





Project ASCEND

BSCC Prop 47 Cohort IV Local Evaluation Plan

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Project Background

Proposition 47 (Prop. 47) is a November 2014 voter-approved initiative that reduces specified low-level drug and property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. Each year, the state savings generated by the implementation of Prop. 47 are deposited into the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund. Sixty-five percent of these savings are set aside annually for the BSCC to administer competitive grant programs. Proposition 47 requires that these funds be awarded to public agencies to provide mental health services, substance use disorder treatment and/or diversion programs for those in the criminal justice system. Additional legislation (AB 1056, Chap. 438, Stats. of 2015) requires that the grants be awarded competitively, and specifies that funds may serve both adults and juveniles. It allows funds to be used for housing-related assistance and other community-based supportive services, including job skills training, case management or civil legal services. The BSCC requires that at least 50 percent of the award made to grantees is passed through to community-based service providers.

Need:

Santa Cruz County is a strip about 10 miles wide between the coast and the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains at the northern end of the Monterey Bay on the central coast of California. Although one of the smallest of California counties, the geography of Santa Cruz County can be divided into four distinct regions: the rugged north coast, including Davenport and Swanton; the urban areas of the City of Santa Cruz, Soquel, Capitola, and Aptos; the mountainous region to the east, including Bonny Doon, Scotts Valley, and the San Lorenzo River Valley; and the fertile south county, including Coralitos, Watsonville, and Pájaro.

Santa Cruz County Office of Education (Santa Cruz COE) has collaborated with law enforcement and community service agencies across Santa Cruz County to address a significant need for Cohort IV Prop. 47 funding for youth diversion programs and services for participants to address mental health, substance abuse and other needs. Santa Cruz County includes 13 school districts that enroll 37,841 students. Three of these districts enroll less than 200 students, and one district enrolls 17,520



students. Additionally, Santa Cruz COE provides educational services at the Santa Cruz County Court School for 24 incarcerated youth and alternative educational services for 1,564 youth who have been expelled or disenfranchised from neighborhood schools.

The ethnicity of youth enrolled in all Santa Cruz County schools includes 57.6% Hispanic or Latino, 32.6% White, 4.5% Two or More Races, 2.2% Asian, .6% African American, .6% Filipino, .3% Pacific Islander, .2% American Indian or Alaska Native, and .6% Not Reported. However, student ethnicity in individual districts vary widely. The two major ethnic groups are Hispanic or Latino and White across Santa Cruz County. Yet the range of student enrollment is from 6.6% to 97.2% for Hispanic or Latino and from 1.1% to 79.9% White. Similar disparity in demographics across Santa Cruz County are seen in the degree of poverty as demonstrated by the percent of students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program for Free and Reduced Price Meals (FRPM). Three districts have an FRPM of 20% or less, and two districts have an FRPM of over 78%. The wide disparity of ethnicity and poverty imply the importance of taking steps to address the needs of underserved populations.

Although only 31 miles apart, the significant variety of topography, population density, and land use negatively impact the accessibility of services throughout Santa Cruz County. Mental health services and substance abuse services that are available to residents of the urban areas are not easily accessible to residents of the more remote unincorporated areas. Not all of the Santa Cruz County law enforcement agencies offer diversion program services. These gaps in services combined with the challenge of providing equitable services across such varied and isolated areas have contributed to the extent of criminal activities in Santa Cruz County.

Additionally, there are many Norteño and Sureño street gangs across Santa Cruz County. Norteño gangs are concentrated in the South County region, and Sureño gangs are predominately located in the Santa Cruz beach and urban neighborhoods. Gang violence affects public health and through addressing the needs of underserved populations through Prop. 47 services there is potential to impact recidivism for ganginvolved youth (McDaniel, DD; Logan, JE, Schneiderman, JU, 2014).



Target Population:

Our target population is identified, measurable, and correlates to needs and gaps in service. The services provided through Project ASCEND will provide services specifically for juvenile offenders, ages 12 to 17 years, who have been arrested or cited for a nonviolent criminal offense and might benefit from mental health and/or substance use services. Santa Cruz County Probation Department reports that from 1/1/23 to 5/31/24 the following numbers of youth were served in the criminal justice system:

- 63 students on probation (as of April 2024)
- 642 referrals to probation (arrests and citations)
- 18 referrals for youth that had gang-related charges
- 311 bookings into Juvenile Hall
- 4 youth sentenced to Ranch Camp

Eligibility Criteria:

Project ASCEND will serve youth ages 12-17 who have been arrested or cited for a nonviolent criminal offense and who might benefit from mental health and/or substance use services. Project ASCEND services will advance principles of restorative justice and trauma-informed care while demonstrating a capacity to reduce recidivism rates among our target population.

Process for Determining Interventions/Services:

Youth Specialists will receive referrals for Project ASCEND Prop. 47 services from law enforcement agencies. Youth Specialists will meet with prospective participants and their guardians, describe the requirements, and explain the benefits and potential outcomes of participation in Project ASCEND. After the youth agree to participate in Project ASCEND diversion program services, Youth Specialists will conduct a risk/needs assessment of participants based on 6 domains:

- · Self.
- Psychosocial, including family, social, and cultural considerations.
- Housing.
- Behavioral Health, including mental health, substance abuse disorders



- · Education and Employment.
- Strengths, Risks, and Protective Factors.

Youth Specialists will make referrals for additional partner services based on this assessment. As Youth Specialists provide case management and diversion program services to participants, they may determine participant needs for additional services. Referrals for services to Project ASCEND partners will include mental health, substance abuse, housing, employment, legal, transportation, social services, assistance with food, and/or basic necessities. Santa Cruz COE will ensure that youth are receiving educational services in one of the 10 local school districts, local charter schools, or in the Santa Cruz COE Alternative Education Program.

Goals and Objectives:

Project ASCEND goals and objectives will result in impacts related to needs and intent of the Prop. 47 program:

Goal 1: Reduce the number of Chronic Juvenile Offenders

Objective 1.1: Decrease juvenile recidivism rates for the target population by 50% by April 1, 2028 as measured by citations, arrests and court records.

Impact: Reduce recidivism of youth convicted of less serious crimes.

