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OAKLAND

2014 MAR 13 PM 12:11 **AGENDA REPORT**

**TO:** FRED BLACKWELL  
City Administrator

**FROM:** PATRICK CACERES  
Measure Y Coordinator

**SUBJECT:** FY 2012-2013 Oakland Unite (Measure Y)  
Violence Prevention Programs Evaluation

**DATE:** March 7, 2014

City Administrator  
Approval

Date 3-12-14

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** City-Wide

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Public Safety Committee accept this informational report from Resource Development Associates (RDA) Presentation of the FY 2012-2013 Oakland Unite (Measure Y) Violence Prevention Programs Evaluation.

**FISCAL**

There are no fiscal implications associated with this informational report.

For questions regarding this report, you may contact Patrick Caceres in the Office of the City Administrator at (510) 238-3325.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Caceres,  
Measure Y Coordinator

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A: Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Programs Evaluation Report FY 2012-2013  
Attachment B: PowerPoint Presentation Slides

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Safety Committee  
March 25, 2014



# City of Oakland

## Evaluation of Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Programs FY 2012-2013



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## Acknowledgements

We wish to express our appreciation for the contributions of all of the agencies, organizations and individuals who participated in the 2012-2013 evaluation of the City of Oakland's Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Programs.

Thank you to the Violence Prevention Programs for your time and commitment to this evaluation. We have appreciated your thoughtful feedback and have benefited from your knowledge. Your cooperation and energy resulted in the collection of extensive data and allowed us to prepare this report. Moreover, our Evaluation Team has tremendous respect and admiration for your contribution to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Oakland, both young and old.

We acknowledge the invaluable contribution of Mark Min and the staff of CitySpan for creating and operating the Youth Services and Information System used by the Violence Prevention Programs.

Our gratitude also goes to the staff of the Oakland City Administrator's Office, and the City of Oakland Department of Human Services. A special thanks to Sara Bedford, Priya Jagannathan and Dyanna Christie at DHS who provided invaluable hands-on assistance to the VPP programs and the evaluation efforts during this year. We are also grateful to Patrick Caceres for his guidance and dedication to this evaluation and to Measure Y.

Patricia Marrone Bennett, Ph.D. serves as the evaluation team leader of the Measure Y Evaluation Team. Please address any questions or comments to [pbennett@resourcedevelopment.net](mailto:pbennett@resourcedevelopment.net).



This report has been prepared by Resource Development Associates.

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## Executive Summary

The City of Oakland’s Measure Y ordinance provides approximately \$5 million annually for the City to spend on violence prevention programs (VPPs), with an emphasis on services for youth and children. The four service areas identified in the legislation and funded via Measure Y include: 1. Youth outreach counselors; 2. After and in-school programs for youth and children; 3. Domestic violence and child abuse counselors; and 4. Offender/parolee employment training.

The City’s Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for implementing the VPP component of the Measure Y legislation and does so through the Oakland Unite Programs. In consultation with the Measure Y Oversight Committee (MYOC) and the City Council’s Public Safety Committee (PSC), DHS develops triennial funding strategies for services that align with the legislation and that meet the shifting needs of the City. DHS then administers and monitors grants to community-based organizations that provide these services across the City.

This report evaluates the Oakland Unite initiative, the 13 violence prevention strategies, and individual programs within those strategies.

### Methodology

This report uses a mixed methods approach to evaluate the implementation and impact of the Oakland Unite initiative, intervention strategies, and individual programs. At the initiative level, the evaluation draws on interviews with leaders from a wide array of agencies and organizations across the City of Oakland and Alameda County, as well as national experts in violence prevention. The report uses these interviews to assess the successes of the Oakland Unite initiative over the past 8 years, as well as to understand challenges the initiative has had in the past or continues to face.

At the strategy-level, this report focuses on interventions implemented across clusters of Oakland Unite programs to understand the what are the key strengths of each programmatic strategy and are the barriers to greater effectiveness, as well as the extent to which each strategy effectively integrates evidence-based practices (EBPs) into its service delivery. Toward this end, the evaluation team conducted over 40 interviews and focus groups with service providers and program participants in Oakland Unite-funded programs. We also developed an EBP assessment tool, which was administered by DHS staff during annual site visits.

At the program-level, this evaluation uses data from the Alameda County Probation Department (ACPD) to analyze clients’ juvenile justice system involvement prior to and up to 2 years after their participation in Oakland Unite programs.<sup>1</sup> Because recidivism is best measured over a timeframe longer than one year, this evaluation includes analyses of justice system involvement for clients who were served during the *prior* fiscal year (FY 2011/12). Looking at the prior fiscal year’s data ensured that there was a

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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation team was unable to analyze recidivism among adult program participants due to difficulties obtaining data from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). This data has since been obtained and future evaluations will include recidivism data for adult Oakland Unite clients.





minimum of one full year, and up to two years, worth of data on all clients whose justice system involvement was analyzed.

## Key Findings

### Oakland Unite Initiative

With the Measure Y legislation set to sunset in 2014, the evaluation team used this year's evaluation as an opportunity to look back at the successes of the Oakland Unite initiative over the past decade, as well as challenges that persist. Our key findings included the following:

The major successes of the Oakland Unite initiative that we identified include:

- Funding strategies have become increasingly responsive to the City's changing violence prevention needs. In particular:
  - Oakland Unite has shifted its focus to higher risk populations and violent crime.
  - Oakland Unite has developed specialized strategies to fill service gaps not covered by existing programs or agencies.
- The initiative has fostered the development of a coordinated infrastructure for violence prevention.
  - DHS has built strong partnerships among Oakland Unite grantees and helped them build capacity to better serve Oakland residents.
  - The City of Oakland has leveraged these partnerships to receive over \$15 million in external funding for Oakland Unite services.
  - DHS has built on existing interagency partnerships and developed new ones to improve service coordination.
  - Oakland Unite has prioritized a data-driven approach that focuses on serving those most in need and on funding high-quality providers.

The ongoing challenges for the Oakland Unite initiative include:

- Oakland Unite has too few resources to meet the City's needs:
  - At approximately \$5 million annually, Oakland Unite has relatively limited resources with which to serve many clients, the majority of whom have a multiplicity of needs.
- Unrealistic expectations:
  - Despite the fact that Oakland Unite has relatively limited resources, the public has high expectations for it to reduce crime and violence.
  - The Measure Y legislation emphasizes prevention and early intervention services, which are not necessarily aligned with expectations that the initiative should reduce violent crime.
- Competing priorities from different stakeholders have hindered the City's ability to develop and maintain a consistent vision and effort.



## Violence Prevention Strategies

The 13 Oakland Unite violence prevention strategies provide a wide array of programs and services to a variety of populations that are at risk for being victims and perpetrators of violent crime. Despite the diversity of strategies, there are few key findings that span all or most of them. The following key takeaways are common across multiple strategies, although they may not be relevant to all strategies.

### Evidence-based practices:

- Several Oakland Unite strategies are themselves recognized as evidence based practices, including the Highland Hospital Intervention strategy, provided by YouthALIVE!'s Caught in the Crossfire program, and the Project Choice strategy, provided by The Mentoring Center and Volunteers of America Bay Area.
  - Restorative Justice, provided by Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth is a promising practice, which means that preliminary evidence indicates its effectiveness but it has not been formally established as an EBP.
- Beyond these strategies, there is wide variation in knowledge about and use of evidence-based practices across different strategies and agencies.
  - All strategies and agencies have demonstrated a commitment to promoting EBPs and to participating in ongoing EBP training and education.
  - Programs that have been funded through Oakland Unite for several years tend to have greater proficiency in EBPs.

### Key strengths of the Oakland Unite violence prevention strategies include:

- All of the violence prevention strategies provide intensive services to high risk/high need clients who might not receive services otherwise.
- Both within and across the violence prevention strategies, there is a high level of coordination and communication between different service providers, and between Oakland Unite providers and City and County agencies, including the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Alameda County Probation Department (ACPD), Oakland Police Department (OPD), and the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency.

### The Oakland Unite violence prevention strategies face the following challenges:

- There are limited resources to help clients address basic needs. In particular, there is a scarcity of safe, affordable, stable housing for clients, including shelters or other housing for survivors of domestic violence; transitional housing for individuals coming out of prison or jail; and housing for youth and transition-age youth, including sexually exploited minors.
- There are limited external services, such as substance abuse treatment and anger management programs, to help Oakland Unite clients address their rehabilitative needs.
- Safety is a very real concern for many Oakland Unite clients. Clients' fear for their day-to-day safety can limit their participation in Oakland Unite services as well as the effectiveness of these services.



## Oakland Unite Programs

This report includes an analysis of juvenile probation clients' justice-system involvement prior to and following their enrollment in Oakland Unite programs. Across all programs included in this analysis, results were extremely impressive. In particular:

- Significantly fewer clients were arrested or adjudicated delinquent following Oakland Unite program participation than before.
- Clients who were arrested and/or adjudicated delinquent after starting an Oakland Unite program tended to be arrested and/or adjudicated for less serious offenses than those they committed previously.
  - In particular, these youth were much less likely to be arrested and/or adjudicated for a violent offense after participating in an Oakland Unite program than before.

The following pages present overviews of the services provided by each strategy, along with key evaluation findings for each.

## Juvenile Justice Center & OUSD Wraparound Services

**497** served

SERVICE OVERVIEW

The JJC Strategy provides intensive case management and wraparound services to youth returning from Juvenile Hall to the community, with the primary goals of re-engaging youth in school and helping them stay compliant with the terms of their probation. Case managers conduct comprehensive assessments of youth to determine strengths, risks, and individual needs; develop individualized case plans that reflect the specific needs of each youth; and connect youth and their families to resources in the community.

- East Bay Agency for Children
- East Bay Asian Youth Center
- Oakland Unified School District Alternative Education
- Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY)
- The Mentoring Center
- Youth ALIVE!
- Youth UpRising

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Case managers develop **strong relationships** with clients that drive **successful outcomes**

*"Because we're school based, we have access to principals...kids' grades, the classroom.... To be in that milieu where gang interactions are happening, and see how this group responds to that that group, [we are] gaining access in a way that is not threatening... That's the power of being school-based."*

Behavioral change is **incremental** and can be seen through the lens of harm reduction.

*"It's also about the kids improving, but for a student who was suspended 5 times for 5 days each who now got suspended 1 time for 4 days, that's improvement! That's one of the things that's hard from an evaluation standpoint—it's hard to communicate that these improvements mean a lot."*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Parental complicity in drug use among youth underscores need to involve families

Reducing drug use requires relationship building

Hard to set a model if the parents are still in that lifestyle

*"Oakland Unified should add training for parent support—to couple this with the strategy—because we can't work with a kid in a silo, they are part of the family system."*

Lack of resources to provide housing and other services

Limited housing options, especially for youth over 18

Lack of mental health treatment

Few substance use programs

## Oakland Street Outreach

SERVICE OVERVIEW

This strategy provides street outreach and case management services to youth and young adults under the age of 35, who meet at least 4 of the following eligibility criteria: gang-involved, gun-involved, on probation or parole for a violent incident, resides or hangs out in a target area, at high risk for using a gun within 30 days, or is a known gang or clique leader.

**265 served**  
**7,430 reached**  
**through street outreach**

OSO staff work in collaboration with other city departments and community-based organizations, many of whom are other Oakland Unite partners. OSO staff coordinate responses to shootings, homicides, and other altercations as well as use their networks to predict and prevent violence. Outreach workers conduct mediations and violence interruptions as well.

- California Youth Outreach
- Healthy Oakland

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

**Strong trust and community buy-in allow for shared information critical to reducing and preventing violence**

*"We had a client where someone broke into his girlfriend's house, and he was ready to go shoot up the whole block, he'd been drinking, he was angry, and he was ready to retaliate. But...we gave him a sounding board. He calmed down...we took him home, and he went to sleep. He called later that afternoon to say thanks...and he was glad he could come talk to us."*

**Solid coordination with Oakland Unite partners results in leveraged resources**

*"The school called us...we went down there to do a rapid response with both sides and at the end of it...both sides agreed that it was over. This was something that started on the streets and spilled over to the school – so this one incident could have stopped 20 or 30 incidents."*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

**Case managers report that they don't have enough outreach workers on the ground to stay ahead of the violence**

*By the time the team does a BBQ, the activity will have moved on to another area.*

**Lack of resources and adequate services hinders ability to fully engage youth in alternatives**

*"Guys will say, 'How am I supposed to live? How am I supposed to support myself?' so it's really hard to sell services that we don't have..."*

Constantly in "reactionary mode"

Hard to be predictive with limited staff

The violence in Oakland is "nomadic"

Housing and employment most difficult

Few resources for basic needs

Resistance from youth and low family support

## Crisis Response and Support Network

SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Crisis Response and Support Network (CRSN) delivers both immediate and ongoing support to the family and friends of homicide victims in Oakland. CRSN provides clinical case management, which includes grief and trauma counseling along with intensive case management aimed at linking participants to a variety of supportive services. In addition, CRSN helps family members of homicide victims obtain Victims of Crime compensation benefits from Alameda County and provides additional emergency financial assistance to help with death and safety-related needs not covered by Victims of Crime funds. Through Oakland Unite funding, the program ensures that families, friends, classmates, and other individuals affected by homicides in Oakland receive intensive support after an incident has occurred.

**326** served with individual services  
**1,195** served with crisis response services

- Catholic Charities of the East Bay

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Clinical case management (CCM) model, in which trained professionals provide grief and trauma counseling *and* traditional case management.

Case managers work with clients to help them cope with the loss of their loved ones and the trauma associated with the violent nature of their loss.

**“We help people learn to live with a hole in their heart.”**

*“Some of us don’t have [funeral] insurance, so it’s hard to cope with that, and planning all that, it’s stressful. I needed the help. It’s not about the money; it’s about all that you have to go through during your grieving time. You go through a lot when you lose someone.”*

*“Where I’ve been wounded, these services, they are the best thing to happen to me... I’m never going to be able to hold my child, but I can address my healing. If I didn’t have these services, I wouldn’t be able to heal. They have given me the mental ability to move forward. [Without them] I’d be closed up.”*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

There is a lack of resources to provide additional support to clients

Limited financial support

Few options for housing assistance

Lack of money for basic needs

*“The biggest gaps are financial needs; there are no resources—the big barrier is that there are some needs that there aren’t community resources for, and we don’t have a deep pocket. There is an availability of resources to help people pay for utilities, housing, other basics.”*

## Highland Hospital Intervention

**147** served

SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Youth ALIVE! Caught in the Crossfire (CiC) program provides two primary services to youth who have been admitted to Highland Hospital and have been involved in an Oakland-based incident involving a gunshot or stab wound: 1) preventing retaliatory violence that may result from the incident, and 2) case management. CiC coordinates with other Oakland Unite partners—including the Crisis Response Support Network and Oakland Street Outreach—to reduce the likelihood of retaliation, re-injury, and further justice system involvement. In addition, CiC case managers develop case plans for their clients that identify short- and long-term goals and connect them to services in the community.

- Youth ALIVE

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Case managers have strong track records of engaging youth prior to their discharge from the hospital

Case manager relationships support positive outcomes related to health, safety, emotional stability, employment, and educational trajectories

*"I was in the hospital and Rafael and Emilio can in. I thought it was the police, and then they said they were a program that could help me with transportation, going back to school. I'd been in the hospital for a month or two, and when I got out, I started working with Rafael. That's when he got me in school and back on track."*

*"It's a blessing to have had an opportunity to be with Youth ALIVE! [and] get support in any possible manner. I wouldn't be doing the same things I'm doing today – everyone decides what to do in their life, I have more self-awareness to do better, stay positive, see things differently in my community."*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Ensuring client safety, sustained medical care, and fear of retaliation

Difficult to sustain connections to medical care

Follow-up appointments scheduled far in the future

Uncertain safety from retaliatory actions

Chronic disappointment by adults undermines trust

Youth have been failed by many adults

Distrust of case managers can impede service provision

Need for long-term mentoring and mental health counseling

*"I don't want to meet nobody else – don't want to start all over"*

## Restorative Justice

SERVICE OVERVIEW

Restorative justice is a philosophy that focuses on restoring relationships that may have been harmed by the experience of trauma in the family or community and by traditional punitive discipline in schools. Oakland Unite supports Restorative Justice programs at West Oakland Middle School and Ralph J. Bunche High School in West Oakland. These programs offer an alternative model for engaging youth in addressing conflict by helping students learn and internalize effective communication styles through positive relationship building. They use Student Circles to facilitate dialogue between students about conflict and positive ways to address it. They also mediate conversations between students and teachers to deescalate conflict and prevent expulsions or suspensions.

**291** served in Circles  
**1,365** reached through trainings and outreach

- Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

RJOY's approach to creating dialogue about harm and the struggles of students increases their sense of self-worth and confidence.

Restorative justice reinforces positive interpersonal communication techniques

"Students tell us that the conversations are working and they want to do better. It's like a healthy drug for the ones we work with the most."

"It's a complete culture shift. Traditionally kids would get suspended for fighting, spitting, etc. and there would be a perpetuation of violence. With restorative justice, staff are learning how to communicate clearer, redirect their frustrations and anger."

"I'm different; I'm a misfit; I'm a philosopher. It's good to be different."

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Difficulty securing buy-in for the RJ model

Resistance to alternative disciplining methods

Teachers and staff hesitant to give up power

"Staff do not always want to give away their perceived power. There are people who are not willing to be courageous. Some people are just not able to do that."

Challenges finding time to implement the RJ model

It takes time to teach the model

Not enough time for ongoing training and coaching

"Buy-in from adults is a challenge because it's a whole philosophy... The whole school approach requires us to train teachers and adults—teach them once they've been trained and create a professional learning community. Teachers are already really stressed. We've had a hard time to get the blocks of time we need to do training."



## Gang Prevention

SERVICE OVERVIEW

This strategy includes gang prevention training for schools, youth-serving organizations, and parents and caregivers. California Youth Outreach (CYO) and Hatchuel, Tabernik and Associates (HTA) provide agency and staff capacity building trainings on gang awareness, Oakland crime trends, and community resources to schools and youth-serving organizations. Project ReConnect provides a parent education series on gang awareness and prevention for parents and caregivers of young people who are gang-involved or at risk of becoming gang-involved. The program is linked to the Interagency Gang Prevention Collaborative's (IGPC) broader gang prevention efforts and leverages the resources of its community members.

**105** served in groups  
**658** served through  
gang awareness trainings

- OUSD Alternative Education and subgrantees:
  - California Youth Outreach (CYO)
  - Hatchuel, Tabernik and Associates (HTA)
  - Project ReConnect

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

**Project ReConnect overcomes community distrust and engages parents and teachers by giving them concrete strategies for gang prevention**

**There is a high demand for trainings across a broad range of organizations, as well as follow-up classes for parents**

*"There was a guest speaker, a former Norteno who spoke about his upbringing, experiences with drugs and alcohol...He shared with parents, step-by-step, what they needed to do to keep their kids out of gangs. There were parents saying, 'My kid's on that road,' and when it was over, they rushed him to say thank you."*

*"I was surprised to hear and see other parents talking about gangs. I felt relief and I didn't feel alone. I realized that other parents had it even worse, and I started to feel comfortable talking with others [in the group]. It gave me a great feeling of security and I transferred that feeling to my son."*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

**In the most violent neighborhoods, participation is low due to suspected level of community trauma and debilitation**

- Areas are so debilitated that residents don't come out
- Distrust and safety concerns impede participation
- Caregivers say outreach could be improved

*"There should be much, much more outreach in the communities. Many, many people would benefit from the course but don't know about it."*

## Our Kids/Our Families Middle School Model

SERVICE OVERVIEW

Our Kids/Our Families provides in-school psycho-social assessments, counseling, case management, referral and follow-up, and family support services to youth who have experienced trauma at home, at school, or in the community. Program staff collaborate with several other school-based service providers to bring a continuum of health and social services for students. In addition to providing direct services to Oakland youth, Our Kids/Our Families provides mental health consultation to school administrative staff and faculty, training them on classroom management, understanding the impact of trauma on students, de-escalation techniques, and culturally inclusive practices. Our Kids/Our Families also outreaches to parents and caregivers of students to provide them with social support and education about the benefits of counseling and other resources in Alameda County.

**982** served in individual services  
**299** served in group services

- Alameda County Health Care Services Agency (ACHCSA)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

**Multidisciplinary, team-based approach to case management and counseling, which increases access to services for youth.**

**Program works with students to reduce their stress and deal with their emotions**

*"If the student is suicidal, self-injuring, or there is child abuse potential, our staff does most of the crisis intervention. Some clinicians hold parent support groups. We even provide mental health services to parents whose kids may not be able to enroll. That way the kids get the support they need."*

*"It helps me talk about my feelings instead of letting them eat me away."*

*"Being around with my counselor makes everything so positive and nice and warm. Most of the time when I'm mad, things explode in my brain. I don't know what to do or say, so I just go see my counselor."*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

**Limited resources and time to address material needs**

*"We'd like to do more case management—help folks with housing, employment, education—and we just don't have the time to do everything. We have to triage and hope they're getting the best possible services."*

- Unable to help with financial needs such as rent or food
- Large caseloads prevent more in-depth case management
- No capacity to follow up on referrals

**Inability to address issues outside students' control**

- Limited emotional and academic support at home
- Limited family involvement

*"I'm happy at school but when I go home, everything is sad. I just go home and have no one to talk to."*

## Family Violence Intervention Unit

**1,293 served**

The Family Violence Intervention Unit (FVIU) strategy, provided by the Family Violence Law Center (FVLC), aims to connect domestic violence survivors to a range of supportive services. FVIU personnel reach out to the domestic violence survivors and provide crisis counseling, safety planning, assistance with Victims of Crime applications, referrals to FVLC's legal department, advocacy with OPD and connection with the District Attorney's Victim Witness Department, and other support as needed. FVIU staff also works with OPD to provide line-up trainings to police officers to increase their capacity to respond to survivors of domestic violence.

- Family Violence Law Center (FVLC)

**Working with clients from start to finish**

**Strong partnership with OPD**

*"We offer a lot of support... We don't just give a person a referral and not know that we're referring to the right place. If we don't provide a service, we work hard to find someone who does provide that services. We start at step A and do as much to walk them through to step Z."*

*"Sometimes in lineups in certain areas, the officers are really engaged. In Eastmont, the officers are a lot more knowledgeable. They ask a lot of questions. We have a high concentration in Eastmont who will continuously call us because they know us, have seen us go out. Or if they see us at line up [they'll say], 'that's right! You guys are awesome - you make our lives easier.'"*

**Not enough direct referrals leads to lag times**

**FVIU often finds out about incidents though police reports**

**Survivors may not accept services if time has elapsed**

**There is limited housing**

**Not enough crisis housing and shelters**

**No long-term housing**

**Limited housing for women with sons**

## Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors

**209** served

SERVICE OVERVIEW

The programs in this strategy work together to provide a continuum of services for commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC). This includes first responder services, where providers go into the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) and accompany the Oakland Police Department (OPD) on prostitution sweeps to offer intervention services. BAWAR provides immediate intervention services, including counseling and referrals to additional and longer-term services, while MISSEY provides longer-term services through wraparound and a SPA drop-in center.

- Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR)
- Motivating, Inspiring, Serving, and Supporting Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY)
- Alameda County Health Care Services Agency (ACHCSA)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

**Immediate intervention for sexually exploited minors**

*"Pre-release planning helps them know what's going on—not get out and suddenly have so much to do, but have a set plan in advance. [They know] you'll have an advocate, you can go to the Drop-In Center, you'll get a case manager and a therapist."*

**Youth receive unconditional support**

*"I thought I'd come and not want to be here, not want to talk; I thought people weren't really going to understand who I was, why I did stuff, they'd be judgmental. And they really aren't. You don't wonder if they care with anyone who works with these organizations. You know that they care."*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

**Lack of resources to provide material support**

*"They really do help you through the mental process, the basic necessities of changing, but if we need somewhere to go, they can't do much to help and it makes it hard because we're still in the same environment with the same people."*

**Girls need more love and support than there is time for**

*"It's not just materialistic things like five and attendants. I would love to be with every kid 24 hours a day but it's not realistic."*

- Need housing and supportive living environments
- Girls need a lot of love and support
- Hard to return to the same environment

## Mental Health Services for Ages 0-5

SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Link to Children (TLC) staff provide intensive play therapy, dyadic parent-child therapy and parent counseling. Children are referred to TLC through the Alameda County Family Justice Center, the Victim/Witness program and through community partnerships with the Oakland Unified School District, Head Start and Oakland Elizabeth House. Safe Passages contracts with Through the Looking Glass (TLG) and offers services that include early identification and treatment for developmental and behavioral pathology for children exposed to family and/or community violence. The services are provided at two Oakland Head Start locations, where TLG clinical staff are also responsible for providing professional development to preschool teachers serving these students.

**315 individual services**  
**306 classroom-based services**

- The link to Children (TLC)
- Safe Passages with subgrantee:
  - Through the Looking Glass (TLG)

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Clinical staff are critical “bridges” to services and resources for families and children

Staff educate children on social problem-solving skills, which positively impacts the whole family

*“Many parents are so focused on what’s happening in their world that they’re not really in tune with their child’s experience. We are able to help them gain insight into their child’s world.”*

*“He used to have terrible tantrums, but since this has become an ongoing process of coming for therapy the tantrums have improved a lot. Knowing we get to see a counselor...he’s been looking forward to it.”*

*“I don’t know where we would be if we weren’t able to come to therapy.”*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Shortage of resources for additional assistance

Access to emergency shelters, food banks

Assistance following up with IEPs and other school referrals

Services for older siblings of children ages 0-5

Absence of after-hours availability and on-site security hinder service provision to a wider population

Need for evening or weekend hours

Waiting area is open without security guards

*“We could use a whole other day at the site to do the kinds of work that needs to be done.”*

## Reentry Employment

**245** served

The Reentry Employment strategy provides employment training and subsidized employment to adults who are on probation or parole. These programs provide case management, education, job readiness training, and subsidized employment over a period of three-to-six months, as well as job placement and retention support services longer term. This service array is designed to help probationers and parolees meet the many challenges they face in obtaining sustained employment, including low literacy levels and educational attainment, limited work histories, and little experience with the soft skills necessary to find a job.

- Oakland Private Industry Council
- Men of Valor Academy
- Volunteers of America Bay Area
- Youth Employment Partnership
- Youth UpRising
- Civicorps

Teaches clients soft skills and hard job skills so they can obtain and maintain employment

Programs go above and beyond to support clients

*"I learned how to respect others, like greeting people. I can also say that this program helped me with my references, my cover letter, that sort of thing. Now I can fill out a whole job application. It bettered me for a lot of things."*

*"When I started the program, I just lost my brother. I really wanted to keep that out of my mind. I sat down with my counselor and told him I was thinking negative.... He told me to take one day at a time and don't put too much pressure on yourself. He told me that I have a beautiful heart and said he saw more in me than being on the streets. He motivated me"*

The external environment poses challenges to success

Shortage of safe, stable housing

Unstable home lives makes it hard to focus

"Leaving the negative life" is a challenge

*"We are a positive environment with only 8 hours of helping, and the other 16 hours they work against what our clients are working towards."*

Clients have such limited job experience

Difficult to train clients with no prior job experience

Need more employment sponsors for on-the-job training

*"Entry level jobs are so low it's very hard to give them on-the-job skills. We need more employment sponsors to step up to the plate and offer them a chance on the job."*

SERVICE OVERVIEW

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

## Youth Employment

**209** served

The Youth Employment strategy provides job skills training and subsidized employment to at juvenile justice-involved youth over the summer and after school. Programs provide soft skills training, on-the-job experience, and additional counseling and case management support to help youth gain job skills and experience; expose them to different career opportunities; and support them through challenges with work, school, and home. These activities are ultimately oriented toward exposing justice-involved youth to opportunities for positive growth and development and preventing further involvement in the justice system.

- The Unity Council
- Youth Employment Partnership
- Youth Radio
- Youth UpRising

SERVICE OVERVIEW

Clients learn job skills, communication, and soft skills

Youth gain confidence through their success

*"I had never worked in a real job. I learned about job etiquette, logistics. I learned how to find a job, how to approach the job listing that I really like. They also teach you about what to do at your job and what not to do. They taught us how to look for a job, how to get it, and how to stay in it. And resumes, which is part of how to get the job."*

*"For my internship, I was an outreach coordinator. I had to call 81 foster youth to get into the program. I found out that I have good interpersonal skills!"*

*"The program will help you in skills—not to be shy, how to communicate with others. You feel good. And you're helping people."*

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Difficulty ensuring the safety of youth

*"Six years ago, you can give all the support you want from family. Once you lift, they're on their own. You just hope that they'll be safe, make safe choices, wise decisions."*

Not enough resources to address youths' multiple needs

- Youth need help with transportation
- Hard to find work-appropriate clothing
- Limited substance abuse treatment

*"There are so many services out there that are designed for dislocated workers but they don't address some needs of our kids. There's a sense that there's a lot of case service out there but they're not appropriate for our kids."*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

## Project Choice

**165** served

SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Project Choice strategy works with incarcerated Oakland residents to help them transition from custody into the community. The Mentoring Center's (TMC) Project Choice program works with juveniles who are coming out of the State's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Volunteers of America's (VOA) Project Choice program works with adults being released from San Quentin State Prison. Both offer a continuum of support services beginning with pre-release transition planning through post-release coordination of supportive services and include intensive case management, housing and employment assistance, and mentoring services.

