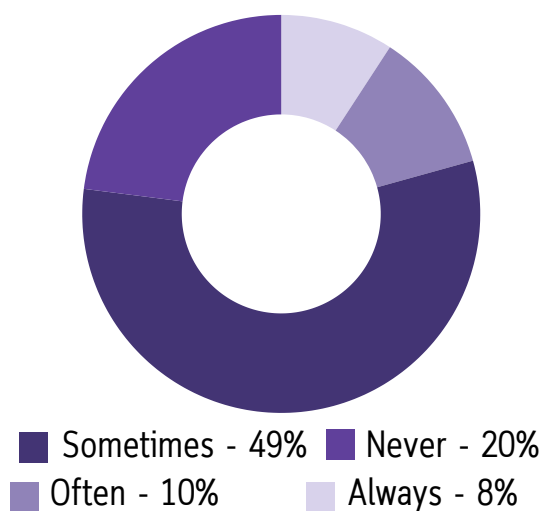


TOP FIVE FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH CAMP

Youth were asked to select from a set of provided “feelings” to report **how they felt about going to camp**. Feelings of worry were marked with a **yellow flag**, which would alert camp staff to the camper’s concern in that area. Youth could also identify other feelings about going to camp by completing an open-ended question.

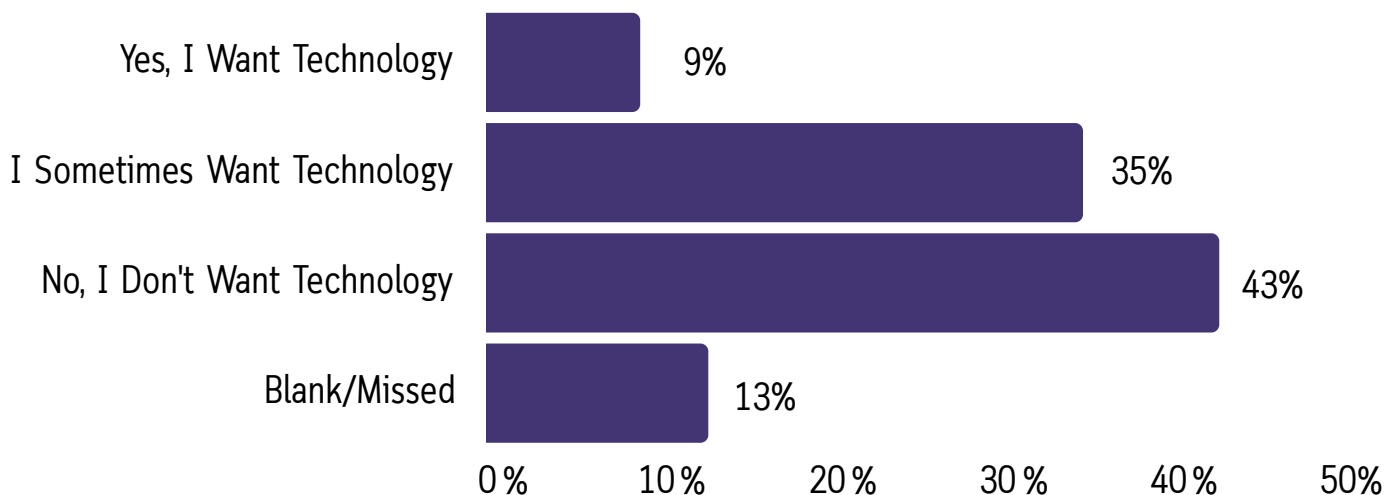
TECHNOLOGY AT CAMP

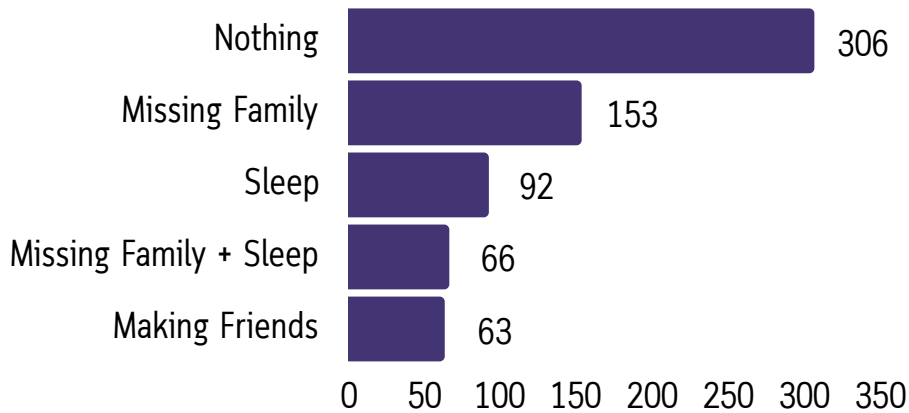
Technology has become an integral part of young people's lives, influencing their communications, social interaction, and free-time activities. Understanding youth technology use provides insights into how they engage with the world, how they form relationships, and access information. In addition, **insights into youth perceptions of technology use can help camp providers tailor programs to align with the preferences and needs of today's youth, enhancing their camp experience.** Insights into technology use can



I WILL MISS TECHNOLOGY WHILE AT CAMP

also inform discussions about managing screen time, digital literacy, and the potential impact of technology on mental, emotional, and social health (MESH). Some camps allow campers and/or staff to use devices like tablets and smart phones, others view camp as a technology-free zone. In the 2023 pilot of My View, campers were asked if they wanted access to technology while at camp. While 9% indicated "I want technology," a **majority (43%)** shared "**No, I don't want technology**" at camp.





TOP FIVE CAMP WORRIES