Goal 2: Divert Non-violent Juvenile Offenders from Juvenile Correctional Institutions

Objective 2.1: Increase participation in diversion programs as an alternative to detention centers and camps for juvenile offenders by 80% by April 1, 2028, as measured by court records, status reports, and attendance logs.

Impact: Reduce recidivism of youth convicted of less serious crimes.

Goal 3: Address the needs of underserved populations in the community, including disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status.

Objective 3.1: By April 1, 2025, provide culturally relevant and evidence-based mental health and substance use disorder support for the target population.

Objective 3.2: Partner with community-based organizations that employ bilingual staff who will connect with youth on a cultural level.

Impact: Mitigate effects of disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status.



Project Logic Model

INPUTS/RESOURCES

- ▶ BSCC Prop. 47 funds
- Leveraged funds
- OperationsTeam
- Law enforcement agencies
- Communitybased organization partners
- Professional learning for traumainformed care and evidence based interventions

ACTIVITIES

- Diversion programs
- Case management
- Educational services
- Mental health services
- Substance use disorder treatment
- Employment services
- Social services
- Assistance with housing, food, and basic necessities
- ▶ Transportation
- Monthly family outreach events

OUTPUTS

- # of participants who complete diversion programs
- # of
 participants
 who receive
 services from
 community based
 organization
 partners

OUTCOMES

- Reduction in juvenile recidivism rates
- Increased participation in diversion programs as an alternative to probation and detention
- ► Improved academic performance, including graduation rates
- Increased job placement

IMPACTS

- Increased protective factors for the target population
- ► Increased capacity of the community to address needs of justice-involved youth
- ► Increased sense of safety in schools and communities
- ► Reduced # of arrests
- Decreased substance abuse



Process Evaluation Method and Design

Research Design for the Process Evaluation:

Process and outcome measures are quantifiable and meet the intent of Prop. 47. and are designed to identify what the program is actually doing and if it's what we planned our program to do?

Project ASCEND process measures include the:

- 1) Effective referral process by law enforcement agencies of prospective participants to Project ASCEND Youth Specialists.
- 2) Implementation of diversion programs with fidelity.
- 3) Scope of services provided by community partner agencies.
- 4) Monthly and accurate data collection.

The Plan to Document Activities and Services:

Project ASCEND services will promote a collaborative approach of all partners through case management of activities and services provided to participants. As part of the enrollment process, Youth Specialists will begin case management for each participant using the Navigate 360 software which will be used by Project ASCEND partners to track services and participant progress.

Tracking Participant Progress:

Project ASCEND activities will include benchmarks of successful completion for diversion programs, as well as for community partner agency services, e.g., mental health, substance abuse disorder treatment, etc. As participants progress, complete, or fail to complete agreements for services, their progress will be tracked by Youth Specialists as part of the case management system that will utilize Navigate 360 data reporting.

Process Variables:

Project ASCEND process variables are aspects related to project implementation, including program implementation and stakeholder involvement. Questions that will be addressed through evaluation of process variables include:



- Program Implementation:
 - Are project activities being conducted as intended with fidelity?
 - Are staff adequately trained to deliver the program effectively?
- Stakeholder Involvement:
 - Are all stakeholders (Project ASCEND staff, law enforcement agency representatives, and community partners) continuously involved with planning, implementation, and root cause analysis of challenges to project success?

Process Data Collection:

Process data collection will be conducted regularly and include:

- On-site observation by the Program Evaluator and Project ASCEND Manager of Project ASCEND partner programs and activities using a Site Visit Protocol.
- Surveys of project partners and staff.
- Monthly Project ASCEND partner and staff focus groups to discuss project successes and challenges.

Project Oversight Structure:

Project oversight will be provided by the Project ASCEND Manager, the Santa Cruz COE Director of Safety, the Project ASCEND Operations Team, and the Program Evaluator. The Project ASCEND Manager is dedicated full-time to monitoring and supporting project implementation across all law enforcement and community agency partners.

The Project ASCEND Operations Team is the local advisory council and includes representatives from all law enforcement and community partner agencies. The Operations Team meets monthly to review implementation progress, discuss challenges, and to collaborate to develop a shared understanding of key components of implementation, including eligibility, success, diversion, recidivism, program completion, outreach, non-violent crimes, etc.

Process data will be reported on a monthly basis to the Program Evaluator.

Additionally, with the participation of the Project ASCEND Manager, the Program

Evaluator will make site visits to Project ASCEND partners to review implementation

processes and to understand any challenges to providing services and reporting



implementation data. The Program Evaluator will prepare quarterly reports, including data analysis to identify patterns, trends, and areas for improvement. These reports will be presented to the Operations Team to highlight project successes, address project challenges, and support a cycle of continuous improvement.

Monitoring of Project Components:

Monitoring of project components will be conducted by the Program Evaluator with support of the Project ASCEND Manager and the Santa Cruz COE Director of Safety. They will conduct visitations at partner agencies to address implementation concerns. Issues of common concern will be identified and addressed in monthly meetings of the Operations Team. In addition to site visitations, surveys of component providers will be conducted to determine implementation effectiveness, successes, and challenges.

Documentation of Project Activities:

Project activities performed by Project ASCEND partners will be compiled by the Youth Specialists and shared with the Program Evaluator on a monthly basis. Data sources will include implementation data, participant data, and services provided to participants.

Implementation data will include:

- Outreach Activities to promote the project to the community, meetings held for the community to discuss project goals and implementation, and/or information provided to potential partners. Data will include the:
 - Number of activities.
 - Number of hours.
- Engagement Activities to connect with potential participants include providing information about the project and benefits of participating. Data will include the:
 - Unduplicated count of potential participants that were engaged.
- Assessment Activities to determine eligibility of prospective participants, formal or informal evaluation of participant needs, and identification of appropriate services. Data will include the:



- Total number of potential participants who received an assessment.
- o Number of potential participants who are enrolled in the program.

