

Final Evaluation Report

March 2018



Beloved Community:
West Contra Costa Partnership for Youth

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of Project

Beloved Community: West Contra Costa Partnership for Youth ("Beloved Community project") operated from 2015 to 2017 and was funded by the California Gang Reduction, Intervention, and Prevention (CalGRIP) project. The City of Richmond's Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) was the lead agency for Beloved Community and worked in partnership with the RYSE Center (RYSE) and Richmond Police Activities League (RPAL) to implement the project.

Beloved Community's purpose was to provide evidence-based prevention and intervention activities to young people ages 15 to 21 in the Richmond community who were involved in a gang or at risk of gang involvement. Primary activities included street outreach, cognitive behavioral therapy, mentoring, life skills training, case management, and subsidized employment. During the grant period, project partners intended to serve the following numbers of youth through their organization's interventions: ONS, 180 youth; RYSE, 135 youth; RPAL, 218 youth.

The project had individual-level and community-level goals and objectives. At the individual level, the project sought to decrease youth involvement in gun violence and gang-related activity while helping young people to develop positive relationships with empathetic adults, begin to address the underlying trauma that may contribute to engagement in gun violence, understand the negative consequences of gun violence, and develop future education/employment plans. At the community level, Beloved Community aimed to support local stakeholders in operating as a trauma-informed community of care by increasing capacity for trauma-informed youth development and developing a shared commitment to trauma-informed policy to promote youth wellness.

Evaluation Methods

ONS contracted with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), a nonprofit research organization in Oakland, California, to evaluate Beloved Community. The evaluation examined both processes and outcomes, and it used a non-experimental, mixed methods research design. Data collection methods included conducting surveys and interviews with program staff and participants and obtaining administrative data and secondary materials. The evaluation explored three primary research questions: (1) What interventions were offered? (2) Who participated in interventions? (3) What was the impact of interventions?

Findings

At the individual level, each project partner exceeded the number of youth they intended to serve through their organization's Beloved Community interventions. ONS served 212 youth; RPAL, 421 youth; and RYSE, 200 youth. Moreover, these participation data, combined with survey and interview findings, indicate that project participants met the stated objectives of developing positive relationships with empathetic adults through ongoing mentoring experiences provided by project partners; engaging in activities that support them in understanding and coping with their mental health needs; and gaining skills and experience for education and employment, thus proactively laying the groundwork for their futures. For example, large percentages of survey respondents agreed that program staff were dependable, always tried to be fair, really cared about them, and were a resource to talk to about what was going on in their lives.

For the objective of understanding the negative consequences of gun violence, all youth in ONS's Operation Peacemaker Fellowship (Fellowship) remained alive, and most were not injured or hospitalized due to gun violence or arrested on gun-related charges. These outcomes suggest that the fellows, who represent some of the young men most impacted by gun violence in the Richmond area, have increased their understanding about the adverse consequences of gun violence and have immersed themselves in pursuing viable, supportive alternatives.

At the community level, RYSE's Trauma and Healing Learning Series contributed to the goal of increasing stakeholders' capacity in trauma-informed youth development and developing a shared commitment to trauma-informed policy, with post-session evaluations indicating large increases in participants' understanding of concepts and interest in continued engagement.

The above findings help to inform and contextualize community-level data that show an overall decline in homicides and gun violence in Richmond during the grant period. According to Richmond Police Department (RPD) data, the city experienced a substantial drop in homicides that were considered by RPD to fall into ONS's focus area, from close to half (43%) of the total homicides in 2015 to about one-quarter (27%) in 2017, which reflects a 56% decrease over time of this type of incident. The data also show a 10% decrease in firearm assaults causing injury or death during the grant period. While there are some methodological challenges associated with measuring community-level outcomes, the data indicate that gun violence—specifically, firearm assaults and gang-related homicides—decreased substantially during the grant period, with these reductions occurring in the context of Beloved Community's implementation.

Challenges

While the project experienced some challenges, none prevented it from operating as intended or meeting its stated goals. One challenge was the experience of youth and staff coping with violence and trauma during the grant period. At times, this had an impact on where or how services were delivered to youth; moreover, some staff experienced vicarious trauma in their support of youth. To address these challenges, partner staff focused on meeting youth where they were—both in terms of physical location and emotional state—and fitting programming into these spaces as appropriate. Partners also implemented tools and strategies to attend to staff's self-care needs.

It is notable that, as the grant period closed, all partners pointed to the CalGRIP funding as being an essential support for service delivery and as helping to substantially grow or strengthen partners' services for the target population. At the same time, another challenge partners reported was a lack of other resources to meet participants' specific needs. For example, some staff reported substantial increases in housing challenges experienced by the youth and families they serve.

An additional challenge project staff described was an overall need to look beyond individual-level behavioral change and concentrate on shifting conditions, systems, and structures that have a negative impact on young people. For instance, staff noted that some youth had fears about accessing community-based services due to visa-related concerns.

Unintended Outcomes

The initiative produced few unintended outcomes. One positive unplanned outcome was the development of a comprehensive case management database for ONS. This need emerged as the initiative progressed and led to creation of a web-based system that is accessible for outreach staff in the field and for administrative staff in the office.

Lessons Learned

Project partners shared lessons they learned during the grant period, and these fall into two main areas. One area concerns the critical importance of addressing and supporting self-care needs of staff. Multiple data sources across the grant period indicate a range of impacts resulting from community violence, including secondary trauma experienced by program staff; partners also stated continuing attention to staff self-care is a lesson learned. Measures taken by partners to address impacts on staff include RYSE's facilitation in 2016 of a Beloved Community Grief and Healing Circle to assist adults in supporting young people's experiences with grief and RYSE's Restoration Week for staff in 2017. ONS reported that their staff engages in trauma reflection regularly and meets quarterly regarding self-care.

The other area relates to optimal strategies for providing authentic, long-term engagement with young people. A theme that underscored partners' work throughout the grant period was careful responsiveness to participants' needs, including modifying project components and developing and maintaining high levels of engagement with youth. This also yielded lessons learned for some partners. For example, regarding programming "fit," while staff felt that most programming was appropriate and met participants' needs, a few components did not align well with participating youth; also, new needs emerged, such as the need to provide mental health counseling onsite at RPAL and to serve younger youth through the Fellowship. In each case, staff modified services and programming accordingly.

Conclusion

The evaluation findings indicate that Beloved Community worked as intended and as described in the grant proposal. The project partners collaborated closely to provide developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and healing-centered services to young people in West Contra Costa who are impacted by violence and trauma and who are not traditionally served or welcomed by most service providers. Partners provided a range of targeted services and programming including street outreach, mentoring, cognitive behavioral therapy, life skills training, case management, and subsidized employment. Each partner engaged more youth than originally planned.

