

CalVIP 2 Evaluation Report

For the project duration September 1, 2018 to August 30, 2021.

December 15, 2021

Parlier, CA

Project Evaluator: John R. Walkup, PhD.

Inquiries regarding this grant evaluation should be emailed to John R. Walkup at jwalkupstandardsco@gmail.com.

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Quantitative Data

Project Fidelity

The following charts illustrate the degree in which project personnel were able to complete the tasks described in the project narrative.

Demographics

It is important to understand who participated as clients in project activities. The following figures describe the number of participants and their backgrounds. All of the data in this section was provided to the evaluator by the Project Director, Sonia Hall.

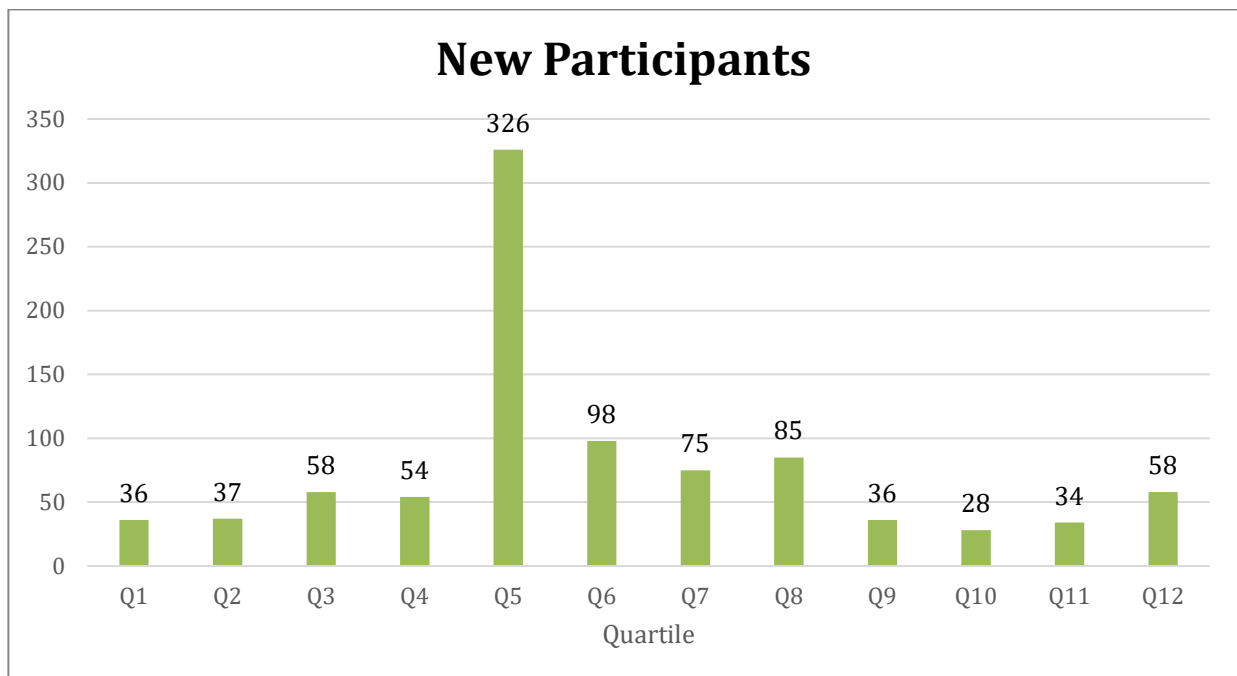


Table 1. The number of new participants/clients that entered CalVIP programs per each quarter.

Source: City of Parlier.

The reader will notice a dramatic spike in participants occurring in Quarter 5, a result of Parlier Unified School District initiating training for human trafficking in grades 9 and 11. The COVID virus began impacting the project beginning in Quarter 6, which explains the drop in participants across Quarters 6-8. Beginning in Quarter 9, services began to be split between the CalVIP 2 grant evaluated here and the City of Parlier's CalVIP 3 grant, which explains the drop in participation beginning in Quarter 9.

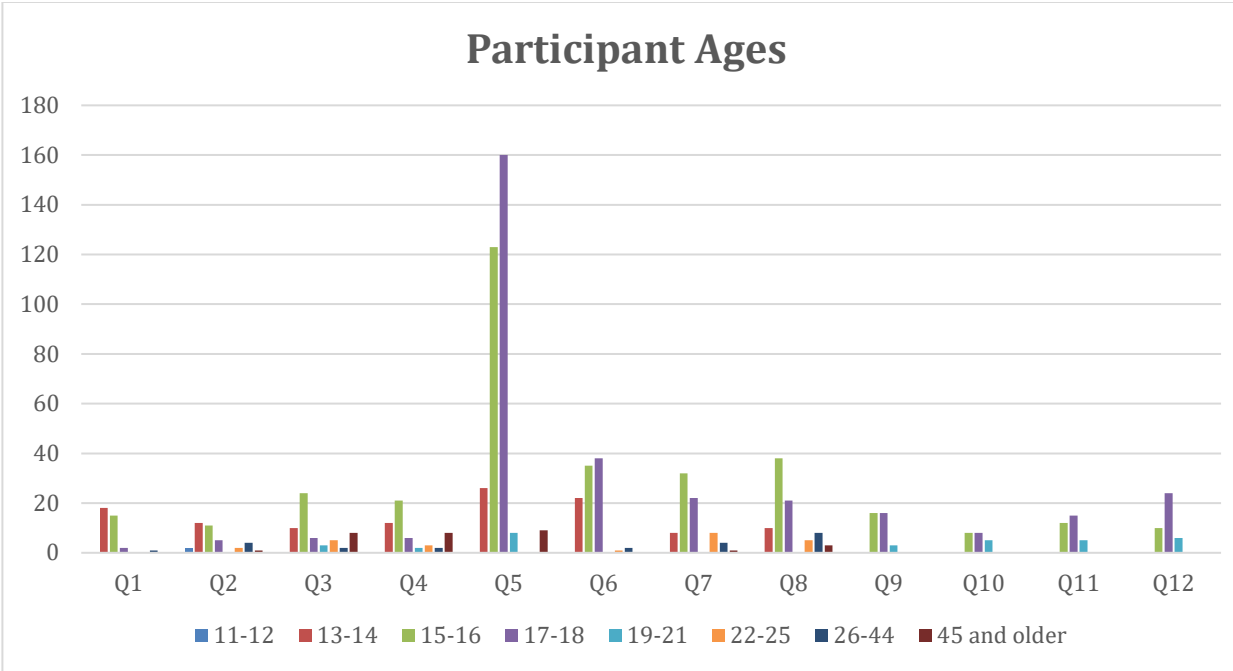


Table 2. The number of participants/clients participating in CalVIP activities by age for each project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

Parlier Unified Schools provided the bulk of the outreach for CalVIP 2 programs, which explains why youth ages 13-18 factor so prominently in Table 2. However, CalVIP 2 services were not relegated solely to school-age children, so older children and adults did receive training at times.

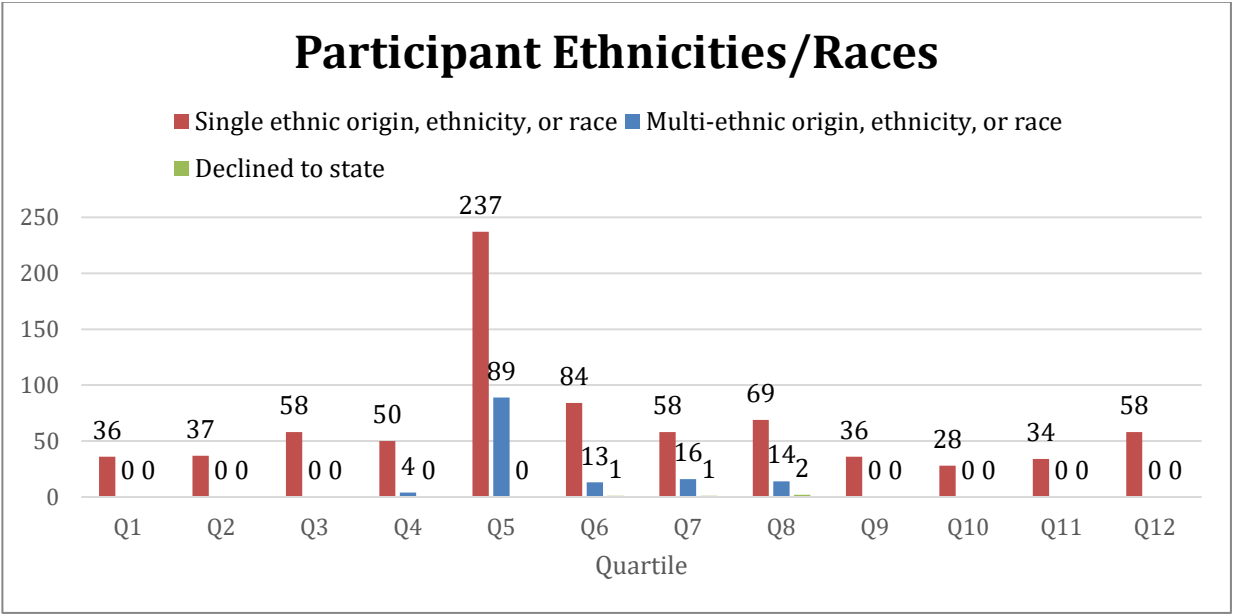


Table 3. The ethnicity/race of CalVIP 2 participants for each project quarter.

Parlier is 98% Hispanic, so the ethnic breakdowns in Table 3 and Table 4 are hardly surprising.

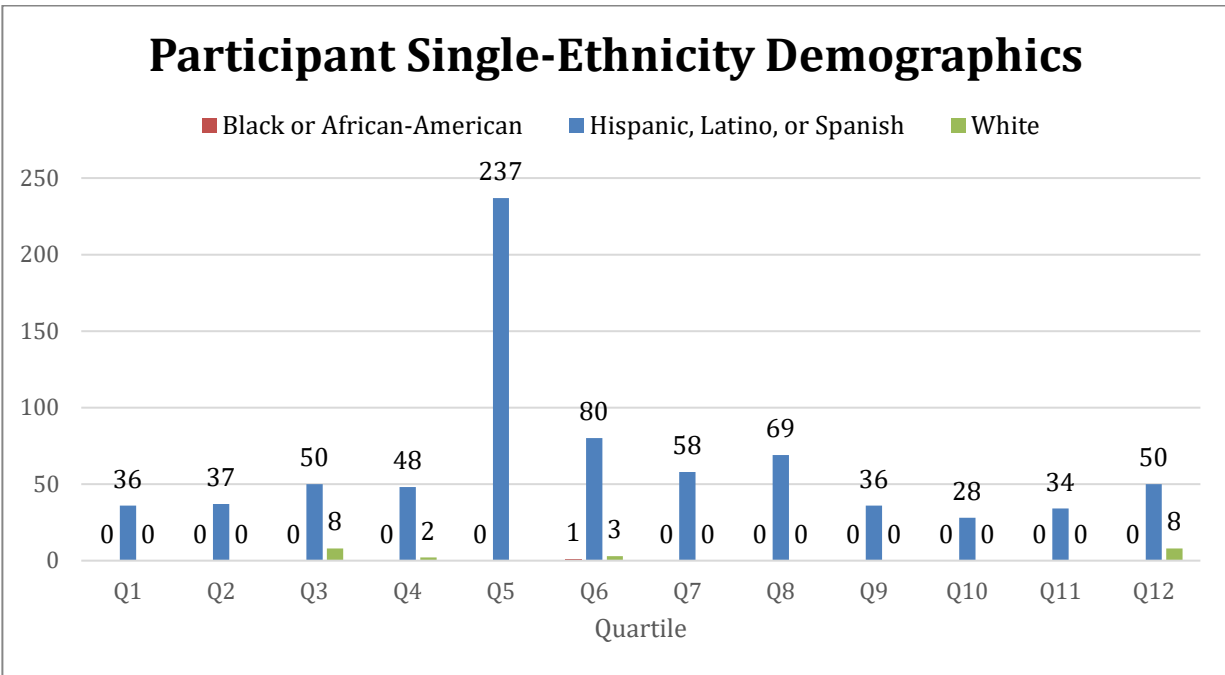


Table 4. The racial breakdown for the single-ethnic category of Table 3 per project quarter.

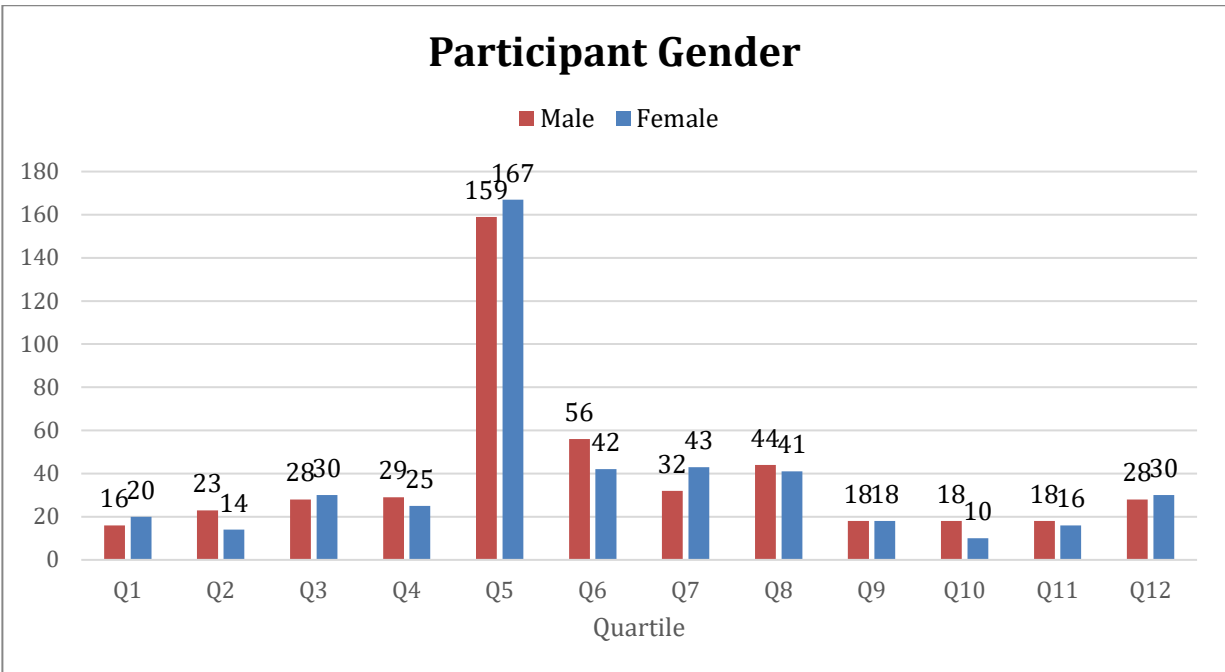


Table 5. The gender demographics of the youth/clients participating in CalVIP projects per project quarter. No non-binary students were reported, so their inclusion was omitted.

Despite what appears in Table 5, the reader would surmise that females would significantly outnumber males when it comes to receiving domestic violence services since they are almost always the victims in domestic violence crimes. However, the State released large numbers of previously-incarcerated individuals into communities like Parlier, and because many of these individuals, who were mostly males, were compelled to attend domestic violence mentoring and other services their numbers increased.

Participation Levels

The following figures describe the extent to which Parlier youth participated in project activities. As in the previous section, all of the data in this section was provided to the evaluator by Sonia Hall.

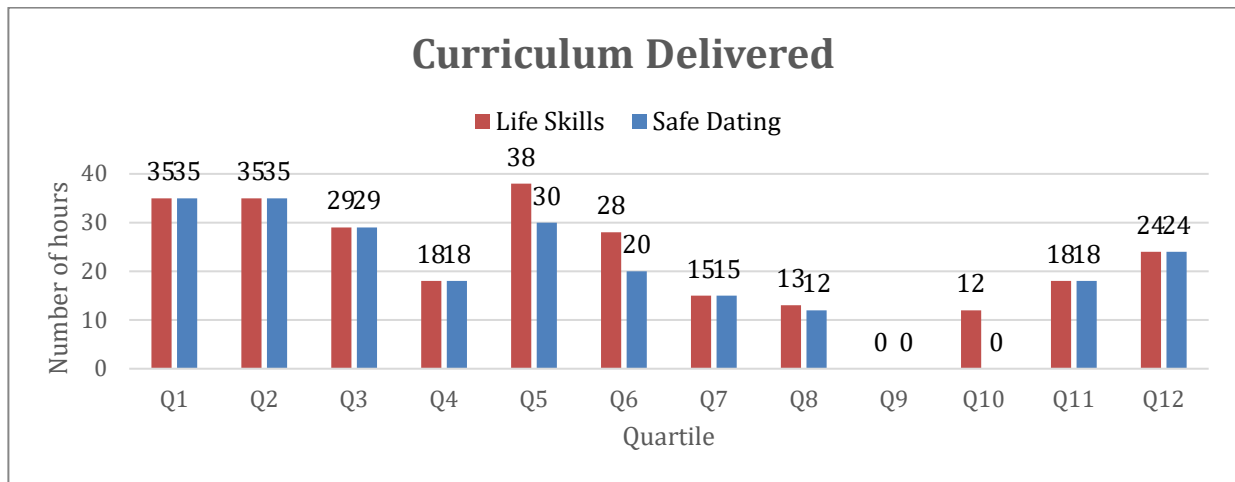


Table 6. The number of hours in Life Skills training (left-side, brown) and Safe Dating (right side, blue) delivered by project personnel per project quarter. Because each student was expected to complete both trainings, the numbers are often the same in a given project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

The lack of training in Quarter 6 in Table 6 is due to the departure of trainer Michael De Juarez, who had previously provided training in both Life Skills and Safe Dating. In Quarter 10, Susan Bechara assumed the training of Life Skills in place of De Juarez, but had yet to incorporate the Safe Dating training in her repertoire of services. As can be seen, however, the number of delivery hours rose steadily across Quarters 10 through 12. However, beginning in Quarter 9 services needed to be split between CalVIP 2 and CalVIP 3, which explains the relatively low numbers towards the end of the grant period. The Project Director could not explain the low delivery hours in Quarter 4.

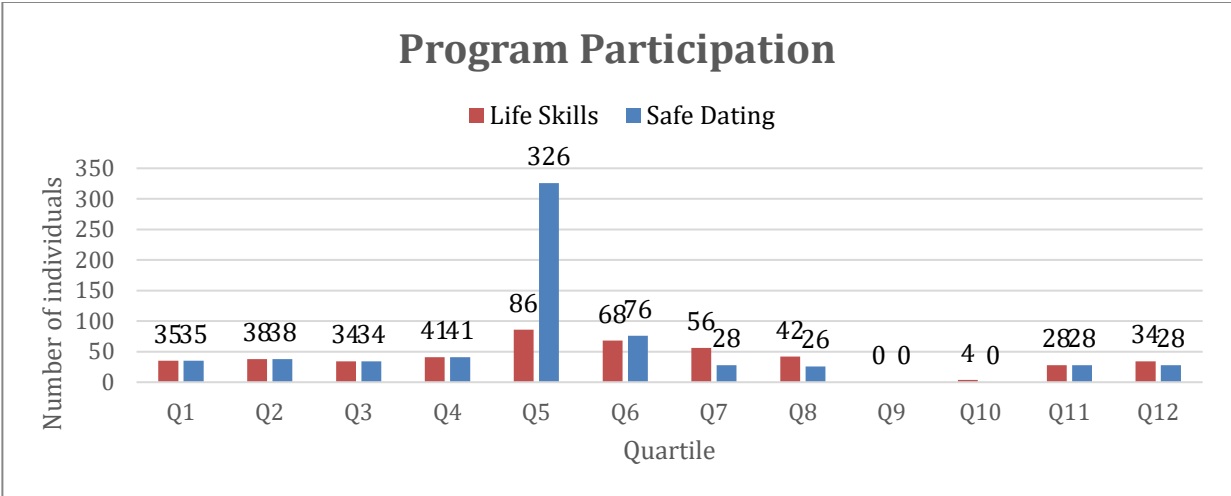


Table 7. The number of clients participating in the Life Skills training (left-side, brown) and Safe Dating training (right-side, blue) per project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

In Table 7, we must again note the large spike in participation occurring due to the school district implementing the Safe Dating program as part of its curriculum for grades 9 and 11.

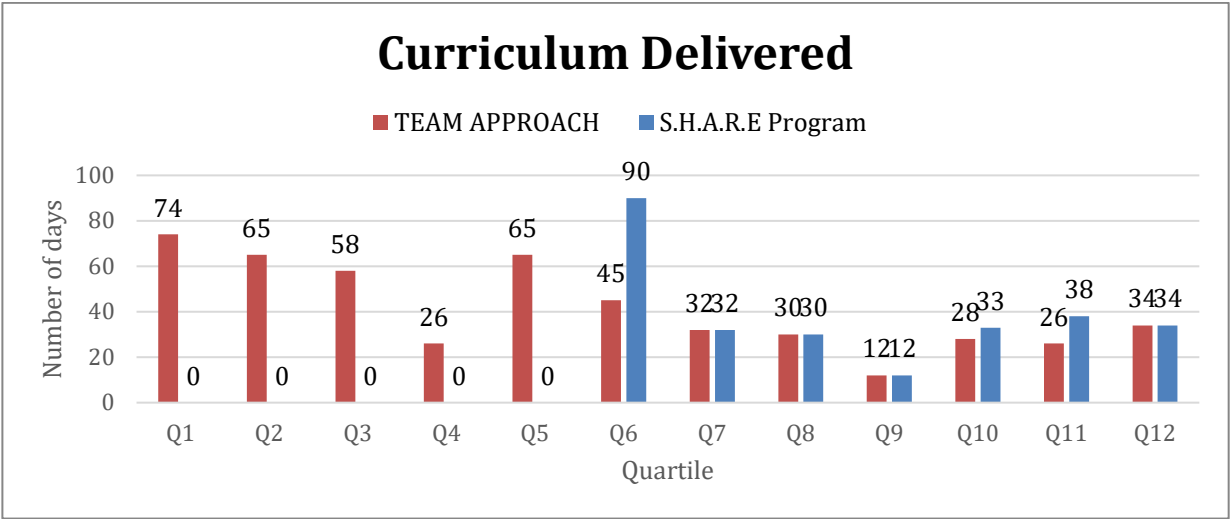


Table 8. The number of days in which the TEAM Approach training and S.H.A.R.E. Program trainings were provided to participants per project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

In Table 8, the inability of CenCal Mentoring to provide S.H.A.R.E. training is apparent in Quarters 1 – 4. Michael De Juarez assumed the responsibility of S.H.A.R.E. trainings beginning in Quarter 5.

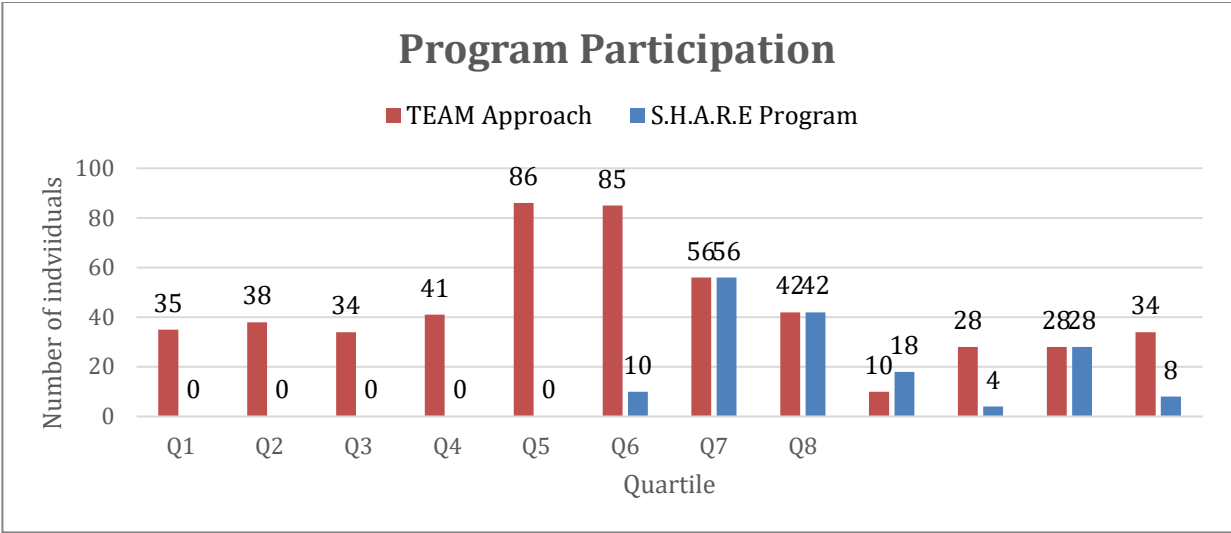


Table 9. The number of clients participating in the TEAM Approach training and S.H.A.R.E. Program trainings per project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

In comparing Table 8 and Table 9, the evaluator noted that there was a substantial number of hours delivered for the S.H.A.R.E. program in Quarter 6 (Table 8), but only a small number of participants (Table 9).

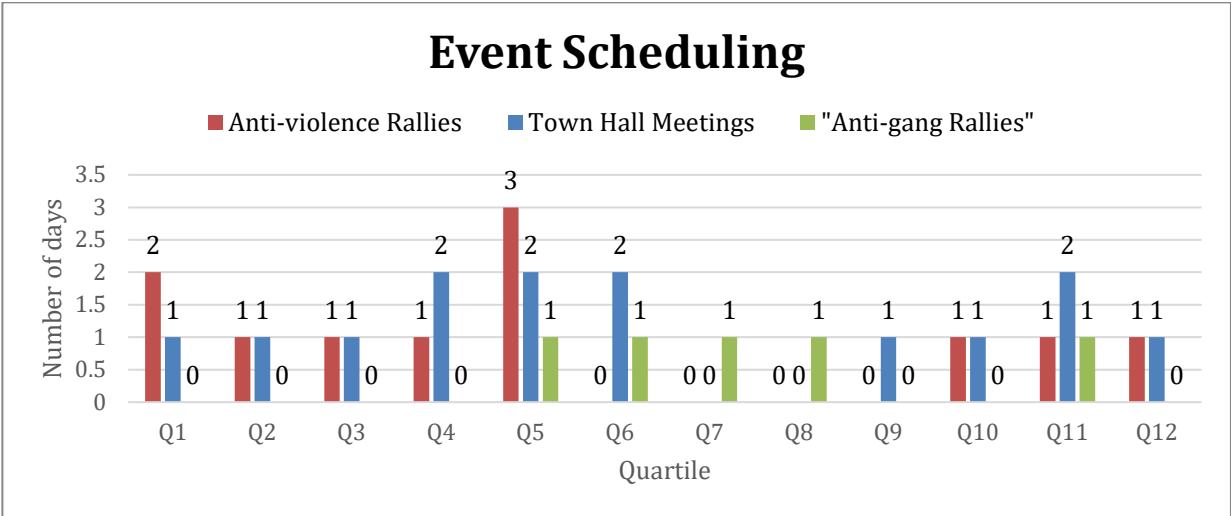


Table 10. The number days each of anti-violence rallies, town hall meetings, and anti-gang rallies were scheduled each project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

In Table 10, COVID played a large role in inconsistent scheduling of rallies and meetings. Such events were often canceled or poorly attended because few knew if it was safe to go outside and mingle with others. The appearance of anti-gang rallies beginning in Quarter 5 was due to drive-by shootings of property (a typical signature of younger gang members). A spate of shootings involving injuries began in Quarter 8, necessitating the need to respond with anti-violence rallies.

