

## **I. Project Background**

### *Overview*

The Merced County-Los Banos region Prop 47 initiative will provide a local intervention program targeting system-involved youth with a history of substance abuse. The intervention program will aim to increase system-involved youth/ young adults' educational attainment and pro-social attitudes; to reduce their risk assessment scores (i.e. PACT-2.0 and STRONG Assessments) and recidivism rates; and to increase youth-serving community-based organization (CBO) capacity, for substance abuse and mental health, in the Los Banos region.<sup>i</sup>

The key program strategies will include:

- 1) The development of a Youth and Family Safety Hub (the Hub), which will facilitate referrals to community-based organizations providing:
  - a. The culturally-competent, evidence-based El Joven Noble program
  - b. A Youth Leadership Advisory Council (YLAC)
  - c. Mentoring
  - d. Social services
- 2) Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), for substance use and mental health issues

The initiative will be focused on young males (ages 10-17) and transitioning young adults (ages 18-24) in the Los Banos region (i.e. Los Banos, Dos Palos, Gustine, and Santa Nella). These changes will be measured starting from the first six month follow-up after intake, and continue through until the end of the three-year initiative.

### *Program Goals*

- 1) Increase youth-serving CBO capacity, to address substance use and mental health, in the Los Banos region
- 2) Increase pro-social attitudes among system-involved youth and young adults
- 3) Increase educational attainment
- 4) Reduce risk assessment scores
- 5) Reduce recidivism

### *Program Objectives*

The Los Banos region initiative will develop a Youth and Family Safety Hub (the Hub), and provide Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) training to members of stakeholder organizations.

The Hub will provide referrals to El Joven Noble (EJN), a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA)-designated evidence-based program to twenty system-involved youth and young adults. Second, the Hub will facilitate referrals to a Youth Leadership Advisory Council (YLAC), by recruiting up to twenty EJN youth, to be advisors for the Los Banos initiative's planning and implementation. Third, the Hub will provide referrals to a network of community leaders. (The community leaders, in turn, will recruit and develop mentors, who will then mentor up to forty system-

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<sup>i</sup> Recidivism is defined as conviction of a new felony or misdemeanor committed within three years of release from custody or committed within three years of placement on supervision for a previous criminal conviction.

involved youth/ young adults.) Fourth, the Hub will provide referrals for social services, such as mental health, substance abuse, employment and housing.

Lastly, the Los Banos initiative will also provide training for up to forty members of stakeholder organizations to provide system-involved youth with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), for substance use and mental health issues.

### *History*

Chief Probation Officer Jeff Kettering led a Merced County stakeholder group in a series of meetings in January, 2017 with the purpose of addressing substance abuse and mental health issues among offending youth and young adults. The group was comprised of a number of community leaders, including public and private health and education service providers and CBOs. Some stakeholder participants conducted qualitative research during the process, holding two focus groups with system-involved youth and another with men serving life sentences at Chowchilla. This stakeholder process uncovered significant gaps in services that underscore the need for community-based treatment for substance abuse and mental health issues among system-involved youth and young adults.

According to the Merced County Public Health Department, only 5.7% of system-involved youth received counseling in the past year, which makes service provision for Latino youth/ young adults particularly challenging as they are less likely than others to access treatment. Hispanics/Latinos comprise a majority of the region's population (64%) according to the 2015 Census. Behavioral Health staff also revealed a significant waiting period for county-run mental health or Alcohol / Other Drug treatment, which as of February 8, 2017, was approximately two months for an Intake Assessment for AOD services and a month for a Mental Health assessment. The group identified significant travel and time issues for clients attempting to access services outside of their community, as well as a near total lack of community-based organizations that serve youth and young adults. The group found that, while there are a small number of young people being served by City of Merced CBOs, there is not a single youth-serving CBO located in Los Banos.

To address these gaps, stakeholders agreed on the concept of providing trauma-informed substance abuse and mental health training to youth-serving adults in the Los Banos region and expanding the Juvenile Hall probation staff-initiated "El Joven Noble" groups into the region's community and schools.

### *Key Stakeholders*

Category	Role
Merced County Probation Department	Oversight of Prop 47 grant program
Merced District Attorney's Office	Information sharing with Probation
Los Banos Police Department	
Merced Human Services Administration Behavioral Health	Provide referrals through the Hub
Merced County Office of Education	Help facilitate trainings for staff in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, information sharing of school related progress data
Los Banos Unified School District	Help facilitate trainings for staff in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, information sharing of school related progress data

Community-based Organizations	Provide oversight of day to day Prop 47 functions and programs
Service Providers	

### *Evaluation Services*

Merced County has entered into a contract with Dr. Edward Flores, Associate Professor of Sociology, UC Merced, to provide the evaluation component of the grant program. He will work closely with Probation staff and all contracted service providers to ensure all phases of implementation and data collection are carried out according to plan.

