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One out of every seven Cuyahoga County residents ages 16 and 24 aren't in school or employed, each of those disengaged youths could cost taxpayers about \$44,000 each year

CLEVELAND, OH – When young people are disconnected from education and employment, the economy misses out on their earnings and potential tax revenue. In Cuyahoga County, about 21,000 young people fall into this category, creating an estimated negative economic impact of \$927 million per year.

Every year that a young person remains disengaged results in \$44,158 in missed wages, lost tax revenue and increased need for public assistance and social services, according to a report released today by The Center for Community Solutions, Youth Opportunities Unlimited and Towards Employment.

These young people are called by many names, including disengaged youth and opportunity youth. While about one-fifth of all the young people in the City of Cleveland are disengaged youth, the report also notes there has been an increase in the number of disengaged youth in the suburbs.

“While many disengaged youth grew up in poor neighborhoods, attended low-performing schools, have faced challenging family circumstances and may have had bad experiences with the education and social service systems, our research shows they can also come from higher-income families in the suburbs,” said Emily Campbell, the Associate Director of Community Solutions. “Regardless of personal circumstances, these young people don’t have a stable connection to education or the workforce.”

In the long term, unemployed and under-employed adults are more likely to experience health problems and to encounter the criminal justice system. Creating a well-designed program to connect young people to education and careers would cost less than \$10,000 per year per participant and would have an immediate positive return on investment. The return would only grow over the individual’s working life.

“Connecting young people to the workforce and to future careers will improve their prospects and doing that is critical for a healthy economy and a well-functioning society,” said Craig Dorn, the President and CEO of Youth Opportunities Unlimited. “This group of young people should be a target population for workforce development agencies, and engaging them can be a key solution to the regional skills gap challenge.”

There are no quick fixes, but disengaged youth can break generational cycles of poverty if they are connected to education or employment.

To speak with Campbell or Dorn, or for more information on the report please contact Dani Carlson at dcarlson@communitysolutions.com

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