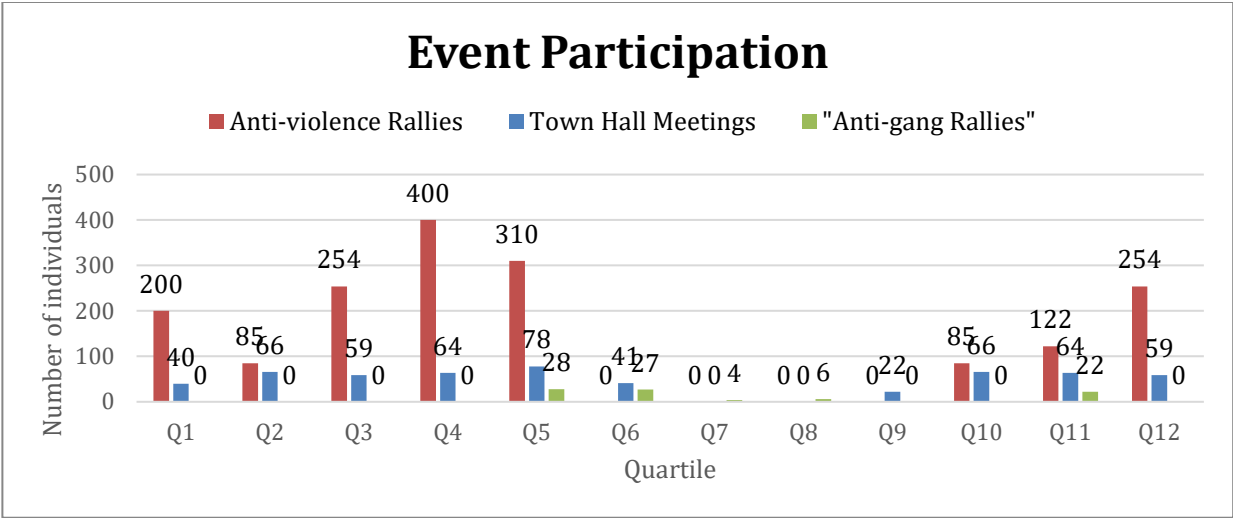


Table 11. The number of individuals participating in anti-violence rallies, town hall meetings, and anti-gang rallies each project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

In Table 11, the large surge in attendance in Quarter 4 was the result of local, albeit popular, bands playing at the rally. The COVID virus depressed attendance in Quarters 6 through 9.

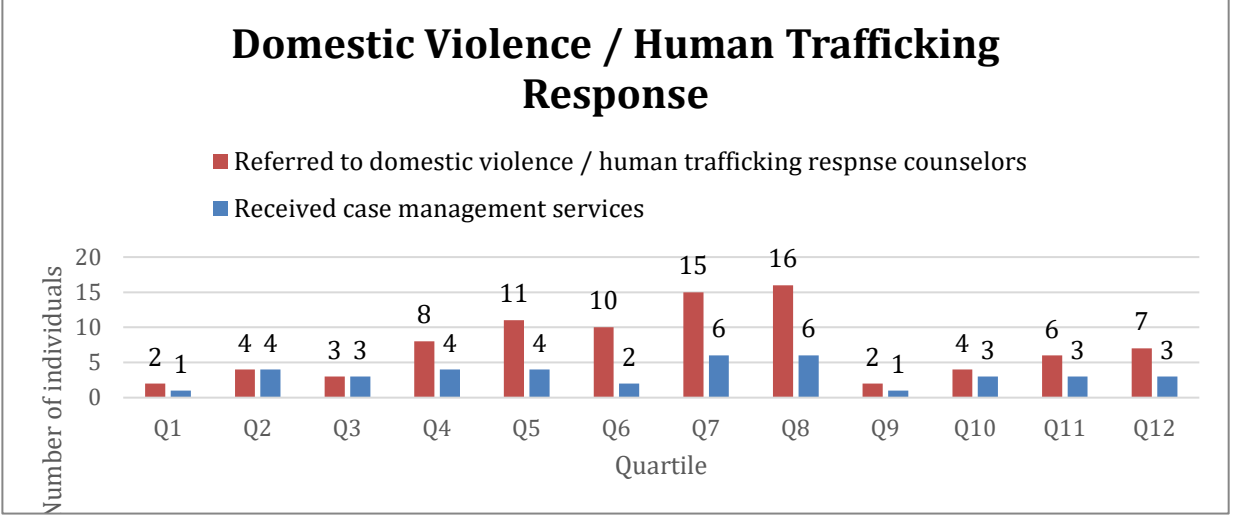


Table 12. The number of individuals that were either referred to domestic violence / human trafficking response counselors or received case management services, per project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

In Table 12, the drop in referrals and case management services occurred as a result of splitting these services between CalVIP 2 and CalVIP 3.

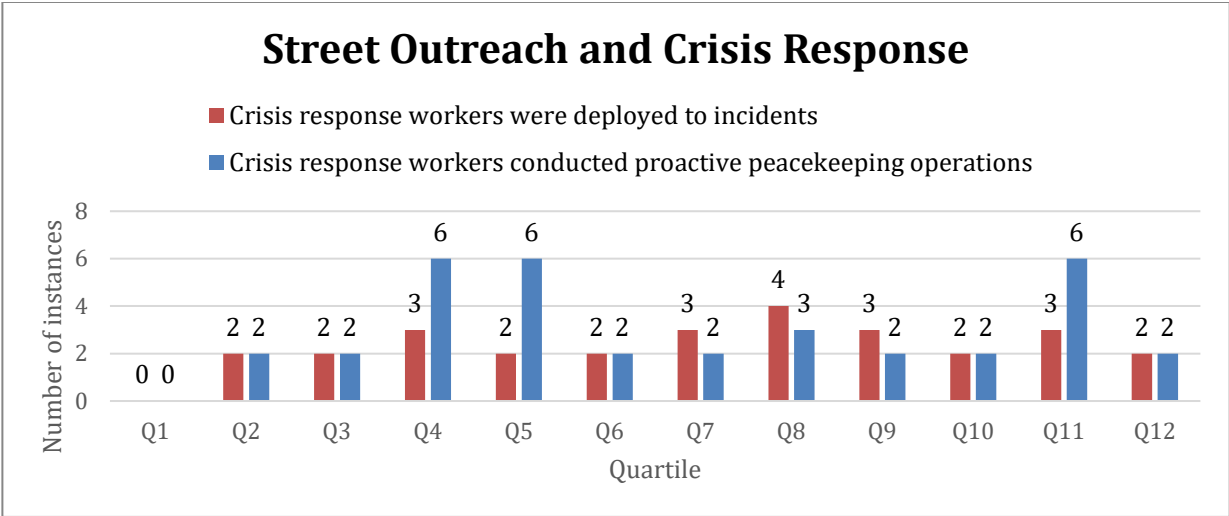


Table 13. The number of instances in which crisis response workers were either deployed to resolve violent incidences or conducted proactive peacekeeping operations per project quarter. Source: City of Parlier.

The Project Director was unable to offer anything noteworthy about the data in Table 13.

Project Success

Crime Data

The CalVIP 2 project in Parlier is an anti-crime grant. As such, its main purpose is to diminish instances of crime, with a heavy emphasis on domestic violence.

In the following charts, crime statistics are shown for Parlier and, for comparison purposes, the state of California using the “Crime in the U.S.” database of the FBI.¹ We must note two important considerations:

- Crime data from the FBI is only available up to the year 2019. Because CalVIP 2 began in September 2018, the data only reflects one full year of the project.
- Much of the focus of CalVIP 2 is to make it *easier* on victims to report crime. As such, an effective CalVIP project will likely *increase* crime reporting.

Given these two considerations, the evaluator is not offering the following charts as a measure of project success. The data is only included to provide content for discussion and baseline measures for future similar projects.

¹ <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/>. With the exception of 2016, the reader can review the data used in this section by downloading Table 8. For 2016, the relevant table is Table 5.

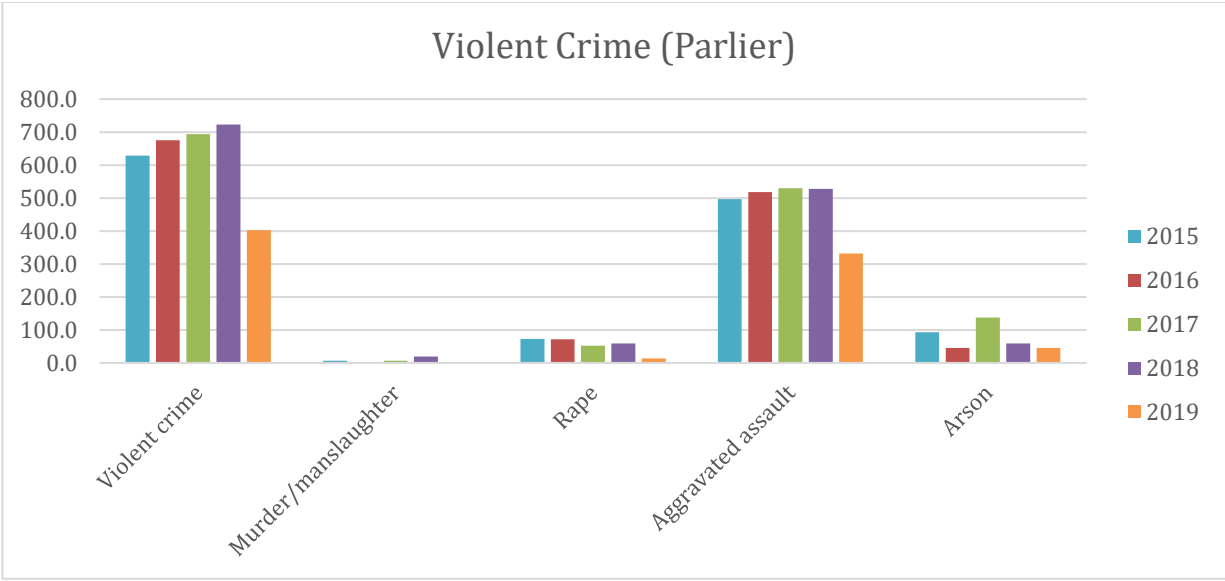


Table 14. Violent crime rates in Parlier, CA by year per 100,000. Source: FBI.

Most notable of all in Table 14 is the substantial drop in violent crime, rape, and aggravated assault in 2019, occurring roughly one year after the beginning of the CalVIP project.

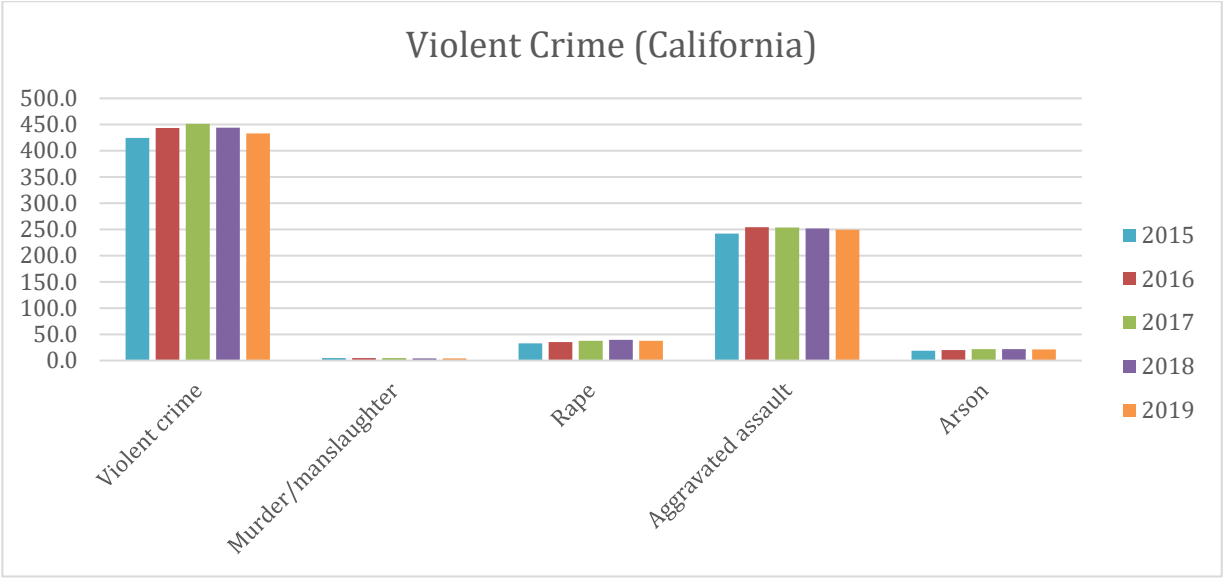


Table 15. Same as Table 14,, but for the state of California. Source: FBI.

As we can see in Table 15, the state of California only experience slight-to-modest reductions in the aforementioned crimes. As such, the drop in crime in Parlier in 2019 appears to be noteworthy.

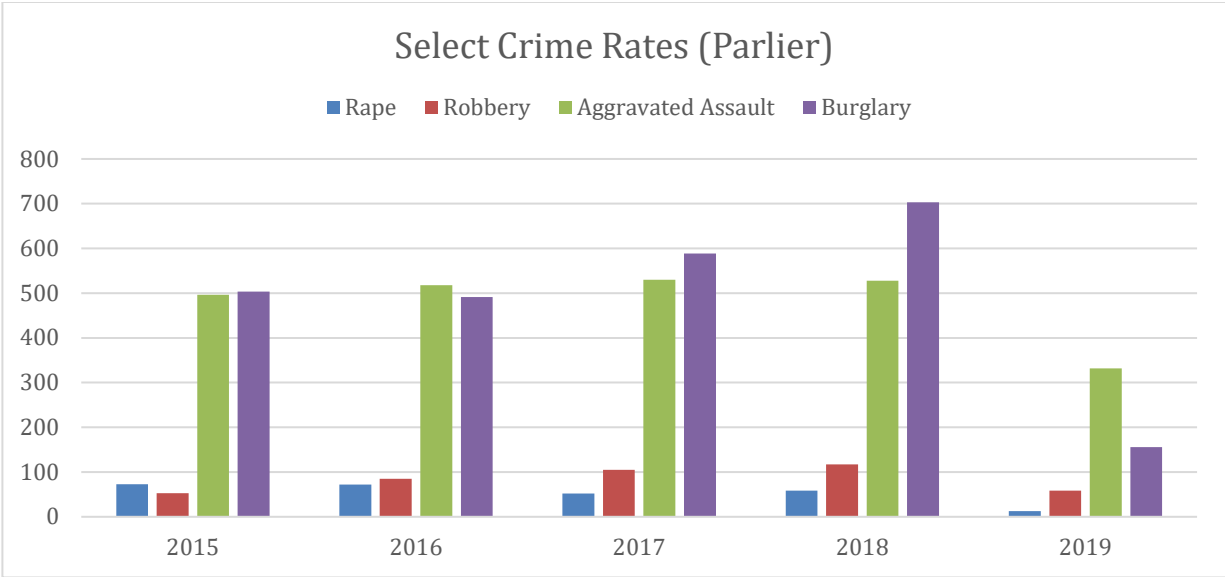


Table 16. Same as Table 14, but categorized by year. Source: FBI.

The drop in crime in Parlier is especially easy to discern by examining Table 16.

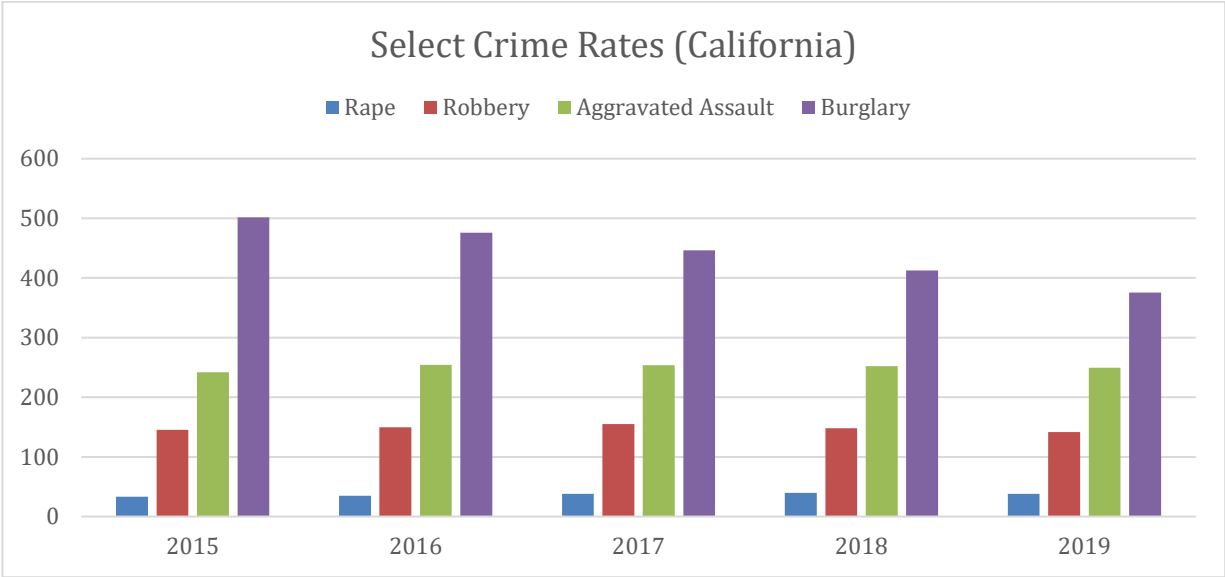


Table 17. Same as Table 16, but for the state of California. Source: FBI.

Table 17 again shows only a slight drop in crime statewide for the same crimes highlighted in Table 16.

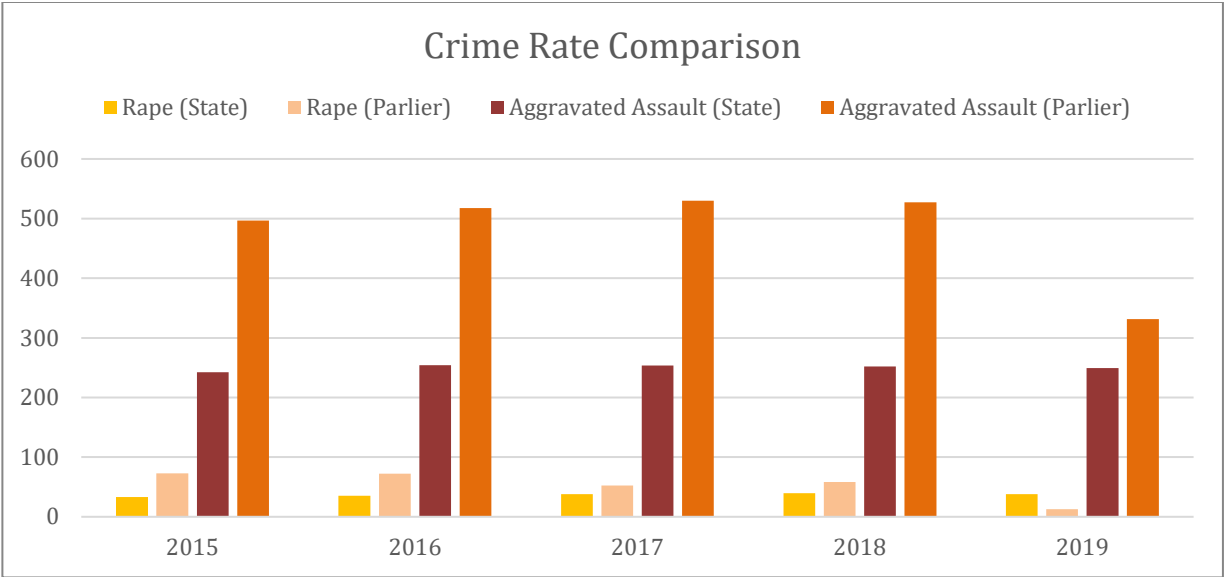


Table 18. Direct comparisons between violent crime rates in Parlier and the state of California per 100,000. Source: FBI.

The side-by-side comparison between Parlier and the state in Table 18 magnifies crime reduction in Parlier. The reader should keep in mind that the rates are relative (per 100,000), so such a comparison is logically valid.

School Discipline Data

Perhaps school suspensions are a better bellwether of CalVIP success than crime data. Therefore, the evaluator compiled district disciplinary data from the DataQuest database maintained by the California Department of Education.² (Note: As a policy, Parlier USD does not expel students, so expulsion data was omitted from this report.)

² <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/page2.asp?level=District&subject=Expulsion&submit1=Submit>

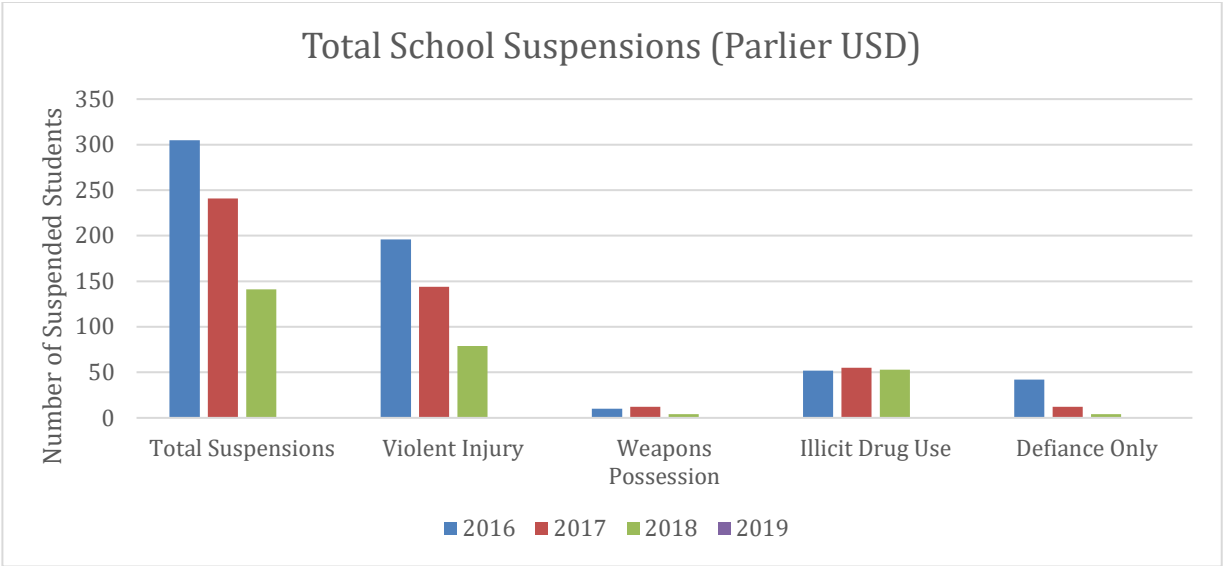


Table 19. Total school suspensions in Parlier USD categorized according to the reason for the suspension for each school year. Here, “2016” refers to the 2016-2017 school year and likewise for other school years. Source: CDE Dataquest.

The reader will note substantial drops in suspensions to near-zero levels for 2019, a direct result of training on alternatives to suspensions, as discussed by Lydia Martinez, , Prevention and Intervention Coordinator for Parlier Unified School District, in response to Question 6 of the interview process. (See the Interviews section below.) Table 21 through Table 24 provide additional detail into the drop in disciplinary action in 2019.

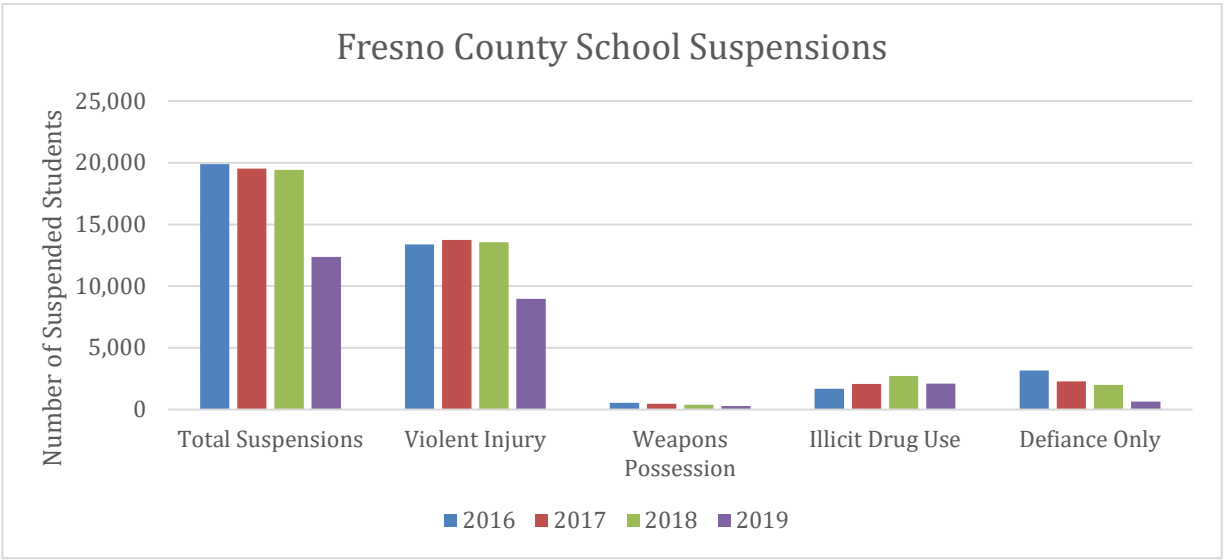


Table 20. Same as Table 19, but for all Fresno County schools. Source: CDE Dataquest.

As seen in Table 20, a drop in suspensions in 2019 also appeared county-wide. However, the drop is substantially less pronounced county-wide. This provides evidence that the efforts of Lydia Martinez and her colleagues in Parlier Unified School District achieved marked success.

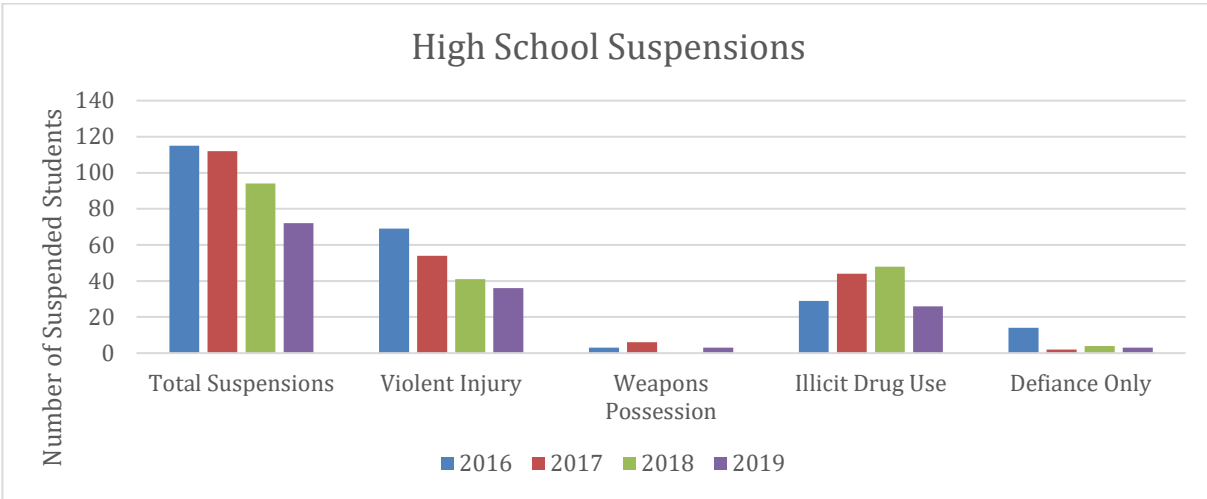


Table 21. Suspensions categorized according to the reason for the suspension, but specific to high school ages. Source: CDE Dataquest.