Camp represents the first time many youth they have experienced a prolonged period of time away from home. Separating from parents/caregivers, familiar surroundings, and regular daily patterns of life can be worrisome for many campers. The top worries identified by campers who responded to My View were **“missing family”** (153 campers), **“sleep”** (92 campers), **“missing family + sleep”** (66 campers), and **“making friends”** (63 campers.) Supporting camper concerns about sleep, bedtime routines, and nighttime activities is an important step toward helping youth have a successful camp experience. Notably, a large number of campers shared that **“nothing”** worried them about attending camp.

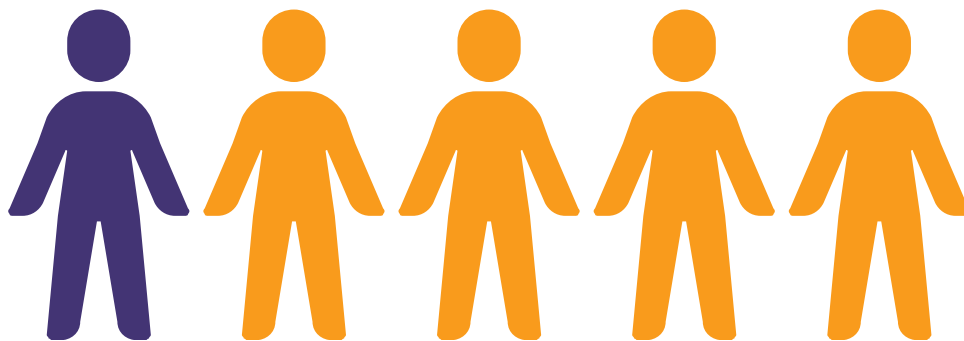


FOOD AND MEALTIMES

Food anxiety refers to feelings of stress or unease that youth may experience related to their dietary needs and preferences while attending camp. Youth with specific dietary requirements or restrictions, food allergies, or cultural preferences related to food may feel apprehensive about whether the camp will be able to cater to their needs, or they may wonder how others will treat them based on their food needs or preferences.

The study findings indicate that food anxiety is real, with 27% of campers sharing that they have (or sometimes have) trouble eating when away from home and close to 20% of campers expressing uncomfortable feelings when eating around other people at camp. Camp staff play a vital role in creating a physically and emotionally safe environment, including during mealtimes, that accommodates diverse camper dietary needs and reduces campers' food-related concerns.

