

TRIBAL YOUTH DIVERSION



Tribal Youth Diversion Grant Program Cohort 2 Statewide Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tribal Youth Diversion (TYD) Grant Program was established by the 2019 Budget Act (Chapter 23, Statutes of 2019), following its origins in the Youth Reinvestment Grant (YRG). The program was designed to divert Native American youth from initial or repeat contact with the juvenile legal system. The program directed resources to communities facing high rates of youth justice involvement, substance use and mental health challenges, and low high school graduation rates. The initiative emphasized the delivery of evidence-based, culturally relevant, and trauma-informed services and interventions.

Cohort II operated from July 1, 2020, through December 31, 2023, with \$9.7 million made available to nine federally recognized tribes. By program conclusion, \$7,526,809 had been expended to deliver interventions including clinical and behavioral health services, educational and career development, supportive services and case management, and community-based cultural enrichment.

Statewide evaluation of the TYD program synthesizes the overall programmatic impacts using aggregated grantee reported data. Although the evaluation findings provide an overview of the diverse program services and youth engaged, measures of program outcomes differed across grantees. Noting this evaluation design, the key findings are summarized below.

- **Program Reach:** TYD Cohort II served 920 Tribal youth across the three-and-a-half-year grant cycle.
- **Grantee Resilience:** Despite the widespread disruptions in program implementation and outreach caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, grantees adapted programming to sustain both direct services and community engagement. Over the course of the grant cycle, programs delivered 1,396 cultural enrichment activities that strengthened Indigenous identity and cultural knowledge among participants. Additionally, programs provided 2,299 instances of academic support and career counseling, facilitated 1,734 case management and referral services connecting youth to appropriate supports, delivered 492 mental health interventions and trauma-informed trainings, and conducted 833 mentoring and family engagement sessions that fostered stronger connections and resilience.
- **Community Engagement:** Three quarters of grantees (78%) incorporated community and school-based cultural enrichment events, that potentially reached an estimated 13,381 youth, teachers, and community members.
- **Cultural Impact:** 77% of youth who completed their respective programs reported greater connection to their Indigenous heritage and stronger cultural identity.
- **Academic Gains:** 72% of youth who completed their respective programs showed improved academic performance, 61% reduced absenteeism, and 44% demonstrated increased prosocial school behavior, resulting in reduced suspensions and expulsions.

TRIBAL YOUTH DIVERSION PROGRAM

Native American youth face complex systemic disparities, with significant numbers experiencing higher incarceration rates, mental health and substance use struggles, and academic inequity (Garcia JL, 2020). The Tribal Youth Diversion (TYD) Grant Program was created to address these inequities by reducing initial or further involvement with the juvenile justice system by providing Tribal youth with alternatives to formal system involvement. The program emphasized culturally responsive interventions that are evidence-based, community-focused, and trauma-informed.

The TYD Grant Program was established by the 2019 Budget Act (Chapter 23, Statutes of 2019), following its initial development under the Youth Reinvestment Grant (YRG) created through the 2018 Budget Act (Chapter 29, Statutes of 2018) and Assembly Bill 1812 (Chapter 36, Statutes of 2018). While the YRG served as the foundation for expanding diversion opportunities across California, the 2019 legislation identified the importance of creating a dedicated program tailored to the unique needs of Native American youth.

In September 2019, the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) convened an Executive Steering Committee (ESC) consisting of subject matter experts on Native American populations, Tribal culture, youth diversion programs, trauma-informed care, and law enforcement. The ESC included members with Native American heritage, whose lived experience helped inform the program's priorities and direction. Committee members developed rating criteria, proposal scoring parameters, and funding categories defined within the Request for Proposals (RFP).