Participant data will include:

- Referring law enforcement agency
- Assessment Date
- Enrollment Date
- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Level of Education
- Prior Arrest
- Date of Subsequent Arrest
- Employment Status at Enrollment
- Employment Goal
- Housing Status at Enrollment
- Housing Goal

Services provided to participants data will include:

- Mental Health Treatment
- Substance Abuse Disorder Detox, Inpatient, Outpatient services
- Diversion Program
- Assistance with Food
- Assistance with Basic Necessities
- Case Management
- Education Services
- Employment Services
- Family Services
- Health Services
- Housing Services
- Legal Services



- Social Services
- Transportation Services
- Other Support Services

Data will be analyzed and distributed quarterly by the Program Evaluator to Project ASCEND staff and the Operations Team to support reflection on project implementation successes and to identify issues of concern to support a cycle of continuous improvement.

Ensuring the Project is Implemented with Fidelity:

To ensure that Project ASCEND is implemented with fidelity, the Program Manager, the Santa Cruz COE Director of Safety, and the Program Evaluator will conduct site visits and interview all partners to ensure the frequency and duration of activities match the program design, provide ongoing support to address challenges, and to determine if staff need additional training and/or coaching. A Site Visit Protocol tool will be developed by the Program Manager and Program Evaluator that will support equity in documentation across all agencies and services. Partners will be surveyed quarterly to self-report on adherence to program components.

Quantitative and Qualitative Process Data Analysis:

Quantitative process data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including:

- Measures of Central Tendency Mean, Median, Mode
- Measures of Variability Range, Standard Deviation
- Statistical Trend analysis

Qualitative process data will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis that includes identifying, analyzing, and reporting data themes using an inductive approach.



Outcome Evaluation Method and Design

Research Design for the Outcome Evaluation:

A Convergent Parallel Design for mixed method outcome evaluation will support concurrent analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data with the results integrated quarterly to inform the continuous improvement process conducted by the Project ASCEND Operations Team.

Quantitative data will include the:

- Interventions/services received by participants.
- Number of participants who successfully completed interventions/services.
- Number of participants who recidivate.
- Surveys.

Qualitative data will include data collected from:

- Focus groups.
- Site visitations.
- Surveys.

The Integration Phase of the Convergent Parallel Design will include:

- Comparison and contrast of quantitative and qualitative results to identify convergence, divergence, or complementarity.
- Synthesis of findings to address research questions.

Participants who exit without completing program requirements, regardless of reason, and youth who have been assessed and are eligible to participate, but choose not to participate will comprise a comparison group to evaluate program impact on recidivism.

Outcome Evaluation Questions:

The evaluation will answer a set of evaluation questions that include the project's goals and objectives, as well as other outcome-oriented questions.

Project Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Reduce the number of Chronic Juvenile Offenders



Objective 1: Decrease juvenile recidivism rates for the target population by 50% by April 1, 2028 as measured by citations, arrests and court records.

- What is the recidivism rate for the target population as measured by citations, arrests, and court records?
- **Goal 2:** Divert Non-violent Juvenile Offenders from Juvenile Correctional Institutions **Objective 2:** Increase participation in diversion programs as an alternative to detention centers and camps for juvenile offenders by 80% by April 1, 2028, as measured by court records, status reports, and attendance logs.
 - What percent of eligible participants who were assessed but did not enroll in Project ASCEND?

Goal 3: Address the needs of underserved populations in the community, including disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status.

Objective 3a: By April 1, 2025, provide culturally relevant and evidence-based mental health and substance use disorder support for the target population.

Objective 3b: Partner with community-based organizations that employ bilingual staff who will connect with youth on a cultural level.

- What is the confidence level of community partners and Youth Specialist staff
 in providing culturally relevant and evidence-based mental health and
 substance use disorder support for the target population based on:
 - Use of culturally validated assessment tools that take into account how cultural norms may affect symptom presentation?
 - o Adapt evidence-based practices to be culturally relevant?
 - Offer family therapy options?
 - Conduct outreach to underserved populations?
 - o Implement trauma-informed practices across all services?
 - Implement restorative justice processes tailored to specific cultural groups?

Other Outcome-Oriented Questions:

Program Implementation:

Are project activities being conducted as intended with fidelity?



Are staff adequately trained to deliver the program effectively?

Participant Engagement:

 Are participants engaged in project activities, including regular attendance and achieving program completion goals?

Contextual Factors:

 Are project activities accessible to participants, e.g., location, time of day, transportation, etc.?

Stakeholder Involvement:

 Are all stakeholders, including Project ASCEND staff, law enforcement agency representatives, and community partners continuously involved with planning, implementation, and root cause analysis of challenges to project success?

<u>Estimated Number of Participants Expected to Receive Each Type of Intervention/Service:</u>

It is estimated that approximately 300 participants will receive Project ASCEND services over the duration of the Cohort IV program. Based on this estimated number of participants, the number who are expected to receive each type of intervention service may be:

- Diversion Program 300
- Mental Health Treatment 225
- Substance Abuse Disorder Detox, Inpatient, Outpatient services 30
- Assistance with Food 15
- Assistance with Basic Necessities 15
- Case Management 300
- Education Services 300
- Employment Services 75
- Family Services 150
- Health Services 10
- Housing Services 15
- Legal Services 5



- Social Services 15
- Transportation Services 30
- Other Support Services 5

<u>Criteria for Determining Participant Success in the Project:</u>

Participant success across all interventions and services will be primarily based on:

- Attendance
- Achievement of benchmark targets
- No further arrests

Successful completion of diversion programs provided by Youth Specialists will include:

- Duration of 12 24 weeks.
- Completion of a minimum of 20 hours of community services.
- Restorative justice activities, if applicable.

Successful completion of project services provided by community agency partners will depend on achievement of benchmark targets and goals. After Youth Specialists refer participants for interventions/services to community partners, qualified specialists will meet with participants and conduct needs assessment. Based on needs assessment for the particular intervention/services, the specialists will recommend a plan benchmark targets that will result in determination of successful completion of that intervention/service. Participants will agree to the plan that will include the frequency, content, and duration of services, as appropriate.

Outcome Variables:

Outcome variables are defined by the evaluation questions that include the project goals and objectives, as well as other outcome-oriented questions:

 Program completion rates - data reported by Youth Specialists on a monthly basis using Navigate 360 software designed specifically to track Project ASCEND interventions/services.