Overall, while it is challenging to separate the impacts of the initiative from other violence reduction strategies taking place simultaneously in Richmond/West Contra Costa (as well as other factors that could influence changes in gun violence), the evaluation data indicate that Beloved Community has had positive outcomes at both the individual and community levels. The findings also suggest that consistent, responsive, and authentic engagement with youth, implemented through interventions such as intensive mentoring and addressing untreated trauma, can appropriately support young people whose needs are traditionally unserved. Furthermore, while this project did not expressly seek to reduce recidivism, most youth in the Fellowship were not arrested on gun violence–related charges during the grant period; this finding may have implications for recidivism-reduction interventions.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview of Beloved Community Project

Beloved Community: West Contra Costa Partnership for Youth (“Beloved Community project”) operated from 2015 to 2017 and was funded by the California Gang Reduction, Intervention, and Prevention (CalGRIP) project. Administered by California’s Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), CalGRIP funding was allocated through a competitive application process to support communities’ evidence-based prevention, intervention, and suppression programs.

The City of Richmond’s Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) was the lead agency for Beloved Community and worked in partnership with the RYSE Center (RYSE) and Richmond Police Activities League (RPAL) to implement the project. ONS contracted with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to evaluate Beloved Community. NCCD, a nonprofit research organization in Oakland, California, conducts research and provides technical assistance and training in such areas as juvenile justice, criminal justice, and child welfare. NCCD prepared annual summary reports for project years 2015 and 2016; this document is the final evaluation report for the Beloved Community project.

B. Beloved Community’s Purpose and Goals

The purpose of Beloved Community was to provide evidence-based prevention and intervention activities to young people ages 15 to 21 in the Richmond community who were involved in a gang or at risk of gang involvement. The project sought to decrease youth involvement in gun violence and gang-related activity while helping young people to develop

positive relationships with empathetic adults, begin to address the underlying trauma that may contribute to engagement in gun violence, and develop future education/employment plans. The project's primary activities included street outreach, cognitive behavioral therapy, mentoring, life skills training, case management, and subsidized employment. During the grant period, project partners intended to serve the following numbers of youth through their organization's interventions: ONS, 180 youth; RYSE, 135 youth; RPAL, 218 youth.

Beloved Community also aimed to support stakeholders in the West Contra Costa region in operating as a trauma-informed community of care by increasing capacity for trauma-informed youth development and developing a shared commitment to trauma-informed policy to promote youth wellness. The project's goals and objectives, as stated in the CalGRIP grant application, appear below.

- Goal 1: Reduced participation in gang-related activity by West Contra Costa youth.
 - » *Objective 1.1*: By program end, participants develop positive relationships with empathetic adults.
- Goal 2: Decreased involvement in gun violence by youth in West Contra Costa.
 - » *Objective 2.1*: At completion of the program, youth understand the negative consequences of gun violence.
 - » *Objective 2.2*: By program completion, youth have begun to address the underlying trauma that contributes to engagement in violence.
- Goal 3: Youth in West Contra Costa engage in positive activities that give them the opportunity to be productive members of society.
 - » *Objective 3.1*: By program end, participants develop positive relationships with empathetic adults.

- » *Objective 3.2:* By the end of the program, participants have engaged in a subsidized work opportunity.
- » *Objective 3.3:* By program end, youth have developed plans for education/employment.

C. Primary Grant Partners

ONS, a non-law enforcement agency and the lead agency for the Beloved Community project, was established in 2007 in response to escalating levels of gun violence and homicides in Richmond. While originally housed in the city manager's office, ONS now operates as its own city department. ONS seeks to reduce—and ultimately eliminate—gun violence and associated homicides in Richmond. This approach, informed by evidence-based practices (including Cure Violence),¹ combines individual and community outreach and considers violence prevention a public health issue. Each year, ONS works with approximately 150 to 200 young men who have been identified as being at high risk for involvement in gun violence, employing such strategies as street outreach and the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship (Fellowship).

During the grant period, ONS collaborated with two primary partners for the Beloved Community project: RYSE and RPAL. These organizations have extensive experience—including working together with ONS on previous CalGRIP grants—with developing, implementing, and sustaining collaborative efforts to meet the needs of young people, particularly young people who are not traditionally served or welcomed by most service providers.

¹ Picard-Fritsche, S., & Cerniglia, L. (2013). *Testing a public health approach to gun violence: An evaluation of Crown Heights Save Our Streets, a replication of the Cure Violence model*. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation; Webster, D., Whitehill, J. M., Vernick, J. S., & Parker, E. M. (2012). *Evaluation of Baltimore's Safe Streets program: Effects on attitudes, participants' experiences, and gun violence*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

RYSE was established in 2008 as part of a youth organizing movement that began in response to a series of homicides near Richmond High School. Their mission is to create “safe spaces grounded in social justice for young people to love, learn, educate, heal, and transform lives and communities.” The foundation of RYSE programming is “the belief that young people have the lived knowledge and expertise to identify, prioritize, and direct the activities and services necessary to thrive.”²

RPAL is a community-based organization that offers young people a positive alternative to the streets. RPAL is “dedicated to supporting young people ages 10–18 holistically as they transition from adolescence to adulthood.”³ Programming includes academic tutoring, computer and media technology classes, sports and recreation, and mentorship. Activities also include field trips to sporting events and museums.

In addition, during the first year of the project, the City of Richmond YouthWORKS, which is part of the city’s Employment and Training Department, was a project partner and provided employment and training services for Beloved Community project participants. During the second and third years, based on an expressed need for a different approach to working with participants, ONS contracted with another provider for these services.

II. EVALUATION METHODS

NCCD worked closely with project partners to develop and implement data collection processes and tools for the evaluation. This approach included drawing on data that partners

² RYSE Center. (n.d.). Homepage. Retrieved from <https://rysecenter.org/>

³ Richmond Police Activities League. (n.d.). *Who we are*. Retrieved from <http://www.rpal.org/home1.aspx>

were already collecting for other purposes, when appropriate, thus minimizing the burden of data collection on evaluation participants. It also involved modifying methods and tools if needed during implementation of the evaluation.

A. Research Design

The evaluation included a process evaluation and outcome evaluation and used a non-experimental, mixed-methods research design. This design allowed for collection of a range of quantitative and qualitative data at various points in time that offer insight about program implementation and outcomes. To understand and document project implementation, the process evaluation focused on collecting process measures, conducting individual interviews with program staff and participants, and reviewing program documents. To examine if the program met the goals described in the grant proposal, the outcome evaluation used program outcome data, participant surveys, and individual interviews with program staff and participants. Secondary data, including quarterly progress reports submitted to the BSCC, helped to inform both components of the evaluation.

The evaluation explored three primary research questions: (1) What interventions were offered? (2) Who participated in interventions? (3) What was the impact of interventions?

B. Data Collection and Analysis

Primary and secondary data sources for the evaluation included the following.