- The Mentoring Center
- Volunteers of America Bay Area

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

**Pre-release planning helps clients prepare and creates stability upon release**

*"Everything is different. New stores and places I wasn't familiar with... I wasn't comfortable. And Project Choice staff just talked to me calmed me down."*

*"Project Choice helped me plan, like was I gonna go to school or was I gonna find a job? So I went to Laney College for a year... Got a summer program job through Project Choice and found a transitional home."*

**Programs provide positive role models who clients can relate to**

*"Them being there is the main thing. Most people in Oakland nowadays don't have anything, especially a father figure. It's basically a part of life that most people don't really have."*

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

**Concerns about safety upon release**

*"Safety is an issue in that many of these guys have had 'beef on the street.' They don't always know where they'll end up. Guys are afraid to go out because of safety on the street. We have to mitigate that."*

**Lack of resources to help with financial and service needs upon release**

*"The way we are funded, we have limited funds to help with first month's rent or give families a bus pass."*

**Limited ability to help with housing and rent**

**Need for substance use treatment**

**Need for help with basic necessities**

*"The ones who can't get the basic necessities can fall off track. Substance abuse treatment is critical because they can't think straight. If we get them stabilized, it helps."*





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## Introduction and Methods

### Oakland Unite Background and Overview

In 2004, Oakland voters passed Measure Y, The Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act of 2004, which levied a parcel tax on Oakland residents in order to support a variety of citywide public safety services, including the Oakland Police Department's Community Policing Neighborhood Services program, the Oakland Fire Department, and a series of Violence Prevention Programs (VPP). This report is an evaluation of the VPP component of Measure Y, or Oakland Unite. The legislation describing their purpose and reach is as follows:

Violence Prevention Services With an Emphasis on Youth and Children:

*Expand preventive social services provided by the City of Oakland, or by adding capacity to community-based nonprofit programs with demonstrated past success for the following objectives:*

- a. Youth outreach counselors: hire and train personnel who will reach out, counsel and mentor at-risk adolescents and young adults by providing services and presenting employment opportunities;*
- b. After and in school program for youth and children: expand existing City programs and City supported programs that provide recreational, academic tutoring and mentoring opportunities for at-risk adolescents and children during after school hours; expand truancy enforcement programs to keep kids in school.*
- c. Domestic violence and child abuse counselors: make available counselors who will team with police and the criminal justice system to assist victims of domestic violence or child prostitution and to find services that help to avoid repeat abuse situations; expand early childhood intervention programs for children exposed to violence in the home at an early age.*
- d. Offender/parolee employment training: provide parolee pre-release employment skills training and provide employers with wage incentives to hire and train young offenders or parolees;*

The City's Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for implementing the VPP component of the Measure Y legislation and does so through the Oakland Unite Programs. In consultation with the Measure Y Oversight Committee (MYOC) and the City Council's Public Safety Committee (PSC) DHS develops triennial funding strategies that align with the services delineated in the legislation and that meet the shifting needs of the City of Oakland. DHS then administers and monitors grants to community-based organizations that provide these services across the City.



During the 2012-13 Fiscal Year, Oakland Unite funded 13 violence prevention strategies across the four areas described in the legislation as illustrated in the table below.

Legislation	Implementation
Youth Outreach Counselors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JIC / OUSD Wraparound</li> <li>• Oakland Street Outreach</li> <li>• Crisis Response and Support Network</li> <li>• Highland Hospital Intervention</li> </ul>
After and in-school programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restorative Justice</li> <li>• Gang Prevention</li> <li>• OUR KIDS Middle School</li> </ul>
Domestic Violence and Child Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Violence Intervention Unit</li> <li>• Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors</li> <li>• Mental Health Services for Ages 0-5</li> </ul>
Offender/Parolee Employment Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reentry Employment</li> <li>• Youth Employment</li> <li>• Project Choice</li> </ul>

Consistent with the Measure Y legislation, Oakland Unite Programs are designed to comprehensively address the risk factors associated with violence in Oakland. Oakland’s effort is built on the premise that violence can be prevented through: individual interventions designed to re-direct high risk populations toward education, career, and pro-social peer opportunities; systems change efforts that result in improved public safety at the school or community level; improved capacity to identify and engage high risk populations; and/or improved coordination across systems. Among the key characteristics of Oakland Unite programs are:

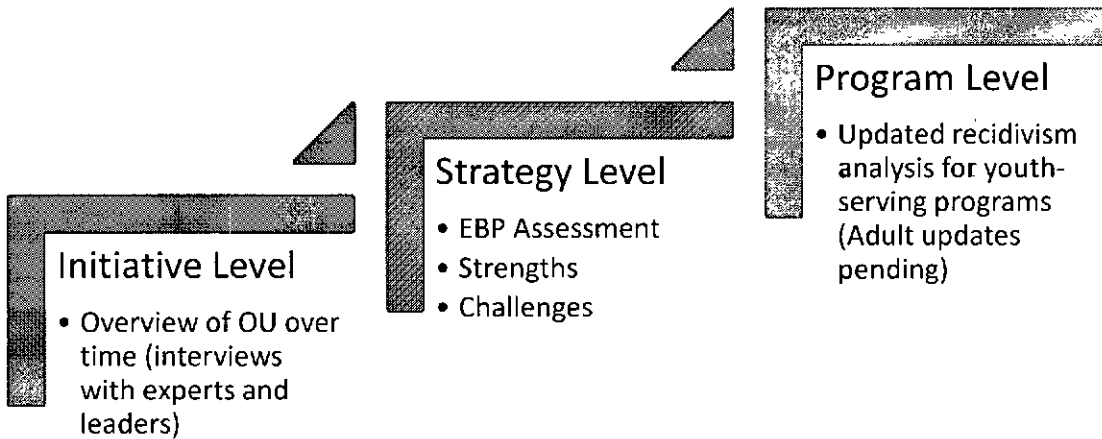
- Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Program strategy areas include a diversity of programs that share either a common target population (e.g., young adults on probation or parole) or a common intervention (e.g., school placement and case management).
- Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Programs target special populations at risk for perpetrating, falling victim to, or experiencing negative consequences from exposure to violence – from gang-involved youth to sexually exploited minors to those on probation or parole.

This report provides an overview of the evaluation of these strategies, highlighting their strengths and challenges in providing services to the populations identified above.

## The Oakland Unite Evaluation

Since 2008, the City of Oakland has contracted with Resource Development Associates (RDA) to evaluate various components of Measure Y, including the Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Programs. Over the past 5 years, these evaluations have taken a variety of approaches to assessing the implementation and effectiveness of Oakland Unite, collecting a range of qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate individual programs, programming strategies, and the initiative as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

As much as possible, this report integrates these three approaches and includes data on the Oakland Unite initiative, the 13 violence prevention strategies, and individual programs within those strategies.



## Methods Overview

The evaluation team used a mixed methods approach to evaluate the implementation and impact of the Oakland Unite initiative, intervention strategies, and individual programs. At the initiative level, this evaluation draws on interviews with leaders from a wide array of agencies and organizations across the City of Oakland, Alameda County, and national experts in violence prevention to assess the successes of the Oakland Unite initiative over the past 8 years, as well as to understand challenges the initiative has or continues to face.

As the strategy-level, this report focuses on the interventions implemented across clusters of Oakland Unite programs to understand the strengths and challenges of each programmatic strategy as well as the extent to which each strategy is effectively integrating evidence-based practices (EBPs) into their service delivery. Toward this end, the evaluation team conducted over 40 interviews and focus groups with services providers and program participants every Oakland Unite-funded program. Key informant interviews were held with leadership, senior staff, and case managers from each provider and were intended to understand their perspective on the factors that make their programs effective and barriers

<sup>2</sup> Past Oakland Unite evaluations can be seen online at [OaklandUnite.org](http://OaklandUnite.org)



they face. The evaluation team followed the interviews up with focus groups with to understand their experiences with the services, how they could be improved, and what has been particularly valuable to them. The data collected from these interviews and focus groups were analyzed and are presented at the strategy level in the report. Staff and clients from each funded service provider were interviewed separately from each other and from other service providers and their responses were triangulated to develop a comprehensive assessment of the strengths and challenges of each Oakland Unite strategy.

To assess the use of EBPs in Oakland Unite programs, RDA developed an assessment tool that captured the extent to which EBPs have been integrated into different aspects of service delivery, including assessment, case planning, staff training, and more. The instrument was designed to document the degree to which providers are using evidence based practices in their programs such that DHS can provide additional support to those organizations that need it. The tool was administered by DHS staff during annual site visits and the data was coded and analyzed by RDA.

At the program-level, this evaluation uses data from the Alameda County Probation Department (ACPD) to analyze clients' juvenile justice-system involvement prior to and up to 2 years after their participation in Oakland Unite programs.<sup>3</sup> To do so, the evaluation team received client-level service data from the City's CitySpan data system<sup>4</sup> and matched that data to juvenile probation records in ACPD's PRISM database. Because recidivism is a common term with a wide variety of specific definitions, this evaluation used a variety of measures of justice-system involvement as indicators of recidivism; these included arrests, which may or may not have been upheld in court, and adjudications, or instances in which youth were found to have committed the act for which they were referred to the juvenile justice system.<sup>5</sup> In addition, this evaluation differentiates between delinquent offenses on the one hand and technical violations of probation on the other. Delinquent offenses are offenses that are against the law *in and of themselves*, whereas technical violations of probation or parole are offenses that are only against the law *because they involve non-compliance with court-ordered conditions of probation*. Examples of the former include robbery, burglary, possession of a controlled substance, or any of the other myriad offenses that are generally understood to constitute criminal or delinquent activity. By contrast, technical violations of probation involve breaking a rule that has been imposed because someone is under correctional supervision; examples include missing curfew, having urine test results that indicate use of drugs or alcohol, or associating with individuals prohibited by a judge or probation officer. Although this evaluation tracks both new delinquent offenses and technical violations of probation as indicators of recidivism, it also differentiates between the two, in recognition of their disparate levels of severity. Finally, because recidivism is best measured over a longer timeframe than

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<sup>3</sup> The evaluation team was unable to analyze recidivism among adult program participants due to difficulties obtaining data from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). This data has since been obtained and future evaluations will include recidivism data for adult Oakland Unite clients.

<sup>4</sup> Because the evaluation only received identifiable data on clients who consented to be included in the evaluation, these are the only clients who were matched to external data and whose outcomes were analyzed. The majority of programs obtained consent from the majority of their clients.

<sup>5</sup> Offenses committed by juveniles and processed in the juvenile court system are, by definition, not criminal offenses. Legally, these incidents are considered delinquencies, and youth who are found to have committed these offenses are not "convicted;" rather, they are "adjudicated delinquent."



one year, this evaluation includes analyses of justice system involvement for clients who were served during the *prior* fiscal year. This was done to ensure that there was a minimum of one full year of data and up to two years of data on all clients whose post-OU participation justice system involvement is analyzed.



## The Oakland Unite Initiative: The Evolution Violence Prevention in Oakland

### Introduction

This section of this report presents an overview of the progress that has been achieved and the challenges that remain in the implementation of the Oakland Unite violence prevention programs over the past 9 years. To do so, the evaluation team reviewed DHS documentation related to partnerships and leverage funding, conducted interviews and focus groups with leaders from agencies and organizations across the City of Oakland and Alameda County, and spoke to national experts in violence prevention. Interviews with local leadership and national experts addressed a variety of issues related to the planning and implementation of Oakland Unite, including funding strategies, target populations, data collection, interagency coordination, and more. The table below presents a list of all of the individuals interviewed for this component of this report, along with their positions and organizational affiliations.

Name	Position/Affiliation
Sara Bedford	Interim Director, City of Oakland Department of Human Services
Shay Bilchik	Director, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University
Alex Briscoe	Director, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency
Dyanna Christie	Violence Prevention Planner, Oakland Unite Programs, City of Oakland Department of Human Services
Kevin Grant	Violence Prevention Networks Coordinator, City of Oakland Department of Human Services
Mark Henderson	Interim Manager, Oakland Unite Programs, City of Oakland Department of Human Services
Josie Halpern-Finnerty	Program Planner, Oakland Unite Programs, City of Oakland Department of Human Services
Reygan Harmon	Interim Ceasefire Project Manager & Senior Policy Advisor to the Mayor, Oakland Police Department & Office of the Mayor
Priya Jagannathan	Program Planner, City of Oakland Department of Human Services (Former Interim Manager, Oakland Unite Programs)
Stefania Kaplanes	Community Injury Prevention Coordinator, Trauma Services, Alameda County Medical Center
David Muhammad	Former Chief Probation Officer, Alameda County Probation Department
Nancy O'Malley	Alameda County District Attorney
Curtiss Sarikey	Associate Superintendent for Family, School and Community Partnerships, Oakland Unified School District
Dan Simmons	Reentry Services Manager, City of Oakland Department of Human Services
Capt. Anthony Toribio	Captain of Police, Oakland Police Department



## Key Successes in the Evolution of Oakland Unite

### A true intervention: responsiveness of funding strategies to city's needs

OU has taken steps to modify its funding strategies to better meet the city's changing violence prevention needs. When the City of Oakland and the Department of Human Services (DHS) first began the process of developing and implementing violence prevention programs to correspond with the Measure Y legislation, the programs were heavily focused on prevention and included strategies geared toward a much wider spectrum of youth. As the initiative progressed, initiative leadership honed its strategies to respond to data on crime trends and to maximize the impact of its limited resources. Key among these changes included:

**1) Shift in focus to higher risk populations and violent crime.** Over the course of the initiative, OU has moved toward more intensive services for higher risk clients. This included shifting some of the youth-oriented strategies from school-based services to programs that work with system-involved youth coming out of juvenile hall, increasing funding for offender reentry employment, and refining the Street Outreach strategy to do more conflict mediation to prevent retaliatory violence. Curtiss Sarikey, Associate Superintendent of Family, School and Community Partnerships for Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), pointed to the JJC strategy as an example of OU's effective use of data in adjusting funding strategies. In light of data showing that most shooting victims are over age 25, OU also adapted its street outreach program to target violent crime in the adult population. OU's Violence Prevention Network (VPN) Coordinator, Kevin Grant, shared, "We defined the outreach that both people wanted and that would be most effective for the violence in the city."

**2) Specialization of strategies to fill gaps in services not covered by existing agencies.** Staff from DHS, the Alameda County Healthcare Services Agency, and the Alameda County District Attorney's office noted that from its inception, OU sought to build on existing programs and prioritized the use of Measure Y funds to fill gaps in the system of violence prevention services. Stakeholders described, for example, using MY funds for healthcare services not covered by Medicaid and for Call-Ins related to CeaseFire efforts. As juvenile justice expert Shay Bilchik observed, "[Oakland Unite] is a vehicle to ensure that the gaps in public agency services are filled with community providers with resources to support them." Over time, OU also took steps to shift programs outside of its focus to other city agencies, recommending that OFCY take over most services for children ages 0-5, for example—a move supported by Reygan Harmon, Senior Policy Advisor for Public Safety at the Oakland Mayor's Office, who noted that this allowed OU to concentrate on higher risk clients and violent crime.

Stakeholders from a number of city and county agencies pointed to the willingness of OU leadership to adapt its strategies based on proven need, with OUSD's Curtiss Sarikey noting, "They really are interested in seeing these programs be successful," and ACHCSA Director Alex Briscoe affirming that OU "changed investment strategies effectively and appropriately." Speaking about the importance of increasing the eligible age for gun violence services, Highland Hospital's Injury Prevention Specialist, Stefania Kaplanes, shared, "I appreciate Sara [Bedford] being willing to step up and talk about how to best meet the needs of this population."





At the same time, stakeholders noted that certain OU strategies have consistently met the city's needs from the start. For example, Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O'Malley observed that victim advocates working with the police department "have made a significant difference in domestic violence," and commented that "Measure Y has been strong springboard" for innovative work in the area of sexually exploited youth. O'Malley noted that OU's efforts in this area led to the creation of a citywide commission on sexually exploited youth, making Oakland "a real leader" in this field.

### **Where systems intersect: strengthening the city's infrastructure for violence prevention**

**OU has fortified Oakland's network of violence prevention services by developing strong relationships and building capacity internally and among grantees.** Among grantees, **OU fostered a culture of collaboration** that allowed greater cooperation. Oakland leadership and partners noted that while many grantees were initially resistant to collaboration both with each other and with city agencies, such partnerships are now part of the norm—"a big hurdle that has come along in terms of the culture of our provider community." OU also began requiring regular cross-sector meetings for grantees. Leadership from agencies including DHS, OUSD, OPD, and Highland Hospital pointed to the effectiveness of such meetings, which include monthly case conferencing JJC providers, a Violence Prevention Network meeting with Street Outreach and crisis intervention providers, and monthly meetings between different employment providers. The evolution of grantees' relationships with law enforcement stands out as particularly successful. OU and OPD noted that while both parties were initially skeptical of collaborating, all grantees now have a relationship with law enforcement. Through the Street Outreach strategy, VPN Coordinator Kevin Grant was able to build trust between law enforcement and street outreach teams, ultimately facilitating their collaboration. Grant recalled, "Right around a year, I no longer had to fight to stand up for our team. It got to a point where the police saw our guys as helpful."

**OU built on existing relationships and formed new partnerships with city and county agencies,** which stakeholders noted has served to strengthen the integration of public systems and demonstrates "an ability to cross sectors with this funding model" (Alex Briscoe). A number of stakeholders pointed to strong working relationships as a key factor in the success of OU's collaborative model, with OUSD's Curtiss Sarikey asserting, "Having strong working relationships supersedes funding streams." Stakeholders cited several examples of successful collaboration:

- Collaboration through the JJC strategy has ensured that "there are good structures built around doing the work and trying meet the needs of the kids...each public system entity gets better the more we find places our work intersects." (Curtiss Sarikey)
- Relationships between Street Outreach and Highland Hospital have allowed for essential linkages and referrals, improving the continuity of care for patients: "Communication from the hospital to the street [is] so powerful on both ends...it's a true intervention." (Stefanie Kaplanes)
- The partnership between Oakland Unite's Street Outreach and Reentry Employment providers and CeaseFire has been critical to City's ability to get CeaseFire off the ground. Through the Street Outreach and Reentry Employment strategies, CeaseFire is able to provide case management, mentorship, job training, and subsidized employment to help probationers and parolees stay crime-free.



- OU has provided case management services for participants in the Ceasefire program: “Without having Emilio and Kevin to work that path with them, we would really have no one” (Reygan Harmon).
- Strong relationships with county agencies have allowed OU to leverage county resources. ACHCSA Director Alex Briscoe noted that a number of OU programs receive funding from ACHCSA and observed, “The relationship between DHS and HCSA has a long and strong tradition of collaboration, and that collaborative culture is one of the strengths of Measure Y.”

In addition, **OU has strengthened both internal and grantee capacity to provide direct services.** With regard to service capacity, OU has provided technical assistance to grantees, and OU staff noted that grantees have increased their capacity to serve high-risk populations and provide reentry services. Several stakeholders also highlighted the consistent leadership of DHS’s Sara Bedford, as well as the caliber of OU’s policy and planning staff.

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*“There are good structures built around...trying meet the needs of the kids. Each public system entity gets better the more we find places our work intersects.” - Curtiss Sarikey*

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**OU has prioritized a data-driven approach and has built strong data collection and sharing practices.** Several stakeholders, including OU advisor and former Alameda County Chief Probation Officer David Muhammad and HCSA’s Alex Briscoe, commended OU for creating a “culture of data analysis and outcome-based funding” (Briscoe). OU staff noted that while there was initial resistance from grantees to collect and share client-level data, over time, “Service data became the norm. Providers are behind it now, and they want more. It does help them in their service, and it lets us tell a story about what we’re doing.” There is now consistency in tracking deliverables across grantees, and stakeholders agreed that the CitySpan system produces high quality data that many agencies are able to use in their work. Reygan Harmon described, “Measure Y has always had better data than the police department. It’s easier to access and it’s what people really want to know. Even the police department has relied on their data.”

**DHS and the City of Oakland have effectively leveraged external funding sources to bolster programming.** Over the past six years, DHS has raised **over \$15 million dollars in grant funding** to bolster Oakland Unite violence prevention programs. All of these grants have built upon the partnerships that Oakland has forged through Oakland Unite. Among the key grants are the following:

- **Second Chance Juvenile Justice Grant – \$1,875,000 over 4 years:** US Department of Justice (DOJ) grant to support juvenile reentry and participate in a national evaluation. These DOJ grant funds enable more reentry youth to be served and enhance system changes for the most at-risk reentry youth in Oakland. This grant also helps support collaboration between Alameda County Probation, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Bay Area Legal Aid, and Oakland Unite funded Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) strategy case management agencies.



- **Community-Based Violence Prevention Demonstration Grant – \$2.2 million over 3 years:** US DOJ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention grant to help implement CeaseFire. This grant increases outreach activities by almost doubling the number of street outreach workers, and supports a public education campaign to ensure that Oakland residents know about CeaseFire efforts. This grant also helps support collaboration between DHS, OPD, the Mayor’s Office, and Street Outreach strategy community-based organizations.
- **Transitional Employment Program Grant - \$9.55 million over 6 years:** This grant from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, in collaboration with the Roberts Enterprise Development Foundation (REDF) and CalTrans, was used to develop a transitional employment work crew program for Oakland residents on parole. Based on a best practice from the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) in New York, this program builds upon Oakland Unite’s Reentry Employment strategy and support employment training and experience for individuals returning from the incarceration.
- **California Gang Reduction, Intervention, and Prevention (CalGRIP) Grant - \$243,759 over 2 years:** DHS received this grant in partnership with OPD and Alameda County Probation to support the Oakland CeaseFire Call-In Program. This collaborative evidence based program involves identifying high risk probationers and parolees and offering them the option to engage in an array of services while warning them that any infractions will not be tolerated.

### Challenges to Fulfilling OU’s Mission

OU stakeholders consistently mentioned three key challenges that OU has faced in its work: the scale of OU resources, the public’s expectations of the initiative, and the political dynamics of Measure Y funding. While stakeholders mentioned other challenges as well, the three described below clearly emerged as the major obstacles to the initiative’s success.

#### Fighting fire with water guns: insufficient scale of Oakland Unite resources

Stakeholders agreed that one of the primary obstacles OU faces is one of scale. Stakeholders used a variety of metaphors to convey the significance of this challenge:

- "These resources [for violence prevention] have been effective, but it’s like having a tanker as opposed to a cruise ship in the face of the storm” (Nancy O’Malley).
- “Oakland is on fire, and you guys are giving us water guns. We can’t put out the fire with the resources we have” (Kevin Grant).

Grant explained that OU is unable to bring the street outreach program to scale, especially in East Oakland: “[Because of resources] we had to size down to the hottest spot of the hottest spot.” Reygan Harmon observed that because Measure Y was not originally designed for the city to provide direct services, OU is “going to cap out in terms of the number of people they can actually work with.”

#### Promise versus reality: unrealistic expectations of violence reduction

Stakeholders spoke about the chasm between the intent of the Measure Y legislation and the public’s expectations of the measure—expectations that have been particularly high in light of widespread



perceptions that violence is rising in the city. David Muhammad explained, “The challenge early on became the false perception that this measure was going to end violence as we know it. If you read the measure, it’s really prevention focused. That became a huge challenge of reality versus the promise.” Stakeholders also pointed to a related challenge of measuring violence prevention when there is no counterfactual. OUSD’s Curtiss Sarikey explained, “People want to know if [Measure Y] works or not. It’s hard to do because naming how some of [these interventions] work is really complicated. When you’re looking at your baseline of a distressed child or family...you don’t know what would have happened if you didn’t provide the services.” Alameda County’s District Attorney agreed: “People have no idea how much is being prevented because of [Measure Y] services.”

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*“If you read the measure, it’s really prevention focused. That became a huge challenge of reality versus the promise.” – David Muhammad*

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### **Too many cooks in the kitchen: the influence of political dynamics on funding strategies**

Leaders from OUSD, ACHCSA, the District Attorney’s office, and the Mayor’s Office commented that OU has been highly politicized. OU’s Kevin Grant described that political dynamics led to “too many cooks in the kitchen” in the design of OU’s strategies. Reygan Harmon added, “Because it’s a parcel tax, it becomes a subject of a political process and therefore political scrutiny. It takes you away from the data and city priorities.” Other stakeholders agreed that pressure from elected officials for the measure to “look a certain way” has impeded OU’s ability to prioritize strategies. OU advisor David Muhammad also observed that turnover in the leadership in the City Administrator’s Office, the Police Department, the Mayor, and the Measure Y Oversight Committee have hindered the Oakland’s ability to consistently prioritize and implement violence prevention efforts across the city.

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*“There are strong data collection and evaluation to show the impact of the programs are important and valuable, [but] resources are insufficient to the task” -Alex Briscoe*

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## **Recommendations for Oakland Unite**

### **Focus and prioritize strategies**

While OU has made progress in narrowing the focus of the initiative, both OU leadership and a variety of stakeholders agreed that the legislation should identify more specific targets, while also allowing for flexibility to adapt strategies based on the newest data. HSCA’s Alex Briscoe noted that OU is “trying to do it all” in terms of violence prevention and recommended “a more narrow focus on a specific aspect of prevention.” Others echoed this sentiment, with Reygan Harmon and David Muhammad recommending that OU define a clear focus.



Specific suggestions included:

- "I would pitch to the most at-risk kids and [focus] hard on them" (Alex Briscoe).
- "There is an over saturation of services for youth in the juvenile justice system. Take advantage of that opportunity and focus on the issues surrounding gun violence" (David Muhammad).
- Increase funding for adults ages 25-35. (Stefania Kaplanes)
- Provide more funding for Street Outreach so they can expand their reach and provide more intensive coverage of hot spots (Kevin Grant)
- "Funding the victim advocates to work with OPD has been invaluable and could be more engaging if they shifted the prioritization" (Nancy O'Malley).

### **Continue to collaborate and leverage outside resources**

Stakeholders agreed that OU could do more to leverage government resources including Medicaid and other federal resources, as well as resources offered by Alameda County and neighboring cities. Both Nancy O'Malley and Reygan Harmon also emphasized the importance of securing a strong commitment from high-level city leadership to prioritize violence prevention. Harmon specified, "Make sure the city has skin in the game and are funding these things as well. I would put more money from the general fund into enhancing some of the programs that MY funds so there is some balance in not being wholly dependent on a parcel tax, which by nature will be politicized." ACHCSA Director Alex Briscoe observed, "Outside revenue is key in a resource-strapped environment such as Oakland...In a multi-jurisdictional setting like Alameda County, if you're not leveraging the other public systems and if there's not careful collaboration and coordination, resources are almost irrelevant."

### **Address public expectations and communicate impact**

Staff and stakeholders stressed the importance of clearly communicating to the public about both the intended scope and the accomplishments of OU. When asked what Oakland voters should know about the initiative, stakeholders shared the following:

- "Measure Y does a good job with the people it reaches, but it only reaches a small segment" (Reygan Harmon).
- "If all of the services of Measure Y walked away, [crime] would be worse" (Nancy O'Malley).
- "The initiative was never going to be able to solve all violence problems" (David Muhammad).



## Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Strategies: Changing Oakland One Client at a Time

### Introduction

The following section presents evaluation findings on the 13 Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Strategies, including the extent to which each strategy draws on and promotes approaches that have demonstrated efficacy in their respective domains, or evidence-based practices; ways in which each strategy is able to successfully address the needs of Oakland Unite clients; and barriers that limit the efficacy of these strategies and the programs therein. This component of the evaluation draws on data from the Department of Human Services’ annual site visits to each program, including an Evidence-Based Practice Assessment developed by RDA and implemented by DHS Program Officers; interviews with staff from Oakland Unite grantees, including executive directors, program managers, and case managers; and focus groups with clients from Oakland Unite programs. There were a few instances in which the evaluation team was not able to conduct focus groups with clients from a particular service provider, either because of the sensitivity of the services provided or because no clients were available for interviews. In addition, there are two programs that are not included in the strategy evaluation – the CalPEP program in the Oakland Street Outreach strategy and the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency program in the Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors strategy. In terms of the former, CalPEP provides mobile HIV testing at a variety of community events across the City of Oakland. This testing is a one-time intervention that includes no additional services or client engagement that could be evaluated. In terms of the latter, the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency received an Oakland Unite grant to help develop short-term housing for sexually exploited minors. This group home is still in the process of being built and does not yet provide services to evaluate.

The following table lists all of the service providers in each of the 13 Oakland Unite Violence Prevention strategies and details which evaluation activities they were included in. Details on the number of clients served and the types of services provided in each strategy can be seen in Appendix A.

Strategy	Providers	EBP Assessment	Staff Interviews	Client Focus Groups
Juvenile Justice Center and OUSD Wraparound Services	East Bay Asian Youth Center	x	x	x
	Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY)	x	x	x
	The Mentoring Center	x	x	x
	OUSD Alternative Education	x	x	x
	Youth ALIVE!	x	x	x
	Youth UpRising	x	x	x
Oakland Street Outreach	California Youth Outreach	x	x	x
	Health Oakland	x	x	x



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Oakland Unite Programs

	CalPEP <sup>6</sup>			
Crisis Response and Support Network	Catholic Charities of the East Bay	x	x	x
Highland Hospital Intervention	Youth ALIVE!	x	x	x
Restorative Justice <sup>7</sup>	Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth	x	x	x
Gang Prevention	OUSD Alternative Education	x	x	x
Our Kids/Our Families Middle School	Alameda County Health Care Services Agency	x	x	x
Family Violence Intervention Unit	Family Violence Law Center <sup>8</sup>	x	x	
Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors	Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY)	x	x	x
	Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR)	x	x	x
	Alameda County Health Care Services Agency <sup>9</sup>		x	
Mental Health Services for Ages 0-5	Safe Passages <sup>10</sup>	x	x	
	The Link to Children	x	x	x
Reentry Employment	Civicorps	x	x	x
	Men of Valor Academy	x	x	x
	Volunteers of America Bay Area <sup>11</sup>	x	x	
	Youth Employment Partnership	x	x	x
	Youth UpRising	x	x	x
Youth Employment	The Unity Council	x	x	x
	Youth Employment Partnership	x	x	x
	Youth Radio <sup>12</sup>	x	x	
	Youth UpRising	x	x	x
Project Choice	The Mentoring Center	x	x	x
	Volunteers of America Bay Area	x	x	x

<sup>6</sup> This program provides a free mobile HIV testing across the city. They do not provide any additional services that could utilize EBPs or lend themselves to evaluation

<sup>7</sup> The evaluation team observed two Restorative Justice Circles instead of conducting a focus group with clients.

<sup>8</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of the services that FVIU provides, the evaluation team was not able to conduct a client focus group.

<sup>9</sup> This grantee is currently in the process of developing a temporary housing facility for sexually exploited minors. The project is still in the planning phase and is not yet ready for evaluation.

<sup>10</sup> No clients from this program were available for a focus group.

<sup>11</sup> No clients from this program were available for a focus group.

<sup>12</sup> No clients from this program were available for a focus group.



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## Juvenile Justice Center & OUSD Wraparound Services

### Strategy Overview

The JJC Strategy provides intensive case management and wraparound services to youth returning from Alameda County Juvenile Hall to the community with the primary goals of re-engaging youth in school and helping youth stay compliant with the terms of their probation. Through collaboration with Hattie Tate, at the Juvenile Hall Transition Center, youth are reenrolled in school immediately upon release. Subsequent to referral, case managers conduct comprehensive assessments of youth to determine strengths, risks and individual needs. Guided by the assessments, case managers develop individualized case plans that reflect the specific needs of each youth and connect youth and their families to resources in the community. Case management activities can include mentoring, crisis intervention, and development of long- and short-term goals through in-person meetings, follow-up phone calls and home visits. Wraparound resources can include referrals to counseling, access to employment training or placement, and management of developmental needs. Many of the programs collaborate with other providers to coordinate service provision for youth. The relationships developed through these programs—not only with the youth, but with their families— provide a critical support network that can be the difference between positive choices and returning to deviant behavior. Through this strategy, Oakland Unite funding supports connections between youth and their case managers, who bridge supports and services to them during pivotal transitions in their lives.