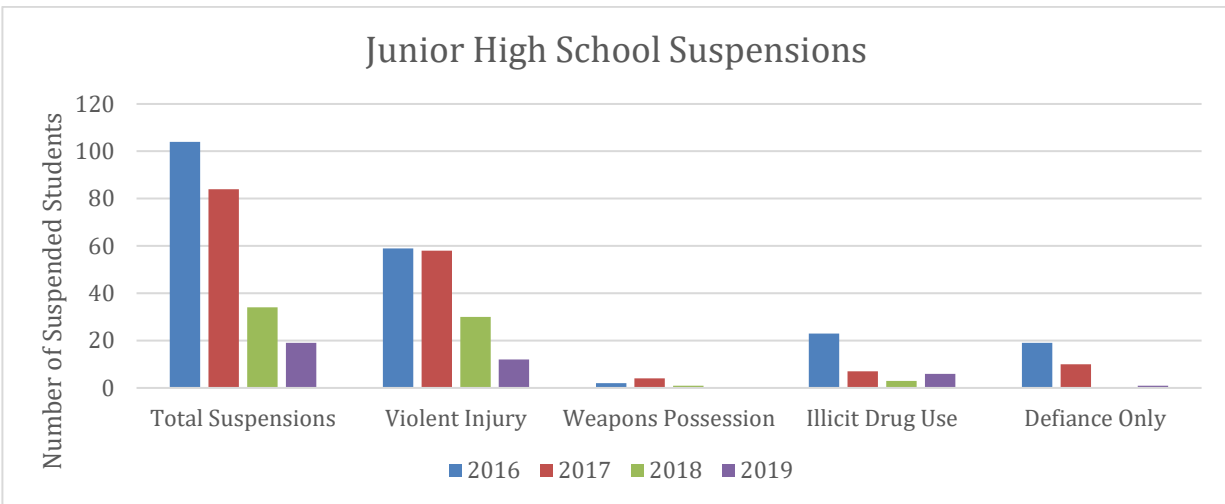


Table 22. Same as Table 21 but specific to junior high school ages. Source: CDE Dataquest.

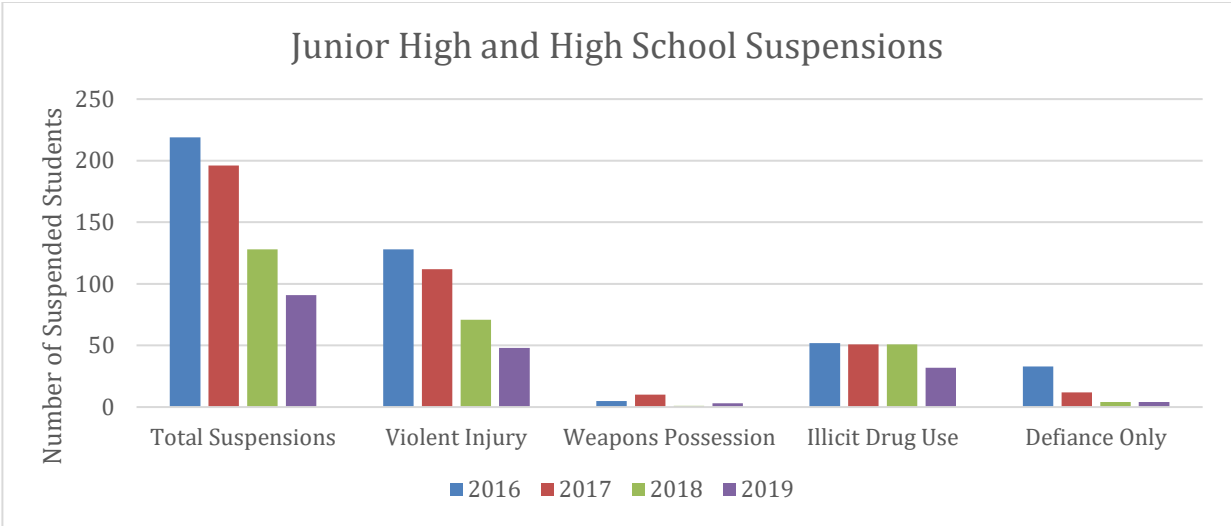


Table 23. Suspensions categorized according to the reason for the suspension, but specific to combined high school and middle school ages. Source: CDE Dataquest.

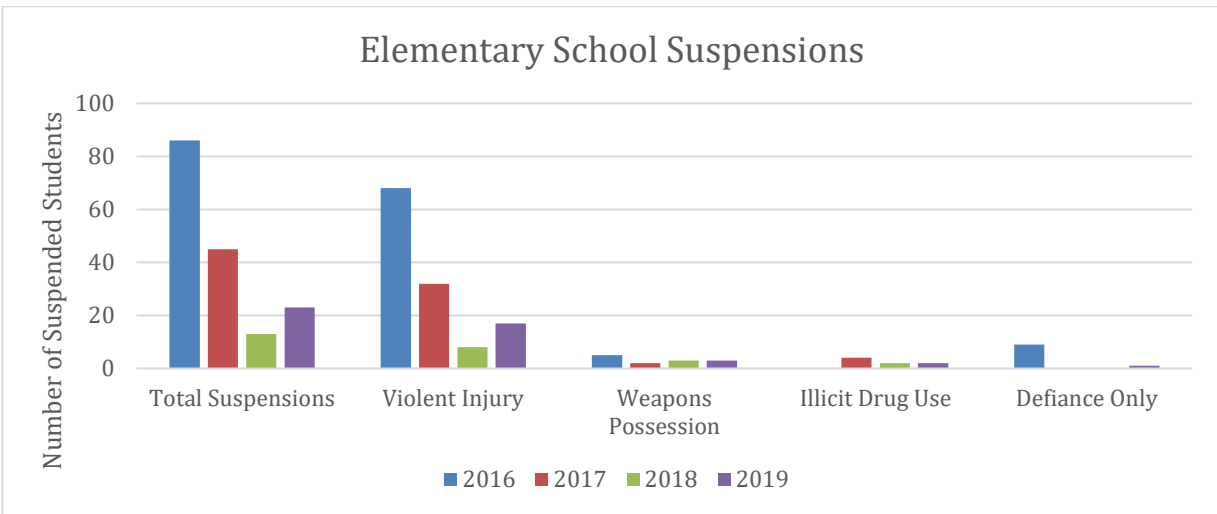


Table 24. Suspensions categorized according to the reason for the suspension, but specific to elementary school ages. Source: CDE Dataquest.

Interviews

The original CalVIP2 evaluation plan includes qualitative data gleaned from a focus group comprising key project personnel. Due to scheduling limitations, the evaluator decided to interview each participant individually.

Participants

The evaluator interviewed the following CalVIP project personnel over the period of Dec. 7 to 14, 2021.

- **Sonia Hall**, City Administrator, City of Parlier and Program Director, CalVIP 2.³
- **David Cerda**, Chief of Police, Parlier Police Department.⁴
- **Lydia Martinez**, Prevention and Intervention Coordinator, Parlier Unified School District.⁵
- **Nora Cuevas**, Code Enforcement Officer / (former) Domestic Violence Advocate, Parlier Police Department.⁶
- **Susan Bechara**, Director, Comprehensive Behavioral Services.⁷

These personnel were chosen because they led vital program efforts for each of the major partners in the CalVIP project.

The evaluator interviewed each participant via Zoom with one exception: Susan Bechara was unable to use Zoom due to technical problems. In her case, the interview was conducted by telephone.

Each Zoom session was recorded using the built-in recording feature of Zoom, with the recordings stored on the evaluator's own business computer. In the case of Susan Bechara, the evaluator used the built in Microsoft Voice Recorder application to capture the interview. The evaluator transcribed the questions and responses for each interview using the Voice Typing

³ <https://parlier.ca.us/contact/>

⁴ <https://parlier.ca.us/police-department/>

⁵ <https://pusd2021.sched.com/lmartinez18>

⁶ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nora-cuevas-ab5787121>

⁷ Comprehensive Behavioral Service, 2830 N Blackstone Ave, Fresno, CA 93703. (559) 243-9731

feature of Google Docs, which he then edited for errors by listening to the original recordings. Appendix A contains the aforementioned transcriptions

Preliminary Instructions

Preliminary instructions were read to each interviewee at the beginning of each session. These instructions included the following:

- This interview is being recorded only with your consent. I will not share the recording with anyone else with one exception: If the BSCC demands it.
- The Program Standards of the AEA guide this evaluation:
<https://www.eval.org/About/Competencies-Standards/Program-Evaluation-Standards>
- Questions are guided by a formal evaluation plan that I developed and submitted to the grantor (BSCC)
- P5 Transparency and Disclosure Evaluations should provide complete descriptions of findings, limitations, and conclusions to all stakeholders, unless doing so would violate legal and propriety obligations.
- It will not be possible to de-identify you in the report.
- You are free to opt out of the interviewer at any time.
- If you want a response removed from the report, I can oblige. I have provided my email address in the Chat window.
- I must disclose conflicts of interest: Sonia Hall and I are good friends and we have worked together on past projects.
- As part of the formative process, I will summarize to the project manager any suggestions that I glean from the interview that can help improve future CalVIP projects.
- Interview questions are crafted to take into account cultural/political sensitivities.
- This interview's sole purpose is to provide data for the evaluation.
- Answers should be open-ended. Please talk freely and be free to go off on tangents if you wish.
- For each prompt, please feel free to discuss the impact by COVID
- With that said, are you willing to conduct this interview?

Questions

The evaluator asked each of the interviewees the following questions:

- Qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to:
 1. Fill grant-funded positions
 2. Expend grant funding on schedule
 3. Serve the targeted population

4. Meet challenges and overcome them
 5. Maintain quality in your services (e.g., do you attend the CCTV Collab meetings)
- In your estimation, how have the following been carried out?
 6. Grant-funded trainings
 7. Community outreach
 8. Intervention
 9. Social media campaigns
 - How would you characterize your agency's involvement/success with:
 10. Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships model.
 11. Training in cultural competency
 12. Peace Over Violence model
 13. Sexual Assault Response Team and Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT)
 14. Developmental Assets/Protective Factors
 15. Mobilizing CTCV community to fight back against violence.
 - Summary questions
 16. What is your biggest accomplishment in serving your target audience?
 17. What do you think is missing from the CalVIP project?
 18. Has involvement in CalVIP increased your interest in future similar projects?

Another question, "Are you aware of any clients, colleagues that have expressed opinions you would want to share?" was omitted after the first interview due to a perceived negative reaction by the respondent.

Summary

Upon reviewing the responses to each question, the evaluator surmised the following. Note that for the sake of brevity and clarity, the evaluator has closely paraphrased the interviewees' responses. Appendix A contains the actual statements from the interviewees.

1. Qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to fill grant-funded positions?

Participants in grant-funded projects often grouse about their inability to fill positions in a timely manner. For this reason, the evaluator was keenly interested in hearing any complaints that key personnel might harbor in this respect.

Based on the responses, the evaluator has surmised that filling grant-funded positions posed little trouble for project personnel. As Project Manager **Sonia Hall** stated: "Well, we filled all the positions immediately and we secured all of our contracts with our partners immediately. So, in fact we secured the part... the contract

with the partners prior to even being funded, so everything was in place.” None of the other interviewees expressed any complaints in regards to filling grant-funded positions.

2. Qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to expend grant funding on schedule?

Much like the previous question, this question was posed to glean insight into another area of grant funding that is commonly dissed: The inability to expend grant monies in time.

“The final month of the grant was originally supposed to be September of [2020]. But then [BSCC] extended it an extra year, but we were pretty much done with using our grant in the budget.”

Project Manager **Sonia Hall** targeted COVID and complaints from community members about the job performance of one of the key personnel as complicating factors in her response: “We were expanding it on schedule and this is where some of the issues came about because we didn't know we were going to be able to be extended a year due to COVID and so throughout COVID we were still paying of course for the Violence Prevention Officer and this is where the issue came in is that the nonprofit that was doing work... he was kind of doing his own thing and contacting people on his own and so on, and still putting in for reimbursements for the... his folks because they were hoping any day that they [undiscernible] going to come back. So, he's trying to hold on to them. So, he was having them... just find other things to do outreach. But, and this is where the issue happened with the City and there are questions as to why are you invoicing when you're not doing anything at the school. But the domestic violence was also under his purview. So, he was getting reimbursement for that.”

Sonia Hall continued: “The guy... did a good job. He came highly recommended and the school loved him. During school time, he was there every day at the schools. But when COVID hit and he wasn't able to go there to be with the kids, the school didn't know what he was doing. But, he was still doing the domestic violence and he was still doing the outreach with the gang members. But he was making calls to the kids that he was working with when the school shut down. But that was about it. So, he thought the grant had to be spent by a certain date, so he didn't see a problem with just getting the reimbursements for what they were doing. Our Finance Director conducted a financial audit, but didn't see anything out of the ordinary.”

Susan Bechara indicated that expending grant monies posed no problems for her agency. Not having been Chief of Police at the beginning of the grant period, David

Cerda was at a disadvantage in responding this question: “Ah, I don't... honestly, I don't believe so. I think, uh, you know, we've been on track and respect to you know respect to utilizing those funds. But as far as I know, I believe we're on track.”

On the other hand, **Lydia Martinez** stated “[expending grant funding] was a little difficult. We have so many plans as you know, and that was just... those were the challenges of COVID. But we did right as soon as even though we didn't get the funding, the mentoring program provided all the support that we needed, whether it was for curriculum, incentives for the students, things to run the program, they were able to provide all it out on a timely manner. They were, they were really good about that.”

In summary, COVID adversely impacted the expending of grant funding, which is hardly surprising. Complaints involving the job performance of one of the key personnel at local school sites caused significant complications for the project. However, a follow-up investigation turned up no evidence to corroborate these claims and **Sonia Hall** dismisses the complaints as unjustified. Still, the inability of CenCal Mentoring and Pastor ___ to provide adequate services points to a potential problem in vetting independent contractors. Apparently, some contractors were selected based on their connection to the City and community. While such connections often prove important for gaining trust among the targeted population, they are no substitute for an independent contractor's capacity for carrying out project activities efficiently and effectively.

3. Qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to serve the targeted population?

All of the respondents had much to say in response to this question. **Sonia Hall** discussed the aforementioned problem with the _____ provider in her response: “But the domestic violence was also under his purview. So, he was getting reimbursement for that, and during COVID that domestic violence shot up... the numbers went crazy and the violence... We had a violence increase. And so part of this nonprofits job two was to... go out and try... to keep the retaliation from happening. So they would go out and work with the officers on the street and trying to get the family members to calm down and not go after the person who just shot their loved one. You know what I mean? So, they're basically called *peacemakers*. Mike [De Juarez] in his nonprofit [Hope Coalition⁸] oversaw the outreach for the intervention peacemakers. He oversaw the mentoring in the schools, and he also oversaw the domestic violence advocacy. It was all running through him. So, when he was

⁸ <https://thehopecoalition.com/>

receiving his checks immediately the Mayor [Alma Beltran] started saying “Well, we're paying him and he's not doing anything.”

Sonia Hall continued: “Oh, so the first nonprofit that we used when we put the grant together was CenCal Mentoring... And they brought someone in to be the mentor and this guy was a disaster. He did a terrible job. The school was very unhappy with him. He didn't keep a list of the kids he was working with. He had nothing to report.” Based on this substandard job performance, **Sonia Hall** replaced CenCal Mentoring with Mike De Juarez of Hope Coalition at the beginning of the fourth month of the grant project.”

“And so he [De Juarez] came in and did a fantastic phenomenal job... things were going well. He did events whenever there was gun violence or any kind of violence in the neighborhood, he would go in and we can do an anti-violence rally, a peace rally. And he had tons of volunteers. He would go out to do these rallies and give away food to all the people in the neighborhood. He would bring out this big truck, with the trailer and on that trailer was bounce houses and all sorts of stuff. It was like they would come out and you know quickly put together this big event. It was fabulous.”

Sonia Hall was quick to point out the efforts of **Susan Bechara** of Comprehensive Behavioral Service to fill in for Mike De Juarez once he left the project. “She works with Probation and Probation will send kids to her that have been sentenced to do drug classes, anger management classes. You know all these different classes. So, she does those classes and on Fridays she was doing them out at our center in Parlier... Susan... hooked up with another church similar to like what Mike does... that does the same thing. And so, anyhow, so this guy comes in and says he's got all these volunteers and he's got all these people that work under him as mentors. He's got the people to go out and do the street outreach. He says he's got all of that. He comes in and school starts. I mean, we hit the ground running.”

“**Susan [Bechara]** had to use her people, her staff, to come in and do the mentoring.⁹ And they've done a good job, but it's Susan staff.

Sonia Hall then discussed domestic violence: “So, we had the domestic violence advocate there in that position until the end of the year. We did the full two years of that grant with having a Domestic Violence Advocate in that position. And then after

⁹ The evaluator followed up his interview with Project Manager **Sonia Hall** with a phone call and asked for further commentary. She informed him that the City had to contribute matching funds to compensate replacement personnel to fill the gap in services.

we had someone else [**Nora Cuevas**] that did it, but she just wasn't on top of it like the other one was. And the reason why **Nora [Cuevas]** was moved from being a community service officer to working as only code enforcement. And Council didn't want her doing anything at all with the Police Department, which meant she wasn't allowed to do the domestic violence anymore." Hall then commented that **Nora Cuevas** was replaced by someone from the Marjorie Mason Center, but that person was later dropped because of her substandard work performance."

"One thing we did still have and that never stopped, no matter what, not even through COVID, was our Tuesday night support group here for the ladies. We have done a great job in serving those victims, especially because we were able to use **Nora [Cuevas]** who's actually a chaplain.... and she's got that experience, but she also worked for the Police Department as a community service officer. So, she had all of the files. She had everything. Whenever there was a domestic violence call, the officer would call her and she'd get up, even if it's in the middle of the night, and go out there. And that wasn't just domestic violence; that was also with rape victims."

We also just wanted to make sure that violence was addressed on the streets. And so we had our violence prevention officer and he did a great job... an experienced officer; it wasn't just some new officer. We had someone who is experienced and he didn't just go out there and do patrol. He was an actual detective. And he went out there to pursue the cases of the domestic violence. Went out there to pursue the cases of rape. Went out there to pursue all of the cases that had any kind of violence tied to it."

Susan Bechara described at length her nonprofit's history of providing services to disadvantaged youth: "Our agency has a history of over 30 years, providing specifically the targeted population in the CalVIP grant. So, it is nothing new for us, but because of the grant we were able to actually execute it more effectively. In the areas where we need to address and so that has been very, very helpful. Yes, we are able to actually address it more effectively. And it's also because it's a smaller town. So, because of the number of years we've been involved in their community... we have what we call the connection on the streets. All among the population that we're trying to serve, that's definitely true. So, it has helped a lot, but I think if we have more funds we could hire even more people to be more effective with the target."

Police Chief **David Cerda** weighed in on the issue of serving the targeted population: "So generally the services begin with the officers that are handling in cases themselves are required to provide victim pamphlet information notification services in respect to counseling, domestic violence, advocacy, shelter, financing, victim rights, and Marcie's law. So, there are a number of things that the officers initially at

the onset of investigation. So that's something that is mandatory we do across the board. So, that would be the first step in any addition to that would be follow up with a Domestic Violence Advocates. So, **Nora [Cuevas]** was assigned to that position. And she had went out on a number of cases to provide that support. I remember there was one case that she was working on... the victim was having trouble with finding shelter or being homeless. The funding helps with respect to what **Nora [Cuevas]** does for us and what Jessie does for us with the follow-up. And investigating the case and providing services for the victim. Funding for training is huge; the training is essential. Having that funding available for training is a big impact, so our officers know how to interview and respond and provide higher quality of service for the victim and have that ability to empathize with somebody in those positions."

Nora Cuevas served as the Domestic Violence Advocate for the grant project until October 9, 2020. As she stated: "Prior to COVID, I would go to different events, community events, and do community outreach. We would also answer any questions if somebody had any domestic violence questions or if somebody would approach [and ask] "What is required?" Like, a one-on-one sometimes. So, that would be a way to getting close to the community and letting them know that we were there to help them. Once COVID hit, it was a little bit more difficult. But, with the previous victims that I work with... they would let either family or your friends know that we had a Domestic Violence Advocate that was available for them. I'm no longer the Domestic Violence Advocate. I feel like if I was able to provide the community with good services, so if they would offer the grant again, I would be willing to step up to become the Domestic Violence Advocate again."

Lydia Martinez focused much of her response on maintaining strong communication among all parties: "Yes, yes we had regular meetings and this was really important and it's just like with anything else: Communication is key. So, we had two separate types of meetings. We had the meetings that **Sonia Hall** would schedule for all parties involved... everyone that was working with the grant. So, we would meet regularly to discuss goals, outcomes, where we were at and those were held on a regular basis. We meet at City Hall in the council chambers and so there was that communication piece there. But then we also within the school side, we made sure that we included them as part of our planning meetings. And our coordination meetings so that we gave him a heads-up of students needing additional support. We made referrals. We made sure to follow it up with a student had already been referred, how they were progressing, so that's how we were managing that to make sure that that we were maximizing our services and it wasn't just some program that

sounded some building and no one knew they were there. We made sure to include them as part of the school planning and leadership.”

In summary, all of the respondents spoke glowingly about their ability to provide services for the targeted population. The lack of a Domestic Violence Advocate, however, undoubtedly diminished the ability of the project to meet the needs of domestic violence victims. As such, this points toward a significant need for future CalVIP projects.

4. Qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to meet challenges and overcome them?

Sonia Hall naturally centered her response on the need to find a suitable replacement for CenCal Mentoring. “Well, you know the challenge that we had like I said with Cencal... when they couldn't do the job, I just basically told them we couldn't do it anymore, period. So the way I met that challenge, I replaced them. But services [expected of this budgeted item] never stopped; that is, we never went without them.”

Susan Bechara commented: “The model of my program [operates] very strictly on accountability, responsibility, and consequences, and that has been very effective so that when we address those clients that we have... that we're targeting that population... they pretty much are already aware on how we conduct our business. So, it wasn't anything new for us and all my staff are well trained so it's really nothing new. It's just helps us with this grant to actually execute it more effectively.”

Nora Cuevas, who was replaced as Domestic Violence Advocate, decided understandably to pass on answering this question. David Cerda responded: The grant has provided us an opportunity to do the advocacy with **Nora [Cuevas]**. And then having an investigator assigned... that's something that we've really never had. So, that is actually a new service and a new strategy that is going to improve our service to the community.”

Lydia Martinez focused on COVID and its impact on being able to meet others in person. “Yeah, as I mentioned there was a challenge. We were right on track. We had shared Google forms where there was a file for referrals, the program they were using, the regular meetings that we were talking about. Once the school closed in March and we wanted to continue the services, so, uh, once we figured out Zoom and it was... distance learning. The program continued to offer their services just like everyone else; it was through distance learning. They were available either phone calls or the parents were okay. They would do home visits... things like that, but that was a challenge and that, you know, and just like all other programs that we had, not

having the students there, being able to do our regular day in day out activities was a challenge. We did the best we could.”

In summary, **Sonia Hall**’s biggest challenge centered on CenCal Mentoring’s inability to perform its job adequately; a problem she solved by simply dismissing them and finding a suitable replacement. COVID negatively impacted **Lydia Martinez**’ ability to conduct her tasks, but she solved that problem through the use of distance learning. The other respondents offered little with respect of the purpose of this question.

5. Qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to maintain quality in your services?

During the grant project, **Sonia Hall** noticed that police officers were ill-equipped to handle adequately cases of rape. So, she described her efforts in improving the reach of the project into this area of violent crime. “Well, we’ve always had meetings [where] we had some kind of training. A lot of people didn’t understand rape and even our officers didn’t really because it’s a scary topic to them. We did partner up with the family Healing Center, so when someone was raped, they go to her group and they have counseling there. That’s where they checked the girl for the rape. So, we partnered up with them and they trained officers on how to handle rape as well as our nonprofits.”

Susan Bechara responded to this question with the following: “Maintaining quality is our integrity. Making sure that services are provided accurately. The papers are being handled as soon as the clients come in, we process them within 72 hours, and we make contacts and the services will be provided immediately — within the 72 hours period.”

Nora Cuevas decided to pass on the question. However, Police Chief **David Cerda** responded by saying “in Parlier, domestic violence along with our gangs and gun violence is an enormous priority. And because it’s prevalent in that community, having these programs and having the financing is going to improve the ability for us to provide the quality of service. Hopefully reduce those occurrences in our community, but it is absolutely something that is necessary.”

Lydia Martinez of Parlier Unified School District discussed her participation in the CCTV Collaboration meetings: “Again, I think it’s because of the coordination of services. That’s how we made sure that we were meeting the program outcomes. Those meetings with **Sonia [Hall]** were very important because she would regularly review. ‘This is what the grant allows’ and ‘this is what we have in the grant.’ I look forward to those meetings. I got to learn about how the Police Department, the other aspect of the grant, how they were handling that with the domestic violence, with the

calls, and the sharing out of data. I also attended the chief's advisory meetings and was a part of his Advisory Board. That was separate but I got to see the reduction in crime. I also shared our reduction in suspensions and office discipline referrals. I think that's how we maximize our service."

Other than possibly **Lydia Martinez**, respondents did not offer much in the way of quality control. Naturally, this is not to say that their respective agencies provide poor quality of services; rather, it appears that they have no formal quality control procedures in place. This represents a significant avenue for improving services in the future.

6. In your estimation, how have the following been carried out? Grant-funded trainings.

Sonia Hall offered the following: "So, we did have good trainings. They have the mental health/first aid training and **Susan Bechara** did that. With that one... it's just basically so could they can learn how to handle the violence that comes with someone who's crazy. And so, and how to approach those people rather than... to to deescalate the situation. And they also did have training on that... on the... escalating any kind of issue that they come up to. So, they had a training on that, they had training on basically showing empathy and the trauma informed care. So, that was a requirement of the grant and that was something that they had early on was training on trauma-informed care. And how to approach the victim and how to treat the victim. Then the last training that they had... they had several trainings; we built a training room at the Police Department just because we started having all these trainings. And then with COVID being the way it was we also were able to do trainings through what the weather-guard type thing."

Sonia Hall continued: "The last training that we had was on human trafficking. And that was a fabulous training. The trainer that trains all over California came in along with our new partner and CalVIP partner, Breaking the Chains. So they came in and they trained our officers on how to identify victims of human trafficking because we have human trafficking issues so bad. So bad! We have domestic violence that goes on but right along with domestic violence is human trafficking and it's starting with young girls that are 13 years old. And when I say human trafficking, it doesn't always have to be them stealing them and making them do stuff. It's these drug dealers that are making these girls have sex with men or whatever. They bring them from over the border. They bring them here, put them to work, and will hold their papers.... they're fake papers until for as long as it... you know... forcing them work. So, that's basically that's what we have found and that's throughout the grant. And because we were more involved in the community and engaged in the community and working on these domestic violence cases and building trust with the community, that's what

came out of it — that was finding that we had a huge problem with human trafficking. So, that's something that came from this CalVIP grant, and I think that's important to notice in the evaluation that because of the trust that we have built with this community the officers are able to see beyond traffic stops. So, the officers had very intense human trafficking training and on how to identify... if you know someone is being trafficked, young ladies being trafficked, and so one of the last things that we did under this grant is we actually were able to save some young ladies that were being trafficked through the support of our officers who used this training, identified it, and they were able to save these young ladies. They were taken to... up to one of those Indian casinos. Thirteen... 14-year old girl girls from our community. The girls went with these guys to try to get whatever they were going to get that the guy said [undiscernible]. He started using them. And making them sleep with these different men. And took them. They didn't want to leave; he kidnapped them. Took them. And so because of our officers, you know, paying attention and listening to the parents and looking at investigating it, they were able to... our violence prevention officer was able to immediately know "Wait a second; this is human trafficking" instead of the typical "these girls ran away."