- Administrative data collected from partners. This includes such data as number of participants served, number of service hours provided, and number of trainings conducted by RYSE for its Trauma and Healing Learning Series. In addition, for the Fellowship, ONS staff provided data on several items, as of the close of the grant period: number of fellows who completed the Fellowship, who were alive, who were arrested on gun-violence related charges, and who were injured or hospitalized due to gun violence.
- Quantitative surveys with participants. In order to glean insights about participants' experiences with and impressions of Beloved Community programming and staff, the evaluation drew on a range of survey data collected from existing surveys and surveys developed for this evaluation. NCCD and the partners developed a survey (designed for this evaluation) for Fellowship participants. ONS staff administered this survey twice during the evaluation period, with participating fellows responding once.⁴ RYSE's annual member survey includes items relevant to this evaluation; survey data from 2015 to 2017 (from respondents who stated that they participated in RYSE programming related to this project) was shared with NCCD in the aggregate. The ONS and RYSE surveys measured participants' opinions in such areas as development of healthy relationships, accessing mental health resources, and preparation for the future (wording of survey items may vary by partner based on staff input of what would resonate with participants). RYSE also shared survey data on program impact from participants in its RYSE Restorative Pathways Program and from attendees at its Trauma and Healing Learning Series sessions. In addition, NCCD and the partners developed a brief satisfaction survey for participants in RPAL's life skills/late-night basketball program, for completion after weekly sessions in 2016 and 2017.
- Qualitative interviews with staff and participants. NCCD staff conducted individual qualitative interviews with nine staff from project partners. Some staff were interviewed annually during the grant period and some less frequently, depending on their level of involvement in Beloved Community. Staff interviews focused on how the initiative was being implemented, what was working well, possible areas for improvement, and lessons learned. NCCD staff also conducted individual qualitative interviews in 2016 and 2017 with eight young people participating in Beloved Community programming (each youth was interviewed once). Youth interviews covered skills gained from programming, experiences with staff, impacts of programming, and suggestions for improvement.

⁴ When planning for the evaluation, NCCD and ONS designed a pre/post survey intended to measure change over time for Fellowship participants on variables such as use of pro-social conflict resolution, substance use, peer and family support, and other items. In practice, however, ONS staff found that administering this survey at the outset of the Fellowship, when development of trusting relationships is paramount, was more challenging than anticipated; as a result, the survey content was revised and the survey administered by staff after participants were firmly engaged in the Fellowship.

- Observation and participation in monthly project meetings. NCCD staff attended monthly meetings, facilitated by ONS, that brought project partners together to discuss progress, challenges, questions, and contextual factors related to real-time implementation of the initiative and the evaluation.
- Secondary data, including quarterly CalGRIP progress reports submitted to the BSCC, program documents, and other materials/information shared with NCCD by project partners.

NCCD staff analyzed quantitative data (such as survey data and program outcomes) using descriptive statistics. NCCD staff analyzed information from interviews and meetings with a qualitative approach to identify, understand, and contextualize themes that emerged from the data.

C. Outcome Measures

Table 1 lists the outcome measure categories and variables used to gauge project impact. The results for these variables appear in Section III, Findings/Results, and are augmented by program participation data and qualitative data.

Table 1		
Outcome Measures		
Outcome Measure Category	Outcome Variable	Data Source(s)
Developing positive relationships with empathic adults	Program staff always try to be fair	ONS Fellows Survey, RYSE Member Survey
	Program staff are dependable	
	Program staff always keep their promises	
	Program staff acknowledge my behavior, whether it's good or bad	
	Program staff tell me when I do something good	
	Program staff really care about me	
	I feel safe and comfortable with program staff	

Table 1		
Outcome Measures		
Outcome Measure Category	Outcome Variable	Data Source(s)
Understanding the negative consequences of gun violence	Number/percent of fellows who are alive	ONS Fellowship administrative data (all variables are as of the close of the grant period)
	Number/percent of fellows who were not arrested for gun-violence related charges	
	Number/percent of fellows who were not injured or hospitalized due to gun violence	
	Number/percent of fellows who completed the Fellowship	
Addressing underlying trauma	<i>Program participation has helped me:</i>	ONS Fellows Survey, RYSE Member Survey, RYSE/R2P2 Impact Survey
	Pay attention to my emotions and feelings	
	Feel it is okay and beneficial to be in programs or services that support my mental health	
	Acknowledge my weaknesses and deal with my trauma	
	Address my pain and trauma	
Preparing for the future	<i>Program participation has helped me:</i>	ONS Fellows Survey, RYSE Member Survey
	Think more about my future	
	Learn skills that will help me be successful in life	
	Understand the importance of legitimate employment	
	Learn skills that will help me get a job	
	Understand the importance of education	
	Learn skills that will help me do better in school	
	Think more about my future	
Operating as a trauma-informed system of care	Understanding of trauma-informed youth development	RYSE Trauma and Healing Learning Series Survey
	Shared commitment to trauma informed policy	

III. FINDINGS/RESULTS

A. What Interventions Were Provided?

During the grant period, Beloved Community partners provided a range of complementary interventions for the target population, with a combined total of more than 31,000 hours of service. Services were implemented as expected, in a timely fashion consistent

with the expectations of the grant, and were modified or adjusted if such needs emerged; this is discussed in more detail below. While partner organizations also provided a variety of other services in addition to those described in this report, the services highlighted here are those that were supported by the CalGRIP grant.

1. ONS Services

ONS provided two primary interventions during the grant period: street outreach and the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship.

a. Street Outreach

Neighborhood change agents (NCAs) implemented the ONS street outreach strategy, which focused on building trust with community members, mediating conflict among young people to prevent and reduce gun violence, providing life skills information, and referring young people to services. The strategy also involved providing street-level conflict mediation within a specific neighborhood and staying informed about what was occurring in the community. If a shooting occurred, NCAs provided support to community members after the incident and offered resources to interrupt potential retaliation efforts. NCAs built trusting relationships with community members, which allowed ONS to gather, assess, and act on vital information regarding community violence on an ongoing basis.

b. Operation Peacemaker Fellowship

ONS also implemented the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship during the grant period. The Fellowship is a non-mandated intensive mentoring intervention designed for youth identified as Richmond's most active firearm offenders. It lasts a minimum of 18 months and consists of seven key components designed to provide fellows with tools, skills, and resources to lead healthy, productive lives.

Fellowship programming and services during the grant period focused on providing intensive mentoring, including multiple daily contacts with ONS staff, development of a goal plan (called a life map), case management with social services navigation support and referrals, life skills, anger management, conflict resolution, pre- and post-employment and training services, and excursions in and out of state. Fellows who completed specific goals received small stipends. In addition, fellows did community outreach projects, met for group lunches and dinners, and participated in local activities such as going to college football games, amusement parks, and cultural activities.

Most services were provided on a weekly basis and in small group settings to facilitate fellows' feelings of safety. Services were provided in a range of locations, from the ONS office to the street corner, in order to encourage participation and develop authentic, trusting relationships. "We're spending time with youth to let them know we care and have no ulterior angle," reported an ONS staff member in early 2017.

Beyond the services themselves, ONS staff provided support to make fellows' participation feasible; for example, staff reported that when several fellows participated in a two-month work opportunity with the city of Richmond's Public Works Department in 2016,

NCAAs made lunches for the participating fellows and provided them with transportation to and from the job site. In 2017, ONS partnered with a local shop owner to provide donated suits and other clothing to fellows (and other community members) so that they would have proper attire for job interviews.

ONS arranged other service provisions to complement fellows' needs. For example, in 2017, ONS partnered with Contra Costa County Homeless Court to help fellows receive debt relief related to past traffic violations that were preventing them from obtaining a current driver's license; this effort resulted in 14 fellows receiving relief from a combined total of more than \$76,000 in traffic violations.