This Strategy includes the following providers: East Bay Agency for Children; East Bay Asian Youth Center; Oakland Unified School District Alternative Education; Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth; The Mentoring Center; Youth ALIVE!, and Youth UpRising.

### Key Takeaways

- Case managers' close relationships with youth help the young people make behavioral changes and positive life choices.
- Case managers connect youth and their families to critical resources to help sustain change.
- For many youth, behavioral change is incremental and can be seen through the lens of harm reduction.
- Difficult home environments can make it hard for youth to avoid falling back into negative activities.
- There is a lack of resources for basic needs, housing, culturally appropriate mental health treatment, and employment opportunities

### Evidence Based Practices

Most of the six programs in the JJC/OUSD Wraparound strategies use evidence-based practices extensively, although a few of the newer programs are still in the early stages of planning or implementation. Within the four JJC programs that do use EBPs regularly, both Executive Directors and Program Managers regularly promote the use of EBPs and ensure that line staff receive ongoing training in EBPs in order to continually build staff skills and knowledge around the use of EBPs. Consistent with best practices, these organizations assess clients prior to case planning as a means to identify clients' areas of service need. Case planning is then done in collaboration with clients and their families, as well as with other relevant partners as appropriate. Despite these strengths, programs do face challenges in implementing EBPs, including trying to serve youth who are resistant to getting services and adapting





EBPs to fit their clients' specific needs. All of the JJC organizations can build upon their existing successes by learning more about how to tailor EBPs to local circumstances and by incorporating EBPs into new staff orientation.

## Program Strengths

### Re-engaging Youth in School

The case managers in the JJC Strategy collaborate with multiple partners and work closely with school staff to help ensure youth are placed in the most appropriate academic setting. Sometimes that means transferring a student to another school in order to keep a youth safe. Getting a young person who has missed a lot of school to a place where he or she is willing to improve their attendance and bring their grades up is an enormous challenge, and frequently takes a lot of time for trust to be established. Providers emphasize that the sometimes seemingly incremental changes they are able to achieve with their clients actually represent significant movement in the right direction. There is the tendency to view



*"It's also about the kids improving – yes they're struggling with behavioral stuff, suspensions – but for a student who was suspended 5 times for 5 days each who now got suspended 1 time for 4 days, that's improvement! That's one of the things that's hard from an evaluation standpoint, hard to communicate these improvements mean A LOT, we're not going to wipe out suspensions with this grant – but if things are improving then that's a lot."*



success as an all or nothing measurement – the student is skipping school, or attending school. However, providers highlight the importance of harm reduction, where helping youth to make fewer poor choices is progress that should be recognized as success. Many clients report that they felt supported by their case managers in returning to school and acknowledge that they would not be attending unless they were getting this level of support.

### Probation Compliance and Completion

The other objective of the JJC Strategy is to help youth stay compliant with the conditions of their probation and to complete their supervision period with no new charges. One of the first steps in helping their clients toward compliance involves establishing a high level of trust. This is accomplished through the case manager's commitment to the youth, providing rides to and from court dates, advocating on behalf of the youth, and helping ease communications with the youth's parent or caregiver. One case manager observes of the way the relationships can evolve, "They come in closed off, not trusting and leave with a better sense of how to communicate, trust adults, be in a space where they can listen and utilize that information." When youth have a stable adult in their lives, they are more likely to begin to make changes in their behavior. One client described his relationships with his case manager, "He cool, he help me get outta jail and came to my court dates and stuff. He get me to go back the right way and he contacts me every day and see what I'm doing."

**Case managers and clients both describe one of the strengths of these programs as their capacity to help youth change their behavior and make positive decisions.** When youth begin to change their language, become more respectful around parents and adults, and begin to think long-term about what will help them stay out of trouble, they are learning to make positive choices. Case managers know



clients' behavior has changed when there is consistent programmatic engagement, when they get fewer phone calls from home, when there are no new arrests, and when they complete probation and get out of the system.

Case managers are quick to point out that many of the successes they observe – such as youth carrying themselves differently – do not appear to be significant; however these changes when taken together tell the story of a young person undergoing major transitions.



*“Our milestones are unconventional: if we notice a decrease in drug use, changes in behavior – more positive now, coming to programming three times a week instead of once a week; maybe she went to school all day instead of just first period, being engaged in a case management session, attending their mental health appointments, advocating for themselves instead of waiting for someone to ask, being responsible enough to call and reschedule an appointment instead of just missing it.”*



### Case Management and Service Provision

**Another primary strength of the JJC service providers is the way in which the staff serve as a resource not only for the youth, but also for their parents** – helping to reestablish communication with youth and through parent workshops on preventing gang involvement. In many instances, communication has broken down between a young person and their family members, and case managers are able to successfully broker relationships and strengthen communication between young people and their families.

**Case managers provide critical resources to both youth and their parents.** Case managers speak of success in rebuilding relationships and mediating between parents and youth, often helping youth understand the perspective of the adults in their life, and the impact of their behavior. One case manager shared they are able to raise issues such as, “How long do you think your friend’s mom is going to let you sleep on her couch?” explaining that most youth have unreasonable expectations of their parents. Another staff shared the experience that many youth “feel like they’re all grown and can do whatever they want. Youth say, ‘I want to be able to stay home, smoke weed, eat up everything, not clean up’ – and then they wonder why mom and dad are trippin.”

Likewise, the young people in these programs have come to rely on the services and resources the JJC case managers provide – whether it involves rides to and from court appearances, employment, a spot in a program, or personally delivering homework to youth who are unable to get to school. Case managers provide a laundry list of services and resources that help keep youth stable, engaged in pro-social activities, and probation compliant. These services can include referrals to mental health treatment and medical care, education regarding safer sex and healthy relationships, and the provision of basic hygiene products, food and transportation. Other resources expose youth to unconventional activities, such as horseback riding, hiking and college tours. Case managers have also paid phone bills so that youth always have a means of communication. Through the provision of these services, the youth develop a level of trust with their case managers, and grow to think of them as people who provide them with consistent support, even if they are struggling.





All of the youth unanimously shared that the relationship they had with their case manager was unique, trusted, and critical to the success of their behavior change. Some of the important aspects of the relationships included the knowledge that their case manager understood their experiences, came from the same neighborhood, and as a result had credibility in the eyes of the youth. These relationships hold a particular significance for youth as the case managers serve as role models, and demonstrate that they can successfully change their lives, as one youth noted: “He’s been there before [on the street].”

Other demonstrations of why their relationship with their case manager is so important entail the role that the case manager plays in the life of the youth – often standing in for an absent parent or family friend:

- *“I ain’t never had no dad. I’ve always been the man of the house.”*
- *“Tammy is like a big sister.”*
- *“Some people didn’t grow up with a father figure. They teach you right from wrong, how to progress in life, how to learn from the people around you.”*
- *“He’s a family friend. He is invited to all my football games and boxing matches.”*
- *“He’s like my brother...There’s trust. It took a little while, but now it’s there.”*

**School-based case managers leverage their proximity to improve outcomes.** Service provision within the OUSD school district is an innovative approach to case management and working with youth. The proximity to the youth allows the case managers and counselors access to principals, the academic progress youth are making and to actually sit in and witness the youth’s experience in the classroom. Further, school-based counselors are able to observe situations as they evolve and intervene in a more timely fashion. Case managers observed, “...that the counselors are there at school, it’s so important for the kid that the counselor is there right away – on the way to the bathroom, grab a quick check in – having the license to be in that milieu where gang interactions are happening – see how this group responds to that that group – we’re able to gain access in a way that is not threatening, not like park monitoring – able to have insight into the social dynamic – that’s the power of being school-based.”

## Partnerships

**JJC providers report strong partnerships.** Nearly all JJC providers indicated that they feel they have a working collaborative relationship with the Probation Department, and that the Transition Center staff is extremely responsive. One CBO relayed they have had increased success with probation officers who are willing to share responsibility of managing clients with case managers. Other providers spoke of their connection to judges, describing situations where they have been called in to court and asked to sit in on hearings or times where judges have referred girls directly to their program. The same provider also communicated this about the District Attorney’s office: “The District Attorney and Public Defender work closely with girls in court so 80% of the time they have the same DA/PD and that’s created a great relationship. I can call them and say, I have a girl who wants to turn herself in, get her calendared, talk to her and help get her compliant. The court wants our opinion on what’s going on in the girl’s life, what should the next step be – seeing the DA and PD working together with services providers is so rare.”

There was near unanimous sentiment expressed across providers regarding their positive relationships with OUSD, DHS and other Measure Y/Oakland Unite providers. Providers shared the following:

- *“No challenges – all principals and vice principals do a great job in welcoming circles, help students feel connected.”*
- *“Collaboration with Project Reconnect and CYO is going well – good long-standing relationships.”*
- *“Strong collaboration with MISSSY, assembling a city-wide male support group with YU and CYO”*



- *“We have constant collaboration with DHS, very supportive partnership, high trust.”*

## Program Challenges

### Complicated Family Situations Make it Hard for Youth to Stay Out of Trouble

**Case managers struggle with parental complicity in drug use among youth.** Staff report that keeping youth compliant with the conditions of their probation is one of the more difficult aspects of their job. Case managers describe how efforts to get their kids off probation often brings them into conflict with cultural norms – and frequently parental tolerance or complicity – particularly around drug use.

- *“The drug use requires relationship building; it takes longer to make changes from smoking every day to every other day. It’s a challenge because it’s a part of their culture.”*
- *“The general acceptance of drug use at home – we’re fighting cultural norms. In single parent homes, moms don’t have control over their sons – they think as long as you don’t hurt or kill someone, it’s just a slap on the wrist. Once that becomes the system for them, that becomes the way they operate.”*

Another challenge is related to lack of parental buy-in. Staff were vocal about the need for Oakland Unite programs to take a holistic approach to this work by including families. Many program staff struggle with helping youth adhere to conditions of probation and attend school when the home environment doesn’t change and doesn’t support behaviorat changes. Their concerns are captured below:

- *“MY should add funding to parent support – to couple this with the JJC strategy – because we can’t work with a kid in a silo; they’re a part of the family system. Whatever work we do with a kid, without the family, what good can we do?”*
- *“A huge part of the overall problem is a lot of the kids we get are not so far in age from their parents, so they kinda grow up with their parents – hard to set a model if they’re [the parents] still in that lifestyle. ‘Why should I stop when mom’s smoking?’, or ‘How do I quit when you’re smoking in front of me?’”*

### Lack of Resources

**Lack of resources in basic needs, housing, culturally appropriate mental health treatment and employment opportunities constitute additional challenges.** Case managers unanimously report that lack of basic hygienic supplies, mental health services where providers look like their clients, adequate housing, and employment opportunities all continue to be challenges. While program staff are able to link many youth to jobs or medical care, the need for these services far outpaces the number served.

Housing: Specifically, staff describe acute shortages around housing for AWOL (absent without leave) youth, housing for youth over 18, and transitional housing.

Employment: There are not enough jobs available for the youth that want them – there needs to be more skill-building resources, help with job readiness, and entrepreneurship. Also, the lirnited resources are only available to “high risk” youth – prompting one youth to ask, “Do I have to get arrested to get a job?”

Mental Health/Medical Care: There is a significant shortage of services relative to need in the mental health arena – specifically for professionals who are culturally similar to the clients. The majority of youth do not seek mental health services or preventive medical care, and while one provider has a



medical enrollment worker come in monthly to help with applications, it is still a daunting process. Staff also report that they're seeing an increase in youth with severe emotional disorders, underscoring a need to increase access to therapists and psychologists.



## Oakland Street Outreach

### Strategy Overview

The Oakland Street Outreach (OSO) Strategy is based out of two organizations: California Youth Outreach (CYO), which operates in Central and East Oakland, and Healthy Oakland (HO), which operates in West Oakland. Together these organizations provide street outreach and case management services to youth and young adults under the age of 35, who meet at least 4 of the following eligibility criteria: gang-involved, gun-involved, on probation or parole for a violent incident, resides or hangs out in a target area, at high risk for using a gun within 30 days, or is a known gang or clique leader. OSO staff work in collaboration with other city departments and community-based organizations, many of whom are other Oakland Unite partners.

OSO staff coordinate responses to shootings, homicides, and other altercations as well as use their networks to predict and prevent violence. Outreach workers conduct mediations and violence interruptions as well as organize and implement “The Way Out” sessions that support de-escalation of violence during critical situations. Each organization has an identified Program Manager and Area Team Lead (ATL) who jointly have the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring the management of the outreach workers and the case managers, developing relationships with community-based service providers for the purposes of referral, coordinating with Violence Prevention Network Coordinator (and through him, the Oakland Police Department), and facilitating weekly team meetings. During their regularly scheduled weekly Friday and Saturday evening/nighttime shifts, street outreach workers walk through assigned ‘hotspot’ neighborhoods with high rates of violent crime. Street outreach workers are required to be on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day under certain circumstances. Case managers are responsible for providing support to young people referred through street outreach efforts, and developing case plans that link youth to services that address their needs.

### Key Takeaways

- Strong trust and community buy-in allow for shared information critical to reducing and preventing violence.
- Solid coordination with Oakland Unite partners results in leveraged resources.
- Case managers struggle to reach deeply entrenched youth.
- Lack of resources and adequate services hinders ability to fully engage youth in alternatives to violence.

### Evidence Based Practices

The Executive Directors of both OSO programs report that they promote EBPs in staff communication and have integrated EBPs in their programs. Program Managers also reflect this emphasis on EBPs. Apart from the difference in perspective, EBPs are evident in the Street Outreach programs. Some of the EBPs they use include targeting services to areas where the most shootings occur and to the youth most at risk for involvement in gun violence. One organization provides one-on-one services to youth after using a validated risk assessment tool to assess their risk for justice-system involvement. Another uses an



assessment tool for case planning that they have used for years to establish risk and level of need, although it is not externally validated. Both programs use case management techniques that are evidence based, including establishing milestones and collaborating with a variety of partners, including OUSD, probation, employment programs, and more, to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to helping youth. In addition, these programs use violence interruption and conflict mediation to get ahead of the violence, as well as mediation follow-up to reduce retaliation. In one case, the program is explicitly modeled on the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention's Comprehensive Gang Model.

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*"We've done so many presentations, when something happens at a school, we're the ones they call to deescalate the problems with the youth."*

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### Program Strengths

#### Access to the Community

**Strong trust and community buy-in generate high levels of communication among residents, who are more likely to share information.** Staff report that they are able to access historically more violent areas of the city that other providers cannot reach because of the high level of trust they have developed in the neighborhoods and among the community members and with the clients they work with. Outreach workers relay that just their presence oftentimes will help prevent violent activity from taking place. As a result of the access they have in these parts of Oakland, staff convey that they are privy to information, are trusted with information, and are sought out as confidants by the residents when altercations arise. This communication allows staff the capacity to prevent incidents or work to reduce retaliation.

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*"The school called us, the parents got involved and they were siding with the youth on each side. But we got all the parties involved including the parents and did a big mediation. That's a skill set you can't measure. Do a rapid response, do a mediation with both sides and at the end of it, one big mediation where both sides agreed that it was over. This was something that started on the streets and spilled over to the school – so this one mediation could have stopped 20 or 30 incidents."*

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#### Helping Young People Change Their Lives

**Youth report that working with their case managers has made significant differences in their lives and helped redirect their lives.** Clients describe the influence these programs have had on them and the ways in which their case managers have helped them see their life with a different perspective and given them hope that they can achieve their goals. The youth talk about how they are now more future-oriented, thinking about pursuing education and employment opportunities, and contrast that with where they imagine they would have been if they hadn't participated in the program. Having their case



managers there to support them and provide them with guidance and support has created opportunities for young people to sustain the changes they have made in their lives.

- *“In the community, for black people, most of the adversaries look like us, and when you look like us, and when you walk into a clinic and see other black people, you think, ‘Maybe I could do that?’ I know where he came from and he can work behind a desk – gives us hope that we could do that too!”*
- *“I would say it’s working – ain’t no telling it’s working. I, we wouldn’t be here. I might be out hurting someone. It’s keeping us busy and off the street. And with other teens who went through what we went through, going through the right direction instead of making the city work, it’s making it better, that’s what I’ve seen. If I hadn’t been with him [case manager] for the last year and a half, I might not even be here, I dunno. If you ask me, it’s saving lives.”*
- *“My case manager, she like the general, she gather a team that was just for me – I really had an advocate a voice that made such a difference, that I had all of that behind me, things I couldn’t articulate, and things I didn’t know I needed, certain things the judge order, I wouldn’t know where to get this counseling or do this community service. She like a navigation system to get it together in bad weather.”*

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*“I’m looking forward to going to college – I never did before, I didn’t like the whole concept.”*

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Case managers corroborate these accounts of the pivotal role they play in the lives of their clients, in helping them begin to make decisions that take their future into account, and keep them in school and compliant with probation conditions. Observations of behavior include when youth find their case managers to tell them, “I’m doing well – I stopped smoking.” Or, they will stay in touch, stop by and check in, or the girlfriend or boyfriend will be in touch. One case manager reports that she has had clients call her to say thank you, and have even brought her lunch.

## Partnerships

**The street outreach workers attribute much of their success to the strength of their relationships, the Crisis Coordination Meeting activity, and collaboration with Oakland Unite partners.** The staff describe their strong partnerships with probation, DHS, and a wide range of Oakland Unite partners, and how these networks enable them to leverage as many resources as are available for the youth they serve. The Weekly Crisis Coordination Meeting is particularly helpful and was described as helping to cross-reference clients all of the teams are serving so they are collectively better able to support families after an incident. The meeting structure helps ensure all outreach workers are on top of all the shootings, homicides and related fallout, and assists them with coordinating the next steps. One parent expressed her gratitude:

*“I’m writing this because I am a mother who’s [sic] young adult could have been another number to add to the murder rate or one who may have retaliated, due to fear and not knowing who else to turn to*





*seek help...we reached out to Mr. Grant and he dealt with the situation immediately and with an excellent resolve. He also (Kevin Grant and Team) provided outlets and resources to support those he has brought to the table to communicate with each other. We here in Oakland's inner city are in desperate need of Kevin Grant's vision, courage, experience and connection to assist with what's going on with Oakland's inner-city youth."*

With regard to the Oakland Unite partners, some outreach workers specifically identify Youth ALIVE! as the strongest collaborative relationship, noting that this partnership "supports each other in ways that support our clients." Other staff talk about their solid relationship with Probation, and the fact that this relationship has resulted in early release from probation or the relaxation of "strict" probation where a youth is released from mandatory testing for clients who have strong records of compliance. Outreach workers were quick to point out the support they feel through DHS, noting that their Oakland Unite Program Officer and the VPNC provide resources and guidance when they need them. Additional Oakland Unite partners referenced include: OIJS, which refers youth; Catholic Charities, which provides counseling and debriefing for staff self-care, mental health and group counseling for their team as well as for clients; East Bay Asian Youth Center, Youth UpRising, and Youth Employment Partnership, who help with jobs; and the Unity Council who refers clients.

### **Program Challenges**

#### **Reaching Youth Most in Need**

**Outreach workers report their struggles reaching youth who are "shot callers" – the heads of the gangs – to offer alternatives to their lifestyle.** While staff explain that overall they are able to work with most youth, there are some who are just not open to services, and unfortunately, they are typically the young men who could really reduce the amount of violence in the area. When youth refuse resolution there is not much an outreach worker can do or say to change their minds. In certain circumstances, there is a "more complicated homicide revenge situation where guys will say, 'Thanks, but we have to do what we have to do.'" It is the challenge of the outreach worker to find out who those youth connect with and who they listen to, and getting the attention of those individuals.

#### **Lack of Resources**

**Staff report resource shortages that hinder their capacity to do their jobs.** Outreach workers describe how lack of adequate services cause challenges when they are trying to offer supports and resources to clients as alternatives to their current lifestyle. They claim that it's hard to engender behavior change when services aren't always available: "Guys will say, 'How am I supposed to live? How am I supposed to support myself?' so it's really hard to sell services that we don't have ..." Case managers talk about their struggles to secure substance abuse and mental health services, housing and employment - describing the latter two (housing and employment) as the most difficult to acquire. One staff member states, "Challenges include actually getting employment – often they're not ready; housing because they can't afford it, and substance abuse because they don't want to get clean." Another case manager reports, "The most critical needs include substance abuse, mental health, housing and employment. Employment is last because with those three in front, you can't get employment." Less prevalent service





challenges include resistance from youth and low family support, navigating Child Protective Services, evictions, and shelter space if clients have children. Other feedback includes deficits around stipends for basic needs – one staff member described helping his client with the purchase of diapers. Another staff member described a client who refused to attend school for what turned out to be embarrassment at not having clean clothes to wear.

### **Staff Capacity**

**Case managers report that they do not have enough outreach workers on the ground to stay ahead of the violence.** Staff describe the difficulty they have in finding themselves constantly in “reactionary mode.” They talk about how hard it is to be predictive with limited staff. They cite the fact that the violence in Oakland is “nomadic” – in the sense that after a particularly active area has been saturated with resources, the activity will move. One case manager notes, “By the time the team does a BBQ, the activity will have moved on to another area.” With additional outreach workers they would increase their networks, have more access to more neighborhoods, and ultimately be better able to predict and respond to the violence.



## Crisis Response and Support Network

### Program Overview

The Crisis Response and Support Network (CRSN) program offered by the Catholic Charities of the East Bay (CCEB) delivers both immediate and ongoing support to the family and friends of homicide victims in Oakland. This program works closely with Youth ALIVE!, with Youth ALIVE! acting as the first responder following a homicide and CRSN coming in as a second responder to provide sustained counseling and support. CRSN provides clinical case management, which includes grief and trauma counseling along with intensive case management aimed at linking participants to a variety of supportive services. In addition, CRSN helps family members of homicide victims obtain Victims of Crime compensation benefits from Alameda County and provides additional emergency financial assistance to help with death and safety related needs not covered by Victims of Crime funds. Through Oakland Unite funding, the program ensures that families, friends, classmates, and other individuals affected by homicides in Oakland receive intensive support after an incident has occurred. CRSN is the only program in the City of Oakland that is specifically designed to address the myriad and often complex needs of surviving family and friends.

### Key Takeaways

- CRSN's Trauma-informed clinical case management model successfully integrates traditional grief counseling with financial support and case management services to help clients meet basic needs and grieve for their losses.
- CRSN successfully partners with Youth ALIVE! and the Street Outreach programs to reduce retaliatory violence.
- Limited resources make it difficult for CRSN to help clients with financial needs, including both long and short-term housing.

### Evidence Based Practices

Both the Executive Director and the Program Manager of the Crisis Response Support Network (CRSN) agree that EBPs are actively promoted and well integrated into the services of their program. They report frequent communication amongst staff and between staff and managers around EBPs, as well as ongoing training for current and new staff. The Executive Director makes reference to the Harvard model, the volunteer model, and ITISA practice as areas of progress in implementing EBPs. The program also uses clinical case management, an evidence-based practice which integrates case management services with counseling services to help clients address both emotional and material needs. Although CRSN takes a trauma-informed approach to counseling and other services, the Program Manager reports that they sometime struggle to adapt established EBPs to the realities of the highly traumatized communities they serve.



## Program Strengths

### Trauma-informed Clinical Case Management

CRSN provides a unique combination of services that help address the critical and otherwise unmet needs of the surviving family members of homicide victims. As Cindy Hill-Ford, the Director of Mental Health Services at CCEB notes, every murder results in at least 4-5 additional victims in the form of the family and friends of the homicide victim.

**CRSN counselors and clients both ascribe the program's strength to its clinical case management (CCM) model, in which trained social work and mental health professionals provide grief and trauma counseling and traditional case management services.** "Just a therapist doesn't provide the same services," Hill-Ford explains. "We do a critical family needs assessment. If someone's PG&E is being cut off, they can't grieve. For example, if a mother needs to have her son's benefits transferred to her, we'll go with her to Social Services (like a case manager would), but while we're waiting with her, we also check in and ask her how she's doing."

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*"We do a critical family needs assessment. If someone's PG&E is being cut off, they can't grieve."*

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**CRSN's clinical case managers work with clients to help them meet the unexpected financial burdens that emerge in the wake of a family member's murder, including burial costs, flowers, and clothes to wear to a funeral, as well as the daunting logistics of planning a funeral, applying for Victims of Crime benefits, working with OPD's homicide unit, and more.** One client, whose 18-year old son was murdered last year, said that she needed both the financial and logistical assistance CRSN provided in the wake of her son's death: "Some of us don't have [funeral] insurance, so it's hard to cope with that, and planning all that, it's stressful. I needed the help. It's not about the money; it's about all that you have to go through during your grieving time. You go through a lot when you lose someone." The program also helps clients meet other financial needs that may not be related to their loved one's murder but become increasingly difficult to deal with amid the grief and trauma of the death, including assistance with rent, gas, and transportation.

**In addition to the financial, logistical, and service linkage support CRSN counselors provide, these trained mental health professionals also provide grief counseling, working with clients to help them cope with the loss of their loved ones and the trauma associated with the violent nature of their loss.** As one of the counselors commented, this task is complicated by the widespread poverty, violence, and trauma that characterize the lives of their clients and the communities in which their clients live. Amid lifetimes of trauma, many clients have learned to bury the pain of violence and death. "Our clients are chronically traumatized folks in chronically traumatized communities, some for generations. So the impact in the long term on the lives of families through generations of being chronically traumatized [is something we have to deal with]... first thing someone loses when they're chronically traumatized is they can't feel."



In addition to using trauma-informed therapeutic modalities, CRSN counselors also make clients comfortable by using language that is resonant for them, such as asking someone, “can we help counsel you through your grief,” rather than asking someone “do you want therapy?” Counselors then work with clients to help them cope with their grief, helping them “embrace the grief, truly grieve, so they can work through it and get to the other side.”

CRSN clients agreed that by helping them open up and address their grief, the counseling services helped them heal. “Where I’ve been wounded, these services, they are the best thing to happen to me... I’m never going to be able to hold my child, but I can address my healing. If I didn’t have these services, I wouldn’t be able to heal. They have given me the mental ability to move forward. [Without them] I’d be closed up, I wanted to build a dog house and close out the world.”

Clients also commented that their counselors’ encouragement to truly grieve was especially important as family members encouraged them to try to just move on. “My family can offer me a hug and expect me to forget. They say ‘this happened, now forget about it,’ without thinking about your needs that go along with grief. You can always call your [CRSN] counselor and they’re always available to talk you down.”

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*“I’m never going to be able to hold my child, but I can address my healing. If I didn’t have these services, I wouldn’t be able to heal. They have given me the mental ability to move forward.”*

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## Partnerships

CRSN’s partnerships with other Oakland Unite providers are also one of their biggest strengths, ensuring a smooth transition between first and second responders and helping to prevent retaliatory violence.

The CRSN service delivery model provides a seamless transition between Youth ALIVE!’s first responder services and CCEB’s second responder services. CCEB staff and Youth ALIVE! staff meet weekly to discuss cases that recently transitioned or may soon transition from Youth ALIVE! to CCEB.

CRSN staff alert the VPNC and Oakland Street Outreach (OSO) providers when they hear of potential retaliatory violence to ensure that Street Outreach workers intensify their activities in a given area. CRSN also participates in Oakland Unite’s weekly Crisis Call, a weekly meeting that the Violence Prevention Networks (VPN) Coordinator facilitates with all of the Oakland Unite crisis response programs. Based on the partnerships between Youth ALIVE!, CCEB, Healthy Oakland, and California Youth Outreach, the Street Outreach providers have also been able to attend funerals of murder victims and talk to their friends and loved ones in order to prevent retaliatory violence. CRSN also works with OUSD leadership to provide school-wide crisis response after a homicide that impacts the school community and with Victims of Crime (VOC) to provide emergency relocation packages for CRSN families



that need to relocate due to safety concerns or mental health issues related to the murder of their loved ones.

### Program Challenges

#### Resources

**The biggest challenge confronted by the CRSN is the dearth of resources available to assist the family members of murder victims.** Many CRSN clients struggle to make ends meet prior to their loved ones' murders and, even with Victims of Crime benefits, it can be difficult for them to do so while dealing with the additional financial costs and emotional trauma that occur after a murder.

**There are inadequate resources for housing support and other living expenses.** There are some needs, such as housing and utilities, for which there are little-to-no community resources available, so after CRSN's own limited financial support funds run out, there is often nothing they can do to help their clients. This can be especially challenging for clients who want to relocate for reasons related to their loved ones' deaths. One client has been trying to relocate since someone was arrested and charged with her son's murder several months ago; the alleged killer, who is a known gang member, knows where the client lives and she no longer feels safe at home. Unfortunately, the process of applying for relocation assistance is slow and CCEB does not have the resources to help her on their own. Another family, whose son was shot in front of their apartment, is struggling to heal from the trauma of his death while having to walk past the site of his murder every day. Although they would like to move to a new apartment, they cannot afford to do so on their own and CRSN has no resources to assist them with this.



## Highland Hospital Intervention

### Program Overview

Youth ALIVE, and its Caught in the Crossfire (CiC) program, is the sole provider in the Highland Hospital Intervention strategy. To be eligible for CiC services, youth must have been admitted to Highland Hospital and have been involved in an Oakland-based incident involving a gunshot or stab wound. The CiC staff provide two primary services to youth who meet these criteria: preventing retaliatory violence that may result from the incident and case management. The first component involves coordinating with other Oakland Unite (OU) partners—including the Crisis Response Support Network and Oakland Street Outreach—to reduce the likelihood of retaliation, re-injury and arrest. Every attempt is made to connect with youth who are still at the hospital within one hour of referral. Efforts to contact young people within 24 hours of referral are made for those who have been discharged from the hospital. The second component involves the provision of case management services. As with many of the other OU partners, CiC case managers develop case plans for their clients that identify short- and long-term goals and work with them to promote positive alternatives to violence through mentoring and home visits. Through the development of the case plans, case managers are also able to connect their clients to services within the community that address housing needs, safety concerns, crime victim services, work training or placement, educational attainment, and follow up assistance such as physical therapy for young people who have more severe injuries. Case managers meet regularly with their clients to implement their case plans.

### Key Takeaways

- When youth are enrolled prior to their discharge from the hospital, there are high levels of client engagement, while connecting with youth after they have been released from the hospital poses challenges.
- Case manager relationships support positive outcomes related to health, safety, emotional stability, employment, and education.
- Strong Oakland Unite partnerships help minimize duplication of services and streamline responses to community violence.
- Challenges include ensuring client safety, sustained medical care, fear of retaliation, and overcoming issues related to trust.