Susan Bechara focused on the trainings she provides others through the grant project: "I've been providing training throughout the community. I have provided a mental health first aid training. I provided [training] on what gangs are all about and we're gonna be actually be more actively involved in that. We haven't really intensively done a formal training yet, but that's one of the things that we're working on right now immediately on gang redirection, training and awareness of gangs, and also behaviors that triggers these children. Why they behave the way they do. But as for myself, I've been doing training for my staff. All the time, every month."

Police Chief **David Cerda** talked at length about the training he and his officers receive: "Yeah, so the trainings that I mentioned earlier are the trainings that I know we've.... all the officers have had and that was the training in respect to a personal-skills training specifically with domestic violence. And then we had the human trafficking training and CIT crisis intervention training and respect to mental health. So those trainings we have certainly had and I'm pretty sure COVID has had an impact on limiting that training because getting officers enrolled in courses... that was all the courses were cancelled. Everything that we had scheduled anything we were trying to schedule everything was cancelled. So yeah, COVID has had an impact on training, definitely and I I'm pretty sure we've had the. As in respect to victims, domestic violence victims, sexual assault victims all of that was cancelled."

David Cerda continued: 'We go through mandatory training every two years, every other year, and it's under our perishable skills training, so we're required to by POST – Police Officers Standard Training. There's a number of topics... domestic violence is and has always been one of the topics, so we get a full day of training on domestic violence, some of the new laws... identifying profiles as well as victim services. That's where we get a lot of our information regarding victim services and advocacy. And in most recent and I think we've seen two other types of training that kind of overlap that well, which is we got we had incorporated a human trafficking training, so human trafficking and understanding, and empathizing with the trauma associated with human trafficking and violence. And a lot of it is associated with a partner's domestic violence. Domestic partnerships that turn into human trafficking. And then the crisis intervention training that we get for mental health has a lot to do with developing those skills, those interviewing skills and skills to help an officer developed a rapport, a genuine rapport, and a somewhat of a therapeutic relationship with the victims and that's kind of what we got out of that. Is it... this you know, if you're looking at domestic violence, human trafficking comes into play there you know mental health situations where there's also, it's common that there's violence in the family. When you have that, 'cause there's a great misunderstanding of the mental health... the stigma that comes with family, a family violence and dynamics... all of those come into play, so we've had all of those trainings of those three, and so it's human trafficking, crisis intervention, and specifically, domestic violence training."

Lydia Martinez spoke at length about the training she received as part of the grant: "Yes, we've had several trainings. I oversee PBIS, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support. Also, we did training on alternatives to suspension. We really come along way with that where it used to be a zero tolerance and just suspend. We looked at. This is where the grant was important for that because when we're looking... let's say, a student, it was the first offense and they just needed to learn what was wrong about what they did. We connect them to the mentoring, have them work with those... with them on those issues, and hopefully it wasn't a reoccurring offense. It took care of that. So, we explored alternatives. We did restorative justice training, human trafficking, prevention training, that was huge. We did that for 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th grade graders and so we got the license for that and they were able to get all that training."

Lydia Martinez continued: "I, with the staff, I went out to the school site at the staff meeting, explaining again like the alternatives to suspension, going over some of the... dispelling some of the myths that if you don't suspend your just you know,

avoiding an issue and you know, went over, you know, why it's important to teach the expectations, and... So, we saw a reduction in suspensions and office discipline referrals and also the school culture changed because of that, because at the end of the day teachers just want to make sure that the issue is addressed, that we're doing something about it so it doesn't happen again. So yeah, I did a lot of training in those areas."

7. In your estimation, how have the following been carried out? Community outreach

Sonia Hall began her response with "Community outreach is huge!" She continued: "We have no issue with community outreach. We had like some kind of a community outreach events. If it wasn't a rally, a peace rally, or a neighborhood block party, we had something like at least every other month. That's reason why we had... well, that's what we use with our CalVIP team, all of our partners."

And it was the entire CalVIP Coalition. Now he had come together and we were doing so much outreach. We had Mike Juarez. He was doing outreach in all of the neighborhoods where there was some kind of violence. And it was outreach that I mean sometimes I didn't even know about it, I just would actually hear about it from other people saying that he went in blanketed their neighborhood with fliers. But there was always some kind of outreach."

Susan Bechara had much to say about community outreach: "All we've done a lot of the community outreach. Also depending on on the different types of outreach effort, you know, food delivery, like you know like. Giving out to the to the people that needs food that is very basic kind of thing, but we have a very involved with the with the Police Department doing all these neighborhood block party and then we will very involved in. We've been involved with the Red Ribbon week for anti-drugs and we've been involved with... doing also outreaches to the schools every month. To provide information on the kids about drugs and about violence. And we provide it in a very unique way. It's not just about training and preaching and talking. We bring in people who've been there and done that. You know, that's actually been through it a lot. So, it's a lot of testimonial, kind of information that we provide. And because we're pretty connected because we've been very connected in the street. So, a lot of the clientele that we work with, they already know who we are. [This] is nothing new so we were able to be very effective in those outreaches and stop the violence before it actually started. I wouldn't be doing this if not for 34 years. That's why we know with the funds. But now with the funds being here, it makes us even stronger than ever because without the funds we struggle. But [we would still do it] because we believe in keeping the community [safe]. We believe that we need to have a proactive approach rather than just suppression... suppression. We need everything. That's

why I use my intervention-to-prevent rather than prevention-intervention. It's intervention to prevent these young people, and the people we work with, intervene to prevent them from being caught with the drugs and the violence... intervene to prevent them from going to jail, intervene to prevent them from getting killed. So, that's why the word "intervention" comes first before "prevention" in our model. So, with my accountability response [undiscernible] the model is to hold every person accountable. And to be able to be responsible... to fix the problem on their own and giving them the tools and the skills to do that, and the consequences of it if they don't do it. So, it's a very simple model and this model has been around since 1994 when I put it together. So, to me it's just executing it with the right people that are not afraid and the right approach. So, it's very radical approach, but it's effective because if we're talking about CalVIP, that's exactly what it is. We gotta be out there, you know. We can't be doing things in the office. We can't do that. We have to do a lot of outreach."

Nora Cuevas began by commenting on how much effort was needed to perform community outreach: "I organized the Easter egg hunt. I organized the "trunk or treat." Every single event that had to do with the community I helped organize. They were time consuming. (laughing) And they were a success. We worked well together as a team with a full-time [undiscernible] of the Police Department, the officers, myself and the Chief. Back then, we worked really closely with another church that... that we were able to go to. I believe it was... 2... we did 12 parties I believe? And they were, it was a success? It was really good."

Nora Cuevas went on to describe the block parties in more detail: "We had food giveaways. We had games. We had handouts. We had the officers out there building relationships with the community trying to alleviate the tension between the officers and the community. Tried to bring them together. And we also talked about violence. We also talked about gangs. And we also let the community know that they could call in any situation and they would remain anonymous. It didn't matter the legal status or anything."

Police Chief **David Cerda** commented: Yeah, so yes. And we do a lot of outreach in in this community. You know, there's there's an enormous need for that, but... yes, we've been actually been able to put together quite a few events and with the you know with COVID protocols in place you know with the proper equipment, the mask and the gloves and what have you we have been able to put together a number of events. Uh, let me see the last event. We had a Red Ribbon. There was in October. That's, uh, that's geared toward the youth. It's anti-crime week anti-drug, anti-gang. We had a big March and. We had a big event at the park and then we've had a we did

a Centennial event, a huge event where we engage the community and every time we've done those... it's standard procedure at our booth we provide information and literature in regards to domestic violence, gangs, drugs, and violence in general. So, most recently we had our Christmas tree lighting where we engage the community. We had a Halloween event as well. And prior to that during mid-summer and in mid-July... I know this because I was triple-digit weather... we had a couple of events out in the community to combat the violence and just reach out to the community to build relations. So, we had a couple of those events and it's may and July. So yeah, and we worked with... we work with the see what's it? CBT... CBS... cognitive deficit target behavior? No, it's Comprehensive Behavioral Service and **Susan Bechara**. I'm trying to help CBS. Yes, yeah, yeah, that's it. And. Her collaboration with the Clergy Council. We've had testimonials out there, so there's a pastor what's Pastor Ricardo in it. And I forgot the name of the church that he represents. So, we've had a number [of] drives so the food drives that we had with the Pastor and there's was a big one out of Fresno that came down at a big church out of Fresno. They came down and helped us out, so we've had it. At least let them during that time, but we were part of that. Like I said, it was collaborative effort, but the biggest one we had was with the Pastor Ricardo we had a big event and then there were some smaller food giveaways that we participated in throughout the year routinely... I think it was once a month for like six months and I know because I was out there personally. Handing out those care packages with the... foods, milk and potatoes and what have you. So we had. We did have a number of those. So then we actually did quite a quite a bit right after, and it was. right at the end of COVID thing, things started to lighten up, but we always had the COVID protocols in place where everything was more or less a drive-through. So, the Halloween was kind of like a walk-through, a drive-through but. Yeah, the food giveaways as well. But yeah, we've done a ton of research. I mean, outreach."

Regarding Red Ribbon Week, **David Cerda** continued: "But so in that celebration we're memorializing him, commemorating him. And we're also... it's dedicated to drug awareness, gang awareness, domestic... any type of violence, with domestic violence awareness gun violence, gang violence and so we come out in March and then celebrate that every year. That's that's done on it every year. So, and it's nationwide. So, all agencies do it... The amount of funding will dictate what you can do. The size of the event, yes, so you know we... we've been fortunate to have the funding to because it, you know, the volunteers are fantastic. But you know... sooner or later the volunteers get burnt out. So, you gotta cycle in new volunteers and getting personnel out there and having, uh, you know materials literature. So, there's

a lot on the back end of that, you know, music, food booths, all that stuff. There's a lot that goes into that. Funding is an enormous part of it. So, with more funding. We can bring a bring... create a bigger extravaganza, help the kids, we raffle off gifts, bikes, TV's you name it. We do a lot of what we can."

Lydia Martinez also focused on community events: We have a really a really strong team and it is because it started. It honestly started because of this because it was the different agencies working together, the City, the Police Department, and the school district where before it was kind of like we all did our own thing. Since we started this, we have this team that when we do a community event, we're all... it's our same families. It's our same students. So rather than everyone doing their own thing, we work together. So, whether it was a Red Ribbon March, community march, or the tree lighting, we did the Christmas parade... just a lot of the community events... the Easter egg hunt... It was calendared almost every month, every other month there was something going on and all the agencies involved work together to make sure we sent the information out to the students and the families and also provide resources. So, we were there, we'd have informational booths to give out information on the services available to them."

8. In your estimation, how have the following been carried out? Intervention.

Sonia Hall focused her response on the personnel brought in by the grant to perform intervention, mostly around domestic violence. "Well, intervention actually was you know when there was some kind of a form of violence. Then Mike [De Juarez] and his team would go swoop in and would basically do the intervention. What we would call *intervention*. And **Susan [Bechara]** also provided some support with intervention... she'd also work hand-in-hand with Probation. So, we'd swoop in and most of the time these kids, if they did something bad, they wouldn't go to, they would be arrested, go through probation, Probation would assign them to do their services in Parlier and so with **Susan Bechara**. At that time, that's what we are paying **Susan Bechara** out of the City's own pocket, directly, because she's a for-profit, so the City had to use our own money to pay for her services. But anyhow... then they're just an intervention with the victims of rape. They would go through the services at the Family Healing Center and the Family Healing Center would go through with them and do the services of the counseling and the rape kits and would do everything there for them. And then we had **Nora [Cuevas]** doing that domestic violence and then once again we also had the support group for the victims of domestic violence or rape that came here every Tuesday night. Now, we were in the midst of doing a huge woman's conference for all of Parlier to make sure that we got the word out there. You know, I was planning this big luncheon. And we had

speaker set. And I was so excited about it and then COVID hit. So, we had to scratch it. We never were able to do it. And so I'm still waiting to do it. We still are going to do it, but the one thing that we were... the reason why we are doing it is what we have found through the grant too is that most of the ladies here from Mexico do not know their rights. They think... they think it's their husband can beat them. They think that's OK. And not only do they not know their rights, but they don't know that if they're a victim of domestic violence, they can get citizenship."

Nora Cuevas discussed her impact on intervention using a real-life, personal vignette. "[Intervention] would be based on the 101, depending on what they needed. It would be based more on that. I would reach out to them. I would come in contact with them. If they needed any sort of resources, I would provide it to them. I would help them fill out forms. I would help them... get them in contact with the appropriate services that they needed. I would help them with... if they needed child care. If they needed help with filling out forms, I would reach out to some other agencies and collaborate with them to assist them. For one of the victims, she wanted to go back to school. But she would always say that she couldn't. She can't go back to school because she had kids. She it was hard for her and that was one of the reasons why she would go back her husband. And so it took a while for her to open up, but slowly we... I met her in 2019. And we started... I started working with her and then I'm reaching out to her. I tried to do it at least once a week, so that she could see that you know somebody was there, and if she needed to speak to somebody, she would be able to call me. We would talk, but at least I would, from my side, I would try to reach out once a week. But, she would reach out if she needed someone to talk too. So, we would just... I started talking to her. Personally, I was a single parent. 'I went to school. I got my degree. If I could do it, you can do it. Everybody can do it as long as you have the support that you need. If you need child care, I will help you get childcare.' So, I did. We were able to get child care. But, this took for her to open up into 6 to 8 months. To get that bond and that trust. She was able to finish her [general ed] online classes. I still reach out to her even though I'm no longer the domestic violence advocate. I still reach out to her because I don't want her to feel that, just because I'm not the domestic advocate... I mean, she doesn't have anybody [else] to go to. So, I still have that communication with her and she's taking college courses now and she put her children in the daycare."

Much of Police Chief **David Cerda's** intervention efforts focused on ant-gang activities. "You know, with working with these groups, these gang members who are involved in gangs already. So, some of that is operations. Some of that is training and education through the schools. Let's see are part of a.. well, it might be prevention

though... but with the part of our outreach with educating and educating the community and respect to literature and pamphlets or what have you, but intervention strategies have been more related to communicating with the gang member on numerous occasions and having those conversations about the reality of gangs and where that is, is going to lead them to a life of... actually. to a life that is going to impact their families and their futures. And we've also incorporated reaching out to the parents because there's a lot of parents out there, they're unaware that their kids are involved in gangs and they don't know what to look for, they don't know the signs. So. talking to the parents, getting the parents involved... we've done a number of that. I'm working with the schools... so most recently, based on that last collaboration we have, the school is going to send out some literature on gang awareness to all the parents. I think they're going to mail it to them because we discussed the fact that, you know, the kids whenever you send him home with something for their parents it rarely reaches the parents, you know. So, we discuss being effective with respect to educating the parents. And incorporating that training and educating in some of the other parent teacher meetings, so if it's a meeting with the parent or with the school resource officer regarding attendance. Within that, within that meeting, incorporating gang awareness. Put the new and innovative that we're trying to.. we're actually adopting. But, yeah, so that's kind of where we're at with our intervention. Like I said, we do our... we do our suppression efforts with the, you know, our sweeps, parole, probation. And then working with... yeah working, working closely with the probation department. In respect to what we want, what we want to accomplish, and changing the lifestyle of these kids. And also I think I mentioned **Susan Bechara's** Comprehensive Behavioral Service. We work very closely with them, so she's providing an enormous amount of intervention and prevention. So, getting the kids that are on probation. I think she gets... it's mandatory through the conditions that their probation that they attend these programs with **Susan [Bechara]**. But she has a number of staff there that work with them and they work with getting these kids to change their behaviors and, you know, have insight into you know there... their behavior and who they're harming, you know, innocent victims as well as their own families."

On whether she would rate her involvement in the grant as very positive: "Oh yes, absolutely. She's made, I think, in a lot of contacts and communicating with all of these kids that everything that I've seen are directly involved and what we're battling today. And we're hoping that that that message can be can be delivered and we can change, you know, the way these kids... they can and see things and the things that they don't see because they don't see... they don't see... they don't have the insight to

see the consequences of their actions. They just see... it's very narrow-minded thinking. are and she's doing good."

As far as **Lydia Martinez** is concerned, intervention occurs through mentoring. "Connecting the students that needed Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention... connecting them to a mentor, letting them know that they were available, and at times you know there is resistance. Kids don't... didn't want to talk to someone or didn't feel comfortable, but this is where it was really important that the staff became part of the school culture and we're out there and they, you know, when there was a Friday events, dress up days, things like that that they were part of that culture. So, the kids knew where to go and once they became familiar faces then the kids would automatically go to them."

In summary, there is no shortage of training provided by the CalVIP grant. As will be discussed later by **Sonia Hall**, training in human trafficking serves as a future need, as the community's severe human trafficking problem only came to light recently through the activities of the CalVIP grant.

9. In your estimation, how have the following been carried out? Social media campaigns.

Sonia Hall started out answering this question by saying "Glad that you mentioned social media, because I almost forgot this." So, I have a group of young people that ran a social media campaign. And the social media campaign was to reach out... and the reason why I have these young ladies do it is because of course no kids are going to listen to the old lady you know, from City Hall, so I knew it had to be their peers that did it. So, they did the whole social media campaign on anti-violence messages and she did something every week even during COVID. During COVID a lot of the kids were going through a depression. And so she started sending out messages just for uplifting because of, you know, trying to address the whole depression issue.

Social media forms an important communication tool between **Susan Bechara's** agency (Comprehensive Behavioral Service) and her clients. "Yeah, we put [social media messages] out there on Facebook and everything. Every time we have events and outreach we do put it out there. And we also show, you know, kids who are graduating and stuff like that. We do put it out there. OK, [undiscernible] stopping the violence and stuff like that. We just did an event like that last Saturday and it had a beautiful turnout. You know, we attract the audience based on the culture right now. Like, a lot of times they come. There's a lot of rap song that is very negative, but we turn that around with the kind of music they like but the words are different. So, it's all testimonial."

As Chief of Police, **David Cerda** knew his agency's use of social media well. "Yeah, we do. We do a lot with Facebook, so you know anything that you know with our anti-violence... that we put out. Our outreach, all of that stuff. That's good to promote healthy positive behaviors. Yes, we utilize Facebook. Tremendously."

Public schools are heavy users of social media, so it was of little surprise that **Lydia Martinez** would be able to talk at length on this issue. "We've really come a long way with social media. I know our new Superintendent is really big on that... making sure that we put out the information on a timely manner, that we connect. Because of our community being primarily dominantly Hispanic, Spanish speaking all our communication goes out in English and Spanish. We have Parent's Square where they get the notification sent to their phones. We have Instagram, Facebook and we're working on developing that. But, we... anytime we had events, we would make sure that we share them on all our social media outlets and our marquees and fliers just to make sure in case parents didn't have access to one of the other social media outlets. But, we really worked on getting that information and our events were very successful, well attended."

In summary, social media does not seem to be lacking among the CalVIP partners, as all of them appear to be substantial users of social media for communicating with the Parlier community and its youth.

10. How would you characterize your agency's involvement/success with Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships model?

Given that she introduced this model to the Parlier community as part of her CalVIP project design, **Sonia Hall** knows the program well. "So, that model was really put in place for, like, a wrap-around approach for the kids, for the youth. And you know, we start first with the youth and teach them about building healthy relationships, then as they grow into adults they could take that into adulthood. Because it's hard to go in and stop it from happening when it's already doing, you know. So, the whole point was to just basically do that wrap-around approach. The school district did a PBIS so they were trying to do the positive and uplifting type thing with the youth. The youth would go in with the mentors and the mentors... they did, basically a curriculum on the healthy relationships and anger management type things."

Neither **David Cerda** nor **Susan Bechara** were familiar with the Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships model, at least not by name. However, **Lydia Martinez** was familiar with it: "Through the mentoring program, I know they had that curriculum and that's some of the things that they... they had mentioned that they were, when they were working with small groups in the... with the students,

they were using that curriculum. I personally, I'm not familiar with it. They did explain to me that that was part of the focus and they had a comprehensive curriculum for that. But, I know that was done through the mentoring."

11. How would you characterize your agency's involvement/success with training in cultural competency?

Parlier is almost uniformly Hispanic. Furthermore, almost all of the key personnel and service providers are Hispanic. So, cultural competency perhaps is not as vital to the CalVIP program in Parlier as elsewhere. Still, **Sonia Hall** was quick to note that "we were sure that we had Spanish for everything that we put out there. [It] wasn't just in English." She also noted the domestic violence issues that can arise from heavily patriarchal societies. "[Parlier is] all Hispanic. [The Hispanic culture] is basically what a lot of our women's conference was addressing. As you know, because of the Hispanic culture, they have a culture... in their culture in Mexico... it's OK to beat your wife. And, so we had to really go in there and make sure we addressed everything in Spanish. We made them feel comfortable about coming in and even speaking to us, so most of their communication with the people out there was in Spanish."

Both **Susan Bechara** and **Lydia Martinez** noted that cultural competency played a role in their services, but did not elaborate. **David Cerda**, on the other hand, stated "Yeah, actually the post-mandated training that we have... they do incorporate being culturally competent and being able to understand, you know the different cultures and the different behaviors, the different customs that are out there that are not so much your typical American culture and whether it's. Middle Eastern culture or it could be race, gender."

12. How would you characterize your agency's involvement/success with Peace Over Violence model?

With the exception of **Sonia Hall**, none of the CalVIP offered much to say with respect to the Peace over Violence model. As **Sonia Hall** put it, "So the Peace over Violence model that we used is basically what Mike [De Juarez] did. With making sure that there's... that we just whenever there's some kind of a violence thing that happened, he'd go out there and blanket the whole neighborhood and make sure that they, instead of them saying "I can't go outside because of all the violence" that they say. "You know what? Screw that. This is our neighborhood. We're taking our neighborhood back." That's mainly focused on domestic violence and that's what the domestic violence advocate did. So, we made sure that we had her out there talking to every single victim.

Both **Susan Bechara** and **Lydia Martinez** claimed to be familiar with the Peace over Violence model, their responses to this question indicated that they may have been referring to the model in more generic terms. As **Susan Bechara** described it: “That’s actually our message all the time. It’s our mission statement.” **Lydia Martinez** stated “I think the Police Department and their Community Resource Officer was working on that. They were doing a lot of work in that area, working with the families, domestic violence issues, things like that.” **David Cerda**, on the other hand, expressed no familiarity with the model.

Although the Peace over Violence model was integral to the CalVIP project design, the lack of familiarity of the model indicates that the Project Director, **Sonia Hall**, needs to make a more concerted effort to communicate the features of this model and its benefits. This change can be initiated by ensuring that the Peace over Model is featured in more social media messages broadcast by the City in its communications. Or, perhaps more local training sessions should feature introductory primers on the model.

13. How would you characterize your agency’s involvement/success with Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT)?

Sonia Hall indicated that this was a sensitive topic and did not want to go on the record discussing it. So, we passed on to the next question.

Susan Bechara stated that “Well, I’m involved in that too because I’m actually a certified domestic violence counselor, so I’m very involved in that... very familiar with that.” However, she did not offer anything more about this topic during the interview.

On the other hand, both **Nora Cuevas** and **David Cerda** spoke more about these positions. **Nora Cuevas** served as the Domestic Violence Advocate and, in so doing, served as the key leader of DVRT activities. She also functioned as a member of the SVRT. As she put it: “The officers were coming out for the domestic violence and they would call me out for the sexual assault crimes.” **David Cerda** also spoke about **Nora [Cuevas]’s** involvement: “Right, so that would be **Nora** and **Jesse**. [**Jesse Ruelas** is the Crime Prevention Officer for the Parlier Police Department.] **Jesse** is also the sexual assault investigator as well. So, he shares those responsibilities and does domestic violence as well as sexual assault. And he is a 290-registrant detective. He registers all 290 registrants in our city. [A 290-registrant is one who is registered as a sex offender pursuant to Penal Code section 290.] And he handles primarily the sexual assault cases as well.

Lydia Martinez also discussed these positions. “Yes, that's the team that... the Police Department put together. They were hired through the grant. They had a person, an officer, that was directly involved in that making sure that they, when there was a case, that she would be present in helping the families, connecting them to resources, and things like that. [Although not asked, it appears that **Lydia Martinez** was referring to **Nora Cuevas**.]

Although all five interviewees were familiar with the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) positions, only **Sonia Hall**, **David Cerda**, and **Nora Cuevas** expressed strong familiarity with their activities. Again, this points to a potential communication issue among CalVIP participants. Social media once again could play a key role in elevating the prominence of these positions. As mentioned elsewhere, the lack of an existing Domestic Violence Advocate — a position filled by **Nora Cuevas** until October 2020 — does not help in this regard.

14. How would you characterize your agency's involvement/success with Developmental Assets/Protective Factors?

The 40 Developmental Assets have played a key role in character development and parent training in Parlier for many years, long before CalVIP 2. Nonprofits such as Parenting Partners provided training in enhancing the Developmental Assets in previous grant projects. In the past, PNAS surveys were administered by district personnel to measure the extent to which Parlier youth exhibited the Developmental Assets.

When asked about the Developmental Assets, **Sonia Hall** stated “that's what's included with PBIS [Positive Behavior and Intervention Systems]. And that's where [the] school district was involved, and so they are really pushing that PBIS. And the gal that you'll be talking to **Lydia [Martinez]**... that's basically her purview at the school and that's what she worked.”

When asked about the 40 Developmental Assets, **Lydia Martinez** stated: “Oh yeah, they added resiliency. Yes, and again through mentoring... again, that's why the importance of having those healthy, healthy connections to adults and things like that. That's where the mentoring piece was so important... building resiliency in students... having those protective factors. [Through] the California Healthy Kids Survey there is a module that that does assess that. It [is] administered to assess the Developmental Assets and... also through PBIS... I have PBIS assessments. We were doing yearly assessments on... that also looked at that at the students of the

resiliency and the protective factors, and it does all of that as well, and that was more internal.”

According to her testimony, **Lydia Martinez** appeared to be unaware of the PNAS surveys and instead referred to WestEd’ California Healthy Kids Surveys (CHKS), a staple of school districts all over California. The evaluator, who is deeply familiar with both the CHKS and 40 Developmental Assets, is concerned that the term Developmental Assets is now being used in the more generic sense — the 40 Developmental Assets are specific and heavily backed by substantial socio-behavioral research. The Program Director may need to explain whether or not the school district is promoting the 40 Developmental Assets and whether the surveys they administer are specifically designed to measure gains in these assets. If not, the Program Director may need to justify the substitution of the CHKS for the PNAS surveys.

15. What is your biggest accomplishment in serving your target audience?

Susan Bechara perhaps had the most to say in response to this question: “One of the main things is that a lot of our plan tells that have completed our program because of the way we are. We run our program. First, when they are referred to us, we mentor them and then if we find that there's risk factors that need to be addressed. Every one of our clients have to stay within the program at least three months. And they have to follow the protocol. They get drug tested. And then a lot of them have turned their life around by being involved in sports now and actually playing in sports. We monitor their grades, their attendance every single week on all of those case notes that we have. So, it's very structured program. We don't just talk to them, we don't just, you know, play games with them, but we actually have them on our caseloads and those caseloads are very much for making sure the family is involved.