ONS regularly reviewed its programming to determine if its services continued to be a good match with fellows' needs. Two key issues that emerged during the grant period were fellows' educational needs and the need for dynamic strategies to address adolescent development in the context of persistent, acute stress and distress. These issues also dovetail with the fact that these cohorts mostly comprise younger youth than previous Fellowship cohorts, and as a result they present with some different needs. ONS staff reported that many fellows in the 2017 cohort did not attend school regularly and/or were not on track to graduate with their class. While the Fellowship is not specifically an education-focused intervention, ONS staff addressed this need to the extent possible by helping to obtain tutors for youth at risk of dropping out of school and coordinating, where appropriate, with school counselors about individual fellows' needs and progress. To address other developmental needs of younger youth, ONS staff participated in trainings about adolescent brain development and paid close attention to the "fit" of services with its current population.

2. RYSE Services

RYSE provided mentoring, case management, and clinical counseling to Beloved Community project participants during the grant period. This programming included services for RYSE members referred to the center by various agencies, including public health and law enforcement. Youth participants in RYSE's Youth Justice Program, RYSE Restorative Pathways Project (R2P2), and RYSE's case management and counseling were served as part of this initiative.

a. *Youth Justice Program*

Youth Justice programming consisted of the following services.

- Streets to Success diversion program: This program provided intervention for low- to moderate-risk youth with first time offenses, in partnership with Richmond Police Department (RPD). The program included an eight-week curriculum designed to preempt and protect youth from formal involvement in the criminal justice system. In collaboration with their case manager, participants developed individualized case plans that included participation in other components of RYSE's Youth Justice programming.
- Reentry services: These services provided transitional support and reentry services for youth who were in the county's juvenile hall or boys' ranch or who had recently been released from custody. Youth worked with their case managers to develop individualized plans to encourage successful reintegration and avoid recidivism; they also participated in programming such as education and career planning/support, anger management, and individual counseling.
- Community service program: This program assisted youth referred to RYSE by the Contra Costa County Probation Department or Office of the Public Defender in completing their court-ordered community service hours.

b. Community Health Services

R2P2 and clinical services are part of RYSE's community health programming. R2P2 is a hospital-based program that works with John Muir Medical Center (located in Contra Costa County) to provide mentoring and intensive case management services for youth who are victims of gun violence, stabbing, or assault. The program's support begins at a young person's hospital bedside, guided by a RYSE trauma response specialist, and continues upon hospital exit to protect against re-injury and to support stabilization and recovery. R2P2 is designed to serve youth who live in and/or were injured in Richmond or West Contra Costa. In 2017, staff reported an increase in referrals to R2P2 from Highland Hospital, located in adjacent Alameda County. This uptick consisted of young people who were injured in Oakland and live in the Richmond area; consequently, R2P2 staff connected with Youth ALIVE!, a community-based organization that runs a similar hospital-based program in Alameda County, around this increase. Also in 2017, RYSE staff reported that R2P2 started to see an influx in referrals of youth injured in stabbing incidents rather than gun violence.

Staff expanded RYSE's clinical program during the grant period. As the grant period began, key activities involved hiring staff (including a full-time clinical therapist) to deliver onsite therapeutic services and developing curriculum and processes for the clinical program (including referral procedures); in the later part of the grant, this was followed by providing psychosocial assessments, individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, and case management for young people. Additionally, as the clinical program continued to roll out, RYSE entered into a formal partnership with the Berkeley-based Wright Institute, which trains graduate students in psychology, to serve as a practicum site for student interns.

Clinical activities also included tailoring and delivering therapeutic groups to meet the needs of ONS fellows. RYSE staff worked closely with ONS staff to plan therapeutic approaches that were responsive to fellows' needs, such as determining where to meet and whether to provide counseling individually or in groups and, if in groups, looking closely at group composition. The fellows' groups—described to fellows as life skills groups—met weekly in two cohorts over a period of eight weeks from March through May 2016. Groups met at offsite community locations where participants felt safe. The purpose of the groups was to create a sense of community and group safety; increase participants' self-expression; and provide psychoeducation about anger, identity formation, and trauma. Based on the experience of the fellows' groups, RYSE and ONS determined that individual therapy rather than a group approach may be a more appropriate method for delivering counseling services for fellows; staff report that several fellows expressed interest in pursuing individual counseling after participating in the groups.

c. *Trauma and Healing Learning Series*

In addition to providing services for young people, RYSE coordinated a Trauma and Healing Learning Series (THLS), held annually throughout the grant period. The THLS was designed to present and consider the impact of multiple forms of trauma and oppression on young people, their families, and their communities. The objective was to build shared language and commitment to collective practice, mutual accountability, and support in implementing and sustaining trauma-informed, healing-centered approaches and practices. Sessions were designed for agencies and providers serving the Richmond and West Contra Costa region, with

a focus on public health, social services, community-based programs, education, and public systems and agencies. In all, 15 sessions were held in the Richmond area, and one in Philadelphia, during the grant period.⁵ See Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2			
Trauma and Healing Learning Series Sessions and Involvement			
Year	Sessions Presented	Individual Stakeholders Attended	Participating Organizations/ Agencies
2015	6	at least 183	more than 60
2016	7	at least 225	more than 70
2017	3	at least 110	more than 40

Table 3		
Trauma and Healing Learning Series Presentations		
Date	Title	Presenters
March 25 and April 1, 2015	<i>Getting Risky: Integrating Risk Into Our Work</i>	RYSE staff
April 8, 2015	<i>Black and Brown Lives Matter: Revealing the Psychic Wounds of Racial Oppression</i>	Dr. Kenneth Hardy, Professor of Family Therapy, Drexel University
April 29, 2015	<i>Nonviolent and Restorative Communication: An Approach to Active Listening, Healing Relationships, and Beloved Community</i>	RYSE staff
May 28 and 29, 2015	<i>Recognizing Trauma and Supporting Resilience and Healing</i>	Dr. Joy DuGruy, Assistant Professor (School of Social Work), Portland State University
June 17, 2015	<i>Gender Justice, Trauma, and Healing</i>	Erica Woodland, LCSW, Field Building Director, Brown Boi Project
May 18, 2016	<i>RYSE Listening Campaign Share Out 2.0</i>	RYSE staff and members

⁵ In addition to the Richmond-area sessions listed in Table 3, the series included a presentation called *Beloved Philadelphia*, presented on April 16 and 17, 2015, by RYSE to cross-sector stakeholders in the Philadelphia area.