### Evidence Based Practices

Caught in the Crossfire (CiC), the violence intervention program that Youth ALIVE! pioneered at Highland Hospital in the 1990s, has become an evidence-based practice/program in its own right. The program is a leading national expert in hospital-based violence intervention (HVIP), and founded the National Network of Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs (NNHVIP) to promote and develop best practices. This network now has members in over 20 cities. Youth ALIVE! staff operate the Training and Technical Assistance Center for NNHVIP. Youth ALIVE!'s Executive Director, who also serves as the NNHVIP Training Director, recently co-authored an article in the *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery* titled "Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs Save Lives and Money" that details the



evidence base for this best practice. Youth ALIVE!'s managers and staff keep current about best practices through contact with partner hospitals and other organizations nationally, via monthly calls in which the Program Manager, Mental Health Clinician, Deputy Director and Executive Director participate, and an annual conference attended by the entire Caught in the Crossfire staff. CiC has continued to implement evidence-based practices by creating an agency definition for trauma-informed care (TIC), adopting an EBP curriculum for its client support groups, and asking program staff to create their own safety plans (i.e. plans to keep themselves psychologically resilient). CiC staff also participate in ongoing check-ins, shadowing, and bi-weekly case conferences.

CiC measures its success by rates of avoiding reinjury and arrest and of engaging in education, employment, safe housing, and other positive outcomes, including the rates at which participants engage in mental health services. Currently, 41% percent of clients are participating. The program can continue to strengthen its use of evidence based practices by continuing to remain abreast of best practices.

### Program Strengths

#### Strong Youth Engagement and Overcoming Issues of Trust

**Case managers have strong track records of engaging youth when they're still in the hospital.** Staff report that a long-standing relationship with the Community Injury Prevention Coordinator at Alameda County Medical Center (ACMC) allows for a streamlined referral process of youth who meet the criteria described above for outreach by the CiC case managers. Youth are frequently skeptical of case managers when they are first approached and initially refuse services. The apprehension requires case managers to be persistent in their efforts to connect with youth during their hospital stay. This persistence pays off, and has resulted in high levels of youth engagement in CiC services, which in turn generates successful outcomes for youth, such as reduced retaliatory violence and pro-social alternatives to violence for the client and his/her family.

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*"When I got shot, Rafael came in – at first I didn't know whether I was going to do it, and I had to check out for a while. I was already out of the hospital, but he kept calling me so I finally said 'Let me see what this man's talking about so he will leave me alone.'"*

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**Once youth are receptive to and engaged in the program, case managers successfully link clients with a wide range of services.** Staff report that they have successfully linked clients with employment opportunities, assisted with resume building and job searches and clothes for job interviews. The program also refers youth to mental health services and staff provide assistance with accessing funds available through Victims of Crime assistance, as well as getting clients safe housing through relocation efforts. Staff report that roughly 65% of clients access follow-up services primarily related to Victims of Crime applications. Those who stay connected to the Caught in the Crossfire program experience long-term successes such as enrollment in college, and more immediate benefits of taking their safety and





health more seriously, speaking about their life in a more goal-oriented way, and maintaining employment. Clients describe the way in which the services provided through CiC have impacted their lives:

- *“They help you understand, if your family don’t care about you, don’t have nobody to give you advice, you need other people to give you advice, help you get busy, get a job. If you have no other option, you go back to what you know – especially if your family’s doing it.”*
- *“It’s a blessing to have had an opportunity to be with Youth ALIVE!, get support in any possible manner. I wouldn’t be doing the same things I’m doing today – everyone decides what to do in their life, I have more self-awareness to do better, stay positive, see things differently in my community.”*

### Overcoming Issues of Trust

**Misperceptions about Caught in the Crossfire staff affiliation can inhibit youth receptivity.** Staff and youth alike report that youth initially suspect that CiC staff are trying to “get information” from youth, or that they are an extension of or represent law enforcement. These misperceptions prevent youth from being open to hearing about the program. Staff work hard to overcome the perception that they are connected to the Police or Probation Department in order to establish trust. Clients relay their first impressions of their case managers:

- *“I was in the hospital and Rafael and Emilio came in – I thought it was the police, and then they said they were a program that could help me with transportation, going back to school. I’d been in the hospital for a month or two, and when I got out, I started working with Rafael. That’s when he got me in school and back on track.”*
- *I thought it was going to be something to do with the police, that’s why I really didn’t want to do it, but when I learned it wasn’t, I was okay to try it.”*

### Partnerships

**Staff at the CiC program attribute much of their success in impacting the level of retaliatory violence to the strength of their relationship and collaboration with Oakland Unite partners.** Approximately two years ago, Youth ALIVE!’s Deputy Director, who oversees CiC as well as the Khadafy Washington Project (a component of the Oakland Unite-funded homicide response and support), proposed to the Violence Prevention Network Coordinator (VPNC) a method for DHS to work with Youth ALIVE! and other key partners to formally coordinate the informal partnerships developing between Oakland Unite grantees involved in shooting and homicide response. The VPNC has been an enormous asset as an OPD liaison, and in supporting responses among Oakland Unite partners California Youth Outreach, Healthy Oakland, and Catholic Charities. This partnership, supported by DHS, has evolved over time such that there is a high level of communication and little overlap in service provision. This has resulted in a well-orchestrated and efficient response to events in the community.



## Program Challenges

While staff report a great deal of success working with clients while they're in the hospital, challenges include engaging clients after they've been discharged from the hospital and overcoming issues of trust.

### Post-Release Engagement

**Inaccurate contact information creates obstacles to connecting with potential clients after they've left the hospital.** Staff report that bad addresses or non-working phone numbers make reaching out to individuals after they've been discharged extremely difficult. Case managers report having to be extremely persistent in reaching out to youth even when they do have contact information; once youth are back in their neighborhoods, it can be challenging to get them interested in program activities.

### Client Medical Care and Safety

**The Caught in the Crossfire staff are challenged to try to keep their clients safe and healthy.** Staff report that the most critical issues for them include client safety and sustaining connections to medical care. Many case managers report that getting their clients to show up for their follow-up medical appointments is a challenge for several reasons. First, clients are often released from the hospital after only a couple of days. From experience, case managers report that the perception that they are being released too early causes some clients to doubt the quality of care that they are receiving and reduces the likelihood that they will show up for their follow-up medical appointments. In addition, follow-up appointments frequently require clients to endure long periods of time in crowded waiting rooms, which is particularly traumatic for gunshot victims. Finally, follow up appointments are often scheduled far into the future, by which point youth are less likely to remember and show up for an appointment. When staff are unable to engage youth in the hospital, the potential to establish a solid relationship where case managers can encourage youth to prioritize their medical appointments is jeopardized.

### Chronic Disappointment by Adults Undermines Trust.

**Most of the youth targeted by CiC have had few positive adults in their lives and have a hard time building trusting relationship with adults.** Other ways in which trust can inhibit the development of a relationship involves circumstances where youth have been failed by too many adults, and they do not want to let anyone else in, exemplified by the quote from a youth who resisted outreach by a CiC case manager at first: *"I don't want to meet nobody else – don't want to start all over."* As a result, developing relationships where youth feel comfortable confiding in and trusting their CiC case managers can be difficult and impede the provision of services. Staff relay that long-term needs for their clients include resources for sustained emotional support, such as mentoring and mental health counseling, as well as identifying other positive adults.



## Restorative Justice

### Program Overview

Restorative justice is a philosophy that focuses on restoring relationships that may have been harmed by the experience of trauma in the family or community and by traditional punitive discipline in schools. Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY) uses restorative justice processes for Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to help students and school staff address conflict by building healthier relationships. Oakland Unite supports RJOY programs at West Oakland Middle School and Ralph J. Bunche High School in West Oakland. RJOY offers an alternative model for engaging youth in addressing conflict by helping students learn and internalize effective communication styles through positive relationship building. RJOY uses Student Circles (or “circles”) to facilitate dialogue between students about conflict and positive ways to address it. Circles are safe places where students engage in a facilitated discussion about the effects of harm they have experienced in school, home, or community, how they were affected by it, and collectively take steps to repair it through relationship building. RJOY also mediates dialogue between students and teachers (restorative conversations) to deescalate conflict and prevent expulsions or suspensions.

### Key Takeaways

- RJOY’s approach to creating constructive dialog that addresses harm and conflict increases students’ sense of self-worth.
- Through intentional relationship building and role modeling, RJOY teaches students positive ways to communicate with their peers and teachers. These techniques help to decrease interpersonal conflicts that would warrant traditional discipline methods, such as suspensions or expulsions.
- RJOY helps students create empowering self-narratives that increase their sense of self-worth.
- Due to a lack of understanding or misperceptions about restorative justice, RJOY has experienced some pushback about their program by adults, school staff, and teachers. Compounding this issue, RJOY does not have enough time with teachers and staff to provide them with the proper training and coaching on using restorative justice techniques.

### Evidence Based Practices

Restorative justice promotes an approach to justice, sanctions, and rehabilitation that focuses on awakening the offender’s awareness of the harm s/he has caused and/or on making restitution to the community s/he has violated. It is considered a promising practice, which means existing research shows evidence that it is successful, but there is not yet enough research to designate it as an evidence-based practice (EBP). Still, there are widely-recognized best practices for implementing restorative justice programs, and the Executive Director and Program Manager of Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY) report regularly communicating, promoting, and educating its staff about these practices. RJOY also makes use of EBPs by using an assessment tool that varies according to client needs. RJOY has seen increasing buy-in from leadership at both schools where it is active, which it attributes to now including principals in its training sessions about restorative justice principles. RJOY measures its success via school level data showing improvement in discipline and a decline in racial disparities in suspensions.



RJOY can strengthen its use of best practices in restorative justice by continuing to teach and promote the principles of restorative justice to all members of its focal school communities.

### Program Strengths

#### Increases Students' Sense Self-Worth

RJOY's approach to creating dialogue about harm and the struggles of students increases their sense of self-worth and self-confidence. RJOY staff facilitate community building and relationship circles where they can use intentional relationships to bridge understanding between students or between students and teachers. Intentional relationships are relationships RJOY staff purposefully seek out with students who may be struggling in school or in the home. An integral component to helping students adapt to the restorative justice approach is by practicing "proactive community building where students are getting to learn from each other, their teachers, their stories, and from the things they have gone through." In circles, RJOY helps students and teachers to understand their personal stories and experiences from perspectives that emphasize their strength, courage, and intelligence. During the "Relationship Building" circle, we observed RJOY staff encouraging students to repeat positive self-affirmations. One student said during the circle, "I'm different; I'm a misfit; I'm a philosopher. It's good to be different." Through these relational processes, RJOY is able to increase students' sense of self-worth and self-confidence.

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*"I'm different; I'm a misfit; I'm a philosopher. It's good to be different."*

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In addition, RJOY's proactive approach to building trusting relationships with students integrates staff into students' natural milieu of social supports. RJOY staff play with students during recess, check in with students as they walk down the hallways, and make their offices available to students whenever they need them. Students become more eager to participate in circles because RJOY staff become a natural support in the school environment. In addition, because students feel respected and appreciated by RJOY staff, they are more likely to seek RJOY staff's advice on a range of other issues, including academic success. RJOY staff recall how students partner with them to strategize ways to do better in school or communicate more effectively with their teachers. RJOY staff even moderate discussions between students and teachers when conflict arises due to school performance. Students who were previously struggling are proud of the success they achieve with RJOY's help. "They bring you their report cards and test corrections. Their parents are thanking us for coming in and congratulating us."

#### Reinforces Positive Interpersonal Communication Techniques

RJOY staff help students learn and practice positive communication styles to decrease interpersonal conflict. In addition to creating a space to share personal stories and develop new understandings, RJOY staff help students reinforce each other's strengths-based personal narratives by role modeling active listening and using "step-up/step-back" facilitation style. In the "Relationship Building" circle, we observed how RJOY staff allow students to talk one at a time and make direct eye contact with open



body language towards the students while each one speaks. One student interrupted the student with the “talking pillow,” which is against the circle’s ground rules. RJOY staff moderate the exchange to show how the student’s interruption of the circle caused the other student to silence himself, “See what happens when you interrupt? Someone just shuts down like he did.” RJOY staff use this moment to explain how to “step-up/step-back” in the relationship building process where each student is encouraged to speak, but not to override the discussion. RJOY’s reinforcement of active listening and mutual respect in this process entrenches positive communication styles that students can translate into moving past interpersonal conflict to prevent violence.

### **Better Relationships between Students and Staff**

**The restorative justice philosophy and techniques also help teachers and school staff take better care of themselves, which improves their relationship with students.** As RJOY’s Director and facilitators explain, restorative justice is not only a means of mediating conflict; it is a wholesale revision of how people communicate with and relate to each other. Thus, while much of the direct work that RJOY does in Oakland schools centers on working with students, working with teachers and staff to help them rethink their own communication styles and their relationships with their students and their peers is also critical to what RJOY does. Toward this end, RJOY’s trainings help teachers and other school staff learn how to take better care of themselves and their needs so that they can address their own feelings of anger and frustration instead of letting those feelings impact their interactions with students. Similarly, RJOY works with teachers to practice effective communication techniques that help both students and teachers maintain the understanding they achieved in Circles and stick to the agreements they made.

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*“It’s a complete culture shift. Traditionally kids would get suspended for fighting, spitting, etc. and there would be a perpetuation of violence. With restorative justice at the school, the staff are learning how to communicate clearer, redirect their frustrations and anger, learning how to take breaks and self-care and learn how to take care of themselves. We teach them how to properly use incentives, how to accept responsibility; how to achieve goals in terms of the agreements we make with them and the students in the Circles. We help them develop empathy, emotional intelligence, how to articulate their feelings.”*

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### **Program Challenges**

#### **Generating Buy-In From Adults and School Staff**

**RJOY faces difficulty getting buy-in from adults at school-sites into using restorative justice as an alternative to traditional disciplining methods.** Understandably, teachers and school administrators may seek out the most effective and quick-acting solutions to students’ behavior problems or poor academic engagement. However, RJOY requires a commitment to building relationships with students over time. RJOY claims that teachers or school staff may attend one or two circles but that may not be enough to entrench themselves into students’ social supports. In addition, restorative justice requires an





examination of power dynamics between the teacher or administrator and the student. In a restorative justice model of intentional relationships, those power dynamics may act as a barrier to establishing trust with the student. These are difficult issues that require significant support and coaching to



*Adult staff do not always want to give away their perceived power... There are people who aren't willing to be courageous. Some people are just not able to do that.*



adequately address, which may not be available at OUSD sites.

### Creating Sufficient Time to Train and Coach Staff on Restorative Justice Techniques

**RJOY cites challenges with a lack of time to provide school administrators and teachers with adequate training in restorative justice techniques.** Restorative justice trainings ideally take place over one or two whole days and finding a block of time that fits the needs of teachers and their workload is difficult. In addition, RJOY cannot pay teachers or administrators incentives to participate in weekend trainings, nor are substitutes always available (or the funding for substitutes) to cover classes that would allow teachers to participate in weekday trainings. Insufficient time and resources to train and coach teachers in restorative justice techniques perpetuates RJOY's inability to create broader buy-in from adults at school sites. This concern is slowly improving, as RJOY's Executive Director reports that as RJOY staff deepens its relationship with school site leadership, they are seeing an increased commitment and willingness to carve out the time needed for training and technical assistance.



## Gang Prevention

### Program Overview

California Youth Outreach (CYO), Hatchuel, Tabernik and Associates (HTA) and Project ReConnect are all subgrantees of OUSD Alternative Education. Both CYO and HTA provide agency and staff capacity building trainings on gang awareness, Oakland crime trends, and community resources to schools and youth-serving organizations; Project ReConnect provides a multi-week parent education series on gang awareness and prevention for parents and caregivers of young people who are gang-involved or at risk of becoming gang-involved. The capacity building trainings for school staff and community based organizations deliver information related to gang dynamics and specific strategies educators and youth workers can take to prevent or intervene in gang involvement. The program is linked to the Interagency Gang Prevention Collaborative's (IGPC) broader gang prevention efforts and leverages the resources of its community members. The trainings for parents and caregivers offered through Project ReConnect consist of a six week course that delivers the PARENT gang prevention program (Preparedness and Relationships Equals Non-violent Transformation). Oakland residents who are parenting young people between the ages of 10 through 16 who are gang involved or at risk of gang involvement are targeted for trainings. Parents and caregivers are recruited through multiple channels including referrals from Probation, participation in the IGPC, referrals through schools, self-referrals, and referrals from other Oakland Unite partners, such as California Youth Outreach case managers. This overview focuses on information collected from Project Reconnect and California Youth Outreach because of their inclusion in the interview and evaluation process.

### Key Takeaways

- Project ReConnect is able to overcome community distrust and engage parents by giving them concrete strategies for gang prevention.
- There is a high demand for gang awareness capacity building trainings for staff and agencies across a broad range of youth serving organizations.
- Consistent parent participation from the most violent neighborhoods is challenging due to suspected level of community trauma and debilitation.

### Evidence Based Practices

Project ReConnect incorporates evidence-based practices (EBPs) in its trainings for parents and caregivers of gang-involved youth and youth at high risk for gang involvement. The Executive Director reports program-wide use of practices such as raising parental awareness of signs of gang involvement and providing tools to strengthen family relationships, such as setting expectations and rewarding positive behavior. The program can strengthen its use of EBPs by working to more clearly articulate its understanding of them and how they are incorporated in staff practices and program design. Through this process, it may also become aware of additional EBPs it can adopt.



## Program Strengths

### High Participation and Engagement

**Project ReConnect is able to overcome high levels of distrust in the community and engage parents in trainings that offer concrete gang prevention strategies.** Staff report that a fundamental strength of their trainings is that they provide parents with a better understanding of how to prevent and deal more effectively with youth who are gang-involved or at risk of becoming gang-involved. By helping parents realize that other parents are dealing with similar circumstances, Project ReConnect staff are to get everyone on common ground and help them feel more comfortable talking about their experiences. As one parent noted, "I was surprised to hear and see other parents talking about gangs. I felt relief and I didn't feel alone. I realized that other parents had it even worse, and I started to feel comfortable talking with others [in the group]. It gave me a great feeling of security and I transferred that feeling to my son."

In helping parents recognize warning signs and familiarizing them with available resources in the community, Project ReConnect is able to build capacity and engage parents to begin talking to their children and taking action to engage with them on these issues.

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*"At Castlemont, there was a guest speaker, a former Norteno. He spoke about his upbringing, experiences with drugs and alcohol and how a couple of mentors turned his life around. He shared step-by-step what they needed to do to keep their kids out of gangs. There were parents saying, 'My kid's on that road.' And when it was over, they rushed him to say thank you."*

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Project ReConnect staff convey that they know their message is effective because many parents come through their trainings asking to attend multiple times, often despite initial reluctance to attend. "Immediately I saw the value of the program despite my initial reluctance, resentment and suspicion. After the first session, I never missed another. I felt a collective connection that reached beyond the classes." They have one volunteer who has repeated the training three times and began actively recruiting parents, and another who has volunteered for over 6 months, testifies regularly, and brings relatives to trainings. Further, they have many families who have participated in the training who are willing to speak out about the program and help recruit other parents. The effectiveness of this "each-one, reach-one" approach speaks to the positive impact Project ReConnect has on parents, who then encourage their friends and family members to attend. Similarly, CYO knows its school-based trainings are working when they see schools develop their school site plans, dedicate time to addressing gang issues, and direct funding toward gang prevention activities.

### Broad Scope and Reach

**High interest beyond the schools conveys importance and need for trainings.** California Youth Outreach staff describe the high levels of interest in the capacity building trainings from a wide range of entities – including Children's Hospital, mental health-serving child agencies, after school providers and





school nurses. The wide appeal to all of these different organizations speaks to the critical nature of the information and resources the program provides, and staff report that the trainings sometimes are filled to capacity.

### **Partnerships**

**Staff at both Project ReConnect and California Youth Outreach attribute much of their success to the strength of their relationship and collaboration with Oakland Unite partners, and a broader group of public agencies.** The staff speak of their strong connection not only with individuals in positions of leadership, but also with line staff. They describe the closeness of their connections with the fact that they are able to reach other program or school staff on their cell phones.

### **Program Challenges**

#### **Parent Trainings: Lack of Trust, Neighborhood Safety, Caregiver Resistance**

**Project ReConnect staff report two challenges with the parent trainings related to initial resistance from parents due to mistrust, and concerns regarding safety depending on the location of the training.** The high level of distrust in the community can contribute to the reluctance of parents to participate in the training. This is especially true for parents who are court-ordered to attend. One parent noted that her initial reaction to the class was: "Why, why, why would I come to a course where they're going to teach me to be a mother? I have already raised two children and I was insulted at the idea that anyone could 'teach' me what I already knew." Further, depending on the location of where the training is held, parents become fearful that they or their child won't be safe in certain parts of the city.

#### **Confusion regarding Staff Roles**

**Staff report that there is the expectation that they provide direct services to the youth.** Project ReConnect only offers the trainings and makes referrals to services for parents or teachers who seek them, but does not provide direct services, such as case management or mentoring, to youth. This has caused some confusion for participants, who often view staff as "crisis intervention" rather than trainers.

#### **Hard to engage residents of Oakland that are Most in Need**

**Resident participation from the most violent neighborhoods is challenging due to suspected level of community trauma and debilitation.** Staff are aware of the need to push into the areas of Oakland that aren't getting the information about their services, but report that these areas are frequently so debilitated and traumatized that even when they do outreach, the residents just do not come out.

#### **Limited Outreach**

**Parents and caregivers who have participated in the parent workshop attest that additional resources should be invested in promoting the program to increase exposure within the community.** As a testament to the impact the workshop had on them, parents and caregivers reported their sense that the program is appropriate for and needed by many more community members, but that they are



unaware that the services exist. To this end, parents and caregivers unanimously suggested dedicating increased resources toward raising exposure of the program and increasing visibility of the services offered.

- *“There should be much, much more outreach in the communities. Many, many people would benefit from the course but don’t know about it.”*
- *“There is a lack of promotion and marketing or outreach. More resources should be put into getting the word out about the program – flyers, local meetings, knocking on doors...I don’t see enough effort here.”*

### Staff Capacity

**Because of the high demand for both parent and staff capacity building trainings, there are not enough staff to meet the need.** The success of Project ReConnect has spread across the community and because there are so many different organizations who have reached out to schedule trainings, they experience issues related to staff capacity. Further, caregivers expressed their wishes that the program should be longer, and have the option for follow-up classes.

- *“The length of the course should be longer – it used to last eight weeks, now only six. Six weeks once a week is not enough.”*
- *“I am worried about the wellbeing of the course participants once classes are over. There should be follow-up courses to continue the progress made during the too-short program.”*



## Our Kids/Our Families Middle School Model

### Program Overview

Our Kids/Our Families is a program through the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency that works to reduce school-related violence and increase pro-social behaviors by providing school-based violence prevention curriculum and behavioral health services in schools across Alameda County. Oakland Unite provides support in order to have the Our Kids/Our Families program at all Oakland Unified School District middle schools. Students are enrolled into Our Kids/Our Families behavioral health services when they have experienced trauma at school, at home, or in the community, including abuse, suicide attempts, witnessing shootings, behavioral problems in the classroom, bullying or fighting, drug use, and domestic violence in the home. Our Kids/Our Families provides these students with psycho-social assessments, counseling, case management, referral and follow-up, and family support services. Program staff also collaborate with several other school-based service providers including Cathoic Charities, Fred Finch, and Seneca Center, to bring a wide continuum of health and social services for students. In addition to providing direct services to Oakland youth, Our Kids/Our Families provides mental health consultation to school administrative staff and faculty, training them on classroom management, understanding the impact of trauma on students, de-escalation techniques, and culturally inclusive practices. Our Kids/Our Families also outreach to parents and caregivers of students to provide them with social support and education about the benefits of counseling and other resources in Alameda County.

### Key Takeaways

- Our Kids/Our Families' coordinated, proactive, and holistic approach to service delivery is increasing access to mental health services and supports for students, teachers, and parents.
- Our Kids/Our Families helps students improve their academic performance and general functioning through counseling, positive brief interventions and supports, and stress reduction.
- Many Our Kids/Our Families clients lack basic resources for stable housing, clothing, transportation, and food. These issues limit the ability of the program to mitigate the impact of trauma in youths' lives.

### Evidence Based Practices

Our Kids/Our Families employs multiple evidence-based and promising practices and is rapidly moving to adopt others. Practices on which they draw include cognitive behavioral interventions (CBIs) for students who have experienced trauma; restorative justice principles; and a validated student assessment tool that is scheduled for implementation in Fall 2013. Our Kids/Our Families is also involved in implementing additional EBP models in OUSD, including a Mental Health Consultation (MHC) model in which school-based social workers focus on empowering school staff and parents to address student needs; a Community Schools Model that organizes community resources around student success; and Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) that focus on improving school climate. The Program Manager and Executive Director of Our Kids/Our Families both describe ongoing communication with staff about EBPs, as well as supportive measures that encourage and require use of EBPs. The primary



challenge Our Kids/Our Families encounters in implementing EBPs is modifying their approach to schools whose leadership is resistant to the approaches that Our Kids/Our Families promotes. Our Kids/Our Families has responded by focusing on leadership development for their on-campus social workers, so that they can influence administration and faculty decision-making around practices that affect school climate. Our Kids/Our Families is taking a diplomatic approach to this challenge and is also creating technical systems to support further integration of EBPs into the schools where they work. They should continue with these proactive approaches.

## Program Strengths

### Multidisciplinary Approach to Services

Our Kids/Our Families participates in a multidisciplinary, team-based care approach to case management and counseling which is increasing access to services for youth. School-based health and social service providers coordinate services for students through a weekly Coordination of Services Team (COST) meeting. The COST meeting allows Our Kids/Our Families and other providers to adequately resource students with the appropriate services to meet their psychosocial needs. The COST includes a mental health clinician, Our Kids/Our Families social workers, parent advocates, school nurse, after-school coordinator, and the school-based health clinic. Referrals for each student are discussed at length, including physical health, mental health, family reunification, and academic support. The outcome is an individualized case plan to address the needs of both the student and their parents/caregivers that otherwise may go unaddressed. This comprehensive approach to services works well, especially for students who are the most at-risk or who are in crisis. One staff member shared, "If the student is suicidal, self-injuring, or there is child abuse potential, our staff does most of the crisis intervention... Some clinicians hold parent support groups. We even provide mental health services to parents whose kids may not be able to enroll. That way the kids get the support they need."

### Improving Academic Performance through Stress Reduction

Our Kids/Our Families works with students to reduce their stress, helping them to perform better in school. Students often incur stress as a result of the trauma they experience at school, at home, and in the community. Our Kids/Our Families social workers teach youth breathing techniques and ways to visualize their change in stress levels before and after relaxation exercises. In addition, relaxation techniques are integrated into cognitive behavioral interventions for trauma in school modules over 10

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*In the beginning, I thought it would be scary to talk to people about stuff because I'm really shy. I didn't know what it would be like to talk to people about my feelings. Since talking to her [program social worker] I feel a lot better. Like, I got it off my chest.*

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week periods. As a result, social workers sometimes see dramatic decreases in student stress. As part of helping students reduce their stress levels, social workers are creating individualized plans to help



students learn different stress reduction techniques, allowing them to shift their focus to improving grades or to improving their general social functioning.

### Engaging and Educating Teachers and Parents

**Our Kids/Our Families outreaches to and works with both teachers and parents to help them better understand the benefits of counseling for students as part of their holistic approach to supporting students.** Our Kids/Our Families helps teachers and parents better understand positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), the signs or symptoms of trauma, and how to address their own vicarious trauma. Our Kids/Our Families specifically works with teachers and trains them to recognize trauma-related behavior and respond effectively through de-escalation techniques and creating positive social interactions with students.

Similarly, Our Kids/Our Families works with parents to teach them how to be better advocates for their children’s mental health or school success. Changing parents’ attitudes towards counseling is seen as a significant success of the Our Kids/Our Families program. Often, counseling or social workers can be perceived as threatening, especially by families who are more vulnerable due to immigration status or poverty. Our Kids/Our Families work with parents to change their attitudes towards counseling so that do not see it as “dangerous anymore.” As a result, parents are enrolling their other children at younger ages into counseling or other similar programs. Having helped parents better understand the purpose and value in counseling and other mental health services, Our Kids/Our Families has helped these parents learn how to better advocate for their children: “I think the success is that even though these parents do not speak English, they learn how to provide more advocacy for their kids.”

The added social safety net of teachers and parents provides students with the support they need to improve their grades in school and social functioning at home. According to one social worker, “A young lady this year was skipping out of class every day and didn’t care about school. Now she’s getting all A’s and B’s. I’ve worked with her mom a lot individually. Sometimes, I work a lot more with moms and



*“A lot of times, parents don’t understand the concept [of Our Kids/Our Families]. I spend a lot of time explaining to them how I’ll be supporting their child to get good grades and won’t be pulling them out of class. I have to psychoeducate parents a lot because they are concerned I am from CPS or Social Services. I have to work a lot with parents who are not legally here and they are afraid”.*



teachers than with the students themselves.”

Our Kids/Our Families staff also shared how their work to engage other family members besides parents can be critical to the safety and success of students, both inside the school and in the home. One youth client was living with physically abusive parents, getting poor grades, and frequently skipping class. The Our Kids/Our Families social worker was able to work with student’s other family members to ultimately find the client a stable home, “We struggled all year with her safety at home and we got her to live with another family member and that was a huge success.”



### Changing the Way Students Think:

Our Kids/Our Families counseling is helping to change the thinking and aspirations of youth. Social workers that have been with Our Kids/Our Families over several years are now seeing former clients excel in high school and going off to college. For some students, the help they received in Our Kids/Our Families still “kicks in” while they are in high school. For example, one former client failed all throughout middle school, but eventually turned her academic performance around and received a scholarship to attend the University of California. To observe this dramatic shift in their students’ attitudes is a significant positive change. One social worker describes, “Their thinking changes – their aspirations are different; they dress differently and are hanging out with different people.”

In addition to changing aspirations, youth clients talked about how helpful it was to have someone to help them change their thinking around their behavior. Our Kids/Our Families social workers help to validate the feelings and experiences of youth, which helps them feel less angry or stressed about school or home problems. Students say that they are calm now and do not get into fights and that talking about their feelings with a social worker helps “instead of letting them eat me away.”

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*“Kids are coming back and thinking they want to go to college. Their thinking changes and their aspirations are different. They dress differently and are hanging out with different people”.*

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### Program Challenges

#### Meeting the Material Needs of Families

The most significant challenge to serving youth in Our Kids/Our Families is in addressing their material needs such as housing, clothes, transportation, and food through longer-term case management. Although a family’s ability to pay rent or provide nutritious food is not part of the scope of Our Kids/Our Families, having a student’s basic needs met significantly impacts their school performance and socio-emotional stability. Social workers report that many parents of youth clients have been in and out of jail or prison, which is a significant adverse experience for children. Immigration issues are also difficult for Our Kids/Our Families staff to address. Some parents of youth clients are recently or illegally immigrated to the US and live in fear of deportation. This adds onto the stress of youth clients. At Madison Middle School, Our Kids/Our Families is able to refer those parents to an on-site attorney that can provide consultation in the case of immigration issues that has resulted in “4 to 5 families... that have been able to get their visa and get on track of getting immigration cards.” Broader social services over a longer period of time would help youth and their families, especially for housing and employment issues. Currently, the large caseloads of Our Kids/Our Families social workers prevents them from engaging in longer-term engagement that could yield better health and academic outcomes for students.