Eligible applicants for the TYD Cohort II Grant Program were federally recognized Native American Tribes in California. To be considered for funding, Tribal applicants were required to submit a proposal presenting a comprehensive plan for delivering diversion programs within their communities. Proposals were to outline strategies grounded in culturally driven, wellness-focused interventions, as well as provide evidence of the effectiveness of the proposed services in meeting the needs of the target population. In addition to a description of the proposed program, proposals had to include justification of community need, a detailed outline of the services and interventions to be provided, an evaluation plan, and a program budget.

In June 2020, the BSCC Board approved a total of \$9.7 million awarded to nine federally recognized tribes across California. Cohort II of the TYD Grant Program initiated on July 1, 2020, and concluded on December 31, 2023, with a total of \$7,526,809 in funds expended by the program's conclusion (see Table 1). These resources supported a diverse range of services aimed at addressing the diverse needs of Tribal youth. Funded activities included clinical and behavioral health services, educational and career development opportunities, supportive services and case management, and community-centered cultural enrichment programs that drew upon Tribal traditions and practices.

Table 1 Grant Award and Funds Spent

| Grantee | Amount Awarded | Funding Spent |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians | \$845,629 | \$587,264 |
| Fort Mojave Indian Tribe | \$1,356,106 | \$777,748 |
| Hoopla Valley Tribal Court | \$1,025,015 | \$1,023,269 |
| Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria | \$1,330,870 | \$673,125 |
| Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians | \$873,398 | \$516,694 |
| Pinoleville Pomo Nation | \$1,400,000 | \$1,400,000 |
| San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians | \$671,790 | \$666,524 |
| Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians | \$1,399,141 | \$1,363,743 |
| Yurok Tribe | \$798,303 | \$518,442 |
| Total | \$9,700,252 | \$7,526,809 |

DATA COLLECTION APPROACH

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORTS

Grantees submitted quarterly progress reports (QPRs) detailing program goals, service descriptions, goal achievement and challenges, and aggregate participant data, including unduplicated quarterly program enrollments, participant demographics, and youth outcomes.¹ The QPR data from across 14 quarters was extracted and cleaned, then summarized across all grantees to generate a picture of overall program performance.

DATA LIMITATIONS

Although grantees aimed to provide accurate quarterly data, evaluation expertise varied across sites. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded these challenges, as staffing shortages and shifting priorities limited the capacity of some programs to collect and report comprehensive data. As a result, some programs were limited in the type or quality of the information they were able to provide. The BSCC does not evaluate or audit data collection or reporting processes. Accordingly, the data presented in this report are descriptive in nature and should not be interpreted as evidence of causal effects on participant outcomes.

¹ [TYD Cohort II Quarterly Progress Report Template](#)

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

TYD grantees implemented diversion programs designed to meet the complex needs of their youth populations while aligning with available community resources. As a result, the nine programs included in this evaluation showcase a diverse array of services, implementation strategies, and program goals.

DIVERSION PROGRAM TYPE

Grantees were required to identify the setting in which youth were diverted from juvenile system contact, with some programs implementing multiple alternatives to formal court processing. Table 2 summarizes the types of Tribal youth diversion programs and the proportion of grantees that implemented each diversion framework.

Table 2 *Program Type and Description*

| Diversion Program Type |
|--|
| Tribal Diversion (78% of programs) |
| Diversion programs developed and administered by Tribal governments or organizations, grounded in Tribal sovereignty, culture, and traditions. These programs often integrate culturally relevant practices, traditional healing, and community-led approaches to support youth. |
| School-Based Diversion (67% of programs) |
| Programs implemented in educational settings to redirect youth away from law enforcement referral and toward supportive interventions that can address behavioral or academic challenges. |
| Family/Youth Self-Referral (44% of programs) |
| The option for youth or their families to voluntarily access diversion services without formal justice system involvement. |
| Pre-Arrest Diversion (22% of programs) |
| Interventions initiated by law enforcement prior to the filing of formal charges. These programs aim to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system by connecting them to supportive services at the earliest point of system contact. |

Court Diversion (22% of programs)

Alternatives offered after a youth had been referred to juvenile court, but before formal adjudication. These programs typically suspend or dismiss charges contingent completion of program requirements.