## **II. Evaluation Plan**

### *Evaluation Plan Goal*

To evaluate the performance of the Los Banos region initiative program, targeting system-involved youth with a history of substance abuse. This includes the following three stages:

- 1) To assess and monitor the tracking of the program data (to ensure accuracy and reliability);
- 2) To assess program fidelity (the extent to which program objectives are implemented as intended);
- 3) To measure the program goal (i.e. the long-term outcome)—the effect of program activities on pro-social attitudes, education, risk assessment scores and recidivism.

The first stage of the evaluation will involve the program evaluator assessing and monitoring the tracking of program data. This will require that the evaluator (or someone from the evaluation team) meet with representatives of the HUB or stakeholder organizations (i.e. Merced County Probation) and conduct interviews. Interviews will track the provision of technical assistance, determine the level and quality of collaboration, and identify needs and assess sustainability; these interviews will be necessary to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data collection practices. The evaluator may recommend modifications to data collection practices in order to ensure systematic, and unbiased, collection of data.

As the initiative is underway, the program evaluator will then request program documentation from the county's two case management systems, the school district, Probation and/or the DA's Office and police department. At regular intervals, program documentation will be requested from each grantee implementation site. Program documentation will contain participant information (demographic, psychometric and legal) to assess program objectives and recidivism outcomes.

The second stage of the evaluation will involve assessing program fidelity, by evaluating processes. This will require that the HUB or stakeholder organizations provide the evaluator with data on processes, such as the frequency of all activities or the number of people participating in any activity.

Assessment of short-term processes will include:

- Confirm the frequency of culturally-competent healing group sessions, and the number of participants in each session.
- Confirm the number of community leaders that are recruited to form a network for recruiting mentors.
- Confirm the number of mentors who are trained and matched with youth.

- Confirm the number of mentoring sessions that mentors have provided.
- Confirm the number of youth recruited for a Youth Leadership Advisory Council (YLAC).
- Confirm youth/young adults' referral and receipt of social services (i.e. mental health, substance abuse, employment, housing).
- Confirm the number of persons from stakeholder organizations who have received CBT training;

Assessment of intermediate-term processes will include:

- Program participants' level of engagement with or completion of Hub-related program elements (i.e. culturally-competent healing groups, mentoring, or YLAC)
- Participants' level of engagement with CBT-related program elements (i.e. tutoring, sports, arts, and life management resources)
- Participants' engagement in ancillary activities (e.g., community leadership/advocacy)
- Participants' placement in affordable housing, employment, etc.

The third stage of the evaluation will involve measurement of the program goals: increasing CBO capacity, educational attainment and pro-social attitudes, and decreasing risk assessment scores and recidivism (among system-involved youth and young adults). This will require that the Hub or stakeholder organizations provide the evaluator with data on participants, such as:

- Number of participants that received various Hub-related services or referrals (see above sections on "assessment of short-term processes" and "assessment of intermediate-term processes")
- Participants' scores on risk assessment measures (i.e. PACT-2.0 and STRONG Assessments at six month intervals)
- Participants' recidivism rates

This will also require that the evaluator collect survey and/or interview data from participants, such as:

- Participants' educational attainment (i.e. surveys measuring absenteeism, graduation or GED completion)
- Participants' pro-social attitudes (i.e. interviews in which participants demonstrate generativity, such as "giving back to the community")

The evaluator will measure changes in participants' pre- and post- intervention educational attainment, pro-social attitudes, risk assessment scores, and recidivism. In measuring participants' pre- and post-intervention changes, the evaluator will use statistical techniques to control for:

- Differences among age, sex and race groups
- Differential risk (i.e. PACT-2.0 and Strong Assessment baselines)
- Differential exposure levels (i.e. completion vs non-completion, or level of engagement)

### **III. Tracking Project Changes and Performance over Time**

To track project changes and performance, the evaluator will conduct semi-structured interviews participants, and group interviews (or focus groups) with program stakeholders. Interviews with participants will be analyzed for areas to improve, and will also supplement program impact estimates (see the next section, "Research Design"). Interviews with stakeholders will include questions such as:

- What level of collaboration was achieved, among the County and grantee service providers selected to implement the program?
- What were the high-value benefits of the collaboration?
- What were the greatest challenges in the collaboration?