## Family Violence Intervention Unit

### Program Overview

The Family Violence Intervention Unit (FVIU) strategy, provided by the Family Violence Law Center (FVLC), aims to connect domestic violence survivors to a range of supportive services. FVIU personnel reach out to the domestic violence survivors referred to them by the Oakland Police Department (OPD), community service providers, hospitals, and the public, and provide crisis counseling, safety planning, assistance with Victims of Crime applications, referrals to FVLC's legal department, advocacy with OPD and connection with the District Attorney's Victim Witness Department, and other support as needed. FVIU staff also works with OPD to provide line-up trainings to police officers to increase their capacity to respond to survivors of domestic violence.

### Key Takeaways

- FVIU ensures that clients receive the full spectrum of crisis intervention services to meet the multiple and overlapping needs of domestic violence survivors.
- FVIU's partnership with OPD leads to real-time referrals, which can be critical for helping survivors leave abusive partners.
- The rate of domestic violence in Oakland exceeds the capacity for in-depth services; the two to three days it takes FVIU advocates to contact survivors identified through police reports can be the difference between staying in and leaving an abusive relationship.
- There are limited housing options for domestic violence survivors, especially women with teenage sons.

### Evidence Based Practices

There are few established EBPs in the field of domestic violence, especially related to crisis intervention. Despite this, FVIU works hard to stay abreast of the latest interventions and other practices, and is regularly involved in conversations with other domestic violence providers related to best practices. In addition, FVIU is firmly committed to evaluating their practices and to staying up-to-date with the latest information and tools being used in the field of domestic violence work. FVIU promotes ongoing professional staff development and overall ongoing education for staff, particularly as it relates to new areas of interest in the domestic violence field. FVLC staff chair and attend several domestic violence, legal, and service related collaboratives, and are active in the state-wide leadership collaborations and positions as well. In the past year the FVIU program staff received training on lethality assessments from nationally renowned expert Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell through a partnership of the Alameda County Family Justice Center and Highland Hospital. Although this tool was developed for longer term client involvement, FVIU staff has successfully adapted it for use with shorter-term client engagement, and staff uses this tool to better assess which of the hundreds of monthly police reports need their immediate attention first.



## Program Strengths

### Taking Clients from A through Z

**The FVIU provides full spectrum of emergency intervention services designed to meet the multiplicity of needs that domestic violence survivors experience.** As part of their crisis intervention, FVIU advocates help clients with issues ranging from emergency relocation services, to filing policing reports, going to court for criminal and/or civil actions, applying for entitlement benefits, and navigating Child Protective Services, as well as counseling and referrals to additional longer-term support services. Moreover, because FVLC also provides civil legal services for domestic violence survivors, FVIU advocates can easily link clients to critical legal services such as civil restraining orders; child custody, visitation, and support; and divorce from an abusive spouse, and in the 2012/13 fiscal year, FVLC legal staff served a total of 775 clients (433 Oakland) with a variety of these legal services. What really makes FVIU services effective, however, is not any one service that they offer, but their ability to provide this full spectrum of services to clients in crisis. As FVIU's Crisis Service Coordinator notes, "Everybody on the team, we work really, really hard. We do a lot for clients. We go above and beyond, even when it's something that we really don't do, we do it. We offer a lot of support... We don't just give a person a referral and not know that we're referring to the right place. If we don't provide a service, we work hard to find someone who does provide that services. We start at step A and do as much as possible to walk them thru to step Z."

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*"We offer a lot of support... We don't just give a person a referral and not know that we're referring to the right place. If we don't provide a service, we work hard to find someone who does provide that services. We start at step A and do as much as possible to walk them thru to step Z."*

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### Partnership with Oakland Police Department

**FVIU's ongoing relationship with the Oakland Police Department is a critical factor in FVIU's ability to successfully serve survivors of domestic violence.** FVIU advocates provide two types of trainings to OPD officers: yearly brief lineup trainings and occasionally the more extensive Continuing Professional Training (CPT). The brief lineup trainings, which FVIU has provided for years, are an opportunity for FVIU advocates to interact with a large number of patrol officers in order to provide an overview of FVIU services for domestic violence survivors and to remind officers that they can contact FVIU 24 hours a day, 7 days a week when they come across or respond to a domestic violence situation. The more extensive CPT, which is offered every two years and counts towards officers Continuing Education Units (CEUs), gives FVIU the opportunity not only to increase awareness of their own services but also to teach officers about the complex issues involved in domestic violence situations and to increase officers' ability to respond effectively.

FVIU advocates note that the volume of calls that they receive from officers responding to domestic violence incidents in the field spikes noticeably following all of these trainings. These real-time contacts





provide FVIU with a critical opportunity to intervene in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident and significantly increase the likelihood that a domestic violence survivor will press charges, file a restraining order, leave an abuser, or otherwise take steps to get out of a dangerous situation. “If the officer calls us and we can talk to the woman right away, we can talk through her options, and help her think through her decisions.”

## Program Challenges

### Not Enough Direct Referrals

Despite the success that FVIU achieves through real-time contact from officers responding to domestic violence incidents, the majority of officers do not contact FVIU when they encounter domestic violence. The flipside to the great response that FVIU gets from officers in the field following trainings is that the majority of officers do not contact FVIU the majority of the time. As a consequence, FVIU gets the majority of their OPD referrals by reviewing police reports and then contacting domestic violence survivors after the fact. The lag time between the officer responding to a domestic violence incident, and FVIU finding out about the incident through the police reports can be as little as 3-4 days, but those few days can be the crucial difference between FVIU advocates being able to locate the survivor. “If someone needs to get to safety, the 3-4 days, sometimes plus a weekend or holiday [between when the incident happens and when we find out about it], we aren’t able to help them get a safety plan. The survivor may have changed her number so we can’t reach her, and let her know about her options.”

Even when FVIU advocates are able to contact survivors who they locate through police reports, the survivors are often much less likely to request services or be willing to leave their abusers if time has elapsed since the violent event. “Sometimes when we follow up after police reports, sometimes the survivors are resistant. Sometimes people don’t know what the services are so they say ‘no thank you’

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*“The lag time issue is important. If it’s two weeks before we contact someone, it’s enough time for him to get out of jail and tell her he’ll make it better.”*

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without knowing what our services are. Sometimes people want to stay with the person – that’s why the lag time issue is important. If it’s two weeks before we contact someone, it’s enough time for him to get out of jail and tell her he’ll make it better.”

At the same time, as FVLC’s Managing Advocate notes, FVLC already struggles to respond to the 200-650 domestic violence-related police reports they receive each month. FVLC and OPD’s limited capacity to respond to all incidents comprehensively indicates a need for innovative solutions from FVIU and OPD to conceptualize other ways to effectively work closely together on common goals of decreasing the domestic violence in Oakland.



### Limited Housing and Other Services

**Limited options for both crisis and long-term housing and housing support make it hard for people to leave domestic violence situations.** Although FVIU provides a wide array of critical services designed to help survivors of domestic violence, advocates are also severely limited by the more general lack of services in the City of Oakland and in Alameda County. Housing is a particularly critical need, the lack of which can force survivors to stay in unsafe situations. “There are so few domestic violence shelters and they fill up really fast, especially for families with children.” This problem can be especially challenging for women with sons, since many domestic violence shelters take the safety precaution of only allowing boys under a certain age. FVIU reviews over 4,000 OPD reports every year and provides services to over 1,100 Oakland clients in crisis; with this high volume of clients and the lack of housing resources for domestic violence survivors, when a survivor cannot get into a shelter or find a friend or family member to move in with, there is not much that FVIU can do. “We can hotel them overnight and keep working with them the next day, but there aren’t enough resources to house everyone and we don’t have the capacity to spend the time helping clients permanently relocate. If a client needs to move, we do not have the resources to individually help them find another apartment or house because of the amount of incoming service requests.”



## Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors

### Program Overview

The programs in this strategy work together to provide a continuum of services for commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC). Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR) acts as a first responder, going into the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) and accompanying the Oakland Police Department (OPD) on prostitution sweeps to offer intervention services to young people – mostly girls – who have recently been arrested for involvement in commercial sexual activity. BAWAR provides immediate intervention services, including counseling and referrals to additional and longer-term services. After the young women have been engaged, BAWAR links them with Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting, and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY), which provides longer-term services through its JJC-strategy program and through its Safe Place Alternative (SPA) drop-in center. The MISSEY's JJC strategy program, like the other JJC/OUUSD Wraparound programs, provides counseling, case management services, and other wraparound supports to young people coming out of the Juvenile Hall, although MISSEY's program focuses specifically on working with young people who have been involved in commercial sexual exploitation. MISSEY's SPA drop-in center provides counseling, workshops, field trips, and more to sexually exploited minors who are referred through a variety of sources, including from BAWAR, OPD, the MISSEY's JJC program, and self-referrals.

### Key Takeaways

- Intervening during an arrest or while a young person is in custody increases the likelihood that youth will be receptive to services.
- CSEC programs provide unconditional love and support, a new experience for the minors and a critical one to turn their lives around.
- Partnerships with OPD, Probation, and the Court have helped these departments come to view sexually exploited minors as victims not perpetrators.
- Limited resources, particularly housing, mean that young people often go back to the same environments they came from, which makes it harder for them to sustain change.

### Evidence Based Practices

The programs in the Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors strategy provides crisis, and long-term support to at-risk and sexually exploited youth. Organizational leaders describe communicating about, promoting, and training staff to use EBPs. Employees are California certified rape crisis counselors, and as a result they are well trained in trauma-informed techniques. Programs use an assessment tool for intake and develop case management plans in collaboration with the client, the client's family, and partner organizations. The programs also use a teaching curriculum modeled on evidence-based and promising practices, which is led by certified instructors and counselors. The overall lack of EBPs for assisting commercially sexually exploited children is a challenge for this strategy; it therefore relies on the EBPs and promising practices that do exist, for instance in crisis response and curriculum-based activities like interactive journaling. The Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors organizations can build on their current position by continuing to move forward with their new curricula.



## Program Strengths

### Immediate Intervention for Sexually Exploited Minors

**Intervening immediately after an arrest or while a young person is in custody increases the likelihood that she will engage in services.** The CSEC Strategy is unique among Oakland Unite strategies in that the providers within the strategy create a continuum of care for sexually exploited minors, with BAWAR as the first responder, meeting the young women through police sweeps or work in Alameda County's Juvenile Justice Center, and MISSEY acting as the second responder, providing longer-term services through their JJC wraparound program and their SPA drop-in recovery center program. Although clients and staff from both programs note the importance of all of the services provided through this service continuum, they especially highlight the importance of the first responder component of this network. BAWAR, which has developed a strong relationship with OPD, is invited to join the police department when they conduct prostitution sweeps. When the police pick up minors who are involved in commercial sexual activity, BAWAR staff immediately approach the young people, offering them support that ranges from a change of clothes to counseling, case management, and more. As BAWAR staff note, "when they're first detained they're more likely to open up and want services." MISSEY staff also connect with arrested and detained girls as soon as they are able and they concur, noting that if an intervention does not happen immediately, it may be too late. "With our girls 3 days is a long time. Three days, they can be exploited again." BAWAR and MISSEY's work inside the County's Juvenile Justice Center is similarly critical. Young women are much more receptive to receiving services while they are in custody than they are after released, when they are frequently surrounded by peers who are also involved in commercial sexual activity and other illegal activities. "Prerelease planning helps them know what's going on, not get out and suddenly have so much to do, but have a set plan in advance. You'll have an advocate, you can go to the Drop-In Center, you'll get a case manager and a therapist." In addition, even if girls do not choose to engage in services while in custody, just having the opportunity to learn about these services can lead to their engagement at a later time. "If we go in while they're in, they're aware of services. These clients do have a tendency to AWOL, but knowing that we can provide services whether or not they're AWOL, if we can deliver that message to them, they'll AWOL but pop up at the Drop-In Center and have the chance to connect with services providers."

### Unconditional Love and Support

**The CSEC programs show the young people unconditional love and support, even if they continue to make negative or dangerous life choices.** As noted above, CSEC clients are extremely likely to AWOL or otherwise run away; girls on probation often miss appointments with their probation officers, girls in foster care run away from their placements, girls at home run away from their families, and young women often skip school. Throughout all of this, the CSEC providers are committed to continuing to work with these youth and to showing them that no matter what happens, there is a place they can go for support. "If girls AWOL, we don't call the police, so they'll come in and we work with them: 'Ok, you're AWOL, you don't have a place to stay because of that. What can you do to not be AWOL, how will that help you?'" For young women who have been involved in the juvenile justice system and the foster care system for years, MISSEY and BAWAR's unconditional support is a new experience, and ultimately



one that helps them turn their lives around. “We’ll start working with some clients and they don’t really get the relationship that we have – we’re there to support them thru everything, we’re not there to turn them into authorities. When that light bulb turns on, it changes how they respond to situations; they’ll admit that they’re responsible for behavior that’s inappropriate.” Clients agree that the unconditional support they receive through these programs are critical to helping them turn their lives around. “They allowed me to speak on it in my own time. Nothing is pushed on you, they kind of give you your space, even if you’re on the run, not doing everything like you’re supposed to do, they’re still there. That’s a big thing. A lot of people need to know that people are going to be there regardless of anything. And these programs show that. They’re going to deal with your B.S. but if you’re doing good or not, they’re going to be there too.”

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*“I thought I’d come and not want to be here, not want to talk; I thought people weren’t really going to understand who I was, why I did stuff, they’d be judgmental and they really aren’t. And they care. You don’t wonder if they care with anyone who works with these organizations. You know that they care.”*

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Other client comments also underscore how important the unconditional support is to these young women.

- *I thought I’d come and not want to be here, not want to talk; I thought people weren’t really going to understand who I was, why I did stuff, they’d be judgmental and they really aren’t. And they care. You don’t wonder if they care with anyone who works with these organizations. You know that they care.*
- *In my foster home I can’t really talk about my past. We don’t speak on it, but a lot of times I have to because it’s part of me regardless of whether they want it to be or not; it’s like I should be ashamed in my house but I can’t really be ashamed of my life and I’m able to speak about that at MISSEY and BAWAR. Whether or not they can relate to it, they understand.*

## Partnerships

CSEC programs have developed strong partnerships with each other, with other Oakland Unite providers, and with City and County agencies that help them better serve Oakland youth.

Through their partnerships, the CSEC programs have established a continuum of care that includes immediate post-arrest intervention, in-custody pre-release planning, and ongoing support in the community. As noted above, the CSEC providers work together to provide a continuum of care for sexually exploited minors, with BAWAR doing the critical work of intercepting young people when they are arrested and/or detained, and MISSEY providing critical early and ongoing support so that these young people may escape victimization.

All of this work is supported through a network of partnerships with other Oakland Unite strategies and partnerships. MISSEY’s involvement in the JJC Wraparound strategy and in the CSEC strategy allows them to provide wraparound services for sexually exploited minors coming out of Juvenile Hall,



while providing an array of other services through their SPA Drop-in Center to sexually exploited minors referred through a variety of sources. In addition, CSEC providers collaborate with other youth-service Oakland Unite programs, including Youth Employment Partnership (YEP), Youth UpRising (YU), East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC), OUSD Alternative Education, and Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth

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*“We have strong connections with other organizations. Before one of our gaps would have been employment but now we work with YEP. Before we’d tell the girls to get off the street, stop making money in those ways but now how are you going to make a living?”*

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(RJOY), to help coordinate to best meet the diverse needs of CSEC youth. All of these programs work together to ensure that the youths’ multiple needs are being served in a coordinated fashion. For example, when working with a young Cambodian woman, MISSSEY staff realized that she needed support navigating culturally-specific issues in her home and they worked with EBAYC to find a case manager who could help address these needs. Similarly, when young women need help finding employment to help them get off the street, MISSSEY coordinates with YEP to enroll them in employment training and subsidized employment programs that can help them stay out of trouble.

**Partnerships with the Oakland Police Department and County Departments including the Probation Department, the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, and the Juvenile Court have allowed CSEC providers to work with more young people in need while changing people’s perspectives on CSEC youth.** BAWAR’s ability to work with OPD gets more services to girls in need. “I’ve worked at 12:00 am on a Saturday night with the Child Exploitation Expert to bring someone in. OPD takes very seriously what we have to say about a kid. They contact us when there’s an operation going on in the city so we can provide services to kids.” Through this process, CSEC providers have helped changed police officers’ attitudes about young people who are involved in commercial sexual activity. “Now they have a mindset that these are kids, these are victims. Even if they’re locking them up, they’re allowing us to be there and then following up asking us ‘how is this kid doing? How is the kid that we picked up Saturday night?’ Even in the instances where they have arrested an exploiter, they’re still concerned with the kid as a victim.” CSEC programs have done similar relationship-building with the Probation Department, which has given the programs the ability to enter the Juvenile Hall and visit group homes to work with young people, and to reframe the way some probation officers view these girls.

MISSEY has also worked closely with Alameda County judges, with the District Attorney’s Office, and with the Public Defender’s Office to reframe how these organizations understand and approach young people involved on commercial sexually activity. “The Court wants our input on what’s going on in the girl’s life, what should be the next step. It’s important that we’re all working together. No organization could do this work by themselves. That Girls’ Court model is exceptional. Seeing the District Attorney and Public Defender working together with service providers – it’s rare.”





## Program Challenges

### Not Enough Resources, Not Enough Time

Like many Oakland Unite programs and strategies, CSEC providers are constrained by the volume of need and the limited resources available. One of the big challenges the CSEC providers face is trying to help young people find housing and other supportive living environments that will allow them to sustain the changes they are trying to make. This can be especially challenging for kids in foster care or who have been involved in the justice system. “One of the big challenges is with kids in the foster care system. It’s hard to find them the right house and they’re put in group homes that aren’t appropriate for them, with therapists who they don’t connect with.” As one provider noted, it’s especially hard for people to change when they have to go back to the same environment they came from. “When they’re part of the system, when they come out of that system, something should be in place to guide their lives. They came from a really structured environment back to the City of Oakland with no structure. They might have changed but the environment is the same. Clients agreed, pointing out, “If they had the funds for housing it would be a lot better. They’re able to help you through the mental process, the basic necessities of changing, but if we need somewhere to go, they can’t do much to help and it makes it hard because we’re still in the same environment with the same people. If they had the funds, it’d be awesome and it’d be a lot easier to really change.”

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*“They’re able to help you through the mental process, the basic necessities of changing, but if we need somewhere to go, they can’t do much to help and it makes it hard because we’re still in the same environment with the same people.”*

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The other resource-related challenge these programs experience is having enough time to support all the young people who need their help. Although the programs provide unconditional love, both providers note that they cannot possibly do enough to provide all of the love and care these youth need.

- *“They need help with survival on a day-to-day basis. We can give them a care package but they need a daily care package.”*
- *“It’s not just materialistic things but love and attention – I would love to be with every kid 24 hours a day but it’s not realistic.”*



## Mental Health Services for Ages 0-5

### Program Overview

The Link to Children (TLC) and Safe Passages/Through the Looking Glass (TLG) are the two organizations providing services in the Mental Health 0-5 strategy. While they both provide services to young children aged five or younger, their activities differ slightly. TLC staff provide intensive play therapy, dyadic parent-child therapy and parent counseling. Children are referred to TLC through the Alameda County Family Justice Center, the Victim/Witness program and through community partnerships with the Oakland Unified School District, Head Start and Oakland Elizabeth House.

Safe Passages contracts with TLG and offers services that include early identification and treatment for developmental and behavioral pathology to children exposed to family and/or community violence. The services are provided at two Oakland Head Start locations, where TLG clinical staff are also responsible for providing professional development to preschool teachers serving these students. Specifically, TLG mental health clinicians offer mental health consultation to children aged five and under who have been exposed to violence. The consultation services include: observation, assessment, behavioral intervention, support and intensive child/parent psychotherapy sessions.

### Key Takeaways

- Clinical staff are critical “bridges” to services and resources for families and children – a perception also echoed by caregivers.
- Staff educate children on social problem-solving skills, which positively impacts the whole family and improves outcomes in education and workplace settings later in life.
- The most critical resource shortages are emergency and permanent housing and child care.
- Absence of after-hours availability and on-site security hinder service provision to a wider population.

### Evidence Based Practices

Leadership at the two organizations describe communicating about, promoting, and training staff to use evidence-based practices (EBPs) as part of the therapy their program provides to young children exposed to trauma or domestic violence. Indeed, the impetus for providing post-trauma therapeutic interventions to children is based on evidence that trauma-exposed children may have decreased capacity for emotional regulation, employing coping skills, and demonstrating social competence. Specific EBPs the program uses include evaluating children with a validated assessment tool and reassessing them over time to allow for adjustments in the case management plan. Case management planning involves the child, his or her family, and other relevant organizations. In addition, the practices and activities therapists use are evidence-based and the program is adding to its EBP efforts by implementing new screening and assessment protocols for therapists to use in case management. One challenge of these new protocols has been meeting the increased time demands on therapists to complete paperwork, but the organization has already established a system of weekly set-aside time to meet the challenge. Another challenge to EBP implementation lies outside the program in some





families' inability to prioritize child therapy in the midst of other traumas. The program can build on its strengths by continuing to implement the EBPs to which it has committed.

### Program Strengths

#### Bridge to Resources and Services

Clinical staff and clients report that services provide a "bridge" to therapeutic interventions and link families to resources in the community. The children that come through the centers have frequently been exposed to environments with an array of negative events including domestic violence and chronic fear stemming from community violence, poverty, neglect, unstable shelter, and drugs and alcohol. Clinicians describe their role as oftentimes "bearing witness" to the violence and helping parents and caregivers begin to understand that their children were affected. Mental health staff offer parents understanding and empathy, with the goal of helping them to become more available to receive their children's communicatins. Clinicians also work with families to create narrarives around trauma and its

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*"Many parents are so focused on what's happening in their world that they're not really in tune with their child's experience. We are able to help them gain insight into their child's world."*

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impact, based on their familiarity with research showing that the capacity of caregivers to coherently narrate trauma experiences is predictive of their children having secure attachment relationships, which in turn predict resilience.

Clinicians report that the process of building trust and acceptance takes time and involves a lot of informal consultation, but that when they are patient with the process it is more successful. While engaging parents can be challenging, clinical staff see their efforts pay off when there's shared communication, when parents return and engage in the intervention, and when they're able to successfully navigate all the potential pitfalls to maintain the relationship. This is reinforced for caregivers when they are able to see the benefits of the intervention.

Further, caregivers echo that therapeutic interventions provide a critical function for families trying to cope with the effects of violence.

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*"I don't know where we would be if we weren't able to come to therapy. My grandson knows, 'This is where I can come so I can talk or I can play or I can vent.' Every now and then something about his mother will come out...I'm glad there's a place he knows he can talk about his mom is he wants to."*

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**Intervention efforts impact the whole family.** Clinicians talked about the successes they've had when they're able to connect with families early on and work with them to help prepare their kids to be able to succeed socially – improve their ability to sit, concentrate, work in groups, play well with peers, be



able to wait, explain a problem, and use words to explain an interaction. These skills are critical developmental milestones – and are necessary to have in order to be successful in school.

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*“This child had been at Head Start for four months and the teachers were struggling with how to manage his impulsive behaviors, and his Mom was struggling at home. I’ve been working with the family for 1.5 years now. Last year he completely decompensated – urinating in public, fell into BART tracks – he was the most impulsive child I’ve ever seen, uncontrollable... I referred him to a psychologist. This year he came back, he’s calm, making friends, able to learn and is ready for kindergarten... The shift in the last year has been incredible!”*

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Clinical staff are able to support children in developing social problem-solving skills and self-regulatory capacities. Possession of these skills and capacities has long lasting implications for children’s successful navigation of life, school, and ultimately in the workplace. These capacities, in addition to having at least one secure attachment relationship, are also strong predictors of resilience.

Caregivers also reflect that the benefits extend beyond those to the children, not only in terms of improved relationships but also in terms of helping caregivers feel more empowered with knowledge.

### **Strong Collaboration Improves Service Provision**

**Mental health staff describe how partnerships bolster their ability to provide for families.** Staff report that Measure Y/Oakland Unite funds are critical to supporting their presence one day a week at Head Start. Staff receive reports at multi-disciplinary team meetings that include Head Start staff, mental health workers and supervisors. The team convenes to brainstorm and discuss challenging cases, and help each other with referrals and recommendations.

**Partnership with Oakland Police Department is evolving.** Clinical staff describe their relationship with the Oakland Police Department (OPD) as improving over the last few years. Officers will send referrals to the providers, and have also provided increased security at one of the sites. One clinician reports that she has presented at Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council meetings to discuss the impact that exposure to violence has on the brain.

### **Program Challenges**

#### **Lack of Resources**

**Clinical staff report challenges with shortages of resources, referrals for older siblings and children with multiple issues.** In addition to therapeutic interventions, staff describe their difficulty getting clients into emergency shelters, access to food banks, back on Medi-Cal, help with legal issues, as well as assistance following up with IEPs and other school referrals. One of the most critical challenges is related to families who have moved out of the area for safety reasons, and they need housing, both transitional and permanent. Getting a family to a safe location is a huge task – and then securing employment,



childcare, schools and transportation for them. Staff observe that there is a small window of time to work with them, and get them set up out of harm's way. Further, clinicians struggle with where to send the older siblings of children they are working with, as they won't qualify for services if they are older than five. Staff also report that they are receiving increasing numbers of referrals for children with multiple issues – not just mental health, but developmental delays such as delays with language. This places additional burdens on staff to locate and rely on resources that are difficult to obtain. Staff observed, "We could use a whole other day at the site to do the kinds of work that needs to be done."

### **Facilities Hinder FuH Provision of Services**

**Issues related to hours of operation and low security reduce the level of services offered.** Clinicians report that the fact that their offices close at 5pm precludes their ability to reach and serve a number of existing and potential families. For the many individuals who work and cannot get to providers until later in the evening, they are unable to access services. Clinicians requested that the clinics consider evening or weekend hours. Additionally, staff relay that there is not adequate security for many of the families they work with – especially in circumstances of domestic violence. The waiting area is open and there are no security guards to protect clients in the event of a violent attack.

### **Caregiver Resistance**

**Clinical staff describe a wide range of caregiver resistance that can hinder the provision of therapeutic interventions.** Sometimes parents agree to work with clinicians but do not fully understand what parent-child work is – and when they get it, they take a step back and do not want to participate. Other challenges include working with families where there is domestic violence because the recidivism is so difficult to overcome. When there are undocumented clients, there is the fear of deportation that impedes service delivery. And more generally, parents are fearful of being reported to child protective services and child custody issues, which leads to trouble establishing trust and engaging in services.

Another source of resistance is found in the stigma associated with seeking mental health interventions. Clinicians report that they try to expand their approach so that they are able to maximize the number of families they engage, but that the challenge of the stigma is extremely prevalent.

### **Collaboration across Oakland Unite Partners could be Strengthened**

**Providers reported low partnership with other Oakland Unite grantees.** Moving forward, it may be beneficial to providers within this strategy to work with DHS to develop a better understanding of other Measure Y-funded grantees, so that the resources can be more strategically leveraged. Outside of other organizations providing similar services, clinical staff reported that they were not aware of which providers were recipients of Measure Y dollars and which were not.



## Reentry Employment

### Program Overview

The Reentry Employment strategy is made up of six programs that provide employment training and subsidized employment to adults who are on probation or parole. Three of these programs – the Oakland Private Industry Council, Men of Valor Academy, and Volunteers of America Bay Area – work with individuals aged 18-35, while the other three programs – Youth Employment Partnership, Youth UpRising, and Civicorps – work with individuals aged 18-24. Although these programs vary somewhat in their specific target populations and formats, all provide a combination of case management, education, job readiness training, and subsidized employment over a period of three-to-six months, as well as job placement and retention support services longer term. This service array is designed to help probationers and parolees meet the many challenges they face in obtaining sustained employment, including low literacy levels and educational attainment, limited work histories, and little experience with the soft skills necessary to find a job.

### Key Takeaways

- Programs go above and beyond to help address the myriad needs of their clients, providing extensive emotional support along with job training and experience.
- Education and work experience give participants an opportunity to feel believe in themselves.
- Despite their hard work, the programs struggle to help clients overcome the many challenges that draw them back into their old lives.
- Lack of stable housing and childcare makes it hard for clients to focus on employment.

### Evidence Based Practices

Executive Directors and Program Managers of Reentry Employment programs describe substantial use of EBPs. Reentry Employment programs make use of assessment tools, involve clients' families in case planning, and revisit case plans as clients make progress. In addition, case managers take a holistic approach, liaising with probation officers and referring clients to other programs for complementary services. Among program staff, EBPs are promoted via ongoing professional development on both weekly and occasional bases. Multiple programs are working towards increasing the focus on EBPs in new staff training. In client services, at least one program has integrated cognitive behavioral interventions and mental health diagnoses into its offerings. Another program provides supportive work experience within the program before out-placing clients to employment. Reentry Employment programs also report challenges as they implement EBPs. These include convincing staff to adopt new techniques; growing younger counselors; establishing and maintaining a learning community external to the organization; and balancing special circumstances with standardized approaches. The Reentry Employment programs are on a clear path to strengthening EBP implementation and should continue their efforts.



## Program Strengths

### Building Hard Skills and Soft Skills

The clients who are served by the Reentry Employment programs enter the programs facing a wide variety of problems related not only to employment, but to almost all other areas of their lives as well.

**Employment-related skills: Programs work with clients to help them gain both the hard skills and the soft skills they need to find and maintain employment.** All Reentry Employment programs pointed out that clients enter their programs totally unprepared to find or keep a job. Few clients have GEDs or high school diplomas and many struggle with basic literacy and math skills. As one provider explained, “They need education, skills. Some cannot write a sentence properly.” Many also lack meaningful employment histories and, even clients who have held jobs in the past have often done so under the table, so they still have “gaps in their work history or lack of a documented work history, lack of documented, transferrable skill sets.”

Because of their limited education and employment experience, the vast majority of participants lack the basic soft skills necessary to obtain and maintain gainful employment. Describing participants’ challenges, one provider provided a laundry list of the soft skills that clients lack upon program enrollment: “Communication is the biggest one. The ability to understand and set boundaries. Knowing where to be and when to be there. Code switching – not understanding how to behave in a professional manner, how to code switch. Dress – not knowing what to wear and not having it.”