Probation Diversion (22% of programs)

Programs that provide alternatives for youth who might otherwise be placed under formal probation supervision. These programs emphasize community-based services, restorative practices, and supportive monitoring over traditional probation conditions.

SERVICES AND INTERVENTIONS

The TYD Grant Program supported and enhanced Tribal efforts to divert youth from justice system involvement via interventions that prioritized culturally relevant education, trauma-informed behavioral health care, academic and career supports, family engagement, and community centering healing practices. Grantees implemented a diverse range of services that were grouped into six broader categories for the purpose of this evaluation: Case Management and Referral Services, Cultural Identity, Education and Career Development, Restorative Justice, Mental Health Interventions, and Mentoring/Family Support (see Table 3 for service descriptions).

Table 3 Services Provided and Implementation Across Programs

|  Case Management and Referral Services |
|--|
| <p>Referral/Linkages to Community Support Services (100% of programs) Connecting youth to community-based supports such as transportation, food access, laundry services, and after-school programs.</p> |
| <p>Referral/Linkages to Mental Health Services (89% of programs) Connecting youth to external mental health services, either through direct partnerships or by providing access to counseling, therapy, or related resources.</p> |
| <p>Referral/Linkages to Alcohol or Drug Services (89% of programs) Connecting youth to external services that address alcohol or drug use, including outpatient/inpatient treatment, counseling, or peer support groups.</p> |
| <p>Referral/Linkages to Other Services (89% of programs) Connecting youth to additional external support through active referrals or warm hand-offs, beyond simply providing resource lists.</p> |
| <p>Risk/Needs Assessments (89% of programs) Assessing youth risk and needs, developing individualized plans, and monitoring progress over time.</p> |



Connecting to Cultural Identity

Cultural Enrichment/Education (78% of programs)

Providing education focused on helping youth develop an understanding of and an identity within Native American culture.

Native Cultural Education in Classrooms and Events (78% of programs)

Delivering cultural education in school or community settings to increase cultural awareness among youth and the broader community.

Immersion Retreats (22% of programs)

Offering retreats that immerse youth in cultural practices while strengthening trust and relationships in natural environments.



Education and Career Development

Academic Support/Tutoring (67% of programs)

Providing academic assistance such as tutoring, advising, study hall, or supplemental instruction.

Career Counseling (89% of programs)

Offering career guidance and employment preparation, including resume building, interview skills, and workplace readiness.

Workshops (67% of programs)

Any workshop(s) provided that do not fall under one of the other listed categories.



Restorative Justice

Tribal Court (67% of programs)

Using Tribal Court processes to divert youth from the juvenile justice system.



Mental Health Interventions

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (33% of programs)

Structured therapy led by a qualified practitioner to address emotional or behavioral challenges.

Family Counseling (33% of programs)

Professional counseling focused on strengthening family relationships and addressing shared challenges.

Trauma Training (44% of programs)

Providing training to help youth understand and cope with personal or historical trauma.

Wellness Training (55% of programs)

Offering training to build physical and emotional well-being and support youth empowerment.



Mentoring and Family Support

Mentoring (67% of programs)

Developing supportive one-on-one or group mentoring relationships that encourage positive youth development.

Parenting Training (44% of programs)

Providing workshops that help parents support youth participation and coordinate caregiving.

Youth/Family Support Groups (67% of programs)

Facilitating groups that offer peer support, shared experience, and mutual encouragement for youth and families.

Across the nine grantees, Case Management and Referral services were nearly universal, with 100% providing community-based linkages, and nearly 90% providing connections to mental health, substance use, and other support services. Cultural connection was also highly emphasized, with 78% of programs incorporating cultural enrichment and education, and about two thirds (67%) extending this work into schools and their local communities. Education and career development was also an area of strong focus, with most programs (89%) offering career planning services, and two-thirds (67%) providing academic guidance and workshops.