Table 3		
Trauma and Healing Learning Series Presentations		
Date	Title	Presenters
May 26, 2016	<i>Adolescent Development, Complex Trauma, and Healing</i>	Dr. Joyce Dorado, Co-Founder and Director, University of California San Francisco HEARTS Program
June 9, 2016	<i>Understanding ACEs</i>	Dr. Vincent Felliti, co-author, <i>The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study</i>
June 29, 2016	<i>Gender Justice, Trauma, and Healing</i>	Brian Villa, RYSE Lead Community Health Coordinator; Erica Woodland, LCSW, Field Building Director, Brown Boi Project
July 21, 2016	<i>Nonviolent and Restorative Communication: Active Listening, Healing Relationships, and Beloved Community</i>	Shanté Lewis, LPCC, and Joe Kim, RYSE Community Health Department
August 4 and 5, 2016	<i>Racing ACEs: Ensuring Racial Justice Is at the Center of Trauma-Informed Approaches and Practices</i>	RYSE staff
September 8, 2016	<i>Black and Brown Lives Matter: Revealing the Psychic Wounds of Racial Oppression</i>	Dr. Kenneth Hardy, Professor of Family Therapy, Drexel University
October 20, 2017	<i>Atmospheric Trauma and Collective Healing</i>	RYSE staff
November 16, 2017	<i>Leading with Love: Restorative and Non-violent Communication</i>	RYSE staff
November 28, 2017	<i>Atmospheric Trauma and Collective Healing (Follow-up Session)</i>	RYSE staff

3. RPAL Services

RPAL coordinated activities for Beloved Community project participants in several key areas including life skills, mentoring, anger management, sports/recreation, and literacy. RPAL generally hosted these services at their facility and contracted with local agencies and

consultants to provide the services. The primary services offered as part of the grant are described below.

a. Life Skills and Late-Night Basketball

Throughout the grant period, RPAL facilitated a series of interactive sessions that combined life skills, mentoring, and basketball, held on Friday nights in RPAL's facility. Each session included a one-hour life skills workshop, a nutritious meal, basketball, and safe transportation home. Life skills addressed many topics, including goal setting, values clarification, future planning, job search skills, stress management, health, conflict resolution, and "know your rights." RPAL contracted with consultants who have personal experience with the justice system to organize and deliver these sessions. In reflecting on the grant period overall, RPAL staff expressed that the popularity of this program was due to the program facilitators, stating, facilitators "can relate to what these young men are going through. The young men treated the facilitators as friends, someone they can respect, relate to, and connect with. That relationship and trust is what keeps those young men coming to RPAL every Friday night."

b. Leadership Development Training

In 2016 and 2017, RPAL coordinated leadership development workshops, held twice a week, for Beloved Community project participants. Originally described as "anger management" workshops, these were reframed as "leadership development" based on concerns expressed by participating youth. A consultant (a trained clinical social worker) led small groups designed to

help young people cope with family issues, school issues, self-esteem, grief, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other concerns that may contribute to anger and violence. Activities included identifying anger triggers and feelings, building self-esteem, developing self-awareness, developing communication and leadership skills, and learning conflict resolution techniques, using learning formats such as art therapy and role play. In summer 2017, RPAL staff noted that some youth who attended these sessions were coping with complex issues such as the death of a fellow RPAL participant, homelessness, and parental deportation, and as a result staff started to shift how this programming was being delivered, focusing more on individual counseling. In fall 2017, RPAL developed and implemented a more formal counseling referral process. During this period, the consultant provided individual, family, and small group counseling.

c. *Literacy Skills*

Throughout the grant period, RPAL contracted with the Literacy for Every Adult Program (LEAP) to provide individual and small-group tutoring in literacy skills to Beloved Community project participants. LEAP, a project of the Richmond Public Library, assists participants with basic reading, writing, and math skills; GED preparation; and computer literacy. LEAP activities for Beloved Community project participants focused on digital literacy skills, reading comprehension activities, and math preparation. In addition, several guest speakers provided participants with information about local construction trades and career pathways to working in these trades.

4. ONS and RPAL: Collaborative Programming

ONS and RPAL worked together to organize community outreach events in two Richmond neighborhoods that were particularly impacted by gun violence during the summer of 2015, which had led to 11 injuries and one fatality. Most of the gun violence was due to ongoing conflict and retaliation among rival groups and led to high levels of stress and trauma for residents.

To help stem the violence and address the anguish felt throughout these neighborhoods, ONS and RPAL collaborated with the Today Academy—a Richmond-based group that promotes nonviolence—to develop and implement outreach events that included both affected communities. The goal of the events was to create a “peace pause” between rival factions; the events took place on August 29, 2015, with approximately 70 to 80 families participating, and on September 19, 2015, with 105 families participating. The events featured engagement with attendees around community safety, activities for children, and distribution of groceries. They also aimed to change some residents’ negative perceptions of young people in the community; at these events, residents saw youth helping with such activities as distributing groceries and cleaning up trash, which provided a chance to reframe community members’ opinions of youth. Subsequent to the outreach events, RPAL staff formed youth basketball teams for the participating communities and, according to staff, youth now feel comfortable enough to play on these teams.

B. Who Participated in Interventions?

Youth in the target population participated in interventions provided by ONS, RPAL, and RYSE throughout the grant period. ONS served 212 youth; RPAL, 421 youth; and RYSE, 200 youth. Many youth were involved in multiple interventions. For example, an ONS fellow could take part in counseling at RYSE or literacy skills through RPAL. Most participating youth were between ages 15 and 21; however, as various needs emerged some youth were outside of this age range. For example, some youth who attended family counseling through RPAL's leadership development component were younger than 15, while some youth who participated in R2P2 through RYSE were older than 21.

While some program components were designed to be relatively long-term interventions (such as the Fellowship, which is structured as an 18-month program), others were provided on a more short-term, drop-in basis (including late-night basketball, where youth can participate in a single session or many). Thus, the level of information collected across components varies, which makes it a challenge to provide a single number of unduplicated youth served under the grant. Table 4 indicates the number of unique youth served in each major component of the initiative.

Table 4	
Participation in Beloved Community Interventions, by Organization (2015–17)	
Type of Intervention	Number of Youth Engaged
Street outreach (ONS)	161
Operation Peacemaker Fellowship (ONS) (Fellowship)	51
Clinical program/counseling (RYSE)	more than 90
RYSE Restorative Pathways Program (R2P2) (RYSE)	63
Youth Justice Programming (RYSE)	126
Life skills/late-night basketball (RPAL)	207
Leadership development (RPAL)	154
Literacy skills (RPAL)	104

Regarding engagement in specific activities, the data show that substantial numbers of youth participated in programming directly related to core objectives of the grant, including mentoring and life skills training. See Table 5.

Table 5	
Participation in Specific Activities (2015–17)	
Type of Activity	Number of Youth Engaged
Mentoring (ONS and RYSE)	390
Life skills (ONS and RPAL)	257
Counseling/cognitive behavioral therapy (RYSE)	more than 90
Developing future plans/goals (ONS)	51
Subsidized work opportunity (ONS)	47

C. What Was the Impact of Interventions?

This section describes the impact of interventions in relation to the goals and objectives of the grant, drawing on data from surveys and interviews, and in the case of the ONS Fellowship, program-specific outcomes. It is important to note that the grant objectives were

not mutually exclusive; instead, they tended to overlap with and inform each other. For example, as young people develop relationships with compassionate adults, they are likely more willing to engage with a trusted adult to start exploring the trauma they have experienced.

1. Developing Positive Relationships With Empathetic Adults

Two goals of the project—reduced participation in gang-related activity by West Contra Costa youth (Goal 1) and engagement by youth in positive activities that gave them the opportunity to be productive members of society (Goal 3)—included the objective that project participants would develop positive relationships with empathetic adults by the end of the grant period. The participation data in the above section, which indicates that nearly 400 youth received mentoring services, combined with survey and interview data, provide evidence that this objective was achieved.