- Recidivism rates data reported by Youth Specialists on a monthly basis using Navigate 360 software designed specifically to track Project ASCEND interventions/services.
- Enrollment rates of eligible participants after intake assessment.
- Confidence level of community partners and Youth Specialists in providing interventions/services with fidelity based on quarterly surveys, and quarterly site visitation observation.
- Participation rates of all Project ASCEND partners in Operations Team meetings – sign in sheets collected monthly.

Outcome Data Collection:

Outcome data collection will include:

- Participant data, e.g, enrollment, interventions/services, etc. collected monthly.
- Site Visit Protocol records collected quarterly.
- Surveys of project partners and staff collected quarterly.
- Sign-in sheets for Operations Team meetings collected quarterly

Outcome Data Analysis:

Quantitative outcome data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including:

- Measures of Central Tendency Mean, Median, Mode
- Measures of Variability Range, Standard Deviation
- Statistical Trend analysis

Qualitative outcome data will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis that includes identifying, analyzing, and reporting data themes using an inductive approach.

Strategy to Determine Project Effectiveness at Reducing Recidivism:

Project ASCEND evaluation will determine project effectiveness at reducing recidivism by comparing recidivism rates of participants who complete the program to participants who exit without completing program requirements, regardless of reason. This strategy will result in demonstrating that recidivism rates and other outcomes are



due to successful project participation and not other factors unrelated to the project.

There is no predetermination of the comparison group, as the population will be created throughout the course of project implementation.

Effects on Outcome Variables of Interventions

Multiple types of interventions will be employed to reduce recidivism for the target population. All participants will receive diversion program, case management, and educational services. The effects of these common outcome variables will be determined by program completion rates and recidivism rates.

Other interventions/services will be provided based on participant needs, e.g. mental health services, family services, substance abuse disorder treatment, etc. As the content, duration, and benchmarks for achieving success for these outcome variables are specific to each participant, no effects on outcome variables can be determined.

Appendices

| Relevant supplementary evaluation and project materials include: |
|---|
| Project ASCEND Brochure (Draft) |
| Project ASCEND Program Guide (Draft) |
| Operations Team Model |
| Operations Team Agenda #1 January 10, 2025 |
| Operations Team Agenda #2 January 24, 2025 |
| Operational Definitions Developed in Collaboration with All Partners 26 |
| Project ASCEND Youth Diversion Program Participation Agreement (Draft) 30 |
| Partner Training Needs Assessment Survey |
| Partner Training Needs Assessment Results |
| Project ASCEND Intake and Data Management Form (Draft) |



















Why Participate in **Project ASCEND?**

- Avoid criminal charges and keep records clean.
- Receive support services tailored to individual needs.
- · Build accountability through structured, positive engagement.
- Stay connected with mentors, family, and the community.

Who is Eligible?

- Youth ages 12-17
- Charged with a non-violent misdemeanor offense
- No weapons or violent felonies involved
- Youth must be willing to participate



How It Works

1. Referral by Law Enforcement: Youth is cited

the program within 48 hours.

- 2. Assessment & Agreement: Youth and family meet with a Youth Specialist to discuss the program and sign a participation contract.
- 3. Personalized Plan: Youth will complete community service, restorative justice, and counseling.
- 4. Program Completion: Successful participants have no further legal action taken against them.

A young person with less involvement in the Juvenile Justice system:

- · Has increased educational and employment opportunities.
- Interacts with fewer peers who have antisocial behaviors.
- · Is less likely to commit another offense.
- Is more likely to maintain positive community supports.

DIVERTING YOUNG

PEOPLE

DEMONSTRATES

BELIEF IN THEIR

POTENTIAL

Project ASCEND is funded by Board of State and Community **Corrections Prop 47**



In partnership with:
Conflict Resolution Police Department
Conflict Resolution Center of Santa Cruz County
Encompass Community Services
Pajar o Valley Prevention and Student Assistance,
Inc.
Santa Cruz County Diffice of Education
Santa Cruz County Office of Education
Santa Cruz County Office of the Public Defender
Santa Cruz County Sentif's Office
Santa Cruz Police Department
Scotts Valley Police Department
Watsonville Police Department

If you or your child has been cited or arrested, ask

- P Location: [Insert Address]
- Contact: [Insert Phone Number]
- Email: [Insert Email Address]
- P Location: [Insert Address]
- Contact: [Insert Phone Number]
- Email: [Insert Email Address]

about Project ASCEND. We are here to help!

- # Website: [Insert Website URL]
- ₩ Website: [Insert Website URL]



Project ASCEND

Community, Education, and Nurturing Development

What is Project ASCEND? Project ASCEND is a youth diversion program that provides an alternative to the juvenile justice system for young people (ages 12-17) cited or arrested for a non-violent misdemeanor offense. Instead of facing court proceedings, youth receive support, services, and accountability measures to prevent reoffending.











Project ASCEND
Achieving Success through
Community, Education and
Nurturing Development

Youth Diversion Program Guide





















Purpose

Project ASCEND (Achieving Success through Community, Education, and Nurturing Development) is designed to divert youth offenders (ages 12-17) cited or arrested for misdemeanor offenses away from the juvenile justice system. The program aims to prevent recidivism, foster accountability, and provide culturally relevant, community-based support.

Eligibility Criteria

Youth Requirements:

- Ages 12-17
- Previous completion of a diversion program does not exclude participation.
- Must be willing to participate voluntarily.
- Does not have to be a 1st time offender
- Not currently on Probation

Offense Criteria:

- Non-violent misdemeanor offenses only (can be multiple charges in one incident).
- Can not be violent felonies or weapon-related charges.

Law Enforcement Referral Criteria:

- Officers determine initial eligibility and refer youth to a designated Youth Specialist.
- Reports are reviewed by a Youth Specialist.
- No current court or probation involvement for eligible participants.

Program Structure

1. Law Enforcement Referral Process:

- o Officers submit referrals to Youth Specialists within 48 hours.
- Youth Specialists confirm eligibility and liaise with probation as needed.
- Officers receive feedback on referral outcomes.