EXAMPLES OF TYD PROGRAM SERVICES



Connecting to Cultural Identity: Fort Mojave Tribal Youth Diversion Program

- Provided culturally grounded, trauma-informed, and family-centered supports to prevent youth system involvement.
- Offered cultural immersion retreats, workshops, and coaching.
- Engaged Tribal Elders and Native American peer mentors to strengthen cultural identity.



Case Management and Referral Services: The San Pasqual Tribal Youth Diversion Program

- Implemented a “Circle of Care” wraparound case management model for Tribal youth and their families.
- Connected participants to culturally specific supports through inter-agency referrals.
- Built a community-based system of care to reduce school truancy and justice involvement.



Mental Health Interventions: The Mechoopda Tribal Youth Program

- Delivered culturally adapted trauma-focused cognitive behavior therapy to address the impacts of historical and individual trauma.
- Supplemented therapy with wraparound supports and parenting workshops to strengthening youth and family well-being.

PARTICIPANTS

Grantees tracked the total number of youth who enrolled and exited their programs. For reporting purposes, “enrollment” was defined as youth receiving services for the first time, ensuring unduplicated counts. Youth who exited and later returned to the programs were classified as “re-enrolled”. The following section presents demographic information for all first-time participants enrolled over the 3.5-year grant period.²

² Youth who only registered at community events or received referrals, but were not formally enrolled, are not included in these totals.

YOUTH PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Over the duration of Cohort II, a total of 920 unique youth participants were enrolled in services or received program interventions across the duration of the grant. Among participants, 92% self-identified as Native American and 7% as Multi-Ethnic with some Native American heritage. Gender distribution was balanced, with 50% identifying as female and 49% as male. Fewer than 1% of participants identified as Non-Binary, Third Gender, or Two Spirit. In terms of age, 37% were 12 years old or younger, 61% were between 12 and 17 years old, and 2% were between 18 and 24 years old (see Table 4).

Table 4 *Demographic Characteristics of Program Participants*

| Category | Demographic Characteristic | Total Participants (%) |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------|
| Gender | Female | 49.8% |
| | Male | 48.8% |
| | Non-binary/3rd Gender | 0.5% |
| | Two-Spirit | 0.1% |
| | Prefer to Self-Define | 0.4% |
| | Unknown/Not Collected | 0.5% |
| Age Group | 12 years or younger | 36.7% |
| | 13-17 years | 60.6% |
| | 18-24 years | 1.6% |
| | Unknown/Not Collected | 1.1% |
| Race/Ethnicity | Native American/Alaska Native | 92.0% |
| | Asian | 0.2% |
| | Hispanic/Latino/Spanish | 0.8% |
| | White | 0.3% |
| | Multi-ethnic origin, ethnicity, or race | 6.8% |

Educational status at enrollment reflected that 37% of youth were enrolled in middle school, 41% in high school, and 18% were participating in other schooling or training. Employment status at intake indicated that 89% of participants identified as students not seeking work, 3% as employed, 2% were not employed or seeking employment due to disability or other factors, and employment status was either unknown or not collected for the remaining 6%.

The most common pathways into TYD programs were self or family referrals (26%) and outreach efforts (26%) such as school or community events and other public engagement. Smaller proportions of youth were referred through schools for truancy or behavioral issues (7%), organizations with referral agreements (5%), and the justice system (4%), primarily through probation. The remaining 25% came through other sources.

To best inform case management services, grantees conducted standardized risk assessments (e.g., Pediatric Adverse Childhood Experiences and Related Life Events Screener) to evaluate each participant’s likelihood of justice system involvement based on associated metrics. Grantees reported that 44% of youth were assessed as low risk,

18% as moderate risk and 15% as high risk. The remaining 23% were not assessed for risk status.