#### IV. Research Design

The research design will consist of three components, guided by the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent did the Hub and service provider grantees increase youth-serving CBO capacity, for substance abuse and mental health issues, in Los Banos?
- 2) How effective was the program in shaping pro-social attitudes?
- 3) How effective was the program in realizing the goals of increasing educational attainment, and reducing risk assessment scores and recidivism (among system-involved youth with a history of mental health issues or substance use disorders)?
- 4) How did program elements effect desired outcomes? How level of program exposure shape outcomes?

The first component will analyze participant involvement in the initiative, through frequency counts of participants' involvement in the different activities as well as services they were provided. (This will include the program fidelity assessment described earlier in the "Evaluation Plan Goal" section).

The second component of this research study will involve qualitative methods to analyze participants' development of pro-social attitudes. The evaluator (or someone from the evaluation team) will conduct individual, semi-structured interviews with up to twenty program participants—once at baseline, and once more after program completion—for a total of forty interviews. The interview questionnaire will be informed by scholarly research on community-based organizations, substance abuse recovery, masculinity and generativity. The questionnaire will have roughly ten open-ended questions, and interviews will last approximately sixty to ninety minutes.

The third component will use quantitative methods and statistical software to analyze the program's effectiveness in increasing educational attainment, reducing risk assessment scores, and reducing recidivism. Propensity score matching will be used to create a weight for the probability of being selected for treatment, based on demographic variables (i.e. age, sex and race) and baseline risk assessment scores. Program participants will then be matched with people who could have been program participants, based on the propensity score, and will be included in generalized linear mixed-effect modeling. Generalized linear mixed-effect modeling will be utilized to measure within subject effects, as well as between subject effects, on the likelihood of achieving the program's goals (i.e. educational attainment, risk assessment score reduction, and recidivism).

The fourth component will involve drawing from the qualitative and quantitative data above to examine how particular program elements might have varied in their efficaciousness.

Evaluation Timeline	Q1 Activities	Q2 Activities	Q3 Activities	Q4 Activities
2017				Evaluation Plan
2018	Logic Model Data collection planning/ support	Data collection planning/ support	Stakeholder interviews	Interim Report

2019		Stakeholder interviews Beneficiary focus groups	Two-year report
2020		Stakeholder interviews Beneficiary focus groups	Final Report

Entity	Activity/ Output in Proposal	Activity/ Output Goals and Objectives Document	Short/ Interim Outcome	Longterm Outcome
Hub-based, culturally-competent practices	El Joven Noble healing circles		Increase in educational attainment; reduction in risk assessment score	Reduced likelihood of recidivism within 3 years for beneficiaries of full intervention
Hub-based mentoring	Build network of community leaders to recruit/ dev mentors for a youth or young adult		Increase the number of community leaders recruiting mentors	
	Recruit/ dev mentors for a youth or young adult		Increase the number of mentors; assign each mentor to one system-involved youth	
	Create/ support cadre of volunteer mentors		Establish regular mentor/mentee meetings	
Hub-based Youth Leadership And Advisory Council (YLAC)	20 youth advise in plan/ imp of Prop 47 initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• receive a stipend</li> <li>• receive community leader/ advocacy training</li> <li>• initiate community service projects</li> <li>• propose ideas to gov/ agency leaders and funders</li> <li>• train to become El Joven Noble circle co-facilitators</li> <li>• &gt;=1 member of the to participate in Prop 47 LAC meetings</li> </ul>	At least 40 youth/young adults per year will have opportunities to participate in mentoring, leadership development, and civic engagement.	Increase in educational attainment; reduction in risk assessment score	
Hub-based referrals	HUB facilitated referrals to mental health and substance abuse treatment, employment and housing assistance, etc.		Reduction in risk assessment score	
Cognitive-Behavioral Training (CBT)	Provide CBT trainings to members of stakeholder groups		Increase number of CBT-trained members of stakeholder groups	
	Connect youth to involvement in sports, arts, and life management, tutoring and arts programs		Increase in educational attainment; reduction in risk assessment score	