2. Intake Process:

- Youth and family voluntarily agree to participation.
- A contract outlining expectations is signed.
- Initial assessment conducted by Youth Specialist to identify risk factors and needed services.
- Culturally responsive interventions such as Joven Noble are prioritized.
- Restorative justice and accountability interventions are included.

3. Program Components:



1



- Duration: 3 months, with possible extension.
- Activities: Community service (minimum 20 hours), reflective essay, letter of apology, school attendance, pro-social engagement, restorative practices, and family support sessions.
- o **Individualized Plans:** Each youth develops a plan with measurable goals.
- Incentives: Completion leads to no court action, record expungement, and positive reinforcement.

4. Collaboration & Communication:

- Multi-agency partnerships with designated contacts ensure smooth coordination.
- o Data sharing considerations include school attendance access

Key Considerations for Implementation

Do's:

- Ensure voluntary, confidential participation.
- Prioritize harm reduction and accountability.
- Offer culturally and linguistically relevant support.
- Promote parental and family engagement.

Don'ts:

- Avoid punitive measures or incarceration.
- No court-ordered or probation-mandated participation.
- Eliminate bias in eligibility determinations.

Success Metrics & Continuous Improvement

Short-Term Goals:

- 90% program completion rate.
- 0% recidivism during participation.

Long-Term Goals:

- 90% of youth avoid reoffending within six months of completion.
- Monthly check-ins for continued support post-completion.

Support Services Available

Family Interventions and Engagement (counseling, family events).



2



- Substance Use & Mental Health Support (therapy/counseling, anger management, intensive outpatient services).
- Mentoring & Life-Skills Training (career readiness, educational assistance, pro-social activities).
- Wraparound Services

Contact Information:

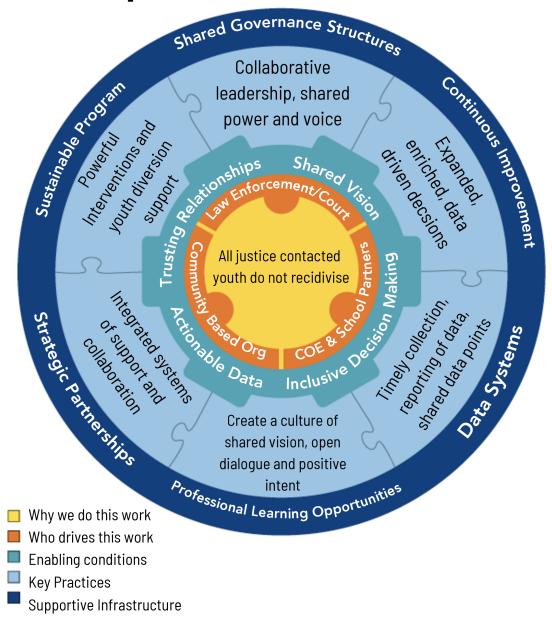
For referrals, eligibility questions, or partnership inquiries, please contact:

Neera Bhatnagar, LCSW Manager, Project ASCEND Santa Cruz County Office of Education 831-466-5852





Project ASCEND Operations Team Model

























Project ASCEND Operations Team Kick Off Agenda

January 10, 2025 11:00a to 1:00p
Santa Cruz COE, Tech Center, 400 Encinal St. Santa Cruz, CA
Link to Slide Deck

| Agenda Items | Presenter | Time |
|---|------------|-------|
| Welcome/ Lunch | Rishi/ All | 11:00 |
| Introductions/ Contact Information | All | 11:15 |
| Agreements | Rishi | 11:30 |
| Connector: Give One Get One | All | 11:35 |
| Review: Existing Diversión Work - WPD: Caminos Hacia el Éxito | Caminos | 12:00 |
| Review: Goals and Vision of Proposition 47 - BSCC Grant Mental Health, Substance Use, and Diversion Services Restorative Justice and Community Partnerships Focus on Underserved Populations Capacity Building and Data-Driven Programs Project ASCEND - Grant Proposal | Rishi | 12:15 |
| Planning: Project ASCEND Operations Team Model | Rishi | 12:20 |
| Planning: Breakout Groups • Brainstorm Poster Exercise | All | 12:25 |
| Planning: Group Share Out | All | 12:45 |
| Closure: Bi-Weekly: 1 hour Meetings (Doodle Poll Link) • Structure · Connector · Review of previous meeting notes · Planning · Close/ Next Steps | Rishi | 12:50 |
| Closure: Questions/ Next Steps | All | 12:55 |























Project ASCEND Operations Team Meeting #2 Agenda

January 24, 2025 11:00a to 1:00p Zoom

Link to Slide Deck

| Agenda Items | Presenter | Time |
|---|------------|------|
| Welcome | Neera | 1:00 |
| Introductions/ Contact Information | Neera | 1:05 |
| Agreements | Rishi | 1:10 |
| Connector: • 3 P's (Person, Profession, Peculiar) | Neera | 1:15 |
| Review: • Notes from Meeting # 1 • Operations Team Model | All | 1:25 |
| Planning: Word Cloud - SLIDO | Rishi | 1:40 |
| Planning: Breakout Groups: Random • Define Keywords from Word Cloud | Neera | 1:50 |
| Planning: Whole Group Discussion | ALL | 2:15 |
| Closure: Remaining Meeting Dates • 2/7 12 to 1:30 - In person • 2/28 12 to 1:30 - Zoom • 3/14 12 to 1:30 - In person • 3/28 12 to 1:30 - Zoom • April and beyond - To be discussed | Neera | 2:20 |
| Closure: Questions/ Next Steps Homework: Partner Services Questionnaire Due Date: 2/14/25 Feedback Form | Julie/ ALL | 2:25 |



Project ASCEND Operational Definitions

Developed by the Operations Team at Meeting #1 1/10/25 and Meeting #2 1/24/25

Development Process - Meeting #1 1/10/25:

Poster 1: Healing, Transformation, and Support

- 1. Healing, transformation, and modeling for kids = connectedness.
- 2. Access to wellness and recovery resources (ongoing).
- 3. Engage in addressing community problems.
- 4. Providing opportunities and support to youth to address equity.
- 5. "This is what I want to do!"
- 6. Making a positive generational impact.
- 7. Compensating for struggles that youth and families experience.
- 8. "This is how our world can improve."