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*“I learned how to respect others, like greeting people. I can also say that this program helped me with my references, my cover letter, that sort of thing. Now I can fill out a whole job application. It bettered me for a lot of things.”*

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Reentry Employment programs help clients gain the soft and hard skills they need to be successfully employed through a combination of educational support, soft-skills training, and subsidized employment. One client emphasized the educational support he received, noting, “They helped me with a program called Second Start – I have a reading disability and they helped me a lot. When I first started YEP, I was reading at a fifth grade level and now I’m reading at a 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade level. YEP gave me the biggest hug ever. I came a long way with YEP.”

A number of other clients highlighted the importance of learning how to find a job and how to act at work on a daily basis.

- *“They were putting people back into the routine of getting up in the morning, utilizing your time, taking advantage of the opportunities in front of you. It really tries to put people back in motion and get people mobile with their time.”*
- *“I had a supervisor for a year or year and a half. It was up and down with him. But when it’s all said and done I have to give him the respect. He taught me a lot about my attitude, my*



*participation, my punctuality, respect. He made me the worker I am today. He didn't take no stuff. He didn't let me run all over him. He had an attitude but he held his ground so it made me sit back and think about needing to listen to him."*

### Going Above and Beyond

**In addition to working with clients to help them develop the job-related skills and employment, Reentry Employment programs go above and beyond, working with clients to address the multiplicity of issues that are affecting them.** This includes getting clients bus passes so they have transportation to work, accompanying them to various government agencies to help them fill out forms and apply for entitlement benefits, helping clients obtain ID cards and other documentation necessary for employment, and more. One of the providers described supporting a client who was having a hard time staying out of trouble. "We had a female client, 22, started program she was in the training – she's training to be a cosmetologist. Then she got arrested again and was in jail for 22 days. I called her every day. Finally, I left a message saying, 'I will stand on your doorstep until you come out.' She hadn't told the school or me that she had been remanded to custody. She finally called, left message and came in. I worked with school to reaccept her into training. I was able to help her stay on track and continue."

More than anything, however, clients talked about the importance of the emotional support from program staff. For many of the individuals participating in these programs, the level of commitment and dedication that these programs and program staff demonstrate is a new experience and an inspiring one.

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*"I mean for me, family is a big part of things. Growing up, I didn't have my mom, my pops and I turned to the streets. When I saw that that they wasn't there for me, I went to this program and they filled that family void for me that wasn't there."*

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- *"They saw something in my heart. They keep you off the streets, keep you out of drama. They help you stay in school, help put money in your pockets so you're not relying on other families, and to stay out of trouble. It really changed my life. When I was 24 I had an attitude problem. I always thought I knew everything. But once I sat myself down and looked in the mirror I knew I needed help and they helped me."*
- *"When I started the program, I just lost my brother. I really wanted to keep that of my mind. I sat down with my counselor and told him I was thinking negative after this happened. He sat down and told me to take one day at a time and don't put too much pressure on yourself. He told me that I have a beautiful heart and said he saw more in me than being on the streets. He motivated me. Like in my teenage years, I was always the follower, never the leader. Once he told me that I could be a leader and do my own thing, that was a 'smell the coffee' type of moment."*



## Clients Learn to Believe in Themselves

By giving participants the skills, experience, and emotional support they need to excel, the Reentry Employment programs show participants that they can be successful and help them believe in themselves. The majority of the individuals who participate in the Reentry Employment programs enter these programs with little faith in their own ability to succeed. Most have dropped out of school, been in and out of the justice system, and held few legitimate jobs, if any. When they first enroll in Oakland Unite Reentry Employment programs, most doubt their own ability to succeed in a traditional work environment. "Our biggest challenge is getting the clients to not question themselves so much in their changing culture. We have a model of who you are and who you want to be, and they may be in conflict. The biggest challenge is to get them to focus on the future and not focus on their previous failures." By giving clients the opportunity to be successful, these programs instill a newfound sense of confidence, which leads clients to believe that they can achieve more with their lives.

- *"I had family who loved me but I didn't believe they that believed in me: It was really up to me to push the issue for myself because my family don't push me the way that the people in this program do. They made me feel confident. Wow, I'm getting emotional right now. This program really did save our lives. I can say that. I wouldn't be where I'm at right now without it."*
- *"I go to court next month; the judge told me back in January that the only way to drop my case is to show him my high school diploma. I can't wait for that date now to show him that diploma. It will feel great. It's making me stronger."*

## Program Challenges

### Hard to Address Clients' Myriad Needs

Despite programs' commitment to helping clients address challenges in employment and in virtually all other areas of their lives, the totality of these clients' needs can ultimately make it difficult for them to succeed. For many clients, the pull of their previous lives is hard to resist, especially when they return to environments that do not support their new aspirations. "We are a positive environment with only 8 hours of helping and the other 16 hours may work against what our clients are working towards. Coping and leaving the negative life is a challenge and the pull toward the negative is stronger. We are a safe environment, and people come from all over, but we've had our share of losses to violence." The long path to a different life and the many roadblocks along the way can become discouraging for clients, who may ultimately decide that it is not worth it. "Getting a job is not going to solve all their problems. They have debt or child support obligations or they have to pay fines and restitutions. This hard work will not pay off until they have satisfied their past obligations to family or to the courts. It's hard to get them to feel good. Their need to feel good can sway behavior. They want to go have fun with their peers and this can cause problems. They are influenced by negative messages: 'Just enjoy life, you only live once.'" The relatively low \$8 hourly wage paid by most of the Reentry Employment programs exacerbates these issues. "It's hard to keep our program being competitive and keep clients engaged for \$8 an hour when they have other means of making quicker money."



As Oakland Unite programs have transitioned to target increasingly high-risk clients, these challenges have grown. These high-risk clients tend to have less job experience and lower educational attainment, and for some clients, “experience levels are so low, it’s very hard to give them on-the-job skills. We need more employment sponsors to step up to the plate and offer them a chance on the job. Need real employers to allow us to groom them.” Clients with violent histories tend to have problems with anger management that create issues on the job and in their lives more generally.

### **Limited Resources for Other Needs, Especially Housing and Childcare**

**There are limited resources to help clients meet basic needs, especially housing and childcare.** For clients with felony convictions and extremely limited financial resources, finding housing is a major challenge. Shelters and transitional housing are limited and many require participants to be involved in treatment programs that would interfere with their Oakland Unite employment programs. Although one of the Reentry Employment providers has 50 units of transitional housing on-site, the rest struggle to help participants find safe, stable places to live. “Housing is the number one need. Not just in the physical needs aspect – so many have unstable home situations that are unhealthy. They are constantly on the verge of being evicted, which makes it hard for them to focus.”

Finding stable, affordable childcare is also a critical need for program participants, and the absence of which can significantly limit their ability to continue program participation and employment. “Childcare [is a major need]. If childcare is not arranged, it affects attendance and program participation. Childcare Links is a program, Bananas is a resource, but waiting lists and cost are still issues.” Unable to find affordable childcare, many clients rely on family members, which can lead to family tensions that still impact participants’ ability to remain involved in the programs: “Informal childcare arrangements can break down. Grandparents might be too busy to provide regular childcare. Families with complicated situations can cause problems. Expectations of family members can get in the way. ‘I’ve gotta do something, so you can’t go to work or school.’”





## Youth Employment

### Overview

The Youth Employment strategy is comprised of four programs that provide job skills training and subsidized employment to juvenile justice-involved youth over the summer and after school. The four programs in the strategy – The Unity Council, Youth Employment Partnership, Youth Radio, and Youth UpRising – differ in terms of the particular job opportunities that they provide to youth, but all have a similar service delivery model, providing extensive soft skills training, on-the-job experience, and additional counseling and case management support to help youth gain job skills and experience; expose them to different career opportunities, and support them through challenges with work, school, and home. All of these activities are ultimately oriented towards exposing justice-involved youth to opportunities for positive growth and development and preventing further involvement in the justice system.

### Key Takeaways

- Programs in the Youth Employment strategy provide strength-based skill development and on-the-job training to help youth develop the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.
- Job success helps youth build self-confidence that helps them succeed in other arenas.
- These programs are among the only positive activities for youth in poor neighborhoods.
- Counselors are positive role models who help youth navigate non-employment related issues, including issues at home and at school.
- Concerns over youth safety limit programs' hours of operation and ability to place youth in jobs outside their neighborhoods.
- There are insufficient resources to help youth enroll in anger management classes and obtain work-appropriate attire and transportation support.

### Evidence Based Practices

Youth Employment organizations are learning how to integrate EBPs into their programs. Most Program Managers report requiring EBP use and providing ongoing staff training to varying degrees. All organizations use an assessment tool, which is sometimes validated, for client intake. Most also conduct client and family interviews during their assessment and case management planning, as well as collaborating with relevant partner organizations and periodically evaluating the client's progress and case management plan. Youth Employment organizations identified room for organizational improvement in the areas of staff retention and capacity; creating a way to share learning across organizations similar to their own; and adapting known EBPs to local circumstances. Youth Employment organizations should continue to incorporate EBPs into their services since some remain in the early stages of EBP adoption.



## Program Strengths

### Strength-Based Skill Development

The Youth Employment strategy's combination of job skills training and supported job experience gives youth the full spectrum of skills necessary for finding and maintaining a job, including soft skills, such as time management, professional behavior and attire, and resume development, as well as "hard skills" and job competencies. Through this process, young people – many of whom have more experience with failure than with success – have the opportunity to learn about their own strengths and find situations in which they excel. Moreover, youth who live in high-crime neighborhoods with few avenues for positive social engagement have a set of structured summer and after school activities that help them stay busy without getting into trouble.

**Program staff and participants both identify soft skills development as one of the most critical components of the Youth Employment programs.** Most youth enter the Youth Employment programs with no job experience and many also have few professional adult role models in their lives. Consequently, youth begin the programs with little understanding of the types of skills, materials, and self-presentation required to obtain and keep a job. In addition to the fact that participants do not know how to obtain work permits, develop resumes, or search for jobs, all four Youth Employment program providers noted that one of the biggest challenges their participants face is understanding how to present themselves in a professional manner, including how to communicate, dress, and manage time appropriately.

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*"I had never worked in a real job. I learned about job etiquette, logistics. I learned how to find a job, how to approach the job listing that I really like. They also teach you about what to do at your job and what not to do. They taught us how to look for a job, how to get it, and how to stay in it. And resumes, which is part of how to get the job."*

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Through their job skill training workshops as well as through one-on-one counseling and coaching, providers work with participants to help them understand and practice their professional communication and self-presentation; after a few months, the youth are proud of their ability to act like professional adults. Several male participants commented that they learned how to act and look like grown men, while participants of both genders talked about learning how to communicate effectively with adults. As one youth participant who worked at a youth center said, "I learned how to act in the workplace. It was kinda weird because I don't usually act like that. How to dress at the workplace, writing emails that sounds professional." Summing up her experience in the program, another participant explained, "I had never worked in a real job. I learned about job etiquette, logistics. I learned how to find a job, how to approach the job listing that I really like. They also teach you about what to do at your job and what not to do. That taught us how to look for a job, how to get it, and how to stay in it. And resumes, which is part of how to get the job."



**Helping Youth Find Ways to Excel:**

**Youth gain self-confidence through their success in professional environments.** In addition to giving youth tools to help them succeed in the workplace, the skill development and professional exposure that the Youth Employment programs lead to greater self-confidence by giving young people the opportunity to demonstrate skills that they did not know they had. One participant explained, “For my internship, I was an outreach coordinator. I had to call 81 foster youth to get into the program. I found out that I have good interpersonal skills!” Another young man explained, “It’s like the program will help you in skills, how you can be – not to be shy, how to communicate with others. You feel good. And you’re helping people out.”

Moreover, the self-confidence youth develop through these programs has a positive effect on other areas of their lives. As one of the providers explained, “When they first come to us, they don’t have a driver’s license, so we get them to go to DMV, get a printout, apply for a license. When they realize that they can do these things, they become more willing to deal with other issues that they’ve been avoiding. That ties into their confidence as well. When they see that they can do something, they become more willing to do it.”

**Positive Afterschool and Summer Activities:**

**The Youth Employment strategy helps youth avoid further justice system involvement by giving them positive structured activities after school and over the summer.** Participants repeatedly talked about the dearth of positive activities for youth in their neighborhoods and the consequent ease with which young people get into trouble. Describing his neighborhood, one participant explained, “Most people are into stealing and robbing cars, tagging, gang banging – all these problems that kids get into since there’s nothing else to do.” He followed this comment up to explain that the Youth Employment program helped him avoid this kind of trouble. “Instead of getting high, it gave us somewhere to be as opposed to making trouble on the streets. The program is actually productive. You gain job skills and friendships.” Other participants concurred, noting, “This program does good things. It helps keep people on the right path,” and “it helps keep us productive, it helps keep us busy so we don't get in trouble.”

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*“Instead of getting high, it gave us somewhere to be as opposed to making trouble on the streets. The program is actually productive. You gain job skills and friendships.”*

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**Positive Relationships with Caring Adults**

**Youth develop strong relationships with their counselors, who serve as positive role models and help youth navigate personal and social issues.** In addition to extolling the skills they learn through their job skills training and work experience, young people also continually spoke about their relationships with their counselors, many of whom went out of their way to help the youth deal with issues with family, school, friends, and more. One youth explained, “After school, I had no place to go. My supervisor and I





connect – we have like the same brainwaves. We would have really good conversations, and she gave me advice about my home life. I was able to be more open to people and more open and social in talking with them.” Other youth commented that in an environment in which few adults really believed in them, they always knew that their counselors did. “You never hear about people shooting here. It’s because they believe in people. A lot of people, their parents don’t, but here, they be like a parent.”

## Program Challenges

### Ensuring Participant Safety

Several program providers noted that the dangerous realities of the neighborhoods they serve actually acts as a barrier to working youth. Safety issues impact the Youth Employment programs and their client in a number of ways. One of the primary issues programs have is limited options for job placement because of safety concerns; many youth do not feel safe traveling outside their own neighborhoods, which means that programs can only place youth in jobs that are very close to home. In neighborhoods with high levels of economic disinvestment, this is a major limitation to the types of opportunities youth are exposed to. One of the programs also had to adjust its afterschool internship program schedule when parents expressed concerns that their children would not be safe if they were not home before dark. Finally, the programs noted that the lack of safety fundamentally structures everything that they do. “Safety is a huge concern. We learned a long time ago, you can give all the support you want from 8am to 7pm but once 7pm hits, they’re on their own. You just hope that they’ll be safe, make safe choices, wise decisions.”

### Limited Resources

Providers in the Youth Employment strategy noted that limited resources constrain their ability to support their participants. Limited resources both within the programs and within the City of Oakland more generally impact the programs in a variety of ways. Several providers pointed to the lack of youth-oriented anger management programs as a challenge for youth who need more extensive behavioral support than the programs can provide internally. Other resource related issues include a lack of funds to help youth with transportation costs and a lack of resources for finding work-appropriate attire for youth. One provider noted with frustration, “With dress, we’ve tried all the programs – Wardrobe for Opportunity, everything – they haven’t worked. None of that is an appropriate link to our kids. One of the services that provides clothes requires them to participate in their program – you have to come four times, then you get a suit. Our kids need 4 button-down shirts and 2 pairs of pants, all not dry cleanable. There are so many services out there that are designed for dislocated workers but they don’t have the same needs as our kids. There’s a sense that there are all these services out there but they’re not appropriate for our kids.”



## Project Choice

### Overview

The Project Choice strategy is made up of two programs that work with incarcerated Oakland residents to help them transition from custody back into the community. The Mentoring Center's (TMC) Project Choice program works with juveniles who are coming out of the State's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), while Volunteers of America's (VOA) Project Choice program works with adults being released from San Quentin State Prison. Both programs offer a continuum of support services beginning with pre-release transition planning through post-release coordination of supportive services and participant monitoring, and include intensive case management, housing and employment assistance, and mentoring services.

### Key Takeaways

- Project Choice prepares participants to successfully transition from custody back into the community by engaging them prior to their release and supporting them throughout their transition into the community.
- Project Choice provides wraparound social supports, mentorship, and positive behavioral reinforcement that helps participants think critically about their lives life choices.
- Project Choice recruits staff with their own histories of incarceration and recovery that legitimates their mentorship and role modeling.
- Some of the key challenges Project Choice faces are ensuring participants' physical safety, securing sufficient housing for all participants in need, and obtaining adequate substance use and mental health services for participants.

### Evidence Based Practices

The Project Choice program model, whereby reentry planning and case management services begin during incarceration and continue through release, is itself an evidence-based practice (EBP) that has been shown to reduce recidivism among both juveniles and adults. In addition to implementing this evidence-based program, the programs in the Project Choice strategy are dedicated to using EBPs in a variety of other ways. Both Executive Directors and Project Managers promote EBPs with their staff, including using validated intake and case management planning tools and employing cognitive behavioral modification methods. In both programs, families are involved in client intake and case management to the extent staff deems reasonable. To gauge the success of the EBPs, the programs look at their overall program outcomes, such as whether their clients are avoiding jail and attending school.

### Program Strengths

#### Linking Clients to Services Prior to Release

**Project Choice engages parolees in transition planning prior to their release and better prepares them for successful reentry by establishing housing and employment for the client.** Project Choice coordinates with San Quentin and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to identify and recruit



inmates from Oakland before they are released. While recruits are still in custody, Project Choice orients them to the program's services and supports in-person, as well as to assess their needs. Project Choice staff help the client to develop a transition plan that includes pick-up from San Quentin or DJJ, transitional housing arrangements, potential employment opportunities, and school enrollment for once they are released. Prior to release, Project Choice staff begin the process to secure housing, employment, and school financial aid for the client, significantly increasing the potential success of reentry upon release.

During focus groups with Project Choice clients, they mentioned how housing and employment were essential to their own rehabilitation, stability, and self-sufficiency. For the majority of adult participants, stable housing "settles them and makes them feel "more clear." Participants have concerns about "falling into old patterns and housing can help them relax some." Clients enthusiastically recalled the moments when they got their first apartments, the increase in self-confidence they felt, and how they felt like "regular productive" citizens once they got the keys in their hands. Overall, housing has both helped to meet the material needs of participants and contribute to their overall sense of wellbeing and self-esteem.

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*"If I weren't in Project choice, I wouldn't know the way to deal with myself better. I wouldn't know how to deal with people better. I'd still be struggling with that. I would have been struggling with housing and employment."*

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Similarly, employment plays a significant role in successful reentry as well. During the Project Choice focus group, many participants noted that most of their criminal activity was financially motivated. Finding them jobs in itself acts as a crime deterrent because it prevents participants from seeking income illegally. For youth clients, finding the financial resources to pay for classes or to help offset the cost of attending school when they could be working was essential. Project Choice has seen how sustained financial stability can help participants change their lives around for the better. One participant was recently promoted to Assistant Manager at Goodwill and has remained out of prison for three years, and while another has stayed out of prison for over year and works at Costco by commuting there with his mother. Project Choice staff and participants all agree that finding participants housing and jobs leads to remarkable success in the reentry process.

- *"Project Choice helped me plan, like was I gonna go to school or was I gonna find a job? So I went to Laney College for a year ... Got a summer program job through Project Choice and found a transitional home."*

In addition to logistically supporting clients' transition into the community, Project Choice helps clients mentally prepare for reentry. Clients are provided with resources on conflict resolution, building relationships, and increasing self-awareness. One participant discussed the transition back into the community as being as difficult mentally as it is logistically, "Everything is different. New stores and



places I wasn't familiar with... I wasn't comfortable. And Project Choice staff just talked to me, calmed me down."

### **Reinforces Incremental Behavior Change**

**Project Choice's approach to reinforcing incremental behavior change sustains participant engagement in the program.** Project Choice staff emphasize the importance of meeting participants "where they are at" and rewarding even the smallest positive behavior change. By reinforcing positive behavior change incrementally, participants can focus on more tangible and immediate goals upon reentry, helping to keep them engaged in the program. Project Choice look for opportunities to reinforce gains in self-awareness, wanting to know how to do better in the program, and increasing positive relationships with families, siblings, and significant others. Reinforcing incremental behavior change also creates more opportunities for success that impacts participants' willingness to make a sustained commitment to Project Choice. One Project Choice staff explains, "Our definition of success is not what middle class people define as success – it's heartbreaking because our clients aren't there yet... We balance expectations between being too high and being so low that we could do a disservice."

### **Fosters New and Different Ways of Thinking**

**Project Choice mentoring and anger management programs teach participants how to think through their actions and make positive choices.** For youth participants, Project Choice reinforces new and different ways to think about self-behavior management and interpersonal relationships. Youth participants said Project Choice's approach to anger management helps them to think more seriously and concretely about their responsibilities and reactions to life events. Project Choice mentors help to reinforce critical thinking skills in youth that lead to better forward thinking about the consequences of their choices and actions. Youth participants shared how being able to change their own behavior and to think critically has positively impacted their relationships with family and friends, and their agency to

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*"I got a life out of this program. If it wasn't for Project Choice, I'd be dead or in jail. I was on the streets. I had to hustle... This is my second chance."*

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take ownership over their actions. One youth participant said, "Everything is about critical thinking. My mentor will ask me, "What happened this week?" But it's critical thinking [to consider] not just 'what happened' but, 'what else could have happened? How it could have turned better or worse?'"

### **Creates a Culturally Relevant Experience**

**Project Choice staff create a culturally relevant experience for participants through mentoring that gives participants more hope for successful reentry.** Project Choice recruits staff who reflect the backgrounds of their clients and the diversity of their clients' incarceration or recovery experiences, giving staff the legitimacy to serve as positive role models to participants. Project Choice staff mentor participants throughout the reentry process and establish relationships with participants that inspires



hope and motivation needed for success in the program. Participants discussed the importance of having staff with backgrounds and experiences that are similar to their own. Creating a more culturally relevant experience for Project Choice participants validates their struggles to achieve a better life because they see staff who can talk about having had to overcome similar barriers in their life. “They helped me help myself. From there, I was able to go to meetings and start talking about my issues. They talked about stuff I could relate to. It was having real counselors who’ve been in the same situations... that gave me the motivation to benefit from the program.”

Youth participants were appreciative of the unconditional social support from Project Choice staff. Many participants discussed the lack of father figures or role models they could trust, “If you don’t have a father figure, you can’t just trust anyone, but you can trust people at Project Choice.” For youth without family support, Project Choice staff help by just listening to participants’ stories and allowing participants to talk out loud about their feelings. Other participants felt that their Project Choice mentors put structure around their interactions, which was useful to understanding respect and personal boundaries, and showed participants that staff understood where the participant was coming from. One participant said, “When it was time for me to come home, my mentor let me know it wasn’t going to be all easy. I had to put my mind to it for things to work out. That put me in my place.” Other participants echoed how important it was for Project Choice staff to ‘meet them where they’re at’ and

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*“Them being there is the main thing. Most people in Oakland nowadays don’t have anything, especially a father figure. It’s basically a part of life that most people don’t really have.”*

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act as a support system. In addition, Project Choice staff advocate for youth at parole board meetings and support them through the parole process, “When I first got denied, I was very upset but my Project Choice mentor helped me figure out how to deal with it. If it wasn’t for him, I’d probably be in DJJ longer.” Project Choice staff provide unconditional social support and stability that helps to emotionally ground and strengthen participants through the reentry process.

## Program Challenges

### Ensuring Participant Safety in the Community

**Decreasing resources for stable housing is a threat to participant safety and rehabilitation.** Although Project Choice staff provide as much support as time and resources allow, there are still risks to a participant’s safety when he or she reenters the same community where he/she became criminally involved. Both Project Choice staff and participants explained that the systemic violence and criminal activity in some neighborhoods increases the likelihood of running into a former acquaintance or gang-member who may be antagonistic to a participant. “Safety is an issue in that many of these guys have had ‘beef on the street.’ They don’t always know where they’ll end up. Guys are afraid to get out because of safety on the street. We have to mitigate that.” Project Choice staff use the time prior to the participant’s release to secure housing in a neighborhood that would ideally be a safe distance away





from those areas that may be unsafe to the participant, but with limited resources, they are not always able to do so. "Housing is an issue: The way we are funded, we have limited funds... to help with first month's rent or even give families a bus pass." As participants are forced into living in communities that are unsafe, they become at greater risk to recidivating back into prison.

### **Poor Coordination and Collaboration within Criminal Justice Settings**

**Project Choice staff in the adult program identify a lack of coordination and communication between parole, probation, and other partners while outreaching to prisoners and arranging for their release as a challenge to engaging participants in Project Choice.** Project Choice staff say that the lack of information sharing, including face sheets that has demographic information and a picture of a potential participant, prevents them from outreaching to inmates to increase program enrollment. Historically, Project Choice staff have not had difficulty obtaining face sheets from parole, but due to changing policies or a reluctance due to security concerns, "Parole Officers are not always comfortable giving out face sheets" as they used to be. Complicating the relationship between Project Choice and prison staff is how AB 109 is changing the designation of inmates to be released on probation rather than parole and Project Choice's contract language that outlines who the program can reach out to. Project Choice staff are optimistic that their relationship to the prison is working out more smoothly, but are still concerned that the lack of communication and collaboration between jail staff can complicate program participation for inmates who qualify for transition planning prior to their release.

### **Lack of Substance Use Treatment Services**

**Project Choice staff and participants identify a lack of substance use treatment resources as a barrier to achieving successful reentry after release from prison.** Project Choice staff have some resources to address substance use including relapse prevention curricula and support groups. However, for those with more pervasive substance use issues, finding the treatment resources is challenging. Project Choice staff also note that there is not a lot of support for addressing marijuana use; which can be a barrier to employment and maintaining commitment to change. "The ones who can't get the basic necessities can fall off track. Substance abuse treatment is critical because they can't think straight. If we get them stabilized, it helps."

### **Lack of Resources to Meet Basic Needs**

**Project Choice participants identify a lack of resources to meet their basic needs as a challenge to the reentry process.** Youth participants discussed the challenges of securing basic financial resources, especially to go to school. Some Project Choice staff use their own incomes to purchase items for participants. One participant discussed how a Project Choice mentor bought their glasses when they couldn't afford them. Adult Project Choice participants also discussed how their mentors used their own money to help purchase them clothes for interviews, or buy them food when they didn't have the money to go grocery shopping. Although participants show a deep appreciation to Project Choice staff for their sacrifices, additional resources for materials needs could make a big impact on the reentry process for participants.



## Program-level Recidivism Analysis

### Introduction

This section of this report presents additional program-level results on client juvenile justice involvement. For each client who matched to justice system data, the evaluation analyzed juvenile justice involvement for five years prior to Oakland Unite program enrollment and two years following program enrollment by tracking clients' arrests and delinquency adjudications during these time periods. The evaluation also tracked whether clients' offenses were violent or nonviolent, or if they were technical violations of probation or parole. Technical violations refer to incidents that violate the terms of an individual's supervision but would not otherwise be considered criminal; they are reported in Appendix B.

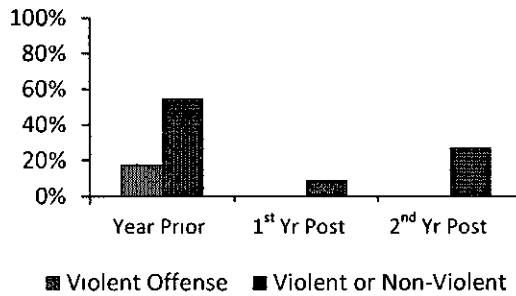
This table presents the percentage of clients who were arrested (in blue) and adjudicated delinquent (in orange) in the five years prior to program enrollment ("pre-program") and in the two years after enrollment ("post-program"). In the example table below, 63% of clients were arrested for violent offenses during the five preceding service start, whereas 16% of clients were arrested for the same offense type during the two years following service start.

	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	63% ↓	94% ↓	28% ↓	78% ↓
Post-Program	16% ↓	34% ↓	9% ↓	25% ↓

The arrest and adjudication tables also feature green and red arrows that serve to guide the interpretation of results. Green arrows indicate positive outcomes over time whereas red arrows indicate negative outcomes over time. For each offense type, a downward arrow is green as it marks a reduction in the proportion of clients arrested or convicted for that offense type.

Following the tables, graphs present pre- and post-enrollment offense data. The charts show violent offenses, and combined violent and nonviolent offenses, for the year prior to program enrollment and the two years following program enrollment. Unlike the tables, the two-year post-enrollment figure is not inclusive of the first post-enrollment year's data.

### Clients Arrested



The full results of our analysis of offenses appear in Appendix B. There, results are disaggregated by offense type, as well as for the cumulative five year period prior to program enrollment; one year prior to enrollment; one year after enrollment; two years after enrollment (non-cumulative); and the cumulative two-year post-enrollment period.



JJC/OUSD Wraparound

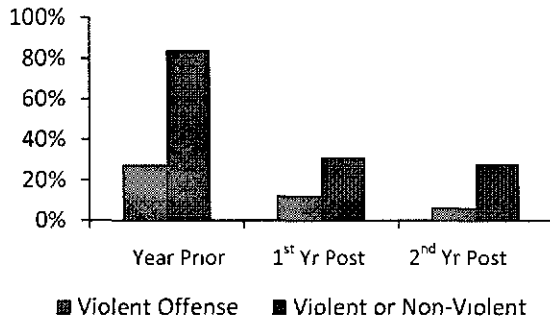
California Youth Outreach

- The number of clients arrested for any offense decreased by more than 50% following program enrollment, while the number of clients arrested for a violent offense decreased by more than two-thirds.
- The number of clients adjudicated delinquent for any offense decreased by more than 68% following program enrollment, while the number of clients adjudicated delinquent for a violent offense decreased by more than half.

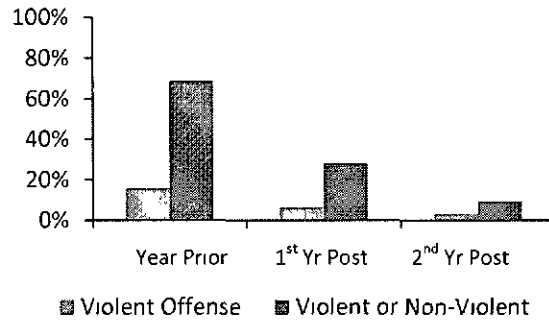
n=32

	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	72%	100%	22%	97%
Post-Program	19%	47%	9%	31%

Clients Arrested



Clients Adjudicated





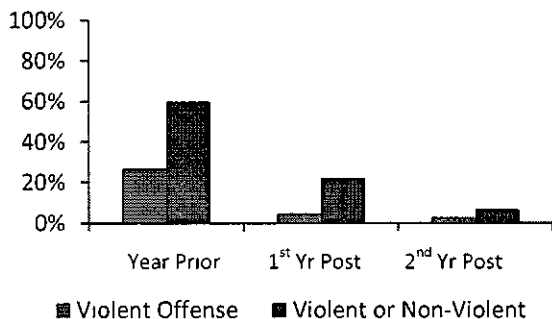
**East Bay Asian Youth Center**

- The number of clients arrested for any offense decreased by almost 75% following program enrollment, while the number of clients arrested for a violent offense decreased by more than 85%.
- The number of clients adjudicated delinquent for any offense decreased by more than 75% following program enrollment, while the number of clients adjudicated delinquent for a violent offense decreased by more than two-thirds.