Susan Bechara continued: “We also make sure attendance at school [undiscernible] is involved with drug testing them and we work very closely with the school district. We work very closely with the Police Department making sure that in order for that client to complete our program, they have to have good attendance, they have to make sure that they're drug free. And that the school performance has improved. And I have graduated many of them. But because of the way we structure it is not something that we do, like, monthly because all of these students come in at different times. So, as soon as they complete the three-month program, we evaluate them and we also have after-care relapse intervention program. So, I would say this... my success rate is at least 78 to 80% and recidivism is very low. Oh, because we monitor them, they get jobs. They are in school. Their grades are good. I had one young man who hasn't been in school almost the whole middle school year. And ever since we got him back in the school, he has been playing football. He's been involved in

football and his school grades has completely went up. And I have another young man who asked [undiscernible] a lot and now he's actually completed the whole program. He's going to get... he's getting off probation and he's also working. So, there's a lot of stories I can tell you. Different stories, many of them.

Both **Nora Cuevas** and **David Cerda** discussed the same story — see **Nora Cuevas'** response to Question 8 — involving the young pregnant domestic violence victim who went on to enroll in college.

Lydia Martinez chose to center her response around the popularity of a safe center she helped install at Parlier High School: “When I realize that this this was this was working was one of the days that I went and I just popped in unannounced and it was like during break and I went into the room where the mentors were at and they had... the room was set up... it was originally for like the after-school program so they had a big table with barstools like those little stools, they had pouches, they had activities and things like that. I went in and there were so many students in there, like, there were students that were talking to the mentor some were just relaxing there. Some were doing their homework. They had their computers out and that to me was an indication that they felt safe there. They had a place to go, and it's so it wasn't any one particular student at which I know there was many individual successes. But overall, in evaluating, that is what we were looking for... students being connected, having that safe place knowing that they can go there and be supported. To me that was. that was the success. That it wasn't an empty room. If I had walked in there and you only had the mentors and they're in their on their phones, or doing whatever, and the kids are out, to me that would have been an indication “OK, this isn't working.” That's not what we want from this.

16. How would you characterize your agency's involvement/success with mobilizing CTCV community to fight back against violence?

Redirecting the Parlier community's emotional response to violence is a central tenet of its CalVIP program. Rather than relying solely on the efforts of the police to fight crime, the CalVIP program aims to change the culture in Parlier toward adopting an attitude of outrage against violence. As such, the evaluator was interested to know to what degree each of the interviewer's agencies were involved in such efforts.

As Program Director of CalVIP, **Sonia Hall** instituted the “fight back against violence” attitude into the project design: “So that's basically what Mike [De Juarez] did with the neighborhood parties, the rallies that he would do in the neighborhood. He'd go out there with all his folks and he'd start to pull up with his big truck and food boxes and people would come out of their houses to go and get food. He just

gave away food. And with the message of peace and let's take her neighborhood back in. But yeah, it's Hope Coalition and this guy was fabulous. He'd just come into a neighborhood and start passing out food. At Christmas time, he always made sure we had toys. And we had a great event. You know, he has always had his volunteers ready to go.

Susan Bechara added "Yes, we do participate in that. Like when we do block parties and everything else we can reach out to the community to get them involved. Yes.

Nora Cuevas expressed a similar community outreach theme in her response: "Yeah that I did do a little bit when I was a Community Service Officer. I was able to do the community outreach where we did block parties.

Lydia Martinez also weighed in: "Yes, we really like I said, we realized we... none of us can do it alone, like, the school district can't do it alone. The City can't do it alone. The Police Department can't do it alone. And that was one of the benefits of having this collaborative through the grant. As I said, it brought everyone together. So when we were working, discussing an issue or things that that were happening in the community, they were doing block parties, you know. Again we got the churches involved doing block parties and at those parties they would... they would close off a section. They'd give out food and then have informational booths. We did the Red Ribbon March, a lot of informational books and resources for families. It helped knowing having the Chief of Police [**David Cerda**] very involved in our team meetings, providing that data so that we knew what we were dealing... what we were up against. And that that has continued. That's, you know, a lot of this, as I mentioned, started because we were working on this together on this grant. But you know, I this has it's going to be a lasting collaborative. Whether we have the funding or not, which I hope we continue to have, but I can see this is not going away. We're going to continue to work together."

Other projects that institute the fight-back-against-violence approach, such as Chicago CeaseFire, place a heavy emphasis on public marches whenever violence occurs in the community. However, none of the respondents mentioned such public displays of outrage. It is important to Parlier youth that they understand violence is acceptable in their community and that the community will not take instances of such violence "laying down." The evaluator wonders just how prominent the fight-back-against-violence message is in the community. Is there anything the community can do to entrench the anti-violence message? Are block parties enough?

17. What do you think is missing from the CalVIP project?

Like most grant programs, participants will sometimes feel that issues important to themselves get left “out of the wash” when it comes to the project design. Issues often arise during the post-award period as grant budgets shift, often leaving some providers and the people they serve unattended. This question was designed to see if there were substantial gaps in service coverage.

Sonia Hall opted out of answering the question and **David Cerda** felt that nothing was missing “I can't think of anything off the top of my head. I think everything is in there.” **Lydia Martinez** also expressed great satisfaction with the current CalVIP program, citing no extra needs: “I know there was challenges because of, again, because of COVID, which you know every agency experienced. But, as you can tell from my interview, I am so grateful that we had this funding available to us. It allowed for us to provide that mentoring, to provide that training, and the incentives. We had regular meetings, a great collaboration with outside agencies and, you know, a lot of projects that we worked on together. I've managed other grants in the past and you know we receive the money and then you know it's within the school district. This was unique because we had an agency providing that and we worked in a collaborative team. So, I really enjoyed this.

Susan Bechara, on the other hand, stated that she was “still feeling like it's not so much missing that we haven't really addressed it as much. I would say parent involvement in the CalVIP needs to be addressed because in a small community like that, you have to look at the dynamics of it. I've done this kind of program and intervention for 34 years. One thing that's always missing... if we want to hold these kids accountable it basically starts from the home and it's missing. We're not making it mandatory for parents to get involved. It's all voluntary. And to me, when we can hit the parents... and you know what it's missing. Honestly, we need to be more holding parents accountable through the child welfare and attendance and the school needs to get more involved in actually executing the rules and regulations about attendance because that would be very helpful. In order... in other words, there has to be a part in the CalVIP that will hold parents accountable. Somehow, I don't know how to explain it, but to get them more involved, you know what I'm saying? It has to start from the home because a lot of times we felt that once we get the kids and parents are not involved... it's almost like a voluntary thing. So, somehow in the accountability we need to make sure that the parents understand that once that child is in trouble or something, we're going to hold them accountable. Getting involved some... somewhere in the [undiscernible] that needs to be addressed there, you know.

Nora Cuevas pointed to an issue she mentioned often throughout the evening: Uhh, for them to incorporate the Domestic Violence Advocate? Yeah, because the officers say that they really need the Domestic Violence Advocate. They haven't had one since I was removed from being the Domestic Violence Advocate. She also pointed toward greater needs in the area of community outreach. "It [community outreach] needs more. Not just handing out stuff. Food distributions are good. But we [need] more. You need more for the teenagers. We need something for different ages, not just for one."

18. Has involvement in CalVIP increased your interest in future similar projects?

All respondents expressed great interest in performing future projects like CalVIP, with **Susan Bechara** responding with "definitely!" and **Nora Cuevas** commenting that she would like to return for future projects as Domestic Violence Advocate. When asked for further commentary, **Nora Cuevas** remarked "I really wish that I could have stayed on in and worked in this mode." She went on to say that community needs "somebody that can build that trust with the community. That they can know that they can always count on... that they can reach out to. Not just because, 'okay, it's 9-5. Ok, I need to go, bye!' You're talking to somebody and then 'OK, yeah, it's 9:00 o'clock. I need to go, bye.' And you know, give them the full attention."

Sonia Hall mentioned her community's need to focus more efforts on human trafficking in future projects. "And that's what our CalVIP [i.e., CalVIP 2], that we had... we didn't have as much of a focus on human trafficking in that CalVIP which is why we put that focus on the next CalVIP [that is, CalVIP 3]."

David Cerda expressed great enthusiasm for continuing the CalVIP project, and similar projects. "Oh, absolutely, it's a tremendous resource. I mean, there's... and it's something when you look at community challenges... the challenges should dictate the services. So, in Parlier domestic violence along with our gangs and gun violence is an enormous priority. And because it's prevalent in that community, having these programs and having the financing is going to improve the ability for us to provide the quality of service. Hopefully reduce those occurrences in our community, but it is absolutely something that is necessary."

Lydia Martinez expressed similar (positive) sentiments: Absolutely, *absolutely*. Like I said, I love that it included some multi-agency type of grant and so to meet the outcomes it involved all of us in working together. We each had our own goal but at the end of the day it was for one... one ultimate goal: To decrease violence in the community to support our students, support healthy relationships, those were the

outcomes and I really hope that we can continue that these funds continue to be available for us to apply. I look forward to continuing to work with **Sonia** and City of Parlier, and the Police Department on other projects.

Summary

Crime data is unreliable for gauging the success of anti-crime projects that compel victims to report crimes they would otherwise not. As such, the crime data shown in this report is included primarily for discussion only.

The interviews of key project personnel provided perhaps the best mark of project fidelity and success. All five participants expressed gratitude for the services provided by the grant project and shared strong sentiments that they felt the project positively impacted their community.

After each question in the Interviews section, the evaluator has provided his reflection on the significance of the testimonials. In the following, he highlights some of the more prominent strengths and weaknesses that surfaced during the discussions.

Project strengths

Strengths they highlighted included the following:

- Although results should be viewed with caution, there is little doubt that Parlier, CA has experienced dramatic reductions in crime beginning one year after CalVIP 2 began. As mentioned previously, however, much of the grant focus has centered on making it more amenable for domestic violence victims to report crimes, so drops in crime rates might reflect a “false positive.”
- Suspension rates in Parlier USD schools dropped to negligible levels in 2019, which likely result from alternatives-to-suspension trainings led by Lydia Martinez. This points to a substantial positive for the CalVIP 2 program.
- As gleaned from personal interviews, trainings funded by the grant were comprehensive, thorough, and well-attended. The personnel conducting the trainings appeared to be credible and effective.
- Interviewees also expressed considerable sentiment that community outreach generated by CalVIP 2 is especially strong, with numerous events planned and carried out. All five participants expressed ample respect for the events, which appear to be entertaining yet informative.
- As indicated by Project Director Sonia Hall in her interview, the CalVIP 2 project was effective in highlighting the need for a focus on human trafficking, the extent of which had not been understood by project personnel.

Project weaknesses

The evaluator surmised from interviewees that there exists some weaknesses in the current CalVIP 2 project.

- A vacancy in the Community Violence Advocate position points to a substantial gap in services. Project personnel did not offer the evaluator a reason for Nora Cuevas' removal from this position (nor did he ask), but regardless the evaluator thinks that the City of Parlier needs a qualified individual to serve in this capacity.
- As Project Director Sonia Hall pointed out, the impact of human trafficking was largely unknown to key personnel. In response, the City of Parlier's CalVIP 3 project, which was recently funded, will focus considerably more effort on this increasingly prevalent crime.
- A cohesive project requires a common language and understanding. As such, Project personnel, and most likely the Project Director, needs to raise awareness of the models (e.g., Peace over Violence, Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships) used to design the CalVIP project.
- The only substantial "glitch" in conducting the project appeared to center on the services provided by CenCal Mentoring, which were judged as completely inadequate by the Project Director. Perhaps a more intense vetting of independent contractors to prevent future problems is in order.

Appendix A

Interview

Interviewer: John R Walkup (JRW)

Interviewee: David Cerda (DC), Chief of Police, City of Parlier

3:01 pm PST, December 8, 2021

JRW:

Alright. I'm sorry I've interrupted you there. Have you been on [as police chief] for the entire duration of the grant?

DC:

Sure, I've been. You mean, employed with the City?

JRW:

In your position.

DC:

No, no. With as the Chief of Police? No, no, not in that capacity. I just stepped into this position... when was it?

JRW:

It was real recent...

DC:

Yeah, it was very recent. Maybe four or five months ago.

JRW:

OK.

DC:

So, I just stepped in this position. So, prior to that I was a lieutenant and a sergeant before that so...

JRW:

OK. alright. So, I think that you'd be... you should be able to respond to most of the questions. But, if I ask you a question that you really can't respond to, because you weren't in the proper capacity at the time, just I ask... then we'll remove over it.

DC:

OK, OK,

JRW:

So, I thought I'd give you some ground rules. I use the American Evaluation Association's guidelines to sort of establish the rules for the interview. And part of it is I have to go through some boilerplate before beginning. So, I am recording the interview and you've expressed consent of that. Let's see here. Well, first of all, you're free to answer any questions you want if you... if I ask you a question rather not [answer] just say "pass" and I'll just move on to the next one. You don't have to provide any explanation.

DC:

OK.

JRW:

Because you have such a small town and your position is so unique, there's no way that I could de-identify you in the report.

DC:

Right.

JRW:

So, it might as well just go ahead and say David Cerda on it, but I just wanted to know about that. Also, the report that I provide will be public. I mean, it will be distributed to people in the project. So, I want to make sure you understand that. And, of course, the BSCC, which is the grantor.

DC:

Right.

JRW:

And let's see here, and there's a transparency guideline that they require. And at any point, if you just feel like, "Hey, I don't really want to do this," you can just simply say "We're finished" and we'll be done. The other one is... after we get done, if there is a response that you really don't want to go in the report, I'll email you... I'll put in the chat room my email. You can just have me pull it out and I'll just delete it.

DC:

Right.

JRW:

OK, so let me go ahead and do that right now,

DC:

OK.

JRW:

I'm trying to be as fair as possible just because you know.

DC:

Yeah.

JRW:

And let's see here. I'm just reading off the list. [undiscernible] OK, so the only purpose of this is to provide data for the evaluation and that's all. It will not be used for any other purpose.

DC:

OK

JRW:

And some of the some of the responses will be going towards evaluating the progress or the success of the grant. Some of them will be used for improving the grant projects in the future. And they're... also your answers should be open ended, so think of these questions as prompts for you to just say whatever

you like. So, there's no qualitative, I mean, there's no quantitative answers, just talking, and I've got all the time in the world. So, talk as long as freely as you want about anything. Let's see.

DC:

OK.

JRW:

Disclose a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest. You know Sonia [Hall] and I have been good friends for a long time and we have been in the past business partners. Although we haven't done any projects together for probably at least a couple of years. This... that's nothing new to you. Let's see here. And OK, questions are guided by a formal evaluation plan that I developed and so all the questions are really aimed at triggering or answering that evaluation plan.

DC:

OK.

JRW:

And with that said, are you willing to conduct the interview?

DC:

Yes.

JRW:

OK, let's go then. OK, so again all these questions... you'll just have to pass on... you just won't be able to answer them [all]. But we'll just do the best we can.

DC:

OK.

JRW:

Generally speaking, how has your agency been able to fill in the grant funded positions? Have you had any grant funded position? So, I think you have. You had like a special agent for domestic violence that was part of the grant funding. Have you been able to fill out those positions?

DC:

Yeah, so we have... one of our detectives was filling that position. In respect to handling domestic violence cases... Yes, and that was Jesse Ruelas. I know that.

JRW:

OK. Now has that position still... is he still he still functioning in that capacity?

DC:

Yes.

JRW:

OK, good because you made it sound like in the past tense so it's like... "no longer there?" (laughing)

DC:

No, no, he's still there and he's still doing our domestic violence.

JRW:

What was the name of the title? The position title?

DC:

Officially I don't know it's...

JRW:

OK, just know that I've got a recording so I can always go back and play it.

DC:

[undiscernible] I can get that.

JRW:

What about expending the grant monies on schedule... have you had any issues with that?

DC:

Ah, I I don't... honestly, I don't believe so. I think... we've been on track with respect to, you know, respect to utilizing those funds. But as far as I know, I believe we're on track.

JRW:

And your targets for this grant... it kind of targets mostly domestic violence, as you know, a primary focus. How has your agency been able to serve the client population and that would be victims of [domestic violence]? Just talk about that.

DC:

So, generally the services begin with the officers that are handling the cases themselves are required to provide victim pamphlet information notification services in respect to counseling, domestic violence, advocacy, shelter, financing, victim rights, Marcie's law. So, there are a number of things that the officers initially at the onset of investigation. So that's something that's mandatory we do across the board. So, that would be the first step. Any addition to that would be follow-up with a domestic violence advocate that we have... so yeah.

JRW:

Pretty much Nora...

DC:

Yes, yes. So, Nora was assigned to that position. And she had went out on a number of cases to provide that support. And I know in one case, you know, even to the extent of finding shelter. I remember there was one case that she was working on... the victim was having trouble with... finding shelter or being homeless so.

JRW:

Yeah, [undiscernible].

JRW:

Now, the grant funding has it... has it changed anything in the [undiscernible]? Of course, Nora's position is grant-funded. So, obviously that part has, but in terms of the first steps, has that changed the way that you guys do that because of the grant? Or is that pretty much SOP... for as long as you can recall?

DC:

Right... standard operations. Standardly we do that. The funding helps with respect to what, Nora does for us and what Jessie does for us with the follow-up. [Undiscernible] and investigating the case and providing services for the victim. And you know it's a... ideally... funding for training you know is huge... the training is essential. But having that funding available for training is a big impact, so the officers know how to interview and respond and, you know, provide higher quality of service for the victim and have that ability to empathize with somebody in those positions. But I could see it in training, definitely, advocacy.

JRW:

Having kind of a curiosity question so it's not really a part of this, but the training was that kind of look like as an online. Or do you go to a center and be trained with other...

DC:

Though we, yes, so there's a... we go through mandatory training every two years... every every other year... and it's under our perishable skills training. So, we're required to by POST — Police Officers Standard Training — required to have this type of training. There's a number of topics. Domestic violence is and has always been one of the topics, so we get a full day of training on domestic violence... some of the new laws... identifying profiles as well as victim services. That's where we get a lot of our information regarding victim services and advocacy. And in most recent and I think we've seen two other types of training that kind of overlap that well, which is we got we had incorporated a human trafficking training. So, human trafficking and understanding, and empathizing with the trauma associated with human trafficking and violence. And a lot of it is associated with a partner's domestic violence. Domestic partnerships that turn into human trafficking. And then the crisis intervention training that we get for mental health has a lot to do with developing those skills, those interviewing skills and skills to help an officer develop a rapport, a genuine rapport... and somewhat of a therapeutic relationship with the victims and that's kind of what we got out of that. Is it... this you know, if you're looking at domestic violence, human trafficking comes into play there, you know, mental health situations where there's also... it's common that there's violence in the family. When you have that because there's a great misunderstanding of the mental health... the stigma that comes with family, a family violence and dynamics... all of those come into play. So, we've had all of those trainings of those three, and so it's human trafficking, crisis intervention, and specifically, domestic violence training.

JRW:

You know this is partly related to the grant, but cultural competency... the fact that you work in a like 98% Hispanic community. Did the trainings reach to that?

DC:

Yeah, actually the post-mandated training that we have... they do incorporate being culturally competent and being able to understand, you know, the different cultures and the different behaviors, the different customs that are out there that are not so much your typical American culture and whether it's Middle Eastern culture or it could be race, gender...

JRW:

Right.

DC:

Yeah, and you're talking even the disability population, you know. They've got their own culture as well. There's a lot of cultures that so... yes, there they do touch on that, you know. and it's it is important that we get more of that. it's being a big, competent and not having that, you know, that one-track mind that you know "everybody behaves in this same fashion" is not the case.

JRW:

Yeah, Oh yeah, definitely, definitely. OK, let's move on here. In terms of the grant funding, how has your agency been able to meet challenges and overcome them? And of course you mentioned the lack of training... the grant funding has helped you there. Anything else that you want to mention... something you maybe not been able to do before, but we were able to because of the grant.

DC:

Well, definitely the... the grant has provided us an opportunity to, I've already mentioned, to do the advocacy with Nora. And then having an investigator assigned to that. That's something that we've really never had, so that is actually a new service and, you know, a new strategy that's gonna improve our service to the community. So those are the two main things in addition to, you know, any training that we get but.... yeah that's kind of [undiscernible]?

JRW:

How is your department been able to attend the CCTV collaboration meetings? [Did you] have representative to those meetings?

DC:

I wish I can be sure. I think so. You know I did.

JRW:

OK.

DC:

And during that time I think there was. And I think. If I'm not mistaken that there was a lot of. There was a lot of a setback in respect to COVID the impact and how those situations are going to be handled. You know, so I know a lot of a lot of training courses, a lot of meetings. All of those were cancelled until you know they have Zoom and other, you know, other media-type interventions came in to where it allows... But, I know COVID had a big impact, so I'm not sure I know that they were... they were attending or it should have been attending these meetings, but I don't know how much of an impact COVID had on that. I honestly couldn't tell you ...

JRW:

That's something I forgot to mention. For each of these questions, if you have something about COVID that you want to mention, feel free because I know it's impacted you know pretty much all over the place.

DC:

Yeah. Oh yeah, no, it was tremendous. We get along with everybody else is. It was a huge impact and it's really set us back in regards to training and being up to date with a lot of [undiscernible] meetings that were being held and then gradually you know these apps, with Zoom and other apps, similar to like [undiscernible] started to started to surface and we're able to to get at least slightly back on track. Not quite normal, but some degree of normalcy.

JRW:

The next question was going to be about the grant funded trainings about how they've been carried out, but can you... have you been able to carry out all the trainings that you needed despite COVID?

Uhm

JRW:

I mean they may not be as great as you'd like to be because, but have you been able to carry them out?

DC:

Yeah, so the trainings that I mentioned earlier are the trainings that I know we've... all the officers have had and that was the training in respect to a personal skills training specifically with domestic violence. And then we had the human trafficking training and CIT crisis intervention training with respect to mental health. So those trainings we have certainly had and I'm pretty sure COVID has had an impact on limiting that training because getting officers enrolled in courses... [undiscernible] all the courses were cancelled. Everything that we had scheduled... anything we were trying to schedule... everything was cancelled. Uh, so yeah. COVID has had an impact on training, definitely and I I'm pretty sure we've had the... respect to victims, domestic violence victims, sexual assault victims all of that was cancelled.

JRW:

What about community outreach? Has the grant funding helped you in carrying out any of that.

DC:

Yeah, so yes. And we do a lot of outreach in in this community. You know, there's an enormous need for that, but... yes, we've been actually been able to put together quite a few events and with the, you know, with COVID protocols in place, you know, with the proper equipment, the mask and the gloves and what have you, we have been able to put together a number of events. Uh, let me see the last event. We had a Red Ribbon. That was in October. That's, uh, that's geared toward the youth. It's Anti-crime Week anti-drug, anti-gang. We had a big march and we had a big event at the park and then we've had... we did a Centennial event, a huge event where we engage the community. And every time we've done those it's standard procedure at our booth we provide information and literature in regards to domestic violence, gangs, drugs, and violence in general. So, most recently we had our Christmas tree lighting where we engage the community. We had a Halloween event as well. And prior to that during mid-summer and in mid-July... I know this because I was triple-digit weather... we had a couple of events out in the community to combat the violence and just reach out to the community to build relations. So, we had a couple of those events and it's May and July. So yeah, and we worked with... we work with the see what's it? CBT... CBS... cognitive deficit target behavior? No, it's Comprehensive Behavioral Services and Susan Bechara. I'm trying to help CBS. Yes, yeah, yeah, that's it. And her collaboration with the Clergy Council. We've had testimonials out there, so there's a pastor [undiscernible] Pastor Ricardo in it. And I forgot the name of the church that he represents. So we've had a number [of] drives... so the food drives that we had with the pastor and there's was a big one out of Fresno that came down at a big church out of Fresno. They came down and helped us out, so we've had it. At least let them during that time, but we were part of that. Like I said, it was collaborative effort, but the biggest one we had was with Pastor Ricardo... we had a big event. And then there were some smaller food giveaways that we participated in throughout the year routinely... I think it was once a month for like six months and I know because I was out there personally handing out those care packages with the [undiscernible] foods, milk and potatoes and what have you. So we had... we did have a number of those. So, then we actually did quite a quite a bit right after, and it

was. right at the end of CoVID thing, things started to lighten up, but we always had the COVID protocols in place where everything was more or less a drive-through. So, the Halloween was kind of like a walk-through, a drive-through but... yeah, the food giveaways as well. But yeah, we've done a ton of research. I mean, outreach.

JRW:

You mentioned a march early on was that march about?

DC:

Yeah, the Red Ribbon March. So, Red Ribbon every year it's it's a nationally celebrated theme and it is in, uh, in and actually that was initiated because of the sacrifice that was given... the detective that was brutally murdered by the drug cartels in Mexico. [undiscernible]

JRW:

Uh, was that many years ago...

DC:

That was, yes, that

JRW:

... like a 90s something like that.

DC:

Yes 1996 maybe or so? Yeah he was yeah. So this Red Ribbon Week is commemorating his efforts to that. So, he was he had infiltrated the big drug cartels in Mexico. And he disrupted a number of those organizations and took them down. But he paid the price for it. They, you know, killed him and his partner. But so in that celebration we're memorializing him, commemorating him. And we're also... it's dedicated to drug awareness, gang awareness, domestic... any type of violence, with domestic violence awareness gun violence, gang violence and so we come out in March and then celebrate that every year. That's that's done on it every year. So, and it's nationwide. So, all agencies do it.

JRW:

OK, did this come about from the grant? Was this a grant funded type of thing?

DC:

Yes, and having like I said funding... the amount of funding will dictate what you can do. The size of the event, yes, so you know we... we've been fortunate to have the funding to because it, you know, the volunteers are fantastic. But you know... sooner or later the volunteers get burnt out. So, you gotta cycle in new volunteers and getting personnel out there and having, uh, you know materials literature. So, there's a lot on the back end of that, you know, music, food booths, all that stuff. There's a lot that goes into that. Funding is an enormous part of it. So, with more funding. We can bring a bring... create a bigger extravaganza, help the kids, we raffle off GIFs, bikes, TV's you name it. We do a lot of what we can.

JRW:

Yeah there's nothing worse than having like an anti-gang event and not having many people show... that just sends the opposite message.

DC:

Right.

JRW:

Sorry you know the community trying to get this anti-gang begun, but, you know, look at look how to hit consequential. It was so yeah, it's really important to have. Yeah big show me for that kind of stuff

DC:

It is... it is and you know making the community aware because a lot of people in the community are not aware and they don't see that that part of it. It's unfortunately... it's a genuine threat in Parlier. We've already established that through our investigations it. These kids are being recruited. The gangs... the gangs in that community have grown tremendously and or what we're doing what we can to put a stop on that, but, you know, it's going take a lot of work and it's going to take the community. It's going to take this our non-profit organization. It's going to take the schools, the parents. We need everybody together in that circle... and then some, you know, to reduce and minimize what is growing.

JRW:

What do you attribute a rise? Was it maybe MAGIK out of Fresno. I know that they caused some grief for the outlying areas, but what do you attribute that to? And this is not really a grant question here. Yeah, it's gotta be curiosity.

DC:

So yeah, this we look at that, it's... it's a combination of being, so we've had...