Poster 2: Healthier Relationships with Substances

- 1. Healthier relationships with drugs, cannabis, and alcohol in our community.
- 2. "Our youth are threatened."
- 3. Community members will know where and how to get support.
- 4. Long-term follow-up to impact success.
- 5. Measure impacts on youth (e.g., depression, anxiety).
- Address causes.
- 7. Accountability ≠ punishment.
- 8. Redefining success.

Poster 3: Community Support and Involvement

- 1. Increased community support.
- Increased community involvement (youth and families).
- 3. Data collection to show effectiveness.
- 4. Participants do not reoffend.
- 5. Changing the narrative.
- 6. Positive relationships.
- 7. Youth have increased/improved job opportunities.
- 8. Youth and families accessing resources.
- 9. Success stories being highlighted.

Poster 4: Financial and Community Impact

- 1. Positively impact our community through financial decisions.
- 2. Advocating for youth programming and financial allocations.
- 3. Student-centered financial decisions.
- 4. Being part of the solution instills confidence in the community.
- 5. Exciting to be included in a countywide project that could become a state or national model.



Poster 5: Youth Opportunities and Collaboration

- 1. More opportunities for youth internships.
- 2. Clear and open communication for reporting (e.g., payroll, expenses, time/attendance reporting).
- 3. Collaborate with other County Offices of Education (COEs) and districts with similar programs (e.g., Salinas PD).
- 4. Identify potential obstacles/challenges and learn from others.

Poster 6: True Transformation Opportunities

- 1. True meaningful opportunities to support transformation.
- 2. Shared language and definitions for key concepts (e.g., recidivism, success, program completion).

Poster 7: Central Coast Diversion Initiatives

- 1. Helping people, fostering community, and creating a positive impact.
- 2. Increased inclusivity and safety.
- 3. Giving back and being relatable ("homegrown").
- 4. Proactive referrals to reduce youth recidivism.
- 5. Embedding personnel in schools and police departments to provide referrals and connect youth to resources.

Considerations - Meeting #1 1/10/25:

1. Healing, Transformation, and Support

- Focus on healing and modeling connectedness for kids.
- Ensure ongoing access to wellness and recovery resources.
- Address community problems and provide opportunities for youth.
- Emphasize equity and creating a generational impact.
- Recognize and compensate for struggles faced by youth and families.
- Vision: "This is how our world can improve."

2. Healthier Relationships with Substances

- Promote healthier relationships with drugs, alcohol, and cannabis.
- Protect youth and provide community support.
- Establish long-term follow-up to measure success.
- Address mental health impacts like depression and anxiety.
- Accountability ≠ punishment; redefine success.

3. Community Impact and Financial Decisions

- Make student-centered financial decisions.
- Advocate for youth programming through financial allocations.
- Build confidence in the community with effective solutions.
- Highlight the potential for a countywide project to become a state/national model.

4. Community Support and Involvement

Increase community involvement and support for youth and families.



- Collect data to show program effectiveness.
- Prevent recidivism and change the narrative for youth.
- Foster positive relationships and highlight success stories.

5. Opportunities and Communication

- Expand opportunities for youth internships.
- Streamline communication for reporting (e.g., payroll, expenses).
- Collaborate with other agencies to identify challenges and learn from similar programs.

6. True Transformation Opportunities

- Provide meaningful opportunities for personal transformation.
- Develop shared language and definitions for success and recidivism.

7. Central Coast Diversion Initiatives

- Foster inclusivity, community safety, and a sense of giving back.
- Emphasize proactive referrals to reduce recidivism.
- Embed personnel in schools and police departments to enhance referral systems and support networks.

Operational Definitions Developed at Meeting #2 1/24/25

Success: Achieving goals with "no new offenses in six months" post-program completion, up to three years. Often measured using tools like the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment, which evaluates needs and strengths. Example: 89% successful completion of a three-month program, with 91% of those not reoffending.

Diversion: Law enforcement, community-based organization, or school district-driven efforts to intervene and prevent youth from entering the justice system. It aims to disrupt patterns of continued illegal behavior. For foster care youth, law enforcement communicates directly with social workers for alternative plans.

Unsuccessful: Failing to meet success criteria, such as recidivism within six months, or not reducing needs as assessed by tools like CANS, where severe needs remain unchanged.

Re-Offend: Committing an offense within the first six months of a diversion program. Includes instances where law enforcement issues a citation or arrest, and the District Attorney's office considers filing charges based on investigation outcomes.

Court-Ordered: A juvenile mandated by a judge to participate in a diversion program. Once ordered, the case is managed by probation, and community-based diversion options are no longer available.

Records Division: Collaboration between ASCEND youth coordinators and law enforcement records departments to intervene and prevent cases from advancing to probation.

Informal Probation: A conditional sentence where no probation officer oversees compliance, but the individual must follow court-ordered terms. Law enforcement and the court monitor any justice contacts during this period. Diversion occurs pre-adjudication.



Convicted vs. Adjudicated: Juveniles are not "convicted" but rather "adjudicated."

Harm Reduction: Non-punitive approaches to substance use issues, such as providing clean syringes or working with youth to avoid harmful substances like fentanyl.

Program Completion: Successfully finishing a diversion or intervention program as outlined in its specific requirements.

Outreach: Efforts to engage and connect with youth or communities, often to inform and support participation in programs.

Trauma-Informed: An approach recognizing the impacts of past trauma, ensuring sensitivity in interactions and program structures.

Gang-Involved: Youth identified as being part of a gang or demonstrating gang-related behaviors.

Recidivism: Youth engaging in illegal behavior again after completing a diversion program.

Culturally Competent: Acknowledging and respecting cultural contexts of the populations served. This includes curiosity about their cultural background but does not necessarily require bilingualism.

Implicit Bias: Unconscious attitudes, feelings, or stereotypes that influence behavior and decisions.

Citation vs. Arrest: A citation is a type of arrest, typically used for misdemeanors. While both are forms of legal intervention, citations feel different than custodial arrests.