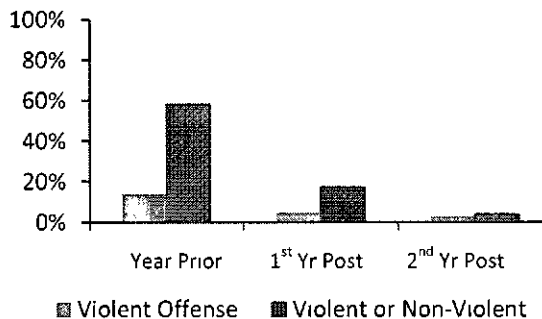
n=104

	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	59%	96%	24%	87%
Post-Program	8%	26%	8%	21%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**





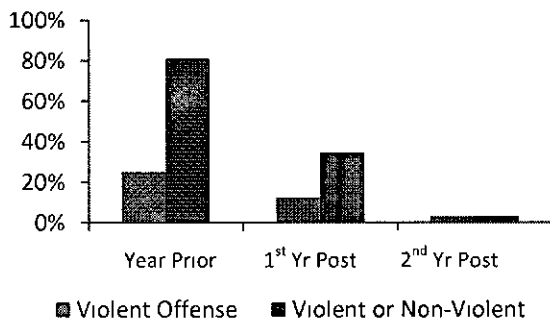
**The Mentoring Center**

- The number of clients arrested for any offense decreased by almost two-thirds following program enrollment, while the number of clients arrested for a violent offense decreased by almost three-fourths.
- While almost 80% of program participants were adjudicated delinquent prior to program enrollment, no clients were adjudicated delinquent for any offense in the second year after enrolling in the program.

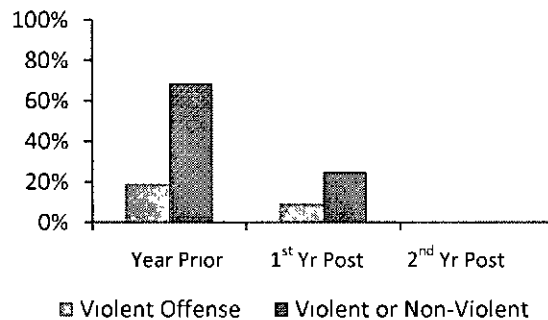
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	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	63%	94%	28%	78%
Post-Program	16%	34%	9%	25%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**





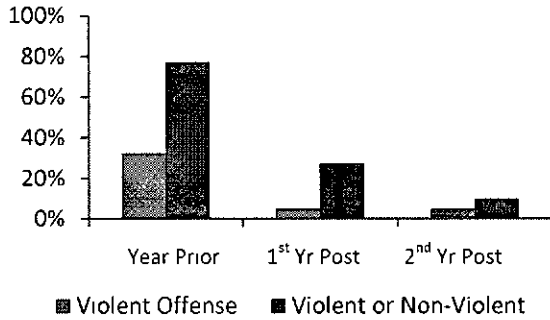
**Youth UpRising**

- Arrests for violent offenses declined from 65% of clients in the 5 years before program enrollment to 10% in the second year after.
- 70% of clients were adjudicated delinquent during the year prior to program enrollment; two years after enrollment only 13% were, a reduction of more than 80%

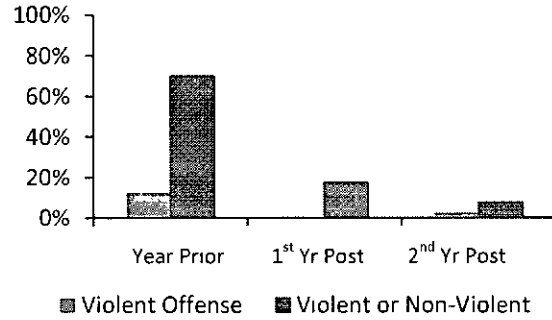
n=40

	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	65%	98%	33%	95%
Post-Program	10%	30%	3%	20%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**





## Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors

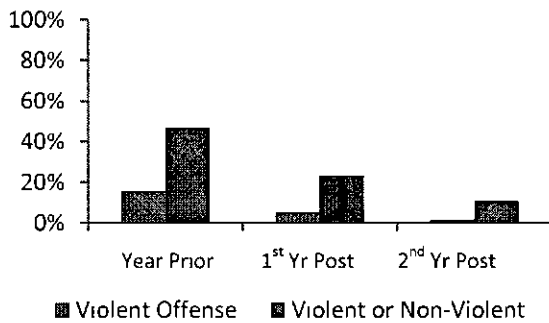
### Motivating, Inspiring, Serving, and Supporting Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY)

- Clients arrested for violent offenses declined from 44% in the 5 years before enrollment to 7% in the 2 years after.
- No clients were adjudicated delinquent for a violent offense in the second year after program enrollment.

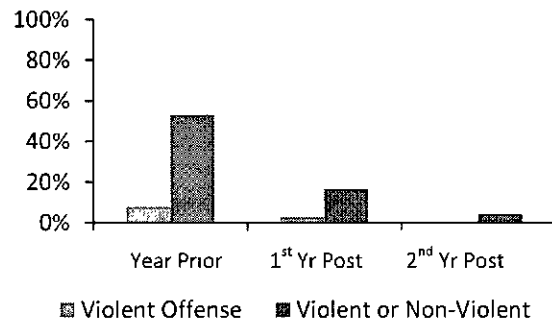
n=73

	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	44%	95%	22%	81%
Post-Program	7%	33%	3%	21%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**







## Youth Employment

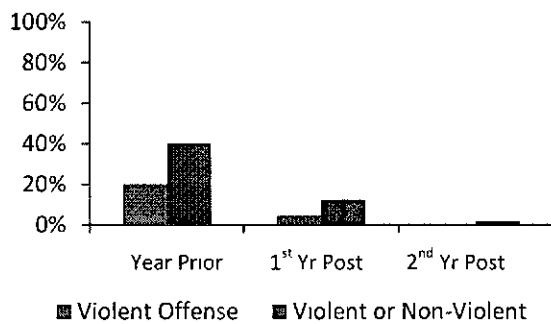
### Youth Employment Partnership, After School Employment

- Clients arrested or adjudicated for violent offenses declined more than 80% following program enrollment.
- No clients were adjudicated delinquent in the second year after enrolling in the program, in contrast to the 38% who were adjudicated in the year before enrolling.

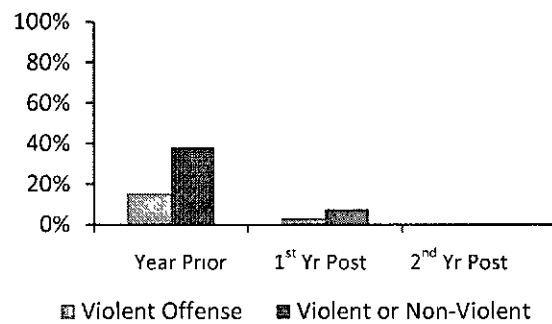
n=65

	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	28%	52%	23%	52%
Post-Program	5%	12%	3%	8%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**





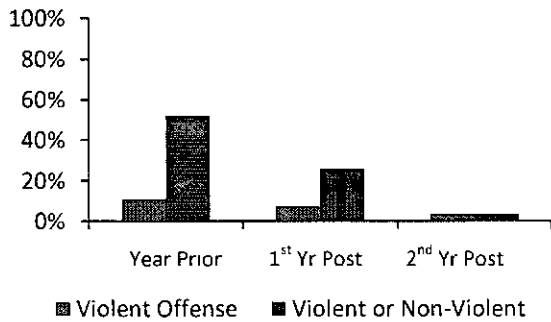
**Youth Employment Partnership, Summer Employment**

- Clients arrested for violent offenses declined from almost 75%, from 100% before enrollment to 26% after.
- Adjudications for violent crimes declined almost two-thirds, from 30% before enrollment to 11% after.

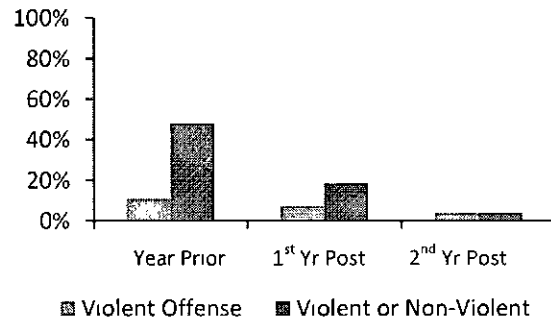
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	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	52%	100%	30%	78%
Post-Program	11%	26%	11%	22%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**





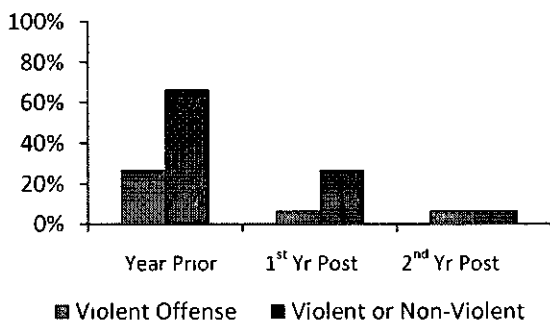
**Youth Radio, After School Employment**

- Arrests for violent or nonviolent offenses declined from 93% to 33% in the five years prior to enrollment to two years after.
- Over the same period, convictions declined from 87% to 20%.

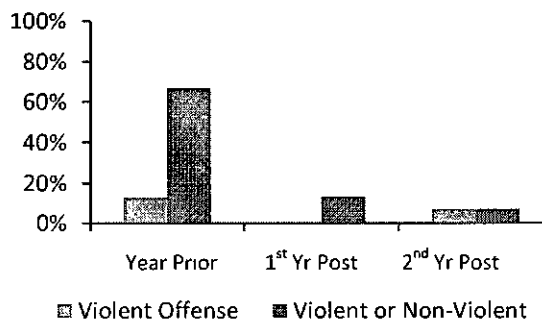
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	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	53%	93%	20%	87%
Post-Program	13%	33%	7%	20%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**





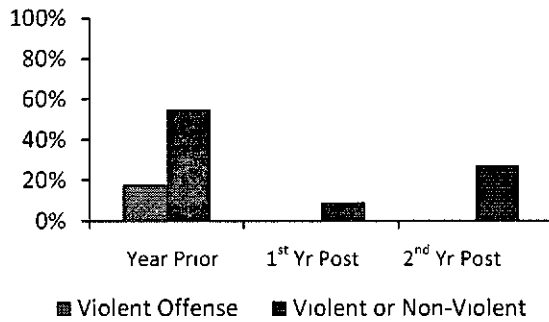
**Youth Radio, Summer Employment**

- No clients were arrested or adjudicated for a violent offense after enrolling in the program; in contrast, 55% were arrested and 45% were adjudicated for a delinquent offense prior to enrollment.
- Arrests and adjudications for violent or nonviolent offenses decreased by more than two thirds during the same period of time.

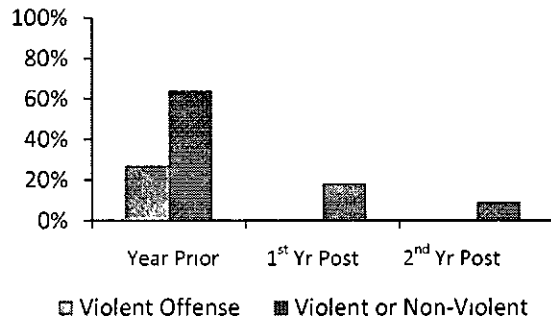
n=11

	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	55%	100%	45%	82%
Post-Program	0%	36%	0%	27%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**





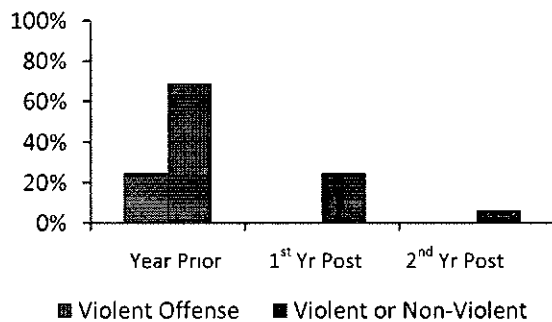
**Youth UpRising, Summer Employment**

- No clients were arrested or adjudicated for a violence offense after enrolling in the program; in contrast, 50% of clients were arrested for violent offenses before they enrolled and 31% were adjudicated delinquent.
- No clients were adjudicated delinquent two years after enrolling in the program; in contrast, more than two-thirds of clients were adjudicated delinquent in the year prior to enrolling and 19% were adjudicated during the first year after enrolling.

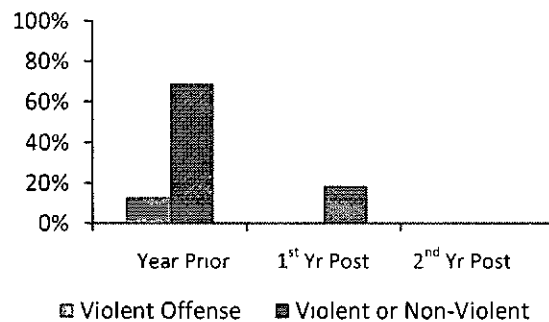
n=16

	Clients Arrested		Clients Adjudicated	
	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent	Violent Offense	Violent or Nonviolent
Pre-Program	50%	100%	31%	94%
Post-Program	0%	31%	0%	19%

**Clients Arrested**



**Clients Adjudicated**





## Appendix A: Strategy-Level Service Tables

The tables in this appendix present an overview of the services that were provided by each Oakland Unite Violence Prevention Strategy during the 2012-13 Fiscal Year, including the number of clients served, the total hours of services provided, and the type of service provided.

JIG/ OUSD Wraparound 2012-13	
Total Served	497
Total Individual hrs provided	13,552 hrs
Served more than 40 hrs	57%
Served more than 100 hrs	11%
Total Served in Group	211
Total Group Service <i>client</i> hrs provided	5,778 hrs
Total Group Service <i>session</i> hrs provided	881 hrs

Oakland Street Outreach 2012-13	
Case Management clients served	154
Case Management Served more than 20 hrs	45%
Intensive Outreach clients served	265
Total Individual hrs provided	4,541 hrs
Street Outreach Event Sessions	936
Street Outreach Participants	7,430
Conflicts Mediated	55

Crisis Response and Support Network 2012-13	
Total Served with Individual Services	326
Total Individual hrs provided	2,890 hrs
Total Victim Network Response Interventions	120
Crisis Response Participants	1,195
Crisis Response Participant hrs provided	2,881 hrs

Highland Hospital Intervention 2012-13	
Total Served with Individual Services	147
Total Individual hrs provided	1,375 hrs
Served more than 10 hrs	30%
Served more than 20 hrs	17%

Restorative Justice 2012-13	
Total Served in Group	291
Total Group Service <i>client</i> hrs provided	1,364 hrs
Total Group Service <i>session</i> hrs provided	289 hrs
Total Events (trainings & outreach)	35
Total Event Participants	1,365





Gang Prevention 2012-13	
Total Served in Group	105
Total Group Service <i>client</i> hrs provided	875 hrs
Total Group Service <i>session</i> hrs provided	65
Total Events (gang awareness training)	34
Total Event Participants	658

Our Kids/Our Families Middle School 2012-13	
Total Served with Individual Services	982
Total Individual hrs provided	12,671 hrs
Total Served in Group	299
Total Group Service <i>client</i> hrs provided	2,954 hrs

Family Violence Intervention Unit 2012-13	
Total Served with Individual Services	1,293
Total Individual hrs provided	2,677 hrs
Served 1+ hrs	44%
Served 5+ hrs	9%

Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors 2012-13	
Total Served	257
Total Individual hrs provided	1,770 hrs
Served more than 20 hrs	27%
Served more than 40 hrs	11%
Total Served in Group – Drop In Center	58
Total Group Service <i>client</i> hrs provided	4,202 hrs
Total Group Service <i>session</i> hrs provided	1,029

Mental Health Services for ages 0-5 2012-13	
Total Served	621
Total Served Individual Services	315
Total Individual hrs provided	1,817 hrs
Total: Classroom-based Services	306
Total Events (classroom sessions)	221

Reentry Employment 2012-13	
Total Served	245
Total Individual hrs provided	3,166 hrs
Total hrs Work Experience	32,218 hrs
Work Experience more than 40 hrs	46%
Work Experience more than 100 hrs	37%





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Total Served in Group – Soft Skills & Training	215
Total Group Service <i>client</i> hrs provided	32,552 hrs
Total Group Service <i>session</i> hrs provided	5,561 hrs

Youth Employment 2012-13	
Total Served	209
Total Individual hrs provided	2,785 hrs
Total hrs Work Experience	16,545 hrs
Work Experience more than 40 hrs	76%
Work Experience more than 100 hrs	42%
Total Served in Group	197
Total Group Service <i>client</i> hrs provided	16,911 hrs
Total Group Service <i>session</i> hrs provided	1,917 hrs

Project Choice 2012-13	
Total Served	165
Total Individual hrs provided	3,025 hrs
Served more than 20 hrs	35%
Served more than 40 hrs	15%
Total Served in Group	110
Total Group Service <i>client</i> hrs provided	3,197 hrs
Total Group Service <i>session</i> hrs provided	519 hrs







## Appendix B: Full Recidivism Results

### JJC/OUSD Wraparound

	Referred Offenses (Arrests)					Sustained Offenses				
	Violent	Nonviolent	Violent or nonviolent	Technical	No arrest	Violent	Nonviolent	Violent or nonviolent	Technical	No S.O.
<b>California Youth Outreach, n=32</b>										
Up to Pre5 <sup>13</sup>	72%	84%	100%	38%	0%	22%	81%	97%	25%	3%
Up to Pre1 <sup>14</sup>	28%	63%	84%	31%	6%	16%	53%	69%	22%	13%
Post1 <sup>15</sup>	13%	22%	31%	38%	56%	6%	22%	28%	38%	59%
Post2 <sup>16</sup>	6%	22%	28%	28%	53%	3%	6%	9%	13%	78%
Cum Post2 <sup>17</sup>	19%	38%	47%	44%	38%	9%	25%	31%	44%	50%
<b>EBAYC, n=104</b>										
Up to Pre5	59%	85%	96%	29%	4%	24%	71%	87%	20%	13%
Up to Pre1	27%	39%	60%	23%	27%	14%	43%	58%	14%	36%
Post1	5%	19%	22%	38%	56%	5%	13%	17%	18%	71%
Post2	3%	4%	7%	20%	75%	3%	1%	4%	4%	92%
Cum Post2	8%	23%	26%	41%	53%	8%	14%	21%	20%	67%
<b>The Mentoring Center, n=32</b>										
Up to Pre5	63%	84%	94%	16%	6%	28%	63%	78%	19%	22%
Up to Pre1	25%	56%	81%	13%	9%	19%	50%	69%	16%	22%
Post1	13%	22%	34%	25%	50%	9%	16%	25%	19%	59%
Post2	3%	0%	3%	13%	84%	0%	0%	0%	3%	97%
Cum Post2	16%	22%	34%	31%	44%	9%	16%	25%	22%	56%
<b>Youth Uprising, n=40</b>										
Up to Pre5	65%	93%	98%	45%	3%	33%	75%	95%	28%	5%
Up to Pre1	33%	63%	78%	40%	5%	13%	60%	70%	25%	18%
Post1	5%	23%	28%	48%	48%	0%	18%	18%	33%	60%
Post2	5%	5%	10%	25%	73%	3%	5%	8%	13%	88%
Cum Post2	10%	23%	30%	50%	43%	3%	18%	20%	33%	60%

<sup>13</sup> Up to 5 years before program enrollment.

<sup>14</sup> Up to 1 year before program enrollment.

<sup>15</sup> First year after program enrollment.

<sup>16</sup> Second year after program enrollment.

<sup>17</sup> Up to 2 years after program enrollment





### Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors

	Referred Offenses (Arrests)					Sustained Offenses					Sustained O
	Violent	Nonviolent	Violent or nonviolent	Technical	No arrest	Violent	Nonviolent	Violent or nonviolent	Technical	No S.O	
<b>MISSEY, n=73</b>											
Up to Pre5	44%	88%	95%	60%	5%	22%	67%	81%	40%	19%	
Up to Pre1	16%	37%	47%	45%	29%	8%	47%	53%	26%	38%	
Post1	5%	19%	23%	51%	41%	3%	15%	16%	37%	56%	
Post2	1%	11%	11%	18%	78%	0%	4%	4%	5%	92%	
Cum Post2	7%	30%	33%	55%	37%	3%	19%	21%	40%	52%	

### Youth Employment

	Referred Offenses (Arrests)					Sustained Offenses				
	Violent	Nonviolent	Violent or nonviolent	Technical	No arrest	Violent	Nonviolent	Violent or nonviolent	Technical	No S.O.
<b>Youth Employment Partnership (YEP), After School Employment, n=65</b>										
Up to Pre5	28%	32%	52%	14%	46%	23%	31%	52%	9%	46%
Up to Pre1	20%	23%	40%	12%	55%	15%	23%	38%	9%	57%
Post1	5%	8%	12%	18%	74%	3%	6%	8%	6%	88%
Post2	0%	2%	2%	3%	95%	0%	0	0%	2%	98%
Cum Post2	5%	9%	12%	18%	74%	3%	6%	8%	8%	86%
<b>YEP, Summer Employment, n=27</b>										
Up to Pre5	52%	85%	100%	19%	0%	30%	59%	78%	7%	22%
Up to Pre1	11%	41%	52%	7%	41%	11%	37%	48%	0%	52%
Post1	7%	19%	26%	19%	59%	7%	11%	19%	7%	78%
Post2	4%	0%	4%	11%	85%	4%	0%	4%	4%	93%
Cum Post2	11%	19%	26%	22%	59%	11%	11%	22%	11%	74%
<b>Youth Radio, After School Employment, n=15</b>										
Up to Pre5	53%	93%	93%	47%	7%	20%	73%	87%	13%	13%
Up to Pre1	27%	40%	67%	27%	33%	13%	53%	67%	13%	33%
Post1	7%	27%	27%	33%	60%	0%	13%	13%	20%	67%
Post2	7%	27%	7%	0%	93%	7%	0%	7%	0%	93%
Cum Post2	13%	33%	33%	33%	53%	7%	13%	20%	20%	60%





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<b>Youth Radio, Summer Employment, n=11</b>											
<b>Up to Pre5</b>	55%	91%	100%	18%	0%	45%	55%	82%	9%	18%	
<b>Up to Pre1</b>	18%	36%	55%	18%	27%	27%	36%	64%	9%	27%	
<b>Post1</b>	0%	9%	9%	45%	55%	0%	18%	18%	27%	73%	
<b>Post2</b>	0%	27%	27%	27%	55%	0%	9%	9%	18%	73%	
<b>Cum Post2</b>	0%	36%	36%	55%	36%	0%	27%	27%	45%	55%	
<b>Youth UpRising, Summer Employment, n=16</b>											
<b>Up to Pre5</b>	50%	88%	100%	38%	0%	31%	69%	94%	25%	6%	
<b>Up to Pre1</b>	25%	50%	69%	31%	13%	13%	56%	69%	19%	19%	
<b>Post1</b>	0%	25%	25%	25%	63%	0%	19%	19%	6%	81%	
<b>Post2</b>	0%	6%	6%	6%	88%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	
<b>Cum Post2</b>	0%	31%	31%	25%	56%	0%	19%	19%	6%	81%	



**Youth Employment Partnership (YEP), After School Employment, n=65**

	Referred Offenses					Sustained Offenses				
	Violent	Non-Violent	Violent or nonviolent	Technical	No Arrest	Violent	Non-Violent	Violent or nonviolent	Technical	No Sustained Offense
<b>Up to Pre5</b>	37%	69%	91%	26%	9%	28%	66%	86%	17%	13%
<b>Up to Pre1</b>	11%	40%	49%	20%	42%	8%	35%	43%	12%	49%





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# EVALUATION OF OAKLAND UNITE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS FY 2012-13

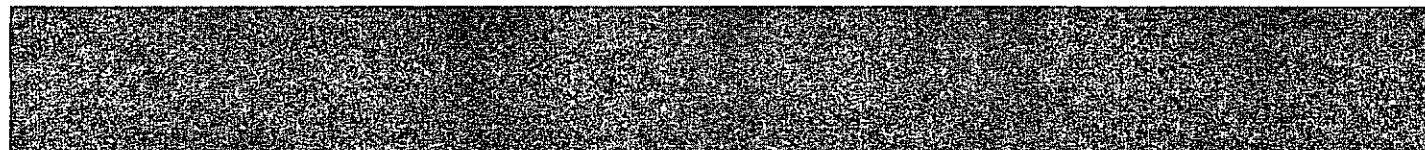
Jan 27, 2014

Resource Development Associates

Patricia Bennett, PhD

Mikaela Rabinowitz, PhD

Jennifer Lynn-Whaley, PhD



# Agenda and Overview

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- Review RFP requirements
- Review Measure Y Legislation
- Explain evaluation components and methods
- Present evaluation findings
- Discuss next steps
- Question and answer

# Evaluation RFP

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RFP Question	2012-13 Evaluation	2013-14 Evaluation
Does MY reduce crime and violence in Oakland?		X
What is relative impact on violence of different strategies?		X
What program activities lead to best client outcomes?	X	X
How could funds be allocated more efficiently?	X	
Are VPPs using best practices?	X	
Do VPPs show better results among some populations than others?		X



# Legislation and Strategies

Legislation	Implementation
Youth Outreach Counselors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• JJC / OUSD Wraparound</li><li>• Oakland Street Outreach</li><li>• Crisis Response and Support Network</li><li>• Highland Hospital Intervention</li></ul>
After and in-school programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restorative Justice</li><li>• Gang Prevention</li><li>• OUR KIDS Middle School</li></ul>
Domestic Violence and Child Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family Violence Intervention Unit</li><li>• Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors</li><li>• Mental Health Services for Ages 0-5</li></ul>
Offender/Parolee Employment Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reentry Employment</li><li>• Youth Employment</li><li>• Project Choice</li></ul>

# Evaluation Components

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## Initiative Level

- Overview of OU over time (interviews with experts and leaders)

## Strategy Level

- EBP Assessment
- Strengths
- Challenges

## Program Level

- Updated recidivism analysis for youth-serving programs (Adult updates pending)

# Evaluation Methods

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- **Initiative Level:**

- Interviews with 15 leaders from City and County agencies and organizations and national experts in violence prevention
- Review of DHS grant funding

- **Strategy Level:**

- 40+ interviews and focus groups with service providers and program participants
- Evidence-Based Practice assessment tool

- **Program Level:**

- Alameda County Probation Department data

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# Initiative-Level Evaluation Findings

# Strengths

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- **Funding strategies have become increasingly responsive to the City's changing violence prevention needs**
  - ▣ Shift in focus to higher risk populations and violent crime
  - ▣ Strategies designed to fill service gaps
- **The initiative has fostered the development of a coordinated infrastructure for violence prevention**
  - ▣ Strengthened and new partnerships
  - ▣ Grantee capacity building
  - ▣ Over \$15 million in external funding
  - ▣ Data-driven approach

# Challenges

---

- **Insufficient funding**

- Limited resources with which to serve many clients, the majority of whom have a multiplicity of needs

- **Unrealistic expectations**

- Legislation emphasizes prevention and early intervention services, which are not necessarily aligned with expectations that the initiative should reduce violent crime

- **Competing priorities from different stakeholders**

- Hinders City's ability to develop and maintain a consistent vision and effort

# Recommended Next Steps

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## □ **Focus, focus, focus!**

- "I would pitch to the most at-risk kids and [focus] hard on them" (Alex Briscoe)
- "There is an over saturation of services for youth in the juvenile justice system. Take advantage of that opportunity and focus on the issues surrounding gun violence" (David Muhammad)
- Increase funding for adults ages 25-35. (Stefania Kaplanes)
- Provide more funding for Street Outreach so they can expand their reach and provide more intensive coverage of hot spots (Kevin Grant)
- "Funding the victim advocates to work with OPD has been invaluable and could be more engaging if they shifted the prioritization" (Nancy O'Malley).