[Discussion about a minor audio problem omitted]

DC:

Yeah, you know what... we looked into... we looked into that and you know how did this happen? There's a lot of variables involved. Some of it is, you know, some of the larger agencies you know their... their effectiveness in reducing crime in their city and relocating... some of these more sophisticated criminals are relocating in smaller cities to get off the radar. Yeah, the bigger cities, like Fresno, Fresno County. So, when you got a more sophisticated criminal, which is what we saw, we saw gangs from West Fresno and all this was based off of in our invest... our detectives and our investigators and in contacting these individuals in the field with tattoos that say "West Fresno Bulldogs" or West Fresno... uhm, and eastside Fresno so and. It was a... and that was years ago when we saw that, and we realized, OK, we've got outsiders coming in and these guys are much more sophisticated and advanced. [Undiscernible] you know the criminal element and how to control that. So, we think there was a lot of recruiting and training done in that area because they... that's what they do is... train, they recruit and train. And that kind of was the biggest component of that. Other than that, there was also... we also found out that a lot of... the bigger role players in the gangs out of Reedley were doing a lot of recruiting in Parlier. We determined this through our intelligence investigations we've had, we had meetings with Reedley. And a lot of the... a lot of the bigger shot callers out of Reedley. Uhm, we're attributing to that. So, we saw the Nortenos in that city 10 years ago... because that was a Bulldog town. It was all [undiscernible] of Parlier, old school chollos at Bulldogs, because Fresno was Bulldogs so you had Parlier Bulldogs, then out of nowhere the Nortenos came in and they outnumbered the Bulldogs five to one and now it's like it's probably like 10:1. They've grown enormously and the kids are aging from, you know, 13, 14 to 22. It's a young group, so there's a young cohort out there, so, we know the profile but...

JRW:

Is there a lot of combat between the groups?

DC:

Oh yes, you kidding me? We just had we were on the hills. It was 11 days straight. And we... they've been there 23 years. We've never had this type of violence. For 11 days straight there were shootings every night and it investigations found out it was in the Nortenos and the Bulldogs who were shooting and retaliating against each other. So there were a couple of shootings. There was a homicide. About eight months ago, one of the Nortenos, the main shot callers, is a young kid that was coming up who was killed in a fight with the Bulldog. One of the other two main leaders of those gangs fought and the Norteno kid got stabbed in the neck and bled to death, and he died. And after that we knew that it was... things were just gonna explode. So, we did what we could [to] control it. But six months later, the shootings erupted and we had several gang members that were shot. We ended up having... we had three homicides. One was gang-related, the other two were believed to be gang-related. Several other victims shot. But, uh, yeah, the drive-by shootings went on for 11 days and it was unbelievable. It was morning. It was early morning. It was late at night. We had we were on high alert. We had every able body out there. Uh, trying to control this and then most recently last week we had. It's all of this is stemming from... Now, they're at the high school. And they crossed paths all the time at the high school. So, it's the tensions are at a boiling point. Last week we had a shooting and it was a gang related shooting of the house was shot up where one of the kids from the Bulldog gang sat at his house. His house was shot up. There were 50 rounds collected. To and within the last 10 days, we've confiscated three knives on students at the high school who are affiliated with gangs, and our intel is telling us they've been ordered to take knives at school to continue to track and control. And I went and retaliate against the other gang. So, with that... and actually we had an enormous meeting yesterday there were 25 staff members of school outreach... [undiscernible], behavioral services... we had a gang expert there. So, we're all brainstorming how to combat this violence. Reaching out to parents... there's a number of things... that that was the first meeting of many that we're going to have. We have another one set up, so... immediately you know that the law enforcement aspect to that is providing immediate security right now to prevent any shootings at the PD. So there's... we're on high alert at the school. There's a lot of [undiscernible] are being trained to identify and understand "What is a gang," "Who's... what's a gang member?" So, the reporting protocol is in place and we've got an officer... the school actually reinstated the SRO position, so we've got two SROs. One at the high school and the other at the junior high. Although the high school is the biggest concern right now and it's it's creating an enormous challenges. It's just...

JRW:

Where's the funding for the SRO's coming?

DC:

The school.

JRW:

OK, so the school is paying for it?

DC:

Yeah, the school is paying for it. They before this before school started we had those shootings and those that 11-day shooting spree. Yeah, yeah, we identified a number of those. The majority of those kids involved in in high school. So you know I did our collaboration and conferring with the high school, this was one of the strategies to help control that. But it's... it's still not enough. I mean, I think if. You know it. It's certainly helping and it's getting you know, improve the safety of that school, but these kids are becoming more, you know, more bold and brazen. You

know, years ago, we didn't see that type of boldness, but you know, it's very prevalent nowadays that the shootings, similar to what you see in Fresno and you know at malls and what have you, there's just... there's just no, there's no regard... it's disregard for human life and it's very reckless and irresponsible. But yeah, it's a huge. We have a huge challenge.

JRW:

OK, and you may have already answered this question with what we've been discussing, but part of the grant project is focused on intervention. Domestic violence intervention is also crime intervention. Domestic violence is obviously a crime in many gang stuff. How's the grant helped you in that regard in terms of intervention?

DC:

No, tremendously. I mean it's our intervention efforts. You know, with working with these groups, these gang members who are involved in gangs already. So, some of that is operations. Some of that is training and education through the schools. Let's see are part of a.. well, it might be prevention though... but with the part of our outreach with educating and educating the community and respect to literature and pamphlets or what have you, but intervention strategies have been more related to communicating with the gang member on numerous occasions and having those conversations about the reality of gangs and where that is, is going to lead them to a life of... actually. to a life that is going to impact their families and their futures. And we've also incorporated reaching out to the parents because there's a lot of parents out there, they're unaware that their kids are involved in gangs and they don't know what to look for, they don't know the signs. So, talking to the parents, getting the parents involved... we've done a number of that. I'm working with the schools... so most recently, based on that last collaboration we have, the school is going to send out some literature on gang awareness to all the parents. I think they're going to mail it to them because we discussed the fact that, you know, the kids whenever you send him home with something for their parents it rarely reaches the parents, you know. So, we discuss being effective with respect to educating the parents. And incorporating that training and educating in some of the other parent teacher meetings, so if it's a meeting with the parent or with the school resource officer regarding attendance. Within that, within that meeting, incorporating gang awareness. Put the new and innovative that we're trying to.. we're actually adopting. But, yeah, so that's kind of where we're at with our intervention. Like I said, we do our... we do our suppression efforts with the, you know, our sweeps, parole, probation. And then working with... yeah working, working closely with the probation department. In respect to what we want, what we want to accomplish, and changing the lifestyle of these kids. And also I think I mentioned Susan Bechara's Comprehensive Behavioral Services. We work very closely with them, so she's providing an enormous amount of intervention and prevention. So, getting the kids that are on probation. I think she gets... it's mandatory through the conditions that their probation that they attend these programs with Susan. But she has a number of staff there that work with them and they work with getting these kids to change their behaviors and, you know, have insight into you know there... their behavior and who they're harming, you know, innocent victims as well as their own families.

JRW:

So you would rate her involvement in the grant has pretty positive.

DC:

Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely. She's made, I think, in a lot of contacts and communicating with all of these kids that everything that I've seen are directly involved and what we're battling today. And we're hoping that that that

message can be can be delivered and we can change, you know, the way these kids... they can and see things and the things that they don't see because they don't see... they don't see... they don't have the insight to see the consequences of their actions. They just see... it's very narrow-minded thinking.

JRW:

OK, uhm. Any notable, but you say, biggest accomplishment? Anything kinda good story you wanna do, that would sort of encapsulate the grant as being a very positive thing that you would like to. It could be also a bad thing. Maybe something that has not worked out well. A disaster.

DC:

Yeah, you know. I think that the grant has been... By God it's the specific story. I know it's been tremendous and in the cases where we had, you know, where the advocacy... and like I said, there was there was one case we had a victim who was homeless on drugs and so those are the hard cases and it's, you know, getting them too, you know, the work that to understand that they're there... that we're there to help them, but for them to follow through because their life is dysfunctional. But at the same time, they're being victimized, so it's it should... it shouldn't matter. So, working those hard cases, and I think Nora had, I mentioned earlier, she had a very tough case where we had a victim who was being battered and homeless and some degree of substance abuse. Working with those cases... those are the hard cases... if you can accomplish getting this person to understand that, you know, for their own, for their own benefit and their own health... and I think she in that case she was able and if it took a lot of perseverance on her part, and I think this person was homeless when she got her set up in a hotel. But to get her to follow through with going to court, showing up to court, following through with their subpoenas, I know that we've taken some victims for the DA, picked him up, and have given him rides. So that's and the victims that are homeless on drugs or just in a bad place, they don't have transportation, they don't have money, they don't have clothes. So that is an enormous accomplishment when you when you meet those challenges. So, it's a lot more than just, you know, being there providing them with pamphlets, it's being there, it's giving them rides, clothing them, it's sheltering them. So, I think in that case, she ended up getting the victim a hotel, a place to stay, financing, and getting that person to court was... I don't have all the details, but I remember going to the house with Nora to contact that person and it was it was the victim's mother's house because we couldn't find the victim. So, we went to the mother's house. And we did find the victim there who was still homeless, just in and out of Mom's house. But, yeah, I think that Nora has more detail on that, but.

JRW:

Her mother couldn't allow her to stay at home?

DC:

Yeah, I think that was... I think that was the case where, OK, she can't stay here. But you know, somebody like that is in a, you know, a really tough situation. If you've got an addiction that compulsion, you know, makes it so much harder for you to be motivated and to have that self-esteem. You know, battered, battered women, or battered victims suffering from that self-esteem. The other thing is, you know, that the understanding the barriers, you know, for domestic violence. Why aren't they reporting? Why aren't they going through with it? Did so a lot of the barriers are done. Maybe they you know if they're on drugs and their homeless. Are they in a bad place you know they're not following through. That's a barrier, or if they don't have transportation. Or, if it's the behavior has been normalized. "Yeah, I've been beaten, you know all my boyfriends beat me up, it's normal. why [undiscernible] not going report it." That's it, the family cycle of domestic violence. Well that's the way my, you know, my parents live

so that's the way I live and it was. But understanding those I've seen that very clearly. I was like, wow, this is... it makes so much sense.

JRW:

How old is this girl now?

DC:

You know she was probably she was young. She was probably... I know she had a child. She was probably in her late 20s, maybe early 30s.

JRW:

And what's her current situation?

DC:

I'm not sure. After that and I have lost track... I'm not sure what happened. I know Nora was deeply involved in and

JRW:

I think Nora talked about it yesterday, but I can't recall what the... what the outcome was.

DC:

Yeah, I know. She lived on ___ St. Pretty sure it was ___ St because I remember ___ and ___. I remember being out there with Nora to help her out. Nora's done a number of those cases for us. Uh, with the other officers working with there, but that's the one that I remember. I remember because it was such a huge challenge and it's difficult to get the victims out there in the first place. But to have other complications, other barriers, like being homeless and being on drugs, you know other victims. Find barriers, because financially you know the... this the suspect, the abuser is the breadwinner. He brings in the money. So, if he's not there then you know how am I going to pay my rent type? Yeah chase, that's a big one in in Parlier.

JRW:

Well also you have a cultural thing about patriarchy.

DC:

Male dominant society.

JRW:

Yeah, uh, what about social media campaigns as the grant funding never does it done much for you in terms of like Facebook accounts, Twitter, anything like that?

DC:

Yeah we do. Come. We do a lot with with Facebook, so you know anything that you know with our anti-violence... that we put out. Our outreach, all of that stuff. That's good to promote healthy positive behaviors. Yes, we utilized Facebook. Tremendously.

JRW:

And you have a lot of people that go on there to get information.

DC:

I, I believe so, you know, and I know that. Uh, we do get a lot of comments. Uh, we have a lot of followers.

[discussion of phone battery charger omitted]

JRW:

OK? Alrighty, uhm, how would you characterize your agency's involvement with the following? I'm just gonna ring off these names. Let me know if any of them ring a bell. So, Starts Strong Building Healthy Teen Relationships... does that ring a bell to you?

DC:

Building teen relationships?

JRW:

Yeah, it's a program. So. I'm just wanting to see if that maybe you had something to say about that, but if it doesn't ring a bell then we'll just move on.

DC:

Yeah yeah, I... I'm not not remembering.

JRW:

OK, training cultural competency we've already really covered. Peace over violence model.

DC:

Uhm, yeah, I'm not. Nothing's coming to mind.

JRW:

Sexual Assault response team. Domestic violence response team. And of course, Nora's part of that deal.

DC:

Right, so that would be, uh, yeah Nora, and and Jesse. And Jesse is also the sexual assault investigator as well. So he's... he shares those responsibilities that does domestic violence as well as sexual assault, and he is at 290 registrant detective. He registers all 290 registrants in our city. And he handles primarily the sexual assault cases as well.

JRW:

OK, the developmental assets, it's really for the high school. I don't think you really have any involvement of that. Is there anything missing from the CalVIP project? Something that you think really, really, really wish we had?

DC:

You know, I think, uh. I think there's... I can't think of anything off the top of my head. I think everything is in there.

JRW:

OK, good. Has your involvement in CalVIP increased your interest in doing this in the future?

DC:

Say it again,

JRW:

Has your involvement in CalVIP increased your interest in doing this in the future?

DC:

Oh, absolutely, it's a tremendous resource. I mean, there's... and it's something when you look at community challenges... the challenges should dictate the services. So, in Parlier domestic violence along with our gangs and gun violence is an enormous priority. And because it's prevalent in that community, having these programs and having the financing is going to improve the ability for us to provide the quality of service. Hopefully reduce those occurrences in our community, but it is absolutely something that is necessary.

JRW:

The last question I'm going to strike because it's hearsay, so I think that pretty long covers it.

DC:

OK.

JRW:

[Undiscernible] I appreciate you taking the time out to do this.

DC:

You got it anytime

JRW:

Good talking to you again, it's been awhile,

DC:

Yes. Yeah, it's been a long time... good seeing you... you know you done good things there with the grant.

JRW:

Yeah, and uh... but you've always done great things as police chief, and I was very happy to hear that you were coming back in that capacity.

DC:

Yeah, we try. That's all we can do is put out the effort so...

JRW:

OK, thanks again, appreciate it and you have my... if you can't find my email address you can get it from Sonia.

DC:

OK, and this.

JRW:

And this broadcast will not be given to her so she will not see..

DC:

OK

JRW:

Thanks again, David.

DC:

You, too.

Interview

Interviewer: John R Walkup (JRW)

Interviewee: Lydia Martinez (LM), Prevention and Intervention Coordinator, Parlier Unified School District

3:11 pm PST, December 12, 2021

[Personal introductory talk omitted]

JRW:

So, I do have some preliminaries that I have to read off to you.

LM:

OK.

JRW:

So, this interview is being recorded only with your consent. I will not share the recording with anyone else with one exception — that's the grantor, BSCC. They may demand it.

LM:

OK.

JRW:

And if they demand it, then I have to turn it over to them, but I'm not gonna plan on sharing it.

LM:

OK.

JRW:

In there, and the AEA which is the American Evaluation Association, their standards are guiding this. I am a member of it and [undiscernible] questions are also guided by a formal evaluation plan I developed

LM:

OK.

JRW:

In other words, the questions are all geared towards that. As far as transparency goes, you know that Sonia and I have known each other for a long time. She's a good friend. I have worked with her.

LM:

She's amazing.

JRW:

Yeah, Oh yeah, we worked on past projects for about 10 years now so I want to disclose that.

LM:

Yeah, absolutely yeah.

JRW:

Well, I I know you from previous works.

I remember you.

LM:

Yeah that's the name. I thought this is when you guys were both working on different there was various grants and stuff and you guys were coming to the district and I remember all of that at that time

JRW:

[Undiscernible]

LM:

[Sonia Hall said] he is a good friend of mine and I said I thought and I... But yes, I remembered and I thought this... I remembered your name, so that's that's great that you still get to work together. And now you're evaluating the program goals and things like that, so...

JRW:

We have not worked on any projects in a couple of years now. So

LM:

Yeah.

JRW:

She's when she when she became the City administrator she started devoting her work then I got on at Fresno State, so I started working on that and we just kind of, you know, we didn't mingle much after that.

LM:

Yes, and you have your I saw doctor its doctor right?

JRW:

Yeah.

LM:

I though I see, yes that's that's awesome.

JRW:

Yeah, I was teaching at Fresno State and now I moved into administration so.

LM:

That's great, I'm very happy for you, but still at the district that's been going on 24 years. I also moved up within the District so now I'm at the District's Prevention and Intervention Coordinator. So I'm overseeing all the prevention and intervention programs that we have. Also with grant management and things like that... so, I really love my job and happy to be there.

JRW:

Sounds like it. Yeah, 24 years

LM:

Yes yes.

JRW:

Did you start out as a teacher?

LM:

I started off as an outreach consultant with the SP65 program, the Dropout Prevention program. I worked in the private sector before as a job developer and then my daughter was in preschool. My oldest was in preschool when they just had the baby, so I took the job and applied and got the job here in Parlier because I wanted to be part of their education and it worked out. Now both my daughters... my my oldest... she's a school counselor and my youngest that has started her fifth year of teaching. So, I'm... it was the best decision I made because it definitely influenced them and I was able to support them through their education.

JRW:

OK, it will not be possible for me to do identify you in the report... this city or the town is just too small. Yeah, this was a large, large town that I might be able to do that, but I'm just gonna go ahead and name you in the report if you don't mind.

LM:

No, that's perfectly fine.

JRW:

OK, you're free to opt out, so at any point you're free to just stop the interview if you want. And along with that, you're not... you don't have to answer every question. In fact, some questions you might not be able to. If you don't want to answer a question you say "pass" and I'll move on. You don't have to provide an explanation.

LM:

OK, no problem, I'll answer whatever I can.

JRW:

OK, I also... if you want I can remove something from the report after the report. I can't change an answer, but if you want to say "Hey, what I said about old Bill there, can you remove that..." And I'll just delete it. Part of this is adhering to the political sensitivities, cultural sensitivities of the town. Being a small town and being, you know... with a lot of politics; you know I've been around Parlier for a long time. It's important for me to make sure that nothing that we put in the report it's going to cause any fissures and so [I'm] much more willing to be flexible in that in that regard.

LM:

Thank you.

JRW:

As part of the formative process, I will summarize to you the project manager any suggestions that we can glean from the interview that will help her improve future CalGrip... uhh CalVIP projects. OK,

interview questions are trimmed, taken account, cultural, political sensitivities. There were some questions I just pulled out. I just didn't think it would be helpful and probably harmful. This interview's sole purpose to provide data for the evaluation, so it's not to be used for anything else.

LM:

Yes.

JRW:

And there's also a summative evaluation component as well. Answers should be open ended, so I'm gonna treat these as prompts and then you just go on and talk about... to talk about the answer to any extent you want.

LM:

OK?

JRW:

So, there's no yes or no stuff, or I mean, if you want answer yes or no, they'll be fine. Feel free to talk freely. For each prompt, please feel free to disclose... please feel free to discuss impact by COVID. So, if COVID has done anything... and I'm sure it does...

LM:

It definitely had an impact, yes.

JRW:

OK, with all that said, are you willing to conduct this interview?

LM:

Absolutely.

JRW:

OK. Let's go. Now, I understand that you're not going to be able to respond to a lot of these questions simply because your involvement didn't necessarily hit all aspects of the program. So, if you want to say, like I don't know, just I'll move on.

LM:

Yes.

JRW:

But qualitatively speaking, how has your agency, in which this case by agency, I would say your position, been able to fill grant-funded positions? If you had any.

LM:

Yes, through this grant we were very fortunate to have mentors come onto the... our school sites so they work with the secondary at the junior high, high school, and also our alternative education. So, having those mentors with such a benefit. You know we talk a lot about intervention and what helps students and it's those connections having those connections, having people that are there to take the time to listen, to work with them. And that was, I think, the most significant thing... I know the city worked with like law enforcement... there was other aspects of the grant. But for us, having those mentors, we were able to find them space within the school sites. So, there was a room

where kids as we moved through the [undiscernible] kids already knew that that's where they can go for support. And the nice thing about that, I would, I would regularly visit the sites and the nice thing is that it was like a safe place for the kids to go. Sometimes it was during breaks or lunch or sometimes it was during a class and a student just needed a time out. They knew where they can... that they would go and there was going to be one of the mentors there to listen to them or guide them and... So, I was very, very happy that we were funded this ... the city was funded this grant so that we had that additional staff to support our students.

JRW:

OK, were you able to expand the grant funding on schedule?

LM:

Uhm, yes it was a little difficult. We have so many plans as you know, and that was just... those were the challenges of COVID. But we did right as soon as even though we didn't get the funding, the mentoring program provided all the support that we needed, whether it was for curriculum, incentives for the students, things to run the program, they were able to provide all it out on a timely manner. They were, they were really good about that.

JRW:

OK, good. How has your agency been able to serve the targeted population?

LM:

We have...

JRW:

You have mentioned some of this already, but go ahead.

LM:

Yes, yes we had regular meetings and this was really important and it's just like with anything else: Communication is key. So, we had two separate types of meetings. We had the meetings that Sonia Hall would schedule for all parties involved... everyone that was working with the grant. So, we would meet regularly to discuss goals, outcomes, where we were at and those were held on a regular basis. We meet at City Hall in the council chambers and so there was that communication piece there. But then we also within the school side, we made sure that we included them as part of our planning meetings. And our coordination meetings so that we gave him a heads-up of students needing additional support. We made referrals. We made sure to follow it up with a student had already been referred, how they were progressing, so that's how we were managing that to make sure that that we were maximizing our services and it wasn't just some program that sounded some building and no one knew they were there. We made sure to include them as part of the school planning and leadership.

JRW:

Number four, how is your agency been able to meet challenges and overcome them?

LM:

Yeah, as I mentioned there was a challenge. I was... we were... we were right on track. We had shared Google forms where there was a file for referrals, the program they were using... the regular meetings that we were talking about... once the school closed in March and we wanted to continue the services, so, uh, once we [undiscernible] we figured out Zoom and it was there was distance learning. I know that the program continued to offer their services that just like everyone else, you know, it was through distance learning. They were available either phone calls or the

parents were okay, they'd do home visits things like that, but that was a challenge and that, you know, and just like all other programs that we had, not having the students there, being able to do our regular day in day out activities was a challenge. We did the best we could.

JRW:

This number 5? How has your agency been able to maintain quality in your services?

LM:

Again, I think it's because of the coordination of services. That's how we made sure that we were meeting the program outcomes; those meetings with Sonia were very important because she would regularly review... you know, "this is what the grant allows." "This is what we have in the grant." And so there was that communication piece and everyone that was involved with it... it was great. I look forward to those meetings. I got to learn about how the Police Department, the other aspect of the grant, how they were handling that with the domestic violence, with the calls, and there was the sharing out of data. I also attended the chief's advisory meetings that he held on... I was a part of his Advisory Board that was separate but I got to see the reduction in crime. I also shared our reduction in suspensions and office discipline referrals and so there was... I think that's how we maximize our services and just that communication piece and coordination. We all really worked well together. It's a great team.

JRW:

OK, and by those meetings are you talking about the CCTV collaborations?

LM:

Yes, yes

JRW:

OK. #6 in your estimation, how have the following been carried out? Grant-funded trainings.

LM:

Yes, we've had several trainings. I oversee PBIS, positive behavioral interventions and support. Also, we did training on alternatives to suspension. We really come along way with that where it used to be a zero tolerance and just suspend. We looked at, this is where the grant was important for that because when we're looking... let's say, a student, it was the first offense and they just needed to learn what was wrong about what they did. We connect them to the mentoring, have them work with those... with them on those issues, and hopefully it wasn't a reoccurring offense. It took care of that. So, we explored alternatives. We did restorative justice training, human trafficking, prevention training, that was huge. We did that for 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th grade graders and so we got the license for that and they were able to get all that training.

JRW:

Have you done any training yourself as part of this grant?

LM:

With PBIS, yes.

JRW:

Okay.

LM:

I, with the staff, I went out to the school site at the staff meeting, explaining again like the alternatives to suspension, going over some of the... dispelling some of the myths that if you don't suspend your just you know, avoiding an issue and you know, went over, you know, why it's important to teach the expectations, and... So, we saw a reduction in suspensions and office discipline referrals and also the school culture changed because of that, because at the end of the day teachers just want to make sure that the issue is addressed, that we're doing something about it so it doesn't happen again. So yeah, I did a lot of training in those areas.

JRW:

In your estimation, how have the following carried out? Community outreach.

LM:

Oh come, we have a really a really strong team and it is because it started. It honestly started because of this because it was the different agencies working together, the City, the Police Department and the school district where before it was kind of like we all did our own thing. Since we started this, we have this team that when we do a community event, we're all... it's our same families. It's our same students. So rather than everyone doing their own thing, we work together. So, whether it was a Red Ribbon March, community march, or the tree lighting, we did the Christmas parade... just a lot of the community events... the Easter egg hunt... It was calendared almost every month, every other month there was something going on and all the agencies involved work together to make sure we sent the information out to the students and the families and also provide resources. So, we were there, we'd have informational booths to give out information on the services available to them.

JRW:

OK, number 8 in your estimation, how has intervention been carried out?

LM:

Uhm, it's through the mentoring. Connecting the students that needed Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention... connecting them to a mentor, letting them know that they were available, and at times you know there is resistance. Kids don't... didn't want to talk to someone or didn't feel comfortable, but this is where it was really important that the staff became part of the school culture and we're out there and they, you know, when there was a Friday events, dress up days, things like that that they were part of that culture. So the kids knew where to go and once they became familiar faces then the kids would automatically go to them.

JRW:

What is your biggest accomplishment in serving your target audience? And this could be a story that may be a single instance, a single student who may have benefited... something that you want... a good story you want to people to know about.

LM:

When I realize that this this was this was working was one of the days that I went and I just popped in unannounced and it was like during break and I went into the room where the mentors were at and they had... the room was set up... it was originally for like the after-school program so they had a big table with barstools like those little stools, they had pouches, they had activities and things like that. I went in and there were so many students in there, like, there were students that were talking to the mentor some were just relaxing there. Some were doing their homework. They had their computers out and that to me was an indication that they felt safe there. They had a place

to go, and it's so it wasn't any one particular student at which I know there was many individual successes. But overall, in evaluating, that is what we were looking for... students being connected, having that safe place knowing that they can go there and be supported. To me that was. that was the success. That it wasn't an empty room. If I had walked in there and you only had the mentors and they're in their on their phones, or doing whatever, and the kids are out, to me that would have been an indication "OK, this isn't working." That's not what we want from this.

JRW:

OK, come in your estimation. How has the social media campaigns been carried out?

LM:

We've really come a long way with social media. I know our new Superintendent is really big on that, making sure that that we put out the information on a timely manner, that we connect, so... because of our community being primarily dominantly Hispanic, Spanish speaking... all our communication goes out in English and Spanish. We have Parent's Square where they get the notification sent to their phones. We have Instagram, Facebook and we're working on developing that. But, we... anytime we had events, we would make sure that we share them on all our social media outlets and our marquees and fliers just to make sure in case parents didn't have access to one of the other social media outlets. But, we really worked on getting that information and our events were very successful, well attended.

JRW:

OK, number 11. OK, here I'm going to basically mention some programs and I'm kind of curious as to just your response to it, and some of these you may not even heard of, in which case you can simply pass on it. How would you characterize your agency's involvement success with Start, Strong Building Healthy Teen Relationships model?

LM:

Through the mentoring program, I know they had that curriculum and that's some of the things that they... they had mentioned that they were, when they were working with small groups in the... with the students, they were using that curriculum. I personally, I'm not familiar with it. They did explain to me that that was part of the focus and they had a comprehensive curriculum for that. But, I know that was done through the mentoring.