Survey data from ONS fellows and RYSE participants (in RYSE Youth Justice programs and/or R2P2) show that large percentages of survey respondents agreed that program staff were dependable, always tried to be fair, really cared about them, and were a resource to talk to about what was going on in their lives. See Table 6.⁶

⁶ For this table and all other reports of youth survey data, sample size may vary by survey item.

Table 6				
Developing Positive Relationships With Empathetic Adults (Survey Data)				
Survey Item	ONS Fellows Survey 2016–17 (N = 20)	RYSE Member Survey		
		2015 (N = 94)	2016 (N = 38)	2017 (N = 26)
Program staff always try to be fair	100%	94%	92%	88%
Program staff are dependable	100%	—	—	—
Program staff always keep their promises	—	91%	88%	95%
Program staff acknowledge my behavior, whether it's good or bad	94%	—	—	—
Program staff tell me when I do something good	—	90%	94%	96%
Program staff really care about me	94%	92%	94%	100%
I feel safe and comfortable with program staff	92%	95%	97%	96%

Note: Dashes denote questions not included in a particular survey.

Survey data gathered from participants in RPAL's life skills and late-night basketball sessions in 2016 and 2017 showed similar findings. Survey respondents agreed that they liked the adults who led the program activities (99%) and that they felt safe doing the activity (100%).⁷

The survey data are reinforced by NCCD's individual interviews with program participants, including ONS fellows. Multiple fellows described ONS staff as being accessible, respectful, and willing to talk with participants about any topic. Some participants also stated that staff acted as mentors and were like family to them. One said that ONS staff "are like father figures, every single one of them. It means a lot . . . I like being around them. [They're] like family."

⁷ The number of RPAL survey respondents does not represent unique individuals; surveys were completed each week following programming, and some youth participated during multiple weeks. A total of 334 surveys were collected.

Finally, conversations and interviews with project staff provided additional evidence that this objective was met. Staff indicated that relationship development and maintenance were key service elements. Notably, ONS staff stated that “the intervention is the relationship” due to the priority placed on building positive, lasting connections with young people rather than on activities alone.

2. Understanding the Negative Consequences of Gun Violence

For Goal 2 (decreased involvement in gun violence by youth in West Contra Costa), the two stated objectives were that youth would understand the negative consequences of gun violence and that youth would have begun to address the underlying trauma that contributes to engagement in violence, both by the end of the grant period. For the objective of understanding the negative consequences of gun violence, the relevant data are drawn from the Fellowship program, as this intervention focuses specifically on reducing and eliminating gun violence in the Richmond community.

ONS staff tracked several individual outcomes that directly reflected fellows’ involvement in lethal violence. For the cohorts that enrolled between 2015 and 2017, 100% of fellows remained alive and 96% were not injured or hospitalized due to gun violence as of the close of the grant period. In addition, most fellows (85%) in the cohort that began in 2015 completed the 18-month Fellowship, suggesting that the consistent, attention-intensive provision of mentoring, life skills, and other services and resources were appropriate and meaningful for these young men. See Table 7.

Table 7	
Outcomes for Operation Peacemaker Fellows (Office of Neighborhood Safety)	
Outcomes	Percent of Total (N = 51)
Remained alive	100%
Not injured or hospitalized due to gun violence	96%
Not arrested on gun-violence related charges	84%
Completed the Fellowship*	85%

*This statistic refers to the 26 fellows who began the Fellowship in 2015. All 25 fellows who began the Fellowship in 2017 remained engaged in the program as of December 31, 2017.

3. Addressing Underlying Trauma

Related to Goal 2 (decreased involvement in gun violence by youth in West Contra Costa), data indicate that the Beloved Community project helped participants understand and cope with their mental health concerns and issues, including acknowledging needs that previously may have gone unvoiced. With more than 90 young people involved in RYSE's counseling and clinical activities—and evidence of increasing demand for these services—the data suggest that many project participants made attending individual counseling a priority. Moreover, survey data collected from ONS fellows and RYSE participants (in RYSE Youth Justice programs and/or R2P2) show that substantial percentages of survey respondents agreed that program participation helped them pay attention to their emotions and feelings and felt that it was okay and beneficial to be in programs or services that supported their mental health. See Table 8.

Table 8					
Addressing Underlying Trauma (Survey Data)					
Survey Item	ONS Fellows Survey 2016–17 (N = 20)	RYSE Member Survey			RYSE R2P2 Impact Survey 2015–17 (N = 21)
		2015 (N = 94)	2016 (N = 38)	2017 (N = 26)	
Being in this program has helped me:					
Pay attention to my emotions and feelings	89%	89%	85%	92%	—
Feel it is okay and beneficial to be in programs or services that support my mental health*	94%	91%	87%	84%	100%
Acknowledge my weaknesses and deal with my trauma	94%	—	—	—	—
Make myself more vulnerable and confront my pain head on	—	—	—	—	100%

Note: Dashes denote questions not included in a particular survey.

*On the ONS survey, this item read: "Being part of the program has helped me feel that is okay and beneficial to be in programs or services that support my emotional well-being."

The survey data were supported by interviews with staff, with staff reporting that multiple clients chose to participate in counseling on a long-term basis. Regarding RYSE's life skills/counseling groups with the ONS fellows held in 2016, staff stated that some youth consistently attended the groups each week and over time could discuss grief and loss during the group meetings. Staff stated that the groups equipped youth with additional coping tools. Building on the trusting relationships developed during the groups, staff reported that two fellows self-referred to individual therapy with the RYSE therapist once the groups ended.

4. Preparing for the Future

Related to Goal 3 (youth in West Contra Costa will engage in positive activities that give them the opportunity to be productive members of society), data indicate that Beloved

Community project participants proactively laid the groundwork for their futures during the grant period. This includes program participation data showing that youth developed and met goals in areas related to education and employment. Moreover, large percentages of survey respondents (ONS fellows and RYSE participants in RYSE Youth Justice programs and/or R2P2) agreed that program participation helped them think more about their future and gain skills for or increase their understanding about the importance of education and employment. See Table 9.

Table 9				
Preparing for the Future (Survey Data)				
Survey Item	ONS Fellows Survey 2016–17 (N = 20)	RYSE Member Survey		
		2015 (N = 94)	2016 (N = 38)	2017 (N = 26)
Being in this program has helped me:				
Think more about my future	94%	92%	85%	96%
Learn skills that will help me be successful in life	—	89%	92%	93%
Understand the importance of legitimate employment	94%	—	—	—
Learn skills that will help me get a job	—	91%	84%	85%
Understand the importance of education	100%	—	—	—
Learn skills that will help me do better in school	—	93%	84%	85%

Note: Dashes denote questions not included in a particular survey.

In interviews with ONS fellows, all interview participants reported making progress toward or completing life map goals related to work, such as obtaining a full-time job, working for a specific employer, and having a career. Regarding education, several participants discussed goals pertaining to schooling; this included graduating from high school and attending college. Several fellows also stated that getting a job was one of their most significant experiences of the

Fellowship. One fellow described how this accomplishment also demonstrated the positive relationship he had developed with ONS staff, saying, "Getting a job [was my most meaningful moment of the Fellowship]. . . . It showed me [ONS staff] care. They want to see me doing better."