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# Strategy-Level Evaluation Findings



# Juvenile Justice Center & OUSD Wraparound Services

497 served

Program Strengths	Program Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case managers develop <b>strong relationships</b> with clients that drive successful outcomes</li> <li>• <b>Behavioral change is incremental</b> and can be seen through the lens of harm reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental complicity in drug use among youth underscores <b>need to involve families</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of resources</b> to provide housing and other services               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Housing for youth over 18</i></li> <li>• <i>Mental health treatment</i></li> <li>• <i>Substance use programs</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*“For a student who was suspended 5 times for 5 days each who now got suspended 1 time for 4 days, **that’s improvement!** That’s one of the things that’s hard from an evaluation standpoint—it’s hard to communicate that these improvements mean a lot.”*

# Oakland Street Outreach

265 served

7,430 reached through street outreach

## Program Strengths

- **Strong trust and community buy-in** allow for shared information critical to reducing and preventing violence
- **Solid coordination** with Oakland Unite partners results in leveraged resources

## Program Challenges

- Case managers report that they **don't have enough outreach workers** on the ground to stay ahead of the violence
- **Lack of resources and adequate services** hinders ability to fully engage youth in alternatives
  - *Housing, employment, basic needs*

*"The school called us...we went down there to do a rapid response and at the end of it...both sides agreed that it was over. This was something that started on the streets and spilled over to the school—so **this one incident could have stopped 20 or 30 incidents.**"*

# Crisis Response and Support Network

326 served with individual services

1,195 served with crisis response services

## Program Strengths

- **Clinical case management (CCM) model** including grief and trauma counseling and traditional case management
- **Help coping** with loss and trauma

## Program Challenges

- There is a **lack of resources** to provide additional support to clients
  - *Financial support*
  - *Housing assistance*
  - *Basic needs*

*“Where I’ve been wounded, **these services, they are the best thing to happen to me...** I’m never going to be able to hold my child, but I can address my healing. **If I didn’t have these services, I wouldn’t be able to heal.** They have given me the mental ability to move forward. [Without them] I’d be closed up.”*

# Highland Hospital Intervention

147 served

## Program Strengths

- Case managers **engage youth prior to their discharge** from the hospital
- Case manager **relationships support positive outcomes**
  - *Physical and emotional health*
  - *Safety*
  - *Employment*
  - *Education*

## Program Challenges

- Ensuring client **safety**, **sustained medical care**, and **fear of retaliation**
- **Chronic disappointment** by adults undermines trust

*"It's a blessing to have had an opportunity to be with Youth ALIVE! [and] get support in any possible manner. I wouldn't be doing the same things I'm doing today – everyone decides what to do in their life, I have more self-awareness to do better, stay positive, see things differently in my community."*

# Restorative Justice

291 served in Circles

1,365 reached through trainings and outreach

## Program Strengths

- **Creating dialogue** about harm and students' struggles increases their sense of **self-worth and confidence**
- Restorative justice reinforces positive **interpersonal communication** techniques

## Program Challenges

- **Difficulty securing buy-in** for the RJ model from teachers and staff
- Challenges **finding time** to implement the RJ model in schools

*"Students tell us that the **conversations are working** and **they want to do better**. It's like a **healthy drug** for the ones we work with the most."*

# Gang Prevention

105 served in groups

658 served through gang awareness trainings

## Program Strengths

- **Overcomes community distrust** and engages parents and teachers with **concrete strategies** for gang prevention
- There is **high demand** for trainings for organizations as well as follow-up classes for parents

## Program Challenges

- In the most violent neighborhoods, participation is low
  - *Debilitated, traumatized areas*
  - *Distrust and safety concerns*
  - *Outreach could be improved*

*“There was a former Norteño who spoke about his upbringing, experiences with drugs and alcohol...He shared with parents, step-by-step, what they needed to do to keep their kids out of gangs. There were parents saying, ‘My kid’s on that road,’ and when it was over, they rushed him to say thank you.”*

# Our Kids/Our Families

## Middle School Model

982 served in individual services

299 served in group services

### Program Strengths

- **Multidisciplinary, team-based approach** to case management and counseling
- Program works with students to **reduce their stress and deal with their emotions**

### Program Challenges

- **Limited resources and time to address material needs**
  - *Financial assistance (rent, food)*
  - *In-depth case management*
  - *Referral follow-up*
- **Inability to address low academic and emotional support from families**

*“Being around with my counselor makes everything so positive and nice and warm. Most of the time when I’m mad, things explode in my brain. I don’t know what to do or say, so I just go see my counselor.”*

# Family Violence Intervention Unit

1,293 served

## Program Strengths

- Working with clients from **start to finish**, including referrals and follow-up
- Strong **partnership and engagement with OPD**

## Program Challenges

- Not enough **direct referrals** leads to lag times
- There is **limited housing**
  - *Crisis housing and shelters*
  - *Long-term housing*
  - *Housing for women with sons*

*“In certain areas, **the officers are really engaged**. We have a high concentration in Eastmont who will continuously call us because they know us. Or if they see us at line up [they’ll say], ‘**That’s right! You guys are awesome—you make our lives easier.**”*



# Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors

209 served

Program Strengths	Program Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Immediate intervention</b> for sexually exploited minors</li><li>• Youth receive <b>unconditional support</b> from program staff</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Girls need more love and support</b> than there is time for</li><li>• <b>Lack of resources</b> to provide material support<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Housing and supportive living environments</i></li></ul></li></ul>
<p><i>“Pre-release planning helps them know what’s going on—not get out and suddenly have so much to do, but <b>have a set plan in advance</b>. [They know] they’ll have an advocate, they can go to the Drop-In Center, they’ll get a case manager and a therapist.”</i></p>	

# Mental Health Services for Ages 0-5

315 individual services

306 classroom-based services

## Program Strengths

- Clinical staff are **critical bridges to services** and resources for families and children
- Staff educate children on social problem-solving skills, which positively **impacts the whole family**

## Program Challenges

- **Shortage of resources** for additional assistance
  - *Emergency shelters and food banks*
  - *IEPs and school referrals*
  - *Services for older siblings*
- Absence of **after-hours availability** and **on-site security** hinder service provision to a wider population

*“He used to have terrible tantrums, but since this has become an ongoing process of coming for therapy the tantrums have improved a lot. Knowing we get to see a counselor...he’s been looking forward to it.”*

# Reentry Employment

245 served

Program Strengths	Program Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teaches clients <b>soft skills and hard job skills</b> so they can obtain and maintain employment</li><li>• <b>Programs go above and beyond</b> to offer emotional support and motivation to clients</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clients have very limited job experience</li><li>• The external environment poses challenges to success<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Shortage of safe, stable housing</i></li><li>• <i>“Leaving the negative life” is a challenge</i></li></ul></li></ul>

*“I learned how to respect others, like greeting people. I can also say that this program helped me with my references, my cover letter, that sort of thing. Now I can fill out a whole job application. It bettered me for a lot of things.”*

# Youth Employment

209 served

## Program Strengths

- Clients learn **job skills, communication,** and soft skills
- Youth **gain confidence** through their success

## Program Challenges

- Difficulty ensuring the **safety** of youth outside the program
- **Insufficient resources** to address youths' multiple needs
  - *Transportation*
  - *Work clothing*
  - *Substance use treatment*

*"I had never worked in a real job. I learned about job etiquette, logistics. I learned how to find a job, how to approach the job listing that I really like. They also teach you **about what to do at your job and what not to do.** They taught us how to look for a job, how to get it, and how to stay in it."*

# Project Choice

165 served

## Program Strengths

- **Pre-release planning** helps clients prepare and **creates stability** upon release
- Programs provide **positive role models** who clients can relate to

## Program Challenges

- **Concerns about safety** upon release
- **Lack of resources** to help with financial and service needs upon release
  - *Housing and rent*
  - *Substance use treatment*
  - *Basic needs*

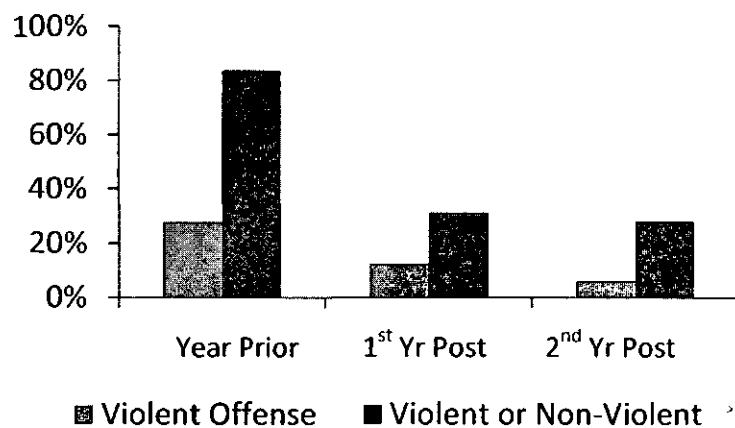
*"Project Choice helped me plan, like was I gonna go to school or was I gonna find a job? So I went to Laney College for a year... I got a summer program job through Project Choice and found a transitional home."*

# Program-Level Evaluation Findings

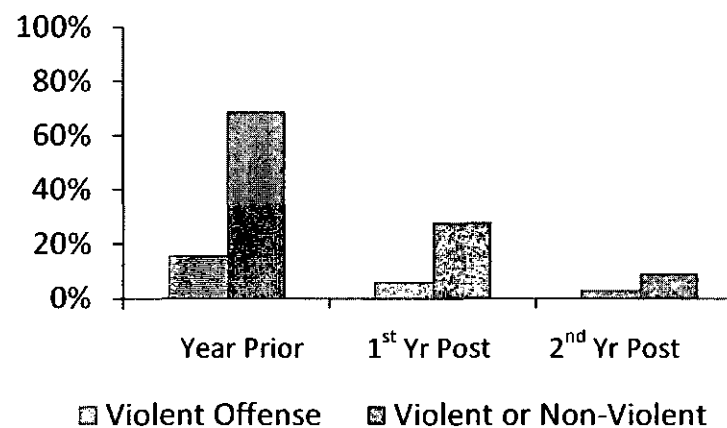
# JJC/OUSD Wraparound California Youth Outreach

□ n=32

### Clients Arrested

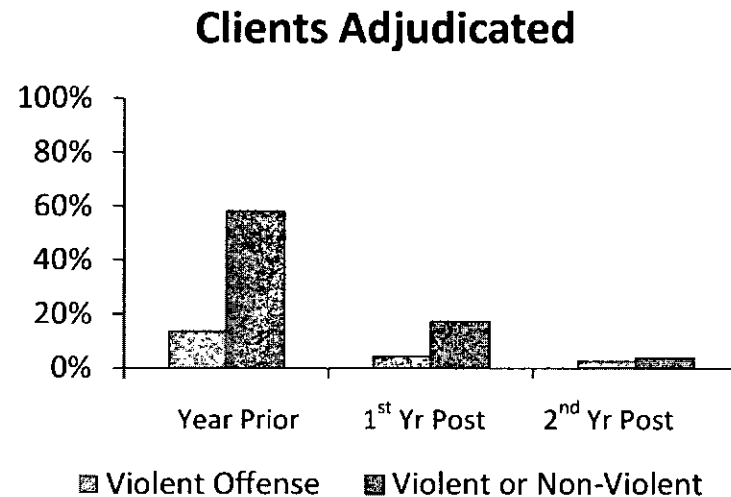
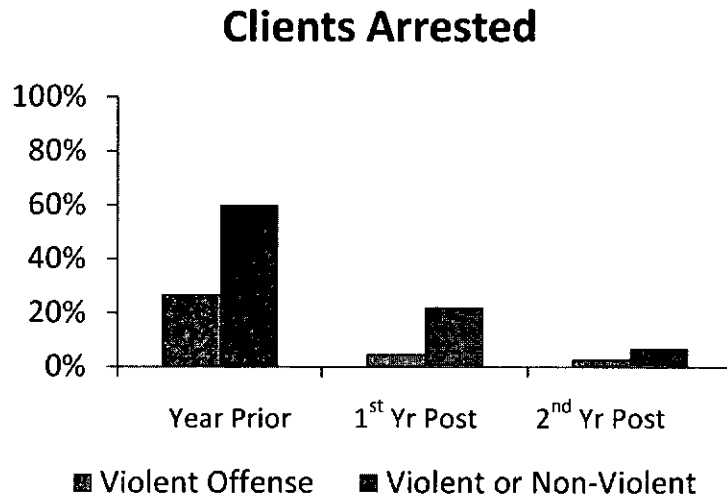


### Clients Adjudicated



# JJC/OUSD Wraparound East Bay Asian Youth Center

□ n=104



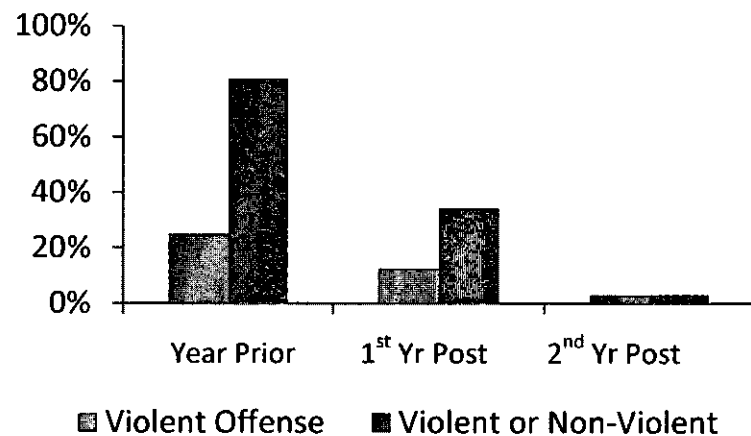


# JJC/OUSD Wraparound

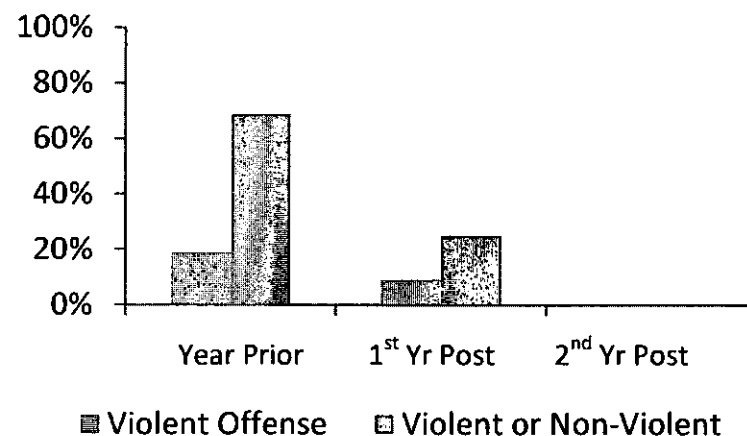
## The Mentoring Center

□ n=32

### Clients Arrested

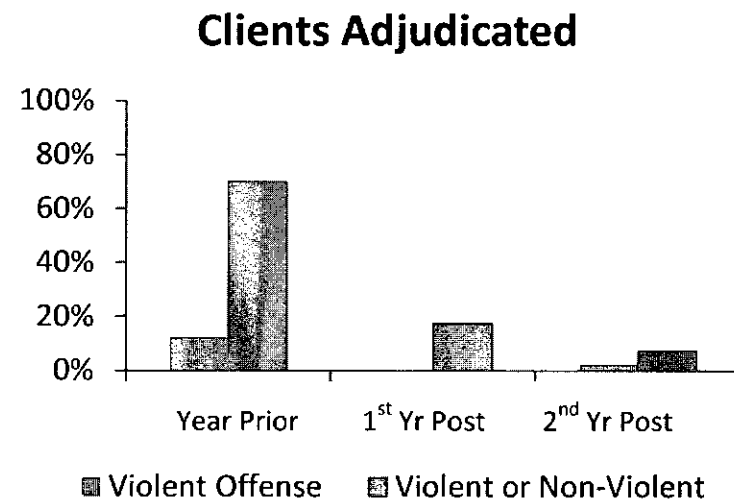
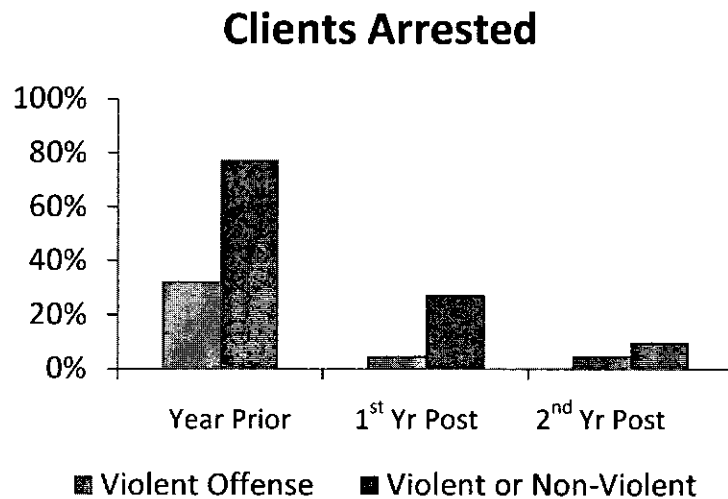


### Clients Adjudicated



# JJC/OUSD Wraparound *Youth UpRising*

□ n=40

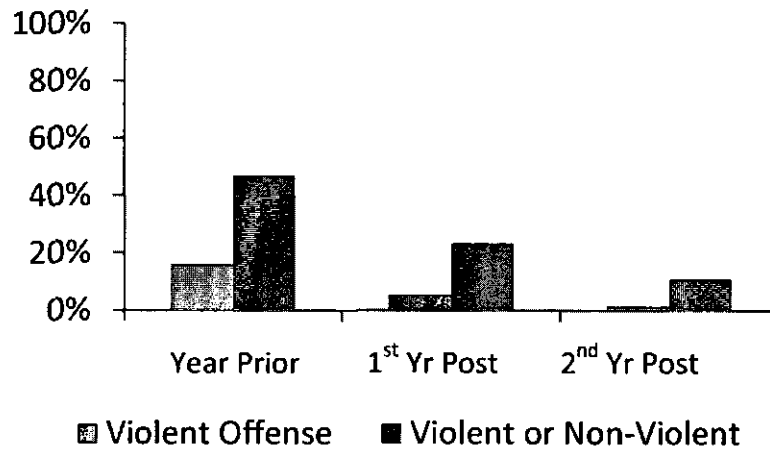


# Outreach to Sexually Exploited Minors

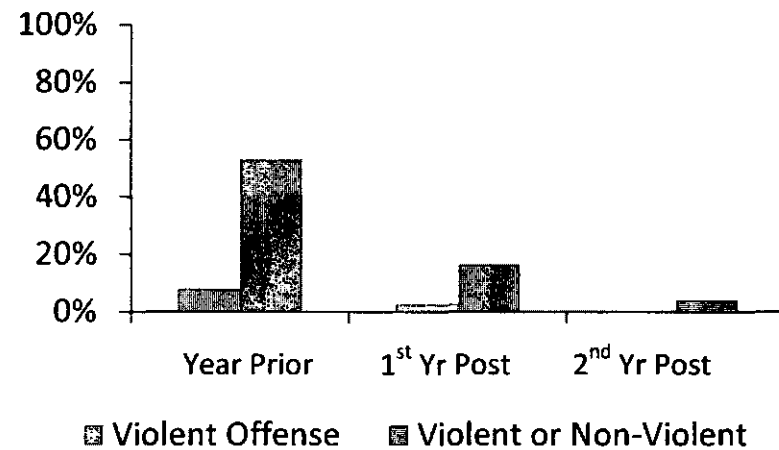
## MISSEY

□ n=73

### Clients Arrested



### Clients Adjudicated

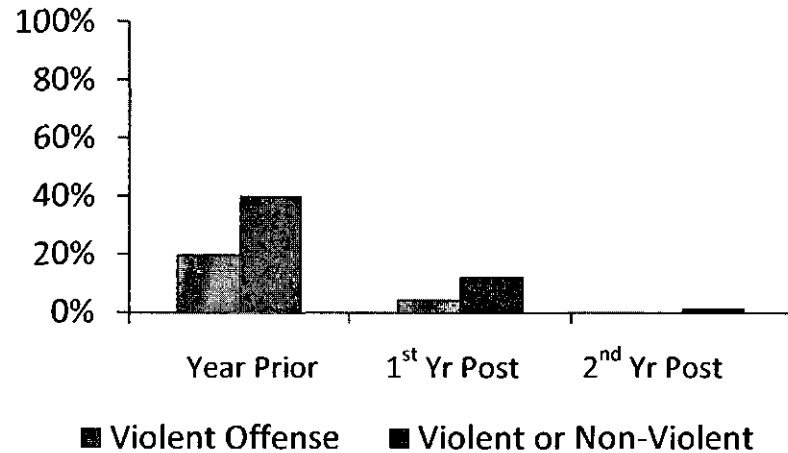


# Youth Employment

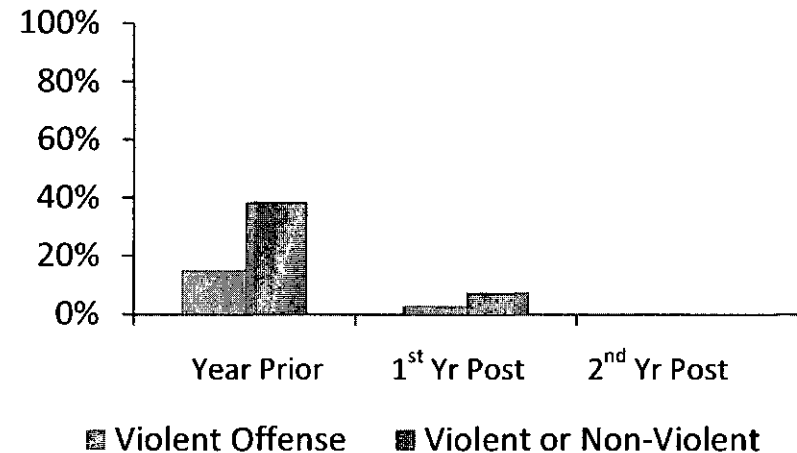
## Youth Employment Partnership, After School Employment

□ n=65

### Clients Arrested



### Clients Adjudicated

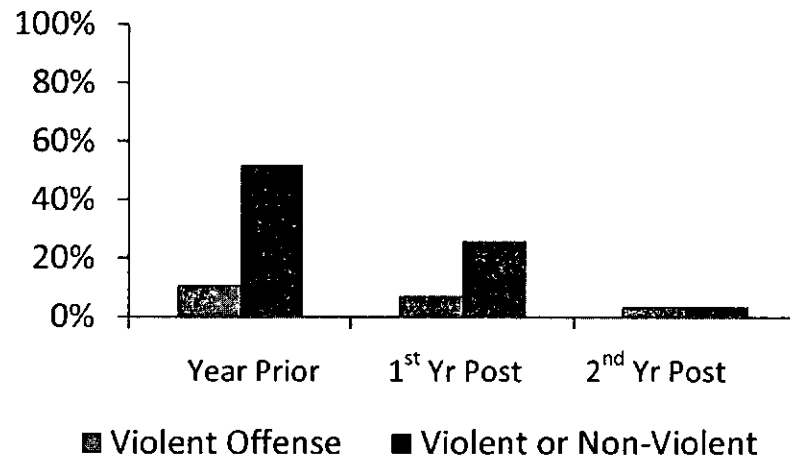


# Youth Employment

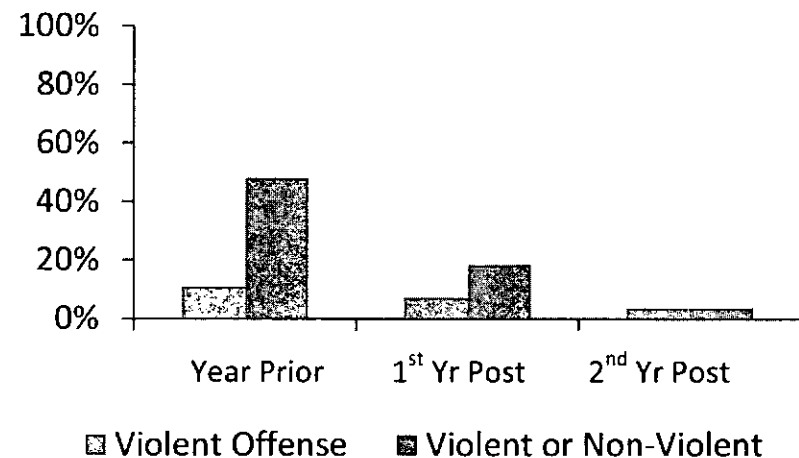
## Youth Employment Partnership, Summer Employment

□ n=27

### Clients Arrested



### Clients Adjudicated

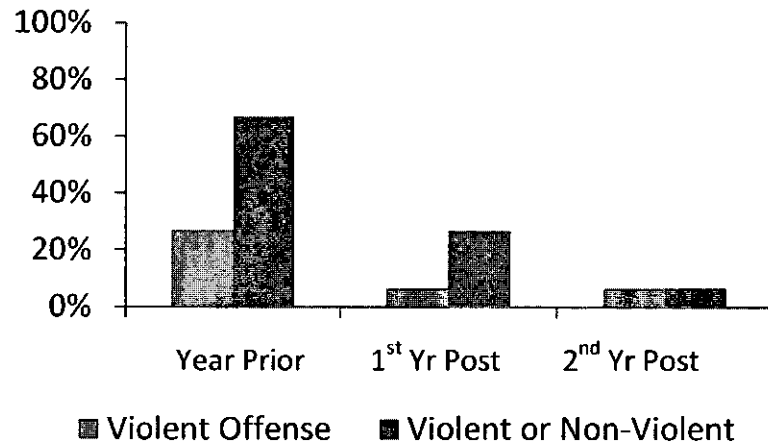


# Youth Employment

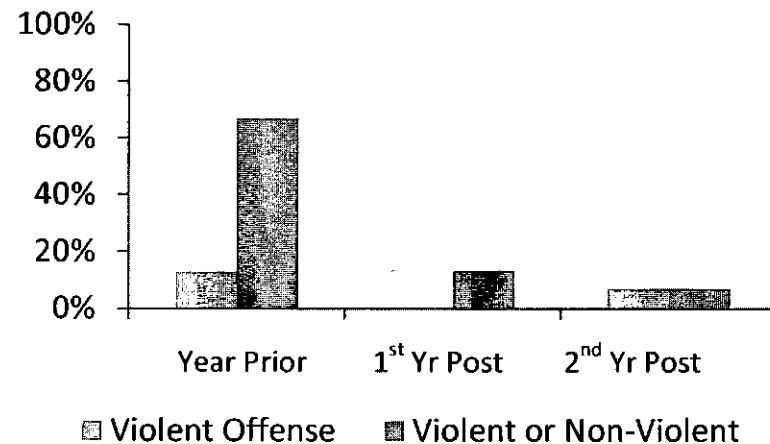
## Youth Radio, After School Employment

□ n=15

### Clients Arrested



### Clients Adjudicated

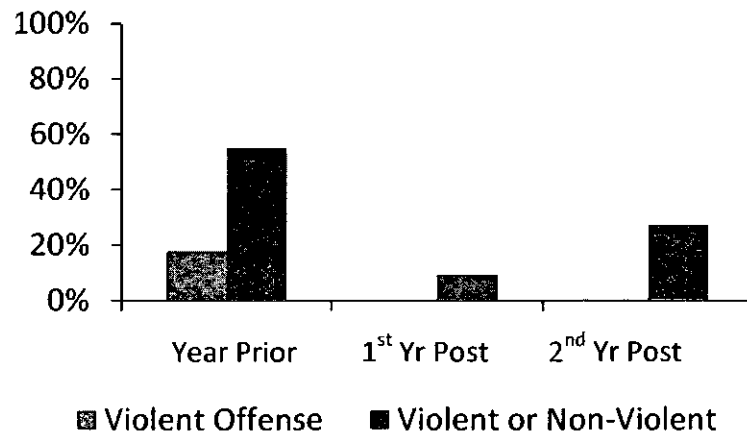


# Youth Employment

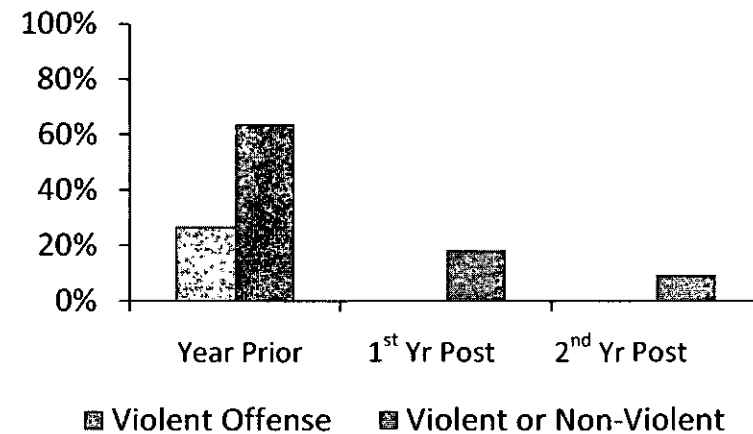
## Youth Radio, Summer Employment

□ n=11

### Clients Arrested



### Clients Adjudicated

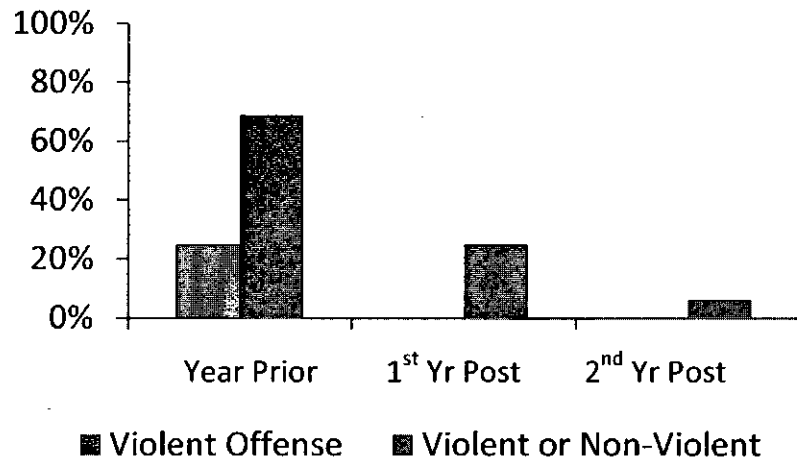


# Youth Employment

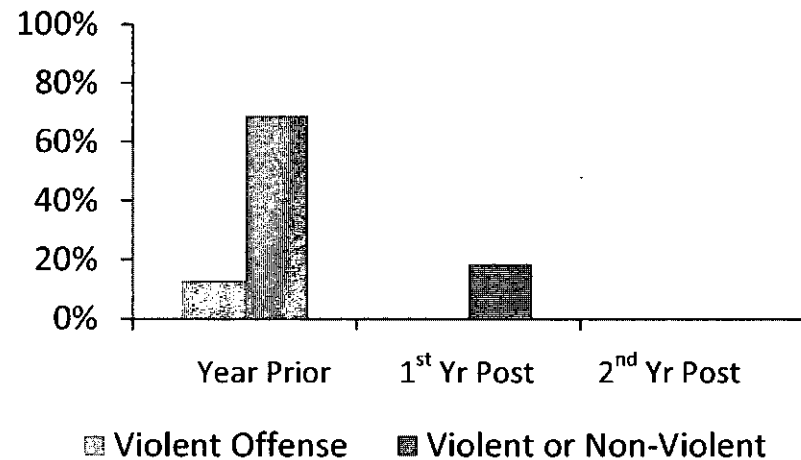
## Youth UpRising, Summer Employment

□ n=16

### Clients Arrested



### Clients Adjudicated



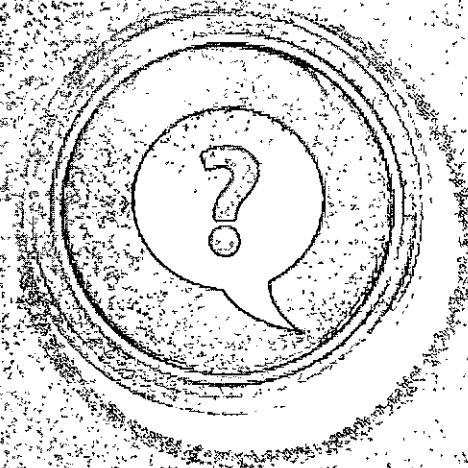


# 2013-14 Oakland Unite Evaluation

# Next steps

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- April Renewal
  - Recidivism Outcomes for New Grantees Only
  - Support DHS and MYOC Funding Decisions
- 2008-2013 Retrospective Outcome and Impact Evaluation
  - Statistical analysis that compares justice-system involvement of OU service recipients to individuals who enrolled but did not continue to receive services
  - Control for program, strategy, provider, dosage, etc.
  - Will only include programs/strategies who work with justice-involved clients



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## Questions and Discussion

RDA

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Thank you

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