1 in 5 campers expressed feeling uncomfortable eating around others



YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF ENGAGEMENT AND CARE

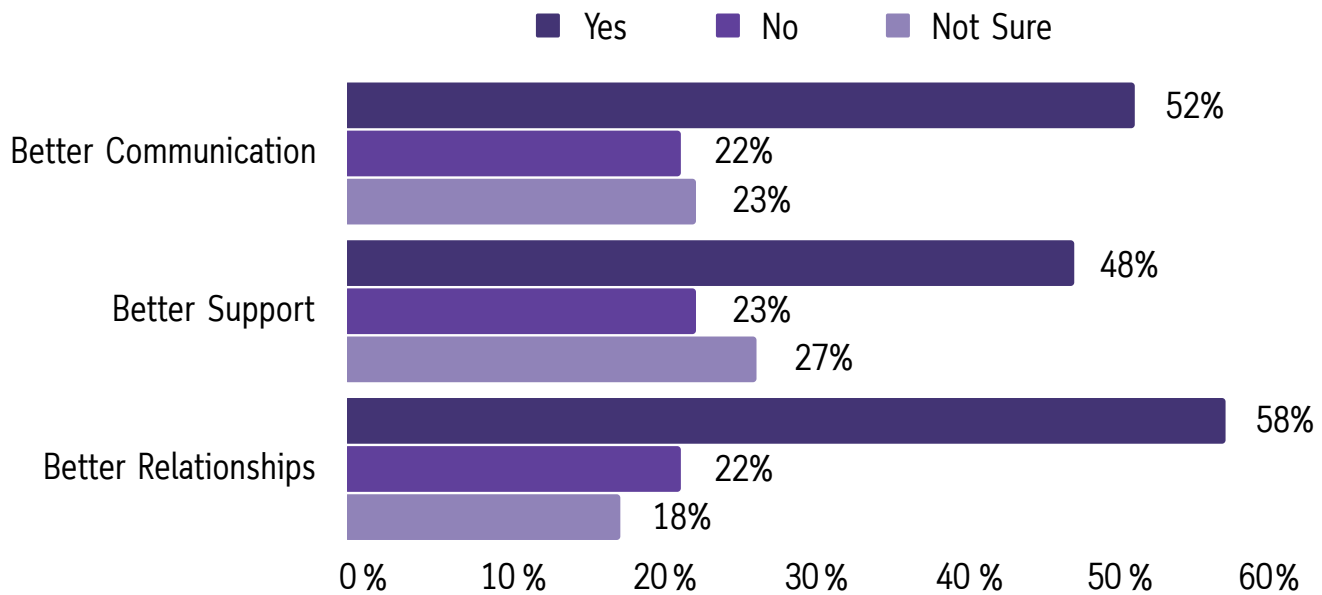
Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is a statistical method used to simplify complex data sets by identifying and summarizing essential patterns. In this study, PCA was used to analyze youth responses to the 15-item youth engagement scale. After performing a linearity check, 2 items were dropped from the analysis. This is like cleaning up the data to ensure that the remaining items truly represent the important aspects without redundancy or overlap.

The resulting 13 items loaded (i.e., were categorized on) two factors that were labeled based on the nature of the scale items that loaded onto them. **"Youth Support and Care"** includes items related to the support and care staff provided to campers, while **"Youth Voice and Engagement"** includes items related to how campers were involvement and engaged during camp activities. The reliability of each factor was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with high values indicating consistency in measurement ($\alpha = .96$ for "youth support and care" and $\alpha = .74$ for "Youth Voice and Engagement").