Entity	Activity/ Output in Proposal	Activity/ Output Goals and Objectives Document	Short/ Interim Outcome	Longterm Outcome
Hub Coordinator	training, CBO activities, scheduling referral liason with Probation & evaluator, and invoicing	Regular meetings with all involved agencies, monthly reports and invoicing		Reduced likelihood of recidivism within 3 years for beneficiaries of full intervention
	Organize activities at the Hub	Publicizing program information	Increase knowledge of the program's success/failures by key stakeholders	
El Joven Noble	El Joven Noble healing circles	Up to 5 weekly sessions. Follow up with participants to make sure goals are met.	Increase in educational attainment; reduction in risk assessment score	
Youth Leadership And Advisory Council (YLAC)	20 youth advise in plan/ imp of Prop 47 initiative • receive a stipend • receive community leader/ advocacy training • initiate community service projects • propose ideas to gov/ agency leaders and funders • train to become El Joven Noble circle co-facilitators • >=1 member of the to participate in Prop 47 LAC meetings	Up to 20 youth/young adults per year will have opportunities to participate in mentoring, leadership development, and civic engagement.	Increase in educational attainment; reduction in risk assessment score; Improved community engagement,	
Mentoring Services	*Build network of community leaders to recruit/ dev mentors for a youth or young adult *Recruit/ dev mentors for a youth or young adult *Create/ support cadre of volunteer mentors *identifying, training and matching mentors	assign each mentor to one system-involved youth, schedule regular mentor/mentee meetings	Increase the number of mentors; ; Increase the number of community leaders recruiting mentors	
Trauma Informed Practices Staff Trainings	Provide trainings to Probation staff and those working with system involved youth and young adults.	2 day Think Trauma Training	Increase knowledge of strategies to help relieve trauma induced suffering, symptoms of trauma	
		2 day Building Healthy Life Skills Training	Increase knowledge of impacts of trauma, trauma and development, coping strategies and vicarious trauma and self care	
CBT	Work with Beck Institute to provide CBT training to members of stakeholder groups	3 day customized training focused on substance use and mental health.	Increase number of CBT-trained members of stakeholder groups	
			Increase in educational attainment; reduction in risk assessment score	



Entity	Activity/ Output in Proposal	Activity/ Output Goals and Objectives Document	Short/ Interm Outcome	Longterm Outcome
Police, schools and others in coordination with Probation	Refer system-involved youth (who meet required criteria of substance or mental health issues) to Hub or Community School sessions.			Reduced likelihood of recidivism within 3 years for beneficiaries of full intervention

Entity	Activity/ Output in Proposal	Activity/ Output Goals and Objectives Document	Short/ Interm Outcome	Longterm Outcome
Probation	Annual referrals to re-entry focused El Joven Noble sessions for 40 youth/ minors with substance or mental health issues (e.g. assessed med and high risk on the PACT assessment tool) for the last 90 days of custody prior to release.	At least 40 youth/young adults per year will have opportunities to participate in El Joven Noble and other activities.	Increase in educational attainment; reduction in risk assessment score	Reduced likelihood of recidivism within 3 years for beneficiaries of full intervention
	Annual referrals to 40 young adults (age 18-24 felony offenders assessed mod and high risk on the STRONG assessment tool with preference for offenders with history of gang involvement).		Increase in educational attainment; reduction in risk assessment score	
	With the Beck Institute: create and offer 3-day substance use and mental health training to 40 frontline probation, police, health workers, middle and high school teachers and administrators working with Prop 47 population, community members and mentors.	At least 40 individuals from community, probation and other backgrounds who serve targeted youth and young adult populations will complete training on trauma-informed practice and/or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for mental health and substance abuse.	Increase number of CBT-trained members of stakeholder groups	
	Leverage resources to provide two separate trainings to educate those interacting and working with system-involved youth and young adults in understanding trauma and its impact.		Increase number of staff trained to provide trauma-informed practices	
	Leverage resources to provide A 2-day Think Trauma training		Increase number of staff trained to provide trauma-informed practices	
	Leverage resources to provide A 2-day Building Healthy Life Skills training. Probation staff and partner agencies will be trained to teach the curriculum to 18-24 year old population 2 days per week in Merced and Los Banos respectively.		Increase number of staff trained to provide Healthy Life Skills training	

Entity	Activity/ Output in Proposal	Activity/ Output Goals and Objectives Document	Short/ Interm Outcome	Longterm Outcome
[Entity implementing El Joven Noble program activities]	Some El Joven Noble participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Receive training as Circle co-facilitators</li><li>• Join YLAC</li></ul>		Increase educational attainment	Reduced likelihood of recidivism within 3 years for beneficiaries of full intervention
			Reduce substance abuse	
			Reduce domestic and community violence	
			Reduce risk assessment score	