SERVICE PARTICIPATION

CULTURAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A rapidly growing body of research underscores the critical role of meaningful cultural knowledge and connection as a protective factor against adverse life outcomes in Native American youth (Wexler & Rasmus, 2021). In recognition of this, grantees not only delivered culturally competent direct services, but also implemented community and school-based activities designed to center Indigenous culture, foster cultural awareness, and increase program exposure to students and families who may not have been aware of the advocacy and referral services offered.



1,145
CULTURAL EVENTS

To capture these efforts, grantees reported the number of classroom-based cultural education activities they conducted, along with participant counts for students, teachers, and school staff. For programs that held Native cultural education events, totals were also provided for the number of events and the cumulative number of individuals who attended. Note that these are not unduplicated counts, as individuals may have attended multiple school or community events per reporting quarter. Additionally, in the early quarters, several programs adapted some activities for virtual delivery in response to COVID-19 restrictions, later transitioning to fully in-person events.

Three quarters (78%) of the TYD programs incorporated community-based cultural education throughout the grant period. Grantees hosted a variety of community-based events each month, including cultural gatherings, art and outdoor activities, traditional storytelling, talking circles, and workshops on traditional skills and practices. Over the grant period, programs carried out 643 community cultural enrichment and outreach events, engaging more than 11,264 community members.

In addition to community events, programs partnered with local schools to deliver classroom-based cultural education. Grantees hosted 502 classroom presentations and activities focused on Tribal history and language, heritage celebrations, as well as curriculum-integrated lessons emphasizing Indigenous culture and traditions. Collectively across all participating grantees, an estimated 2,117 Native American participants, their classmates, teachers, and other district staff engaged with the cultural education and outreach activities, see Figure 1 for the participant breakdown by quarter.³



13,381
CULTURAL EVENT
ATTENDEES

³ Due to slow program implementation associated with COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, Quarter 1 (July 1 – December 31, 2020) and Quarter 2 (January 1 – March 31, 2021) data were combined.

Figure 1 School-Based Native Cultural Education Participation by Quarter



CULTURAL ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians “Culture is Prevention” Program

- Hosted youth and family gatherings at Sherwood Valley Rancheria and Cahto Tribal Rancheria.
- Blended cultural, artistic, and outdoor activities that welcomed multi-generational participation.
- Included traditional Indigenous songs, regalia-making classes, and storytelling, encouraging youth to connect with and learn from Tribal Elders.

The San Pasqual Tribal Youth Diversion Program

- Advanced Kumeyaay cultural education through school and community-based presentations.
- Organized talking circles and cultural and awareness activities that highlighted Kumeyaay history and language.
- Coordinated events for Native American Heritage Month.
- Developed a cultural education curriculum for both school-aged youth and adults.