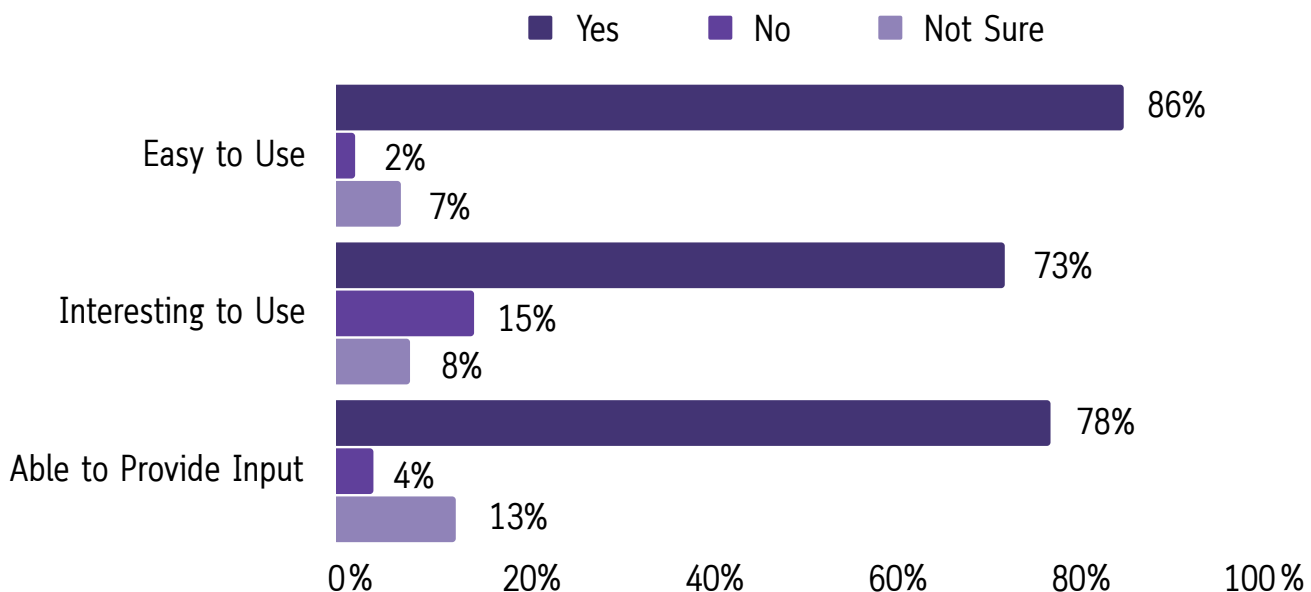
Overall, PCA was used to simplify the data, highlight essential patterns, and ensure a focused understanding of the youth camper perspectives. **Camper responses suggest the My View tool was highly effective for engaging youth and providing them with a way to share their thoughts and feelings about camp.**



YOUTH SUPPORT AND CARE



YOUTH VOICE AND ENGAGEMENT



USEFULNESS OF MY VIEW FOR STAFF PROVIDING CARE

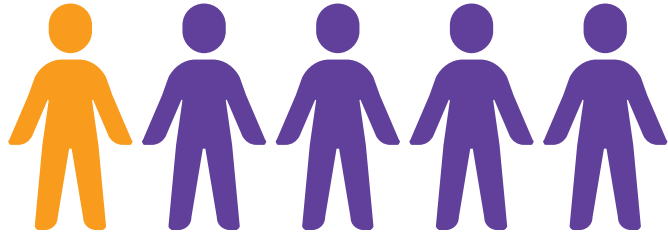
At the end of camp sessions, staff from the participating camps (N=27) shared their reactions to the My View tool through open-ended questions in an online survey. When asked how they believed My View supported camper care during camp, staff shared that My View:

- enhanced camper care through **higher levels of awareness**
- helped staff **manage and support camper situations** proactively
- fostered **intentional communication** with campers



LESSONS LEARNED AND GAPS

1 IN 5 CAMPERS HAD A
STRONG DESIRE TO KEEP
FEELINGS TO THEMSELVES



37% CAMPERS REPORTED CONCERNS
IN TALKING WITH A TRUSTED ADULT

20% CAMPERS SHARED CONCERNS
ABOUT BEING BULLIED OR TEASED



OVER 19% CAMPERS WORRIED
ABOUT GOING TO CAMP

IMPLICATIONS

Implement Pre-Camp Screening Tools: Camps should consider adopting pre-camp screening tools, such as My View, to gather comprehensive information about campers' needs, concerns, and perspectives about camp. These tools can provide valuable insights to inform camper care, allowing staff to better prepare for and address individual needs.

Strengthen Program Design by Including Youth Voice: In this study, My View provided an impactful approach for utilizing digital empathy to enhance youth engagement and voice. Camps should identify how youth perspectives can be considered in the design of camp activities, programs, and services.

Provide Training for Camp Staff: Camp staff should receive thorough training on how to implement and utilize screening tools like My View and the information provided by those tools. Through this education, camps will be able to improve the standard of care for campers and other participants.

Enhance Communication Between Campers and Staff: The study suggests that the My View tool facilitated better communication between campers and staff, enabling a higher level of awareness about camper needs and moving the camper-staff relationship from transactional to transformational. Camps should capitalize on such tools to enhance communication channels, allowing campers to express themselves and seek care. This proactive approach can contribute to a more supportive camp environment.



502.830.8393

ALLIANCEFORCAMPHEALTH.ORG

INFO@ALLIANCEFORCAMPHEALTH.ORG



INSTAGRAM: @ALLIANCEFORCAMPHEALTH

LINKEDIN: @ALLIANCEFORCAMPHEALTH

FACEBOOK: @ALLIANCEFORCAMPHEALTH



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