JRW:

Training and cultural competency. This is number 12.

LM:

That, uh, I wouldn't know.

JRW:

OK, Peace over Violence model.

LM:

I think the Police Department and their Community Resource Officer was working on that. They were doing a lot of work in that area, working with the families, domestic violence issues, things like that.

JRW:

Sexual Assault response team. Domestic violence response team.

LM:

Yes, that's that is the team that again that the Police Department put together. They hired through the grant. They had a person, an officer, that was... is directly involved in that making sure that they when there was a case that she would be present and helping the families, connecting them to resources and things like that.

JRW:

OK, so here's one that you probably are familiar with developmental assets, protective factors.

LM:

Oh yeah, they added resiliency. Yes, and again through mentoring... again, that's why the importance of having those healthy, healthy connections to adults and things like that. That's where the mentoring piece was so important... building resiliency in students.

JRW:

OK.

LM:

[undiscernible] having those protective factors.

JRW:

Did you uhm, did the district give out any of those tests, surveys? Remember the...

LM:

California Healthy Kids.

JRW:

Well, it was like the California Healthy Kids, but it was for the developmental assets, very similar to it. I'm trying to remember the name of them, but I think that usually... go ahead.

LM:

That was a it... through the California Healthy Kids Survey there is a module that that does assess that. It [undiscernible] and so that that was administered to assess the developmental assets and uhm... Also through PBIS I have PBIS assessments. We were doing yearly assessments on.... that also looked at that at the students of the resiliency and the protective factors, and it does all of that as well, and that was more internal.

JRW:

OK and then number 16, mobilizing the CTV... mobilizing your community to fight back against violence.

LM:

Yes, we really like I said, we realized we... none of us can do it alone, like, the school district can't do it alone. The City can't do it alone. The Police Department can't do it alone. And that was one of the benefits of having this collaborative through the grant. As I said, it brought everyone together. So when we were working, discussing an issue or things that that were happening in the community, they were doing block parties, you know. Again we got the churches involved doing block parties and at those parties they would... they would close off a section. They'd give out food and then have informational booths. We did the Red Ribbon March, a lot of informational books and resources for families. It helped knowing having the Chief of Police very involved in our team meetings, providing that data so that we knew what we were dealing... what we were up against. And that that has continued. That's,

you know, a lot of this, as I mentioned, started because we were working on this together on this grant. But you know, I think this has it's going to be a lasting collaborative. Whether we have the funding or not, which I hope we continue to have, but I can see this is not going away. We're going to continue to work together

JRW:

Right. OK, so we got just a couple more questions. These are kind of summaries #17. What do you think is missing from the CalVIP project? Is there, if anything, but do you think that there is just something that you think "My gosh, I really wish that we had included this"?

LM:

Yeah no. I know there was challenges because of, again, because of COVID, which you know every agency experienced. But, as you can tell from my interview, I am so grateful that we had this funding available to us. It allowed for us to provide that mentoring, to provide that training, and the incentives. We had regular meetings, a great collaboration with outside agencies and, you know, a lot of projects that we worked on together. I've managed other grants in the past and you know we receive the money and then you know it's within the school district. This was unique because it... we had an agency providing that and we worked in a collaborative team. So, I... I really enjoyed this.

JRW:

And I think you've answered this question but I'm going to hit ask you anyway. Has involvement in CalVIP increased her interest in future similar projects?

LM:

Absolutely, absolutely. Like I said, I love that it included some multi-agency type of grant and so to meet the outcomes it involved all of us in working together. We each had our own goal but at the end of the day it was for one... one ultimate goal: Is to decrease violence in the community to support our students, support healthy relationships, those were the outcomes and I really hope that we can continue that these funds continue to be available for us to apply. I look forward to continuing to work with Sonia and City of Parlier, the Police Department on other projects.

JRW:

OK, well there it is, that's good, I appreciate it.

LM:

Yes, thank you

JRW:

I know you're busy. You want to get to other things.

LM:

Yes, thank you. I'm glad we were able to connect. I felt so bad that I wasn't available at the other times, but...

JRW:

Oh, that's okay.

LM:

... this was important to me because as you can tell, I'm very grateful that we received... that we have this grant and I want to make sure that we are in a place where we can be refunded and continue to provide these services so that it was important to me to make the time to talk to you about it.

JRW:

OK, thanks again Lydia. Appreciate it.

LM:

Thank you. You have a great day.

Interview

Interviewer: John R Walkup (JRW)

Interviewee: Nora Cuevas (NC), Code Enforcement Officer / (former) Domestic Violence Advocate, Parlier Police Department

3:04 pm PST, December 7, 2021

[Personal introductory talk omitted]

JRW:

We are recording this. I'm not going to share the recording with anyone. It'll stay on my computer here and know my company computer. The BSCC, which is the grantor, may demand it, in which case I would have to submit it to them. But in that case they would be the only ones that see it.

NC:

OK

JRW:

And so and by the way, really important also. You're free to opt out, you're free to and not answer any questions you don't want to answer. You don't have to provide an explanation as to why you can just simply say "eh pass" and I'll just move on to the next one and after the interview you might think, you know, "I might have disclosed something... maybe about one of the people I'm working with" ... accidentally, of course, or "I just don't really want my answer to this question out." I have in the chat room put my email address. Just let me know and I'll just delete it from the report. I don't want to... I don't want to compromise anything here. You know?

NC:

Okay.

JRW:

Let's see here. Just as a note, I'm going to be writing a formal evaluation report and part of the AEA standards also is transparency, so all of those people who are, like, directly involved key stakeholders would have access to the report. And I have no way to di... to really... to really de-identify. I mean anybody reading the report is going to know pretty much, for the most part, who said what? It's not just not enough people involved in the study and this town is too small to be able to expect any kind of way of, you know, masking who is saying what on a particular [undiscernible] response to a particular question. So are you OK with that?

NC:

Yes. I do have a question. What is the evaluation on and for what year?

JRW:

This would be the evaluation for this past year and well, actually, I think this is a summative evaluation of the project. And so I don't recall which year the project started because I wrote evaluation plan and submitted it, but the time frame is a little fuzzy to me.

NC:

Yeah, 'cause I can only answer for... because I'm no longer assigned to the grant. So, I can only ans... My last day was October 9th of 2020.

JRW:

OK, so just hold your response just limit them to the time frame in which you were involved.

NC:

OK.

That's fine.

NC:

[Undiscernible]

JRW:

Let's see if there's any other kind of initial stuff I want to cover here. OK there... strictly speaking, there were probably some interview questions I would... I was supposed to ask as part of a typical AEA, but I understand part of the AEA' policies, though, is to trim the evaluations to reflect cultural political sensitivities. So, I've deleted some of them given that this is a small town. I think a lot of these evaluations are written, like, for larger cities, and, like, some of the questions are like "Yeah, I'm not going to ask that." (laughing) So, just to let you know that if you're wondering why a particular question was not asked, it might be because of that. And this here is... the only purpose of this interview is to provide data for the evaluation report. It will not be used for any other purpose.

NC:

OK

JRW:

Good. With one except it might be used for like improving the grant in the future. That's a formative process. They might take responses and say, "Well, we can, you know, do better next time around," but it's strictly limited to the actual grant funded project itself. And uhh... oh answers, I want him to be open ended. So, this is... it's not an interview, it's a focus... it was supposed to be a focus group discussion. But because of the, you know, scheduling problems, we're just doing them one at a time. And the whole idea is, is that these questions I asked are prompts for you just talk freely about whatever you like. So, don't feel like you, like, you have to respond "yes" or "no." Just if I ask a question, feel free to talk as much as you want about it in any way you want, and again, you can always just pass. You can just say "I prefer not to" and I could just move on to the next question.

NC:

[Undiscernible]

JRW:

And also CoVID has impacted people you know everywhere and for each of the questions I have. Feel free to talk about maybe how COVID has maybe affected your response because the... I think especially Sonia, she's very interested in knowing how COVID may have impacted the grant progress. OK, with all that, are you willing to conduct the interview?

NC:

[Undiscernible on the recording due to a technical glitch, but the interviewer remembers her approving.]

JRW:

Good deal, good deal. OK, and a lot of these questions again, especially maybe this first one, may not apply to you because your time frame doesn't extend all the way through, but if you can describe qualitatively speaking, you know, how have you been able to fill grant-funded positions. Do you have any? Like when... and I don't have the budget with me, but did you get budgeted for any new positions within your agency at all?

NC:

No.

JRW:

OK, then we just skip this. What about expending the grant funds? Have you had any troubles like expending the monies or anything like that? Do you want to talk about?

NC:

What do you mean?

JRW:

Well, you might have been funded through this grant a certain amount of money budgeted to maybe do things with. For example, you might have been given money to do prom... community outreach or something like that,

NC:

[Undiscernible]

and if you have been funded by any amount budgeted... actually by this grant... have you had any trouble expending it?

NC:

No, I did get... I was assigned through the CalVIP program... I was assigned (or grant)... I was assigned as the domestic violence advocate.

JRW:

Ok

NC:

So, I did reach out to the victims. And it was... I was on call 24/7. The officers would contact me if there was immediate response that needed to be done, that it would like an emergency?

JRW:

Uh-huh.

NC:

And then I would just see the followups after that. Where it... I would have to go sometimes to the hospitals.

JRW:

OK, good deal.

NC:

[undiscernible] COVID-time, so COVID did not affect me offering services.

JRW:

OK, good deal. Anything else?

NC:

No.

JRW:

OK? What about serving the targeted population and the targeted population here would be, if I recall correctly, well... domestic violence victims, especially. How is... how have you been able to perform that?

NC:

Well, I started in 2019, and I went all the way up to October 9th, 2020. That is when I was providing the services for domestic violence. Prior to COVID, [undiscernible] We would do. I would go like to different events, community events, and do community outreach at the same time as doing community outreach. We would also answer any questions if somebody had any domestic violence questions or if somebody would be... they would approach, like, "What is required?" Like, a one-on-one sometimes. So, that that would be a way to getting close to the community and letting them know that we would... we were there to help them. And that once COVID hit, it was a little bit more difficult. But, with the previous victims that I work with, if they would see something they would let either family or your friend's [undiscernible] that we had a domestic violence advocate that was available for them.

JRW:

OK, and you worked... you worked in your position before this grant came around.

NC:

Yes, I was the Community Service Officer,

JRW:

Right, So there's no real way of comparison, so I'll just go ahead and leave it at that. Have you had any challenges? Anything that's gotten in your way here?

NC:

Well, they removed me from the from the domestic violence advocate? I'm no longer the domestic violence advocate...

JRW:

That was in October.

NC:

Yes, that was October 9th, 2020.

JRW:

Do you want to talk about that in any way?

NC:

I mean, I feel like if I was doing a... I was able to provide the community with good services, so if they would offer the grant again, I would more definitely be willing to step up to become the domestic violence advocate again.

JRW:

OK, and there's nothing else you want to talk about all that.

NC:

No.

JRW:

OK, good. Let's see here... and maintaining quality in your services. For example, they have CCTV collaboration meetings. Do you go to those?

NC:

Uh, no.

JRW:

OK. Anything else about that in maintaining quality?

I don't take part in those, so I can't answer that question.

Alright, we'll just pass on that. Have you done... did your... did you engage in any... did you actually perform any trainings as part of the grant?

NC:

Uh, no.

JRW:

OK did you? Did you attend any... participate in any of the grant funded-trainings?

NC:

No.

JRW:

OK. And you talked about community outreach again. You already have talked about that, so I think I could probably go on the next question. How did... your intervention process, can you describe that and how well? Well, let's see how well. The intervention process that you used, could you describe... elaborate on that?

NC:

For domestic violence?

JRW:

Yeah.

NC:

It would be based on a... on the 101, depending on what they needed. It would be based more on that. I would reach out to them. I would come in contact with them. If they needed any sort of resources, I would provide it to them. I would help them fill out forms. I would help them... get them in contact with the appropriate services that they needed. I would help them with... if they needed child care. If they needed help with filling out forms, I would reach out to some other agencies and collaborate with them to assist them.

JRW:

Did you have any, like, success stories? Is there any kind of interventions, maybe, or anything else you've done that gave you like a lot of satisfaction?

NC:

For one of the victims, she wanted to go back to school. But she would always say that she couldn't. She can't go back to school because she had kids. She it was hard for her and that was one of the reasons why she would go back her husband.

JRW:

Right.

NC:

And so it took a while for her to open up, but slowly we... I met her in 2019. And we started... I started working with her and then I'm reaching out to her. I tried to do it at least once a week, so that she could see that you know somebody was there, and if she needed to speak to somebody, she would be able to call me. We would talk, but at least I would, from my side, I would try to reach out once a week. But, she would reach out if she needed someone to talk too. So, we would just... I started talking to her. She would [undiscernible] Personally, I was a single parent. I went to school. I got my degree. If I could do it, you can do it. Everybody can do it as long as you have the support that you need. If you need child care, I will help you get childcare. So I did. We were able to get child care. But, this took for her to open up into 6 to 8 months. To get that bond and that trust.

JRW:

Did she fear repercussions for going to college?

NC:

Yes, she did, but she was able to finish her [general ed] online classes and then the last I heard was that she was uh... I still reach out to her even though I'm no longer the community... the domestic violence advocate. I still reach out to her because I don't want her to feel that, just because I'm not the domestic advocate... I mean, she doesn't have anybody to go to.

JRW:

Right.

NC:

*So, I still have that communication with her and she's taking college courses now and she put her children in the daycare and she's doing good. She left her husband, which *

JRW:

That's a good thing.

NC:

That's a big step, and you know, and I know the cultural issues associated with that. I had on this. Of course, this not supposed to be about me, this is an interview about your involvement in the program, but..

JRW:

[Interviewer's personal story omitted for lack of relevance.]

But so yeah, I fully under... appreciate what some of these women are under, you know, because especially when you have like jealousy, they're afraid you're going to go to college and find somebody else.

NC:

[undiscernible] better. Somebody that or they just want to go to college or they just want to go to school just get out of the house.

JRW:

And once you know once you become successful, how long will you be able to keep her? Yeah, I get it. Totally get it. Let's see here, let's go ahead and move on. Did you have any kind of any instances where they really felt that, like, not so much let somebody down, but a failure like "I really wish I could have done better or I wish I could've done more"?

NC:

Yes, when every time... every time they would go back to the to the aggressor. That's when I would feel like, OK, didn't do my part. I need to try a little bit harder to help them open up their eyes and make sure that they know they have a safe place to go to. Every time they would uhm... because a lot of them would be [undiscernible] called out. [Undiscernible] I would be listening to the radio and video/radio and just listening to DV-in-progress and the address... I already knew who it was. So, every time that call would come out, I would always feel like "OK, I didn't succeed. I need to do a little bit more."

JRW:

Yeah. Yeah, I imagine that your role probably does have almost... I wouldn't say daily but regular "I wished... I just wish things would have been different."

NC:

Well, during COVID it was up. It went sky high. the [undiscernible]. At first people were getting along. I guess they... they were at each other's throats, so they wanted out.

JRW:

Yeah. OK, let's see here. I got that... Oh, and social media campaigns? And of course, you kind of covered this with outreach. Is there anything else about social media... any kind of social media campaigns that you've been engaged in to... related to the grant funding?

NC:

No.

JRW:

Alright, I'm going to now just mention some various parts of the grant. You may not be familiar with all of them, in which case you can simply pass on it. But, I would like you to characterize your agency's

involvement, success with, or problems with any of the following. So, this is going to be like one of those, like, psychology things where a person says a word; you're supposed to respond... I don't know if that's right (laughing)... so, if you're not familiar with this, say "I'm not familiar with that."

NC:

It's not that I can't... as I said I haven't been doing it for a year.

JRW:

Yeah, sure.

NC:

Over a year.

JRW:

Alright, so here we go. Start Strong, Building Healthy Teen Relationships model. Does that mean anything to you?

NC:

No

JRW:

OK. What about training in cultural competency? Have you... anything you want to talk about there?

NC:

No.

JRW:

OK. Peace over Violence. Ring a bell?

NC:

No, have we've done anything about that.

JRW:

That was the model that they used...

NC:

...that was the model?

JRW:

... to develop the grant. So, I just thought you might have... that might ring a bell is something you want to talk about.

NC:

Peace over violence... (long pause)

JRW:

That's OK.

NC:

Not.

JRW:

Sexual... Sexual Assault Response Team, Domestic Violence Response... Violence Response Team.

NC:

OK, that's... that does because... like I said, I was available 24/7... [undiscernible]. The officers were coming out for the domestic violence and they would call me out for the sexual assault crimes.

JRW:

Developmental Assets... this is more of an education thing, so I don't think that you had any... anything to do with it? Protective factors and developmental assets.

NC:

No.

JRW:

That's mostly with the youth school district.

NC:

Yes.

JRW:

Mobilizing of the community to fight back against violence. That was kind of integral to the Peace over Violence model.

NC:

Yeah that I did do a little bit over with my... when I was a Community Service Officer. I was able to do the community outreach where we did block parties.

JRW:

Oh OK, yeah, good deal.

Want to talk about that a little bit?

NC:

The block parties? They were time consuming. (laughing)

JRW:

Yeah.

NC:

And they were a success. We worked well together as a team with a full-time [undiscernible] of the Police Department, the officers, myself and the Chief. Back then, we worked really closely with another church that... that we were able to go to. I believe it was... 2... we did 12 parties I believe? And they were, it was a success? It was really good.

JRW:

So, what did what did the block parties do? What did you guys do for those things like that?

NC:

We had food giveaway... we had... we had games. We had foods for a variety of stuff. We had handouts. We had... we had the officers out there building relationships with the community trying to alleviate the tension between the officers and the community. Tried to bring them together...

JRW:

Yeah.

NC:

And we also talked about violence. We also talked about gangs. We also talked... gave information. And also let the community know that there was... they could call in any situation and they would be... remain anonymous. It didn't matter the legal status or anything.

JRW:

Yeah Sonia [Hall], when it comes to arranging these events is in her element. She really gets involved in community events. Frank... it's definitely not my skill set. You don't want me... you don't want me organizing any kind of party because you're not going to get one. (laughing)

NC:

I organized the block parties.

JRW:

Oh. Okay, I see.

NC:

Yeah, I organized the block parties... I organized the Easter egg hunt. I organized the "trunk or treat." Every single event that was... that had to do with the community I helped organize.

JRW:

Oh, OK. Did you guys have a parade here recently?

NC:

We had a... was it [light parade]?

JRW:

Might have been. I just heard something about yesterday. Yeah, it was yesterday,

NC:

Yeah, yesterday.

JRW:

OK, so now we're going to get to the last few questions here. These are really kind of summaries. What do you think is missing from this... from this grant project if anything? Is there something that you really wish that that it would have incorporated but didn't?

NC:

Uh, for them to incorporate the domestic violence advocate? Yeah, 'cause the officers say that they really need the domestic violence advocate. They haven't had one since I was removed from... from being the Domestic Violence Advocate.

JRW:

OK, yeah, I kind of forgot you mentioned... that's obviously one that you would have mentioned. Anything else?

NC:

Continue doing the community outreach.

JRW:

I'm sorry...

NC:

That is really important... the community outreach. That's very important.

JRW:

OK, so you did... we did build community outreach into the actual project. Are you saying it wasn't quite enough? We need more?

NC:

Yeah, it needs more.

JRW:

OK

NC:

It needs more. Not just handing out... Food distributions are good. But we [need] more. You need more for this... for the teenagers. We need more for the... the food distribution. A lot of the people that come out are the older. We need some something like for... not with any something like 40s and 30s or 40s and 20s and the teenagers. We need something for different ages, not just for one.

JRW:

OK, anything in particular that you thought would be the most effective, like outreach. Something that, you know, it didn't even come to mind, like, "Wow. We really wish that we could have done something like this." And if you said something, I missed it. I'm sorry.

NC:

If I did, [undiscernible] I forgot. (laughing) I can't... I really... because I haven't been doing it for awhile, so I really don't how much...

JRW:

That's alright.

NC:

... they've been doing. I think if... if I would say something it would be like and they're doing it, I don't want to say something bad.

JRW:

Yeah, question number 18 here. I think you've already answered pretty... pretty thoroughly: Has involvement in CalVIP increased your interest in future similar projects? But you've already said that "I

really wish that I could have stayed on in and worked in this. In this mode." Anything else you want to talk about? Anything in response to that?

NC:

[Undiscernible] Somebody that can build that trust with the community. That they can know that they can always count on... that they can reach out to. Not just because, "OK it's 9-5. OK I need to go, bye." You know you're talking to somebody and then "OK, yeah, it's 9:00 o'clock. I need to go, bye." And you know, give them the full attention. That's the only thing.

JRW:

Well, that's good.

NC:

Because a lot of these symptoms do need our full attention. And even though they tell you the same story over and over and over, not to judge them. We're not here to judge them, we're here to listen to them. We're here to hear them out, not to be that person that says, "Well, you're the one that keeps on going up there."

JRW:

OK, so I want to make sure I have this straight, you mentioned about somebody having a little bit more, I'd say, engagement. Were you referring to engagement with the people that are involved as personnel in the grant or with the clients that you're trying to serve?

NC:

Just the clients.

JRW:

OK, I got it.

NC:

I don't, I don't, I don't know anything about that. Just for the clients, like, whatever like say for myself, if I would be for X, Y and Z? Yeah, just whoever is a part of. Of offering the services is there for the people.

JRW:

OK, now you when you were, you know, in your position with the with the grant, you obviously fulfilled that, I mean, you obviously would.... I would say... when somebody contacted you, I'm sure you didn't just blow them off. You look... you sound like you really engaged. So, are you saying that people from the other parts of the grant were maybe not meeting this obligation?

NC:

No, I don't know. I'm just saying that you know, if we... if we can have somebody. I don't know if they are...

JRW:

OK, I got you. I get you, OK.

NC:

No, no, I don't... I don't know about that. I'm just saying it would be nice to have somebody.

JRW:

[Final question omitted on account of its hearsay nature.]

That's it, I really appreciate you taking the time out for this...

NC:

I hope I was able to [undiscernible] questions. I'm... I'm rusty because I really haven't...

JRW:

Yeah, that's fine, that's fine. Before we get off, is there anything else that you wanted to mention.

NC:

No, this is short notice. I didn't know.

JRW:

That's OK, that's OK. And by the way, if you open up the chat window, my email address is there, but it is just, well... you could read it.

NC:

Yeah, the Gmail?

JRW:

Yeah, if you forgot something that you really want to mention, by all means just email it to me. And if you want me to do to omit something from the report... I don't think you've disclosed anything here that you would worry about.

NC:

No.

JRW:

You know, but if, for example, if you're blurted out the name of one of your clients, that would be...

NC:

No, no, I'm that part, I'm very... confidentiality is my 100%.

JRW:

Oh yeah, oh yeah. So, but you know, it could happen mistakenly sometimes. But, if you know that kind of thing, but if there's also something that you just for any reason, you just don't want to have to go in the report, email me and I'll go ahead and take care of that.

NC:

I don't think I said any names, correct? (laughing)

JRW:

No, I don't. There's nothing that when you were talking I'm thinking "She might want to retract that later." (laughing) But it can happen, especially if you have, you know, like a conflict with one of the other project personnel or something.

NC:

Oh, no, I never had conflict with anybody.

JRW:

Well good, good deal.

(Interview ends)

Interview

Interviewer: John R Walkup (JRW)

Interviewee: Sonia Hall (SH), Project Manager, CalVIP 2

3:03 pm PST, December 9, 2021

JRW:

I was given consent to record... and I also say that I will not share the recordings with anyone but the BSCC. However, I will write a report from the comments made here and those will be available publicly for anybody involved in the project and that is a transparency criteria for the AEA which is The American Education Association... why did I say that... the American Evaluation Association, of which I am a member, and so that was one of the stipulations was that people have to have access to the actual reports that come out of this.

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

Typically, we probably should share the video recordings. However, being a small town, I decided... I have to... one of the guiding principles of the AEA is that we have to be sensitive to cultural and political issues.

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

and given Parlier is a town of only 14,000, has very strong political history, I think it's best I do not.

SH:

I think so. I agree

JRW:

Okay, so far though, however, I don't think anything has been recorded that would cause any concern to anybody, but just to let you know. Another thing is is that if you disclose something that you don't want to have in the report, you can email me and I will have it removed.

[Note: JRW emailed SH a clarification that he would be willing to remove from the report any her testimony, not the testimony of others.]

SH:

OK.

JRW:

We're not really supposed to do that. However, again a small town, highly political, everybody knows each other, and the danger of having something cause trouble is too high for me to ignore it, so I decided to put in the stipulation. And this was especially important for like the domestic violence person. She may have blurted out the name of somebody by accident.

[Note: The domestic violence person did not, in fact, blurt out any names during her interview.]

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

I want her to be able to contact me and say, can you delete? No, but it's also for personnel issues. You may say something. You know, untoward about somebody else accidentally, or something like that, and I don't think there's any reason to put that in the report.

SH:

Uh-huh.

JRW:

OK, . The questions are guided by a formal evaluation plan that I developed and submitted to the BSCC. Another thing is it will not be possible for me to de-identify you the report, so anybody reading the report is going pretty well know who said what.

SH:

OK.

JRW:

There's just not enough people here. You know the and the town is too small to be able to expect any kind of confidentiality in that regard.

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

You are free to opt out, so at any point if you want to terminate the interview you can. And well, I'll come back to that in a moment, but you can opt out if you wish. I must disclose conflict of interest, but the conflict of interests between me and you so I don't know if it's that important to disclose it here. But I do tell everybody that we are good friends and we have worked in a business environment in the past as colleagues. And they all know it anyway.

SH:

Yeah,

JRW:

I just need to disclose that. Let's see here. I am free to report any suggestions to the project manager, you, anything that I think you could use to help improve the project in the future. That's part of the formative evaluation process. Interview questions are trimmed or take into account, cultural, political sensitivity. So, there were a lot of questions that I could have asked. I deleted them because I kind of felt that being the situation you guys are in it would not be prudent to ask those kind of questions

SH:

Okay, now.

JRW:

And the issue here is that if you could read a report from like so for example, the domestic violence person, but you could determine who was she was talking about.

SH:

Yeah,

JRW:

So, I've trimmed some questions that might open that kind of thing up. The interview's sole purpose is to provide data for the evaluation and has no other purpose. Answers should be open ended, so I'm going to ask you questions that you should consider those as prompts to talk freely, so I'm not looking for yes or no. There's no right or wrong, you are just to simply talk [undiscernible] for as long as you want,

SH:

OK

JRW:

You're free to go off-tangent if you wish. Uh, and I have all night, so we're not under any time constraints. For each prompt, please feel free to discuss the impact by COVID. Because I know that that has had a very large impact...

SH:

Yes, has had a very large impact on our entire program or project.

JRW:

With that said, are you willing to conduct the interview?

SH:

Yes.

JRW:

OK alright. And I'm gonna have to trim these out because a lot of these will not pertain to you since you're the project program manager. But the first one is actually important, qualitatively speaking. How has your agency been able to fill grant funded positions?

SH:

Well, we filled that the positions immediately and we secured all of our contracts with our partners immediately. So, in fact we secured the part... the contract with the partners prior to even being funded, so everything was in place.

JRW:

Now, you did have a change in the domestic violence response team. Would you like to talk about would you like to talk about that?

SH:

[Undiscernible] talk to you about that in 13 minutes.

JRW:

OK. Uh, let's see here. What about expanding grant funding on schedule?