5. Operating as a Trauma-Informed System of Care

In addition to addressing individual-level objectives, the Beloved Community project also focused on a community-level goal of developing a trauma-informed system of care in the West Contra Costa region through increasing stakeholders' capacity in trauma-informed youth development and developing a shared commitment to trauma-informed policy. RYSE's Trauma and Healing Learning Series contributed to meeting this goal. Post-session evaluations indicated high increases in participant understanding of concepts and interest in continued engagement. For example, in the 2015 and 2016 local sessions, at least 96% of participants in each session reported increased understanding of trauma-informed youth development, and at least 96% indicated interest in a shared commitment to trauma-informed policy.

These data are supported by write-in remarks from attendees on the evaluation forms. "Addressing trauma SHOULD feel disruptive. I shouldn't shy away from figuring out a helpful and safe way to talk to my clients about it," wrote one 2015 workshop attendee. A participant at a 2016 workshop stated that the workshop was "helpful in terms of facilitating healing conversations among youth, but also helpful for thinking about facilitating healing conversations among staff. If we can model good communication, that will help youth feel safe."

6. Reductions in Gun Violence and Homicide

The findings described above help to inform and contextualize community-level data that showed an overall decline in homicides and gun violence in Richmond during the grant period. According to RPD data, the city experienced a substantial drop in homicides that were considered by RPD to fall into ONS’s focus area—from close to half (43%) of the total homicides in 2015 to about one-quarter (27%) in 2017—representing a 56% decrease over time of this type of incident.⁸ The data also show an overall decrease in firearm assaults causing injury or death, from 93 in 2015 to 84 in 2017, representing a 10% reduction. See Table 10.

Table 10						
Homicide and Firearm Assault in the City of Richmond (2015–17)						
Type of Incident	2015		2016		2017	
	#	% of total	#	% of total	#	% of total
Homicides						
Total homicides	21		22		15	
Homicides in ONS focus area (young men at high risk of involvement in gun violence)	9	43%	7	32%	4	27%
Firearm Assaults						
Total firearm assaults	93		82		84	
Firearm assaults that caused injury	75	81%	60	73%	70	83%
Firearm assaults that caused death	18	19%	22	27%	14*	17%

Sources: “Richmond Crime Data for 2015,” *Richmond Standard*, November 30, 2016; 2016 and 2017 homicide data and all gun violence statistics provided to ONS by RPD.

*Two of the 14 firearm assaults that caused death were ruled as justifiable/self-defense.

Project staff described some factors that they felt contributed to the reductions in gun violence. “Things are very quiet on the street,” said an ONS staff member in summer 2017.

⁸ RPD defines gang participation using state Penal Code 186.22(a), under the California Street, Terrorism, Enforcement, and Prevention (STEP) Act.

“There are lots of reasons for this and in part it’s because of the work we’ve done in years prior—stopping retaliation among earlier cohorts of fellows, so younger kids don’t feel like they need to be violent. Kids now, including the current fellows, are having different conversations—like *Why are you having an issue with the other neighborhood? I have no issues with that neighborhood*. But older guys—the 40-year-olds—still try to stir things up. Young kids aren’t picking up the mantle of the older guys. It’s taken years to change this.”

In reflecting on the grant period overall, an RPAL staff member stated that he felt providing life skills and late-night basketball for the target population contributed to a drop in violence on Friday nights. “I think part of the decrease in violence on Friday night is due to these young men being off the street and engaged in basketball. The environment is safe. Everyone’s on equal ground,” staff stated.

D. Additional Key Findings and Themes

In addition to examining the three primary research questions, several other key themes emerged from the data. These include successes and challenges experienced during the grant period and are briefly described in the following pages.

1. Provision of Authentic, Consistent, and Responsive Youth Engagement

A theme that underscored grant partners’ work throughout the grant period is careful responsiveness to participants’ needs, including adding or modifying project components and developing and maintaining high levels of authentic engagement with youth. This also yielded “lessons learned” for some partners. For example, regarding the “fit” of programming, while staff

felt that most programming was appropriate and met participants' needs, a few components did not align well with young people's needs and experiences. In other cases, new needs emerged, such as the need to provide mental health counseling onsite at RPAL. Accordingly, the relevant programming and individual providers were adjusted to address these concerns.

Authentic and responsive engagement also surfaced around introducing programming to youth. Staff remained consistently aware of and sensitive to community violence that Beloved Community project participants experienced. During year one, the start-up and consistent maintenance of some programming elements was challenged by fluctuating levels of community violence and persistent experiences of trauma for youth. Staff focused on meeting youth where they were—both in terms of physical location and emotional state—and fitting programming into these spaces as appropriate. In 2015, an ONS staff member said:

It's been hard to convince youth to do the program. They have concerns around violence and safety. There have been a lot more homicides and shootings. We get them wherever we can—they are in the midst of chaos. There are shootings and police raids. We're meeting with youth in their homes and neighborhoods, and we need to understand they just got shot or their house got raided. We work on how to build healthy relationships in spite of being in the midst of violence.

Furthermore, ONS staff noted that many fellows during the grant period were younger than those in previous Fellowship cohorts. This presents its own set of challenges in being responsive to participants' needs. "We've got this recipe [for working with older youth] and now we realize we need to change the recipe a little," said an ONS staff member. "Attention span, critical thinking, education level in general—it's different [with a younger group]. Plus the adolescent mind and the insecurities and ego—trying to gauge this effectively [is challenging]."

2. Self-Care for Partner Staff

Multiple data sources across the grant period indicate a range of impacts and effects resulting from community violence, including secondary trauma experienced by program staff. Staff reported in 2015 that an increased demand for services and having to cope personally with the ongoing violence was affecting staff; interviewees said staff were experiencing morale issues and required more self-care. In 2016, RYSE stated in a CalGRIP quarterly progress report:

RYSE continues to be barraged with multiple incidents of violence and death, including the murder of four young people in March. . . . It continues to be a concentrated time of incident after incident. . . . The increasing load of acute and secondary trauma carried by staff and project partners is weighing very heavily and with deep grief, fatigue, and sadness. The healers are hurting.

Partners acknowledged the critical importance of addressing impacts on staff and took steps to do so. For example, in March 2016, RYSE facilitated a Beloved Community Grief and Healing Circle, which was designed to assist adults in supporting young people's experiences with and processing of grief. In May 2017, RYSE closed its office for a week and held Restoration Week for RYSE staff "to rest, reflect, and recharge mind, body, and spirit" and stated that when staff returned, "RYSE will be instituting a set of comprehensive short and long-term staff supports."⁹ ONS reported that their staff engages in trauma reflection and self-care work on a regular basis and comes together quarterly as a group regarding self-care.