The Pinoleville Pomo Nation

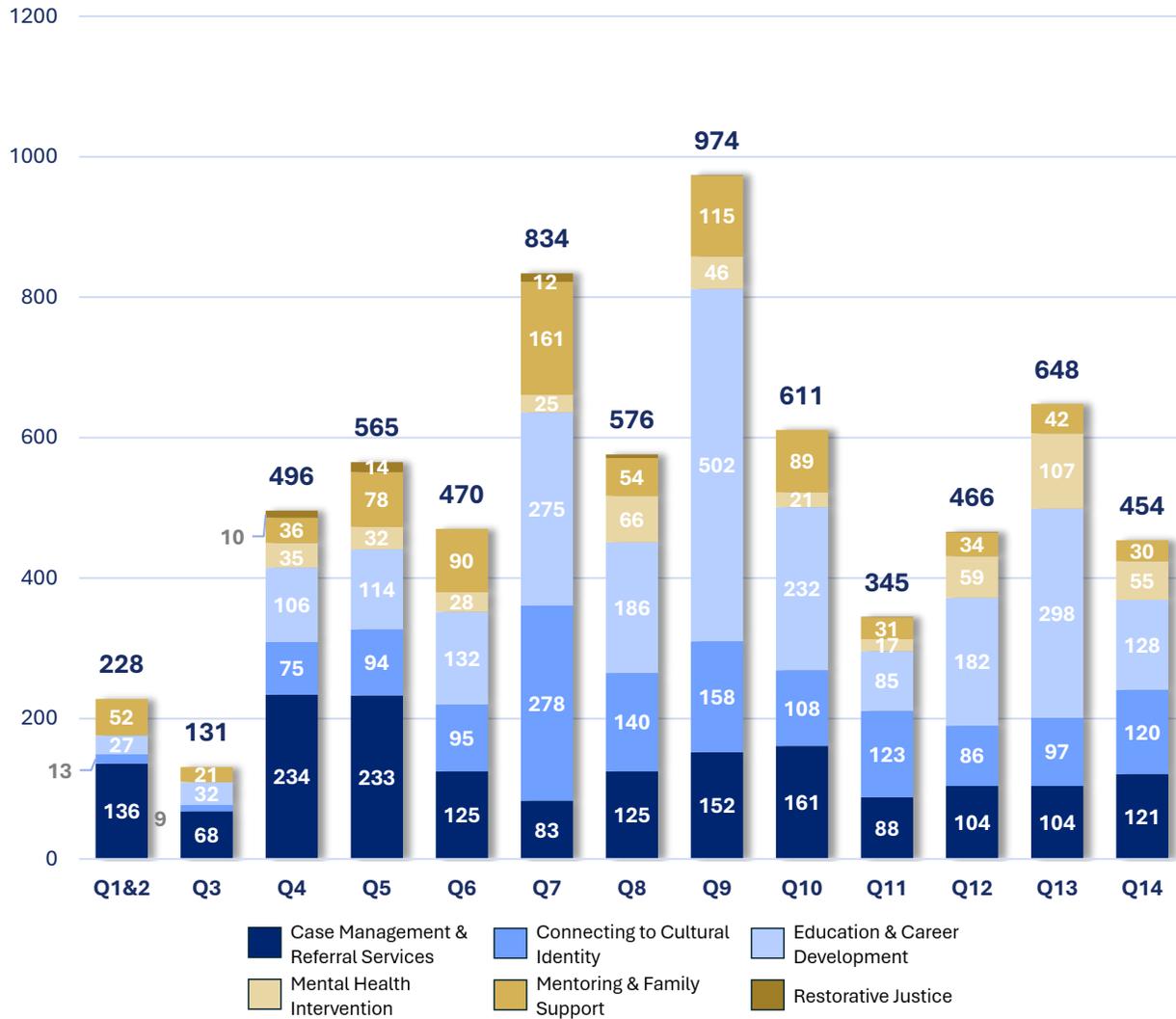
- Integrated cultural teachings into both community events and school-based education.
- Featured Pomo basketry, traditional games, dance and song, storytelling, Indigenous foods, and Northern Pomo language instruction.
- Addressed local history and lived experiences of prejudice in education.
- Incorporated cultural education into the classrooms, giving students and teachers opportunities to engage with Indigenous traditions.

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS IN PROGRAM SERVICES

Grantees were asked to report the total number of youth who participated in services each quarter, with most participants receiving multiple services each quarter (e.g., a participant receiving tutoring services, multiple sessions of cognitive behavior therapy, and participating in Tribal court would be counted once for each of those services). Additionally, if participants received ongoing services across multiple quarters, they were counted in each quarter that services were provided. Figure 2 displays the number of

youth who received each type of service⁴ by quarter, including participants who exited and re-enrolled multiple times (see Table 3 for detailed service descriptions).

Figure 2 Services Provided to Youth Participants by Quarter



As Figure 2 demonstrates, services were slow to start up. The greatest factor that contributed to delays in implementation was the COVID-19 pandemic. Stay-at-home orders were in place through the end of Quarter 4 (April 1 – June 30, 2021). Even with quarantine orders lifted, the pandemic impacted virtually all aspects of programming over

⁴ Program services were grouped into broader service categories (e.g., referral/linkage to community-based support services, referral/linkage to mental health services, referral/linkage to alcohol or drug services, and referral/linkage to any other services were grouped under case management and referral Services). Reference Table 3 for detailed description of each service type.

the life of the grant, with specifics discussed in greater detail in the Program Challenges section.