Restitution: Restoring or compensating victims, often a civil matter. Example: Shoplifting cases handled through civil restitution agreements.

DA Involvement: Cases kept in-house are referred to probation for violations or incomplete diversions. Probation then decides whether to escalate the matter to the District Attorney.

Restorative Justice Intervention: Practices that repair harm and rebuild relationships through community-centered resolutions.

Cultural Humility: A commitment to ongoing self-reflection and awareness of cultural differences, respecting those served without assuming superiority.

New Offense: Any offense occurring during or shortly after program participation, as defined by justice system timelines.

Fights (No Weapons): Physical altercations reviewed on a case-by-case basis, considering injuries, context (e.g., hate crime or gang motivation), and history of the youth involved.





Project ASCEND YOUTH DIVERSION PROGRAM AGREEMENT

| Partic | ipant Name: | Case #: |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---|
| incider | nt on m rather thar | ected to participate in the ASCEND Youth Diversion Program due to an This opportunity allows your case to be handled through our a the Juvenile Justice System. Your participation will begin on _ and will successfully conclude upon completion of the agreement terms. |
| YOUR | R STRENG | THS & PROGRAM COMMITMENTS |
| During | your intake, | we identified these strengths that will support your success: |
| • | | |
| To bui | ld on these st | rengths and create positive outcomes, you are committing to: |
| 1. | | Reflection: Complete an elective essay on decision-making and how your ct yourself and others. This is an opportunity to demonstrate your insight and ing skills. |
| 2. | | Contribution: Complete assigned hours of community service in an area s your interests and skills. This allows you to use your strengths to make a erence. |
| 3. | • | lity & Accountability: Write a letter of apology that demonstrates your ng of impact and ability to take responsibility for your actions. |
| 4. | Positive Ho | me Engagement: |
| | Be hyour | w household guidelines established by your family ome by 10:00 PM nightly, including weekends unless otherwise specified by parents/guardians. municate respectfully with family members |
| 5. | Educationa | Success: Attend school regularly and participate positively at: |
| 6. | Lawful Beh | avior: Make choices that keep you and others safe by following all laws. |
| 7. | Additional | Growth Opportunity: |



Project ASCEND Training Needs Assessment Survey

Training Opportunities Your assistance is needed in identifying the training opportunities that you believe would be beneficial for your agency. Please consider the needs of the entire department as you provide your input. Your feedback is essential in guiding our planning for the upcoming year. If you participated in person on March 15, there is no need to submit this form. Thank you. **Email** Your answer **Trauma-Informed Work** Understanding the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Recognizing signs of trauma in youth and appropriate de-escalation techniques Strategies for engaging with youth in a supportive, non-punitive manner We need it! We are already trained in it! No, not for us! Curious, need more info. **Adolescent Brain Development & Decision-Making** Neuroscience of youth behavior and impulse control Impact of peer influence and environmental stressors on youth choices Techniques for effective communication with adolescents We need it! We are already trained in it!



No, not for us!

Curious, need more info.

| Restorative Justice Practices Principles of restorative justice and its application in diversion |
|--|
| Facilitating restorative circles and victim-offender dialogues |
| Alternatives to punitive measures that focus on accountability and healing |
| We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! |
| No, not for us! |
| Curious, need more info. |
| Implicit Bias & Cultural Competency Recognizing and addressing biases in youth interactions |
| Culturally responsive approaches to diversion |
| Building trust with diverse youth populations |
| We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! |
| No, not for us! |
| Curious, need more info. |
| De-Escalation and Conflict Resolution Techniques Non-violent communication skills |
| Mediation strategies for youth conflicts |
| Managing situations involving emotionally distressed youth |
| We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! |
| No, not for us! |
| Curious, need more info. |
| |





| Family & Caregiver Engagement Strategies Partnering with families to support youth success |
|--|
| Culturally sensitive approaches to family engagement |
| Empowering families as partners in the diversion process |
| My child test |
| ○ We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! |
| No, not for us! |
| Curious, need more info. |
| School & Law Enforcement Collaboration Positive police presence in schools |
| School-based diversion efforts |
| Alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices |
| We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! |
| No, not for us! |
| Curious, need more info. |
| |
| Other topics suggested: Individual Educational Plans and Manifestations |
| We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! |
| No, not for us! |
| Curious, need more info. |
| OTHER SUCCESTIONS |

OTHER SUGGESTIONS



Project ASCEND Training Survey Responses

Agency Respondents: Law Enforcement (4), CBO (4), Other (3)

| | ~ , , | T . | \ // | ` '' | <u>'</u> |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| Trauma- Informed Work Understanding the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Recognizing signs of trauma in youth and appropriate de- escalation techniques Strategies for engaging with youth in a supportive, non- punitive manner | Adolescent Brain Development & Decision- Making Neuroscience of youth behavior and impulse control Impact of peer influence and environmental stressors on youth choices Techniques for effective communication with adolescents | Restorative Justice Practices Principles of restorative justice and its application in diversion Facilitating restorative circles and victim-offender dialogues Alternatives to punitive measures that focus on accountability and healing | Implicit Bias & Cultural Competency Recognizing and addressing biases in youth interactions Culturally responsive approaches to diversion Building trust with diverse youth populations | De-Escalation and Conflict Resolution Techniques Non-violent communication skills Mediation strategies for youth conflicts Managing situations involving emotionally distressed youth | Youth Rights & Legal Considerations Understanding juvenile justice laws and policies Confidentiality and ethical considerations in working with youth |
| Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. |
| We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We are already trained in it! | We need it! |
| We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | Curious, need more info. | We are already trained in it! |
| We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | We are already trained in it! |
| We are already trained in it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! |
| | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! |
| We need it! | We are already trained in it! | | We need it! | We are already trained in it! | We need it! |
| We need it! | Curious, need more info. | | We are already trained in it! | Curious, need more info. | We need it! |
| We need it! | | We need it! | We need it! | Curious, need more info. | We need it! |
| We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We are already trained in it! | We need it! | We are already trained in it! |
| | We need it! | We need it! | | | |