⁹ RYSE Center. (2017). Events: RYSE Restoration Week. Retrieved from <https://rysecenter.org/events/2017/5/19/ryse-restoration-week>

3. A Climate of Increasing Needs and Reduced Resources

Partners' capacity to serve and meet the needs of large numbers of young people fluctuated during the grant period. As the grant began, the City of Richmond's general fund allocation for ONS was reduced by nearly 35%, which had a significant impact on ONS's capacity to provide services to its target population and necessitated layoffs of several NCAs. ONS staff noted at multiple points during the grant period that, in addition to the two Fellowship cohorts that participated between 2015 and 2017, approximately 20 other young men also would benefit from being fellows. However, the reduction in resources made recruiting and serving this additional group through the attention-intensive Fellowship a significant challenge.

RYSE staff stated throughout the grant period that the organization has experienced increasing demand for its clinical/mental health services, including receiving referrals of young people with high levels of mental health needs from schools and other agencies without the capacity to serve them. RYSE staff also reported substantial increases in housing challenges experienced by their members, which can have implications for making progress in other key areas. This included youth and families needing to move away from the Bay Area to cope with the high cost of living; at times, these issues also affected ongoing program participation or retention.

4. CalGRIP Grant Helped Partners Grow and Strengthen Services

In discussions of resources, it is notable that, as the grant period closed, all partners pointed to the CalGRIP funding as being an essential support for service delivery and helping to substantially grow or strengthen partners' services for the target population. "The grant helped us give the young men we work with the resources that they so desperately needed and

deserved,” said an ONS staff member. “We helped to change the possible unhealthy trajectory of 51 young men through the Fellowship.” ONS staff also reported that the need for a comprehensive web-based case management database, available in the office and in the field, emerged during the grant period. While creating a database was not an objective originally stated in the grant proposal, ONS was able to direct a portion of CalGRIP resources toward developing this tool.

“This funding has helped us build a meaningful, effective clinical program because it’s not tethered to insurance dollars or MediCal,” a RYSE staff member related. This included helping to defray staff costs and led to RYSE’s emergence in the county as a core component of the clinical landscape (including organizations turning to RYSE for guidance in how to support youth who have trauma).

“The grant allowed us to have anger management classes,” said an RPAL staff member. “We started dealing with kids and their mental health, which in retrospect was a good move for our students.” He noted that before this grant, RPAL would refer a member who had mental health needs to external services; through the grant, RPAL began developing capacity to address youth mental health needs in house.

5. Attention to System Change and Disruption

While most of the Beloved Community project’s stated goals for the grant period focused on behavioral change at the individual level, interviews and conversations with program partners throughout the grant period repeatedly emphasized the dire need for larger structural change. In 2015, a project staff member described this situation:

[Due to] the acute violence and tensions we've been experiencing since the spring, on a daily basis, there is a lot of pressure on both [ONS and RYSE]. We adjusted our course accordingly. This is what gets lost in this work—the focus on young people changing their behavior while there is complete dismissiveness of the conditions that they face. As adults we have to shield them from this. There is relentless scrutiny of kids changing their behavior, yet systems have no culpability [to change theirs].

Further illustrating this point, RYSE staff wrote in a third-quarter progress report in 2016, "The cycles of violence in which most of RYSE clients live and navigate . . . illuminate the importance of a constant and continued focus on systems change and culture shift required to create and sustain peace and healing."

As the grant period closed, some project staff noted that actions taken by the current federal administration led to additional systems-level challenges and harm to the young people they serve. "There is an elevated danger. For youth in R2P2, they're afraid to access community-based services [related to documentation/U Visa issues], and we can't guarantee they're going to be protected. This leads to more anxiety and distress for them, and it is heartbreaking for us as an organization."

IV. CONCLUSION

From 2015 to 2017, the Beloved Community project provided evidence-based prevention and intervention activities for young people in the Richmond community who are involved in a gang or at risk of gang involvement. As stated in the grant proposal, these activities included street outreach, mentoring, cognitive behavioral therapy, life skills training, case management, and subsidized employment. The project had individual-level and community-level goals and objectives, with a focus on reducing West Contra Costa youth's participation in gang-related activity and involvement in gun violence, promoting youth

engagement in positive activities, and supporting the development of a trauma-informed system of care.

At the individual level, the evaluation data show that each project partner exceeded the number of youth they intended to serve through their organization's interventions. For example, ONS served a total of 212 youth, an 18% increase over its stated goal of 180. Moreover, the participation data, combined with survey and interview findings, indicate that project participants met the stated objectives of developing positive relationships with empathetic adults through ongoing mentoring experiences provided by project partners; engaging in activities that support them in understanding and coping with their mental health needs; and gaining skills and experience for education and employment, thus proactively laying the groundwork for their futures.

Regarding the objective of understanding the negative consequences of gun violence, all youth in the Fellowship remained alive, and most were not injured or hospitalized due to gun violence or arrested on gun-related charges. These outcomes suggest that the fellows, who represent some of the young men most impacted by gun violence in the Richmond area, have increased their understanding about the adverse consequences of gun violence and have immersed themselves in pursuing viable, supportive alternatives.

At the community level, RYSE's Trauma and Healing Learning Series contributed to the goal of increasing stakeholders' capacity in trauma-informed youth development and developing a shared commitment to trauma-informed policy, with post-session evaluations indicating large increases in participant understanding of concepts and interest in continued engagement.

The findings described above help to inform and contextualize community-level data that show an overall decline in homicides and gun violence in Richmond during the grant period. According to RPD data, the city experienced a substantial drop in homicides that were considered by RPD to fall into ONS's focus area—from close to half (43%) of the total homicides in 2015 to about one-quarter (27%) in 2017—representing a 56% decrease over time of this type of incident. The data also show a 10% decrease in firearm assaults causing injury or death during the grant period. While there are some methodological challenges associated with measuring community level outcomes, the data indicate that gun violence—specifically, firearm assaults and gang-related homicides—decreased substantially during the grant period, with these reductions occurring in the context of the implementation of Beloved Community.

Overall, while it is challenging to separate the impacts of the initiative from other violence reduction strategies taking place simultaneously in Richmond/West Contra Costa (as well as other factors that could influence changes in gun violence), the evaluation data indicate that Beloved Community has had positive outcomes at both the individual and community levels. The findings also suggest that consistent, responsive, and authentic engagement with youth, implemented through such interventions as intensive mentoring and addressing untreated trauma, can appropriately support young people who have traditionally received minimal or unsuitable assistance from most service providers. Furthermore, while this project did not expressly seek to reduce recidivism, most fellows were not arrested on gun violence-related charges during the grant period; this finding may have implications for recidivism-reduction interventions.

Appendix

Logic Model

BELOVED COMMUNITY: WEST CONTRA COSTA PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUTH LOGIC MODEL

Need: Young people in West Contra Costa County experience “atmospheric trauma” from high rates of violence, trauma, and stress present in their communities. Youth must cope with such factors as intentional injury; lethal violence; poverty; substance abuse; contact with child welfare, law enforcement, and juvenile justice; and suspension, expulsion, and dropout from school. Beloved Community provides strong, consistent programming that focuses on building positive, empathetic relationships with these disconnected young people, offering different approaches to address their trauma experiences, and supporting them in gaining skills/knowledge for education and employment. Beloved Community also seeks to support stakeholders in the West Contra Costa region in developing capacity for and operating as a trauma-informed community of care.