Education and career development services represented the largest share of service delivery throughout the grant period, highlighting grantees' emphasis on academic support and professional development. Case management and referral services, including referrals and linkages to mental health and substance use treatment, community support and other services were also a key component of programming, particularly in earlier quarters. Cultural enrichment and immersion activities prioritizing youth connection to cultural identity were delivered consistently across the grant period, reflecting the integration of Indigenous cultural practices within the fabric of grantee service models.

Overall service delivery peaked in Quarter 9, with some of the inconsistencies in service participation in later quarters likely reflecting challenges in maintaining consistent data reporting in the closing months of the grant period.

STATEWIDE OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM COMPLETION

Given the diversity across the programs, grantees independently established benchmarks to define "successful program completion". These benchmarks reflected program-specific milestones or minimum levels of service participation, such as achieving a 90% reduction in truancy, or completion of three months of academic tutoring. Youth were classified as having successfully exited the program only if they met these grantee specific benchmarks.

By the conclusion of the grant period, 23% (212) of participating youth successfully completed the program requirements. Four percent of youth exited prior to meeting the requirements for successful program completion. Of those, fewer than 1% exited due to justice involvement, while the remaining participants left the program because of attrition, non-compliance, or limited program fit. Presumably, the remaining 73% of participants either continued receiving program services or their status, whether successful program completion or exiting for other reasons, was not reported.

YOUTH OUTCOMES

To reflect the diversity of program capacities and the breadth of instruments used to measure participant progress, grantees reported the number of participants who demonstrated improvement across broad program indicators. While baseline metrics were not required, several grantees incorporated objective pre- and post-intervention measures, such as GPA, school attendance, and risk status, alongside structured surveys and interview narratives to provide a more comprehensive picture of participant outcomes. Of note, grantees limited their reporting of different outcomes to those that were directly relevant to the services that were provided. Additionally, grantees were able to report multiple outcomes for each youth participant; however, each outcome was only reported once for each participant. Table 6 shows the positive outcomes reported for the 212 youth who completed their respective programs.

Table 5 Positive Outcomes in Successfully Exited Youth

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | Cultural Awareness/Identity | 77% of youth improved their cultural knowledge and self-reported greater connection to their cultural identity. |
| | Academic Performance | 72% of youth improved academic performance. |
| | Risk Status | 71% of youth reduced their assessed risk status. |
| | Justice System Contact While Enrolled | 67% of youth had no contact with the criminal justice system while enrolled. |
| | School Attendance | 61% of youth improved their school attendance. |
| | Family/Caretaker Relationship | 60% of youth and/or their families reported improved familial relations. |
| | Mental Health | 57% of youth improved their mental health status. |
| | School Behavior | 44% of youth demonstrated increased prosocial school behavior, including reduction in suspensions and expulsions. |
| | Substance Use | 7% of youth reduced their substance use. |

The most prominent outcome reported for youth exiting the program was increased cultural knowledge, with 77% of youth indicating strengthened connection to their Indigenous culture and identity. Alongside cultural engagement, youth demonstrated gains in academics, with 72% of youth showing better academic performance, 61% having improved their school attendance, and 44% of youth engaging in increased prosocial behavior. Programs also reported protective impacts, with 71% of Tribal youth showing reduced assessed risk status, and 67% having had no contact with the criminal justice system while enrolled. Collectively, these data show that participants who completed their respective programs demonstrated or reported positive impacts across numerous life domains.