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|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| Motivational Interviewing for Positive Behavior Change Techniques for engaging youth in goal-setting Encouraging self-reflection and personal growth Identifying youth strengths and fostering resilience | Mental Health & Substance Use/Abuse Awareness Recognizing signs of mental health challenges in youth Referral processes for mental health and substance use support Reducing stigma and providing supportive interventions | Education & Employment Pathways for Youth Connecting youth with education, vocational training, and job opportunities Understanding barriers to academic success and employment Supporting youth in skill- building for future success | Family & Caregiver Engagement Strategies Partnering with families to support youth success Culturally sensitive approaches to family engagement Empowering families as partners in the diversion process My child test | School & Law Enforcement Collaboration Positive police presence in schools School-based diversion efforts Alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices | Other topics suggested: Individual Educational Plans and Manifestations |
| Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. |
| We need it! | We are already trained in it! | We need it! | We need it! | We are already trained in it! | We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! | We are already trained in it! | Curious, need more info. | We need it! | | We need it! |
| Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | | We need it! | | We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! | We need it! |
| We are already trained in it! | We are already trained in it! | | We need it! | We are already trained in it! | |
| We are already trained in it! | | Curious, need more info. | We need it! | We need it! | |
| Curious, need more info. | | Curious, need more info. | We are already trained in it! | We need it! | We need it! |
| Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | Curious, need more info. | We need it! | |
| We are already trained in it! | We are already trained in it! Curious, need more info. | | | Curious, need more info. | |





Project ASCEND Intake Forms (for Navigate 360 Data Management) ** required

Referral Information: (Youth Specialist complete most ahead of scheduled Intake appt)

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| **Would you like assistance with housing resources? □ Yes □ No |
|--|
| elf-Assessment |
| How would you describe yourself? What do you feel are your greatest strengths? What personal goals would you like assistance with? What do you see as your biggest challenges? Have you participated in any youth programs before? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, which ones? |
| What are your interests/hobbies? What is important for me to know about you? |
| ducation/Employment Information: |
| Current School: Grade: **Level of Education: Drop down with Enrolled in middle school Enrolled in high school Enrolled in vocational training Enrolled in 2/4 year college Some middle school Some high school High school graduation or GED Some college Vocational Training Other Unknown Decline to State |
| Attendance Issues? □ Yes □ No |
| Special Education/IEP/504 Plan? □ Yes □ No Academic performance or Concerns: □ Yes □ No □ If yes, please describe: |
| Behavioral Concerns at School? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please describe: Future education plans: |
| Extracurricular Activities/Interests: **Employment Status: drop down menu Employed, full time Employed, part time Not working due to age, disability, student, volunteer or homemaker |



Unemployed

Other

• **Would you like assistance with finding a job? \square Yes \square No

| Who lives in your home? | |
|--|--|
| Describe your relationship with fam | ily members: |
| Home Environment Concerns? □ Y | es □ No |
| If yes, describe: | |
| Peer Relationships: □ Healthy □ N | eeds Support |
| Gang Associations: ☐ Yes ☐ No | |
| o Specifics: | |
| Natural Supports (mentors, "aunts/or | uncles", coaches, religious leader, etc.) |
| Have there been any major life eve | nts recently? □ Yes □ No If yes, explain: |
| | |
| Behavioral Health (Mental Health, Subst | ance Use) |
| Have you ever received mental heaIf yes, explain: | |
| | ng or you would benefit from mental health services? |
| Do you feel you could benefit from □ Yes □ No | nformation or a referral to substance use services? |
| Strengths/Risks/Protective Factors: | |
| Strengths: | |
| Concerns: | |
| Protective Factors: | |

Psychosocial (Family, Social, Cultural)

Confidentiality Notice: All information provided in this form is confidential and will only be shared with necessary service providers to ensure appropriate support. Data entered into Navigate 360 and for BSCC Prop 47 compliance will be used for case tracking and reporting purposes.



Identified Needs:

| Identified Needs (Check all that apply): |
|--|
| □ Academic Support/Tutoring (set task to School liasion/PS Coordinator) |
| ○ □ Mentorship |
| ○ □ Family Support Services |
| ○ □ Vocational Training/Job Readiness |
| ○ □ Recreational Activities |
| ○ □ Restorative Justice Practices (link to crc?) |
| ○ □ Housing Assistance |
| o □ Other: |
| Youth's Personal Goals for the Program: |
| Parent/Guardian Goals for the Youth: |
| **Accepted Services: □ Yes □ No |
| **Refused Services: □ Yes □ No (refer to probation) |
| info and print out for youth/family, and obtain signatures to scan back into Nav360 for record keeping. Will need in spanish as well |
| Additional Info for Navigate 360 see below |
| <u>Case Management Monthly Reports all required (autopopulate identifiers?)</u> Youth name: ID: |
| Age: |
| Gender: |
| n e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e |
| Race: |
| Race: Level of Education: Prior Arrests: always YES |





| School Contact: |
|---|
| Concerns: |
| Positives: |
| Notes: (Dates of contact and ability to summarize) |
| Other resource: |
| Contact: |
| Progress: |
| Notes: (Dates of contact and ability to summarize) |
| Community Service Hours: |
| Contact: |
| Summary: |
| Date/Hours completed |
| Notes: |
| Conflict Resolution |
| Contact: |
| Services: |
| Summary: (Dates of contact and ability to summarize) |
| Assignments: |
| Essay □ Yes □ No Date Completed: (calendar) |
| Letter of apology □ Yes □ No. Date Completed:(calendar) |
| Letter of applicated the property pate Completed (Calendar) |

End of services Assessment: REQUIRED

**Participation Status: Drop down menu:

- One time intervention
- Enrolled, active participant (including returning participants)
- Enrolled, no contact in previous quarter
- Exited without completing program requirements (regardless of reason)
- Completed program requirements
- Completed program requirements, still active

**Employment Status Completion Drop down Menu

Employed, full time Employed, part time Not working due to age or status (disability, student, volunteer or caregiver, etc) Unemployed, looking for work Other

**Self-reported or verified housing status at the time of program completion.

Independent living/housing
Family/relative homes
Foster care
Permanent Supportive Housing
Bridge Housing
Transitional Housing
Rapid Rehousing
Homeless
Other