CHALLENGES AND HIGHLIGHTS

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Several grantees reported encountering numerous challenges over grant period, with the most prominent hurdles arising from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly all grantees reported significant disruptions in program implementation, with school closures, program activity cancellations, and staffing shortages impacting grantees to varying levels of severity. Grantees reported challenges arising from limited campus access, which hindered youth enrollment, referrals, and consistency in participation. Virtual fatigue, lack of in-person interaction, and delayed school re-openings further diminished program reach.

With program content needing to be adapted to virtual delivery, multiple grantees reported that they faced both technological and access barriers. Youth participants struggled to access reliable internet, devices, and private space to participate in remote activities. These factors created difficulties for academic support and cultural programming, which were designed for in-person delivery.

Several grantees experienced staff shortages resulting from hiring freezes, staff having to take medical leave, and turnover. This contributed to reduced operations within Tribal and partner agency offices, delayed inter-agency coordination, and ultimately slowed program start-up. Limited staff capacity over the grant cycle in conjunction with school closures also led to disruptions in participant tracking, collection of school performance metrics (i.e., attendance, truancy, test scores), resulting in reduced data reporting.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Despite the significant disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, grantees adapted their approaches and continued to deliver impactful services to Tribal youth, their families, and their communities. Their ability to reconfigure service delivery and sustain engagement under less-than-ideal circumstances is an accomplishment. Several programmatic successes are highlighted below.

Advancing programming anchored in Indigenous cultural frameworks, the Fort Mojave Tribal Youth Diversion Program provided opportunities for youth to become visible community leaders, volunteering at events, organizing activities, and teaching traditional practices such as bird songs and ribbon skirt making. Their cultural leadership extended beyond the reservation to include advocacy that contributed to the 2023 designation of Avi Kwa Ame (Spirit Mountain) as a national monument.⁵ Youth participants, supporting family, and community members who attended program events characterized the program as transformative, emphasizing its impact on cultural healing and leadership development.

The Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico BEAR (Bridging Education Action and Respect) program engaged 125 youth and their families in cultural enrichment, academic support,

⁵ [Proclamation Establishing the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument.](#)

and mentoring activities, despite significant staffing shortages. Tribal youth attended annual Youth-Gathering of Native Americans (Y-GONA) workshops, with attendees showing measurable increases in reported self-worth, rising from 84% at the 1st Y-GONA to 100% at the 3rd, and cultural connectedness, which rose from 61% to 86%. Parents and caregivers also benefited, reporting stronger relationships and renewed confidence in their family roles.

The Pinoleville Pomo Nation Tribal Youth Diversion Program reached nearly 150 youth via healthy living classes such as anti-bullying, traditional food demonstrations, financial literacy, and suicide awareness workshops. Cultural education classes were integrated into South Valley High School schedules to ensure every student and teacher received at least 60 minutes of weekly instruction on Pomo traditions, history, and language. Summer enrichment activities at Mendocino College and a weeklong cultural camp provided hands-on experiences in basket weaving, traditional plant use, and Pomo language, alongside college and career counseling.

CONCLUSIONS

The Tribal Youth Diversion Grant Program aimed to divert at-risk Native American youth from justice system contact through individualized, trauma-informed interventions that emphasize Indigenous culture and community healing. Cohort II grantees demonstrated meaningful progress in supporting Tribal youth over the course of the grant. Across nine grantees, the program reached more than 900 youth directly and thousands more through cultural community engagement activities. Particularly notable outcomes included strengthened cultural identity, improved academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and increased protective factors, all despite the extraordinary challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to note that progress for Native American youth cannot be fully represented through program completion or exit outcomes alone. Historical and intergenerational factors influence participant's experiences, and progress may not follow a linear trajectory. This evaluation highlights the value of considering both programmatic processes and outcomes. The creation of safe, community-focused spaces, building trust, and connecting Tribal youth with their cultural heritage may be as consequential as the quantifiable end products. By prioritizing non-punitive, culturally relevant approaches that promote youth resilience, the TYD program laid the groundwork for long-term change that may not be fully captured by short-term data.

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