SH:

So, we did... we were expanding it on schedule and this is where some of the issues came about because we didn't know we were going to be able to be extended a year due to COVID and so throughout COVID we were still paying of course for the violence prevention officer and and this is where the issue came in is that the nonprofit that was doing work... he was kind of doing his own thing and contacting people on his own and so on, and still putting in for reimbursements for the... his folks because they were hoping any day that they [undiscernible] going to come back. So, he's trying to hold on to them. So, he was having them... just find other things to do outreach. But, and this is where the issue happened with the City and there are questions as to why are you invoicing when you're not doing anything at the

school. But the domestic violence was also under his purview. So, he was getting reimbursement for that, and during COVID that domestic violence shot up... the numbers went crazy and the violence...

JRW:

I mean I can't imagine why.

SH:

We had a violence increase. And so part of this nonprofits job two was to provide the... you know, go out and try to help with reducing the... well, trying to keep the retaliation from happening. So they would go out and work with the officers on the street and trying to get the family members to calm down and not go after the person who just shot their loved one. You know what I mean? So, they're basically they're called peacemakers. And so, uh? Mike, from this nonprofit... so, his job in his non profit is he oversaw the outreach for the intervention peacemakers. He oversaw the mentoring in the schools, and he also oversaw the domestic violence advocacy. It was all running through him. So, when he was receiving his checks, immediately one of the... I'll just be honest... [undiscernible] saying "Well, we're paying him and he's not doing anything." She figured that... or she heard a rumor that he was sharing the money with the police chief. [undiscernible]

JRW:

When you say sharing the money, are you talking about...

SH:

The money he's receiving from the ground?

JRW:

Right, so that was going into the police chief's private...

SH:

No. she heard a rumor that he was receiving money — his reimbursements — and giving the police chief part of it.

JRW:

OK, so the police chief wasn't personally... benefitting...

SH:

No. Giving it to him personally.

JW:

Oh wow.

SH:

We never found anything like that. I don't... I know it didn't happen, but that was, you know... and at that time the politics were running very high, because that's when we were having issues with the chief and you know, we were cutting him out. So, it caused a lot of issues, John. That's so... you know when COVID hit that caused a lot of issues with our program

JRW:

And when you talk about the police chief, you're not talking about, Cerda, you're talking about the one before him.

SH:

No, the one before because the police chief knew this guy because he used him in Fresno. The guy actually was... he did a good job. He came highly recommended and the school loved him. When during school time... you know, he was there every day at the schools. But when COVID hit and he wasn't able to go there to be with the kids, the school didn't know what he was doing, so... But he was still doing the domestic violence and he was still doing the outreach with the gang members. But he was making calls to the kids that he was working with when they... the school shut down. But that was about it. So, he thought the grant had to be spent by a certain date, so he didn't see a problem with just getting the reimbursements for what they were doing. Our Finance Director conducted a financial audit, but didn't see anything out of the ordinary.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

So that is a question you would have to ask him. I mean, what what were they doing? I don't know if anybody's ever asked him. [Note: Mike Dejuarez told Sonia Hall after the interview that he did not wish to speak on this matter.]

JRW:

Was his departure related to this?

SH:

Yes.

JRW:

OK. I don't... I mean, there's only so far I want to go into this, you know the purpose of the evaluation is just to find out if the grant monies were expended wisely. And you know some of what you're talking about seems to go a little bit further, and I said that you could talk off tangent or go as deep as you want. But obviously not all about what you said is going to go [undiscernible].

SH:

So, he's actually going to work with you... I mean, meet with you. And...,

JRW:

Who?...

SH:

For the evaluation... Mike at the nonprofit.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

He's.. I asked him to still... because he served the youth. You know he was there for most of the grant until...

JRW:

I mean, that's good. Yeah, we might get a very, you know... we might get a view from the other side of the aisle, and that's always good. OK, are we ready for the next one? Go ahead.

SH:

What was I saying? Oh, so the first non profit that we used when we put the grant together was Cencal Mentoring.

JRW:

Right.

SH:

And, uh, Cencal started the program. And they brought someone in to be the mentor and this guy was a disaster. He did a terrible job. The school was very unhappy with him. He didn't keep a list of the kids he was working with. He had nothing to report. They just, you know, it was just a disaster. And like I said, the school was unhappy with them. So that's the reason why we just said, "You know what? If you can't put somebody else in here to do this, I think we just need to, you know, shake hands and go our separate ways." Which is what we did. And then we brought Mike Juarez. That's that's the guy that we brought in in place of Cencal Mentoring.

JRW:

What's his nonprofit called?

SH:

It's Hope Coalition.

JRW:

Oh OK, got it. You've worked for them many times in the past.

SH:

Oh yeah. And so he came in and he did a fantastic phenomenal job. And I'm going to have you interview the school so she can tell you too.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

Because I don't know her side, you know, so it would be good to hear what she has to say. But anyhow, so pre-COVID he did a good job, things were going well. He did events whenever there was gun violence or any kind of violence in the neighborhood, he would go in and we can do a anti-violence rally, a peace rally. And he had tons of volunteers. He would go out to do these rallies and give away food to all the people in the neighborhood. He would bring out this big truck, with the trailer and on that trailer was bounce houses and all sorts of stuff. It was like they would come out and you know quickly put together this big event. It was fabulous. So anyhow, that's what happened there. Why Cencal started it... started the grant and then it ended with Hope Coalition.

JRW:

OK, is Cencal still being held by or led by the former mayor?

SH:

He's basically taken a backseat on there... more of an advisory type thing. So, it seemed like to me... it seemed like the person that they brought in to do the mentoring for this school... the guy wasn't being paid well. He wasn't being paid much. So he didn't really care about being there. You know what I mean?

JRW:

Right?

SH:

So, it seems like that they're running a bit top heavy in that organization now. Like Randy and the other guy, they're making lots of money.

JRW:

Right.

SH:

You know what I mean? And so, but... and then they didn't have... the thing that I was upset about most was no curriculum. They were doing no curriculum... there was no organization. They weren't teaching the kids.

JRW:

Right.

SH:

And I needed to have life skills done. I needed to have the curriculum with the teen dating making sure that that the teens know what the... the do's and don'ts, and what their rights were, and so on. But none of that was being done. So...

JRW:

Because I think that the teen dating big was pretty big in the development or the design of this thing in the first place.

SH:

Yeah!

JRW:

That's too bad. OK, well there's your... there's a negative, right?

SH:

Uh-huh, that's reason why we had to change and get another nonprofit who would do those things. So, Cencal was with us probably for about 3 months, and that's it.

JRW:

What's the current state of that particular program? Where? How is it working now?

SH:

Oh, I don't know if you remember Susan Bichara.

JRW:

I don't think so.

SH:

She she does a... she works with probation and probation will send kids to her that have been sentenced to do drug classes. Anger management classes. You know all these different classes, so she does those classes and on Fridays she was doing them out at our center in Parlier. So, when everything happened and Mike actually left right at the end of that this CalVIP. So, he was here until the end.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

So, Susan came in. And Susan now is the one in our new grant. But Susan, when she came in, she was ...she's not a nonprofit... she hooked up with another church similar to like what Mike does... that does the same thing. In fact, he knows Mike and he has tried to get different contracts that Mike got instead of him. And so, anyhow, so this guy comes in and he comes in and says he's got all these volunteers and he's got all these people that work under him as mentors. He's got the people to go out and do the street outreach. He says he's got all of that. OK? He comes in and school starts. I mean, we hit the ground running. School... this grant started in September.

JRW:

Really?

SH:

(laughing) Susan had to use her people, her staff, to come in and do the mentoring. And they've done a good job. [undiscernible] but it's Susan staff.

JRW:

What your describing is for the new grant?

SH:

Yeah, this is the new grant, so I don't want ti get it mixed up.

JRW:

Yeah, that's true. I mean, I'll get it sorted out. OK, uh, let's move on?

SH:

OK. And then...

JRW:

Go ahead.

SH:

The issue to... let me go back to... the domestic violence.

JRW:

Okay.

SH:

So, we had the domestic violence advocate there in that position until the end of the year. We did the full two years of that grant with having a domestic violence advocate in that position,

JRW:

Right.

SH:

And then after we had someone else that did it, but she just wasn't on top of it like the other one was. And the reason why..

JRW:

that [undiscernible] Nora.,

SH:

Yeah, that would be Nora. So, Nora was moved from being a community service officer to working as only code enforcement. And council didn't want her doing anything at all with the Police Department, which meant she wasn't allowed to do the domestic violence anymore.

JRW:

Well, why wasn't she replaced with somebody else?

SH:

Well, somebody else was... did replace her? And this young gal that replaced her actually used to work with the Marjorie Mason Center.

JRW:

Right,

SH:

And so that's the reason why they thought it was OK to just go ahead and do this. But this little gal, you know, that only works if she is at work (laughing).

JRW:

Wow, so she never showed up much?

SH:

She was unreliable because she had the credentials. She was educated. Nora, Nora has the credentials too? And she's educated. But, this young lady, you know she had all of that, but then she just wasn't reliable. And, so with the new grant, now though, I'm trying to get Nora back on.

JRW:

OK. I'm a little unclear as to the timing here. Your existing grant... what was its final month?

SH:

So, it was originally... the final month was originally supposed to be September of last year. But then they extended it an extra year, but we were pretty much done with using our grant in the budget

JRW:

Right.

SH:

So, all we really did is just try to continue as much services as possible. It was during COVID. And one thing we did still have and that never stopped, no matter what, not even through COVID it didn't stop, we had Tuesday night support group here for the ladies.

JRW:

OK, well going to this domestic violence thing...

SH:

... at City Hall...

JRW:

... is it fair to say that this position was filled through throughout the duration of the grant?

SH:

Yes.

JRW:

OK, that's what I'm mostly interested in.

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

OK. OK, so shall we move on?

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

Qualitatively speaking. How has your agency been able to serve the targeted population? And the targeted population mostly here is domestic violence victims.

SH:

We have done a great job in serving those victims, especially because we were able to use Nora who's actually a chaplain.

JRW:

I didn't know that.

SH:

Yeah, she's a chaplain and she's got that experience, but she also worked for the Police Department as a community service officer. So, she had all of the files. She had everything. Whenever there was a domestic violence call, the officer would call her and she get up, even if it's in the middle of the night, and go out there. And that wasn't just domestic violence; that was also with rape victims.

JRW:

Is there any other targeted populations that for which you want to talk about in terms of meeting their needs?

SH:

Well, we also just wanted to make sure that violence was addressed on the streets.

JRW:

Yeah,

SH:

And all types of violence, and that meant the youth violence or the gangs. And so we had our violence prevention officer and he did a great job... an experienced officer; it wasn't just some new officer. We had someone who is experienced and he didn't just go out there and do patrol. He was an actual detective. And he went out there to pursue the cases of the domestic violence. Went out there to pursue the cases of rape. Went out there to pursue all of the cases that had any kind of violence tied to it.

JRW:

And this was grant funded

SH:

Yes.

JRW:

OK. Alright, anything else you wanted to discuss on that prompt? There's going to be a lot of opportunities to talk about all kinds of things.

SH:

OK, we'll just move on.

JRW:

How has your agency been able to meet challenges and overcome them? COVID is one of them. But there might be other things.

SH:

Well, you know the challenge that we had like I said with Cencal. The way that that we had [undiscrnable challenge... you know, basically asking for the information from them and talking to them, and when they couldn't do the job, I just basically told him we couldn't do it anymore, period. So the way I met that challenge, I replaced them But services never stopped. Never went without it.

JRW:

Yeah, that's important. The next one is, qualitatively speaking, how is, how has your agency... how has your agency been able to maintain quality in its services? Obviously, you attend the CCTV collaboration meetings because you probably host them. Anything you... anything comes to mind?

SH:

Well, we've always had, you know, when we do have the meetings, we have some kind of training. We have someone there to give us insight on... especially with rape. A lot of people didn't understand rape and even our officers didn't really... beause you know, a lot of them... it's a scary topic to them. You know what I mean? And, uh, so we did partner up with the family Healing Center. Do you remember them?

JRW:

That name does ring a bell.

SH:

It was that that nurse who put together that nonprofit to... so when someone was raped, they go to her group and they have counseling there, that's where they checked the girl for the rape and I'll have to send you there website so you can see... So, we partnered up with them and they taught... they trained officers on how to handle rape as well as our nonprofits.

JRW:

Were they funded out of the grant?

SH:

Yes.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

Actually, they were funded under training, so that was just basically how we paid for them.

JRW:

Okay, but they did receive grant funding.

SH:

No, they received grant funding, yes but from the City under the City's budget for training.

JRW:

I see. Alright, in your estimation, how have the following been carried out. We will start with grant funded trainings. There you go. How have things gone with the grant-funded trainings? [undiscernible] have you been doing?

SH:

So we did have some good trainings. They have the mental health first aid training and Susan Pichara did that. With that one... it's just basically so could they can learn how to handle the violence that comes with someone who's crazy. And so, and how to approach those people rather than... to deescalate the situation. And they also did have training on that... on the... escalating any kind of issue that they come up to. So, they had a training on that, they had training on basically showing empathy and the trauma informed care. So, that was a requirement of the grant and that was something that they had early on was training on trauma-informed care. And how to approach the victim and how to treat the victim. Then the last training that they had... they had several trainings; we built a training room at the Police Department just because we started having all these trainings. And then with COVID being the way it was we also were able to do trainings through what the weather-guard type thing. But anyhow, the last training that we had was on human trafficking. And that was a fabulous training. The trainer that trains all over California came in along with our new partner and CalVIP partner, which is Breaking the Chains. I don't know if you're familiar with them.

JW:

Yeah, I've heard of them.

SH:

Yeah, they're very well known in Fresno. There are always featured on KMJ. Any help...

JW:

Didn't they also... didn't they also used to do some work in Mendota?

SH:

I don't, I don't think so. We're their first rural nonprofit, I mean, rural city, so they've never worked in the rural area; it's always in the city. So they came in and they trained our officers on how to identify victims of human trafficking because we have human trafficking issues so bad, John. So bad! We have domestic violence that goes on but right along with domestic violence is human trafficking and it's starting with young girls that are 13 years old. And when I say human trafficking, it doesn't always have to be them stealing them and making them do stuff. It's these drug dealers that are making these girls have sex with men or whatever.

JRW:

Yeah sure. Well, I've always associated...

SH:

And I mean using them like that.

JRW:

So, we're talking about sexual trafficking.

SH:

Yes, yeah, there's sexual trafficking that we found here and also the work-related trafficking and that's the fields. The field workers.

JRW:

And the trafficking there is to bring... is to smuggle...

SH:

They bring them from over the border. They bring them here, put them to work, and will hold their papers.... they're fake papers until for as long as it... you know... forcing them work.

JRW:

Exploitation, yeah.

SH:

Yeah. So, that's basically that's what we have found and that's throughout the grant. And because we were more involved in the community and engaged in the community and working on these domestic violence cases and building trust with the community, that's what came out of it —that was finding that we had a huge problem with human trafficking. So, that's something that came from this CalVIP grant, and I think that's important to notice in the evaluation that because of the trust that we have built with this community the officers are able to see beyond traffic stops. So the officers had very intense human trafficking training and on how to identify... if you know someone is being trafficked, young ladies being trafficked, and so one of the last things that we did under this grant is we actually were able to save some young ladies that were being trafficked through the support of our officers who used this training, identified it, and they were able to save these young ladies. They were taken to... up to one of those Indian casinos.

JRW:

When you said they were taken up to one of those [Indian casinos] what do you mean?

SH:

13, 14-year old girl girls from our community. The girls went with these guys to try to get whatever they were going to get that the guy said [undiscernible]. He started using them. And making them sleep with these different men. And took them. They didn't want to leave; he kidnapped them. Took them. And so because of our officers, you know, paying attention and listening to the parents and looking at investigating it, they were able to... our violence prevention officer was able to immediately know "Wait a second; this is human trafficking" instead of the typical "these girls ran away." You know what I mean?

JRW:

Right?

SH:

And so through investigation and tracking phones and so on, they were able to find them, bust down the door and save them.

JRW:

OK, that's takes care of my next... one of the next. well, one of the questions that's coming down the pike here, so that's good. OK, anything else you want to add?

SH:

No.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

I think that's pretty amazing, don't you?

JRW:

Oh, absolutely. I mean, that's definitely going into the report. That's what... that's really good. How have the following been carried out as far as community outreach goes?

SH:

Community outreach is huge. We have no issue with community outreach. We had like some kind of a community outreach events. If it wasn't a rally, a peace rally, or a neighborhood block party, we had something like at least every other month. That's reason why we had... well, that's what we use with our CalVIP team, all of our partners. We weren't just... we always joked about this. We always said we're the community plant... planning event or event planners. (laughing)

JRW:

Right. You do a lot of work in that.

SH:

Because we're always planning some sort of event. And it was the entire CalVIP Coalition. Now he had come together and we were doing so much outreach. We had Mike Juarez. He was doing outreach in all of the neighborhoods where there was some kind of violence. And it was outreach that I mean sometimes I didn't even know about it, I just would actually hear about it from other people saying that he went in blanketed their neighborhood with fliers. But there was always some kind of outreach.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

I have lots of pictures, everything. (laughing)

JRW:

Yeah, and by the way, those pictures would be nice to have.

SH:

I'll send you the pictures.

JRW:

Yeah, good deal. And both the other people that I talked to has talked a lot about it. So, there's going to be a lot to say about the community outreach.

SH:

I bet Cerda talked about it. He was always involved in them.

JRW:

OK, the next question you pretty well have covered, but I'll ask it again. That way, in case you've forgotten something. Again, we're going back to how have the following been carried out. Intervention.

SH:

Intervention?

JRW:

Yeah.

SH:

Well, intervention actually was you know when there was some kind of a form of violence. Then Mike and his team would go swoop in and would basically do the intervention. What we would call intervention. And Susan also provided some support with intervention with... but she was... she'd also work hand-in-hand with Probation. So, we'd swoop in and most of the time these kids, if they did something bad, they wouldn't go to, they would be arrested, go through probation, Probation would assign them to do their services in Parlier. And so with Susan... Susan Bichara. At that time, that's what we are paying Susan Batara out of the City's own pocket, directly, because she's a for-profit, so the City had to use our own money to pay for her services. But anyhow... then they're just an intervention with the victims of rape. They would go through the services at the Family Healing Center and the Family Healing Center would go through with them and do the services of the counseling and the rape kits and would do everything there for them. And then we had Nora doing that domestic violence and then once again we also had the support group for the victims of domestic violence or rape that came here every Tuesday night. Now, we were in the midst of doing a huge woman's conference for all of Parlier to make sure that we got the word out there. You know, I was planning this big luncheon. And we had speaker set. And I was so excited about it and then COVID hit. So, we had to scratch it. We never were able to do it. And so I'm still waiting to do it. We still are going to do it, but the one thing that we were... the reason why we are doing it is what we have found through the grant too is that most of the ladies here from Mexico do not know their rights. They think... they think it's their husband can beat them. They think that's OK. And not only do they not know their rights, but they don't know that if they're a victim of domestic violence, they can get citizenship.

JRW:

What? Seriously?

SH:

Yep they sure can. Yeah, it's called the U-visa. It's a U-visa. And so we were trying to inform... get out there and inform all these victims and these people that were being victimized that they can get a U-visa and get their own citizenship. They didn't have to worry about their husband who was beating them and who was holding their papers. Their documents. So, they would always threaten these ladies with, you know, saying that they're going to turn them in.

JRW:

Right.

SH:

And so we were able to help quite a few ladies, John, and that's always a good feeling. But, sometimes you know it's easier for them to come here and talk about things and to be able to get the strength to finally do it finally... finally, leave him because you know they just because you've got a domestic violence advocate going there and trying to, you know, get them to do it, having the strength of other ladies who have done it always makes it easier for them. You know what I mean? So, we always have that and even through COVID I still have the doors open for that.

JRW:

So, would you say quite a few women are talking about 5-10-15-20?

SH:

We had four and for that we were able to [undiscernible] went through the process for U-visa. But I had a lot of women that came here for the group.

JRW:

Right

SH:

It is about 15.

JRW:

Do you have any, like, biggest disaster or biggest disappointment you want to share? Something that is really, let's say, very unfortunate. I'm not talking about the, you know, the logistics of getting the grant. You know, the budget and all that stuff. I'm talking about as far as your involvement with the actual community... the client [undiscernible] the clients themselves. Do you have anything that you really wished "man I was" ... and in this example would be like if you had mistakenly identified one of these girls to their husband and they beat them or something like that. I mean.

SH:

Nothing like that happened. But... (long pause)

JRW:

Can you think about that for a moment I'm going to get me [undiscernible].

SH:

I can't think of anything. I think the biggest, the biggest disappointment, was not being able to do the Women's conference.

JRW:

Do you talk about that little bit more?

SH:

Yeah, so we had a conference planned for... and the main thing of the conference... we called it a women's conference and it was just basically so we can get the word out to as many women as possible because I finally felt like we were getting somewhere. And so I planned this conference and of course with the conference the whole thing was about just women's issues, so the men would know what it was about. You know what I mean? Just a fellowship for women. And so offering lunch, I had food was going to be catered and young ladies that were going from the high school that were doing the babysitting. And so we had that planned. And then it was planned like in April and everything shut down right before we were going to have the conference. That was a huge disappointment.

JRW:

Any chance of getting fired back up?

SH:

Yeah, so we're working on getting it fired back up for this grant, but you know, things are still up and down with... up and down with the COVID. You never know what's going to happen next. Right when we think it's going to open again, then — what's his name? Newsome gruesome — closes. But I think we're going to be able to do it here real soon. I'm going to plan it again for April.

JRW:

Alright, on to the next one. How have the following been carried out in terms of social media campaigns? And by social media of course we're talking about Twitter, Facebook...

SH:

Still glad that you mentioned social media, because I almost forgot this. So, I have a group of young people that ran a social media campaign. And the social media campaign was to reach out... and the reason why I have these young ladies do it is because of course no kids are going to listen to the old lady you know, from City Hall, so I knew it had to be their peers that did it. So, they did the whole social media campaign on anti-violence messages and she did something every week even during COVID. During COVID a lot of the kids were going through a depression. And so she started sending out messages just for uplifting because of, you know, trying to address the whole depression issue.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

But we did have a really neat social media campaign going from these kids

JRW:

And I kind of missed it. Was this Twitter, primarily Facebook,

SH:

Facebook and I don't know Snapchat... is that what it's called? What... what are they called?

JRW:

Well, there's Tiktok, which I doubt that's it.

SH:

No, that's not it.

JW:

Then there's Snapchat.

SH:

There's one more.

JRW:

Twitter. You're talking to the wrong person. (laughing) You need to talk to somebody younger. That's OK we can move on. OK, so what I'm gonna do is just mention some of these programs that are part of this grant. And primarily just talk freely when you hear the terms. You know what I'm talking about, so let's start

off with Start Strong Building, Healthy Teen Relationships model. Does that ring a bell to you? Anything you want to talk about that?

SH:

So, that model was really put in place for, like, a wrap-around approach for the kids, for the youth. And you know, we start first with the youth and teach them about building healthy relationships, then as they grow into adults they could take that into adulthood. Because it's hard to go in and stop it from happening when it's already doing, you know. So, the whole point was to just basically do that wrap-around approach. The school district did a PBIS so they were trying to do the positive and uplifting type thing with the youth. The youth would go in with the mentors and the mentors... they did, basically a curriculum on the healthy relationships and anger management type things.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

And then this... the youth of this school district did a curriculum that included human trafficking.

JRW:

OK, good deal. Then things are successful?

SH:

Yes.

JRW:

You're feeling good about those?

SH:

Yeah, I feel good about that. That was I. I feel that was all successful.

JRW:

Cultural competency. Training in cultural competency.

SH:

Oh yeah, I mean everything... we were sure that we had Spanish for everything that we put out there. Wasn't just in English.

JRW:

Right. Well, that and you have a small town.

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

You know. And it's Hispanic.

SH:

It's all Hispanic. Yeah, it's kind of a, you know, question more that I think mainly is for... even though we had to put it in the grants because that's what it required, I think it's more focused on towns that have all these different cultures, right?

JRW:

Right, well, I mean. You could have a disconnect between an agency and their own population because these agencies, they're all thinking, you know, like 50% Hispanic, 20% black .. no not in Parlier. It's 98% Hispanic and there is... there are cultural issues that arise from that and in the domestic violence thing where you have a very patriarchal family structures sometimes could impact that. So do you want to talk about that at all about? The Hispanic culture itself?

SH:

Well, you know that's... that's basically what a lot of our women's conference was addressing. As you know, because of the Hispanic culture, they have a culture... in their culture in Mexico... it's OK to beat your wife. And, so we had to really go in there and make sure we addressed everything in Spanish. We made them feel comfortable about coming in and even speaking to us, so most of their communication with the people out there was in Spanish.

JRW:

Right and you could extend that to they're probably less willing to go to the police.

SH:

Yeah,

JRW:

There's probably a lot more family shame in mentioning these things. They're probably more dependent on their husbands for or boyfriends for financial...

SH:

For financial and you know, and they don't know what they can do. They don't know that their services out there to help them.

JRW:

Right

SH:

They don't know.

JRW:

Okay. Peace over Violence model.

SH:

So the peace over violence model that we used is basically what Mike did. With making sure that there's... that we just whenever there's some kind of a violence thing that happened, he'd go out there and blanket the whole neighborhood and make sure that they, instead of them saying "I can't go outside because of all the violence" that they say. "You know what? Screw that. This is our neighborhood. We're taking our neighborhood back" and staying with the domestic violence. That's mainly focused on domestic violence and that's what the domestic violence advocate did. So, we made sure that we had her out there talking to every single victim.

JRW:

Right.

SH:

Every single victim. And making sure they know that they need to... that there is a world where there's peace instead of violence.

JRW:

Yeah, it just seemed that king thing that came out of the Rittenhouse trials. Was the willingness of, especially people on the left, of overlooking domestic violence who is convenient for them. Because of people that he shot, that Rittenhouse shot, couple of them had extensive domestic violence criminal pasts. It was amazing because those who wanted Kyle Rittenhouse convicted were basically saying "That's that's not that big a deal." I mean, these are the same people who would normally have been leading the March against this kind of crap. But they were more than happy to overlook it when the when it was politically convenient. That was really kind of sad. You know, it's like. You know well, yeah, OK, maybe he is a repeat offender domestic violence abuser. But you know, that doesn't make him a bad guy. Then I saw that expressed many times. It's just crazy. So where are your principles? You know that kind of thing. Of developmental assets, you know the protective factors, we worked with that a lot. Everything you want to talk about is in terms of the 40 developmental assets and all that stuff?

SH:

So that's what's included with the PBIS. And that's where this this school district was involved, and so they are really pushing that PBIS. And the gal that you'll be talking to Lydia... that's basically her purview at the school and that's what she worked.

JRW:

Do I know her? Lydia sounds familiar.

SH:

Yeah you do. You do know her. Lydia Martinez.

JRW:

Yeah but they've been doing PBIS for a long time out there. In fact, it was a kind of a cornerstone 10 years ago,

SH:

Yeah, and it still is and they're still growing strong on that. It's probably one of the only things they do well.

JRW:

Yeah, I will have to talk to her about it. Where was she... in what capacity was she serving before?

SH:

She basically was the one that worked with the youth. Troubled youth. That's always been her job... since we've known her. Now, she's an administrator.

JRW:

At the at the high school or?

SH:

At that District. District administrator.

JRW:

What, in what capacity was she doing?

SH:

I'm wondering what her title is because...

JRW:

Well, it's OK. It's not that important...

SH:

The school district has a lot of administrators.

JRW:

I'm trying to think of the head person in that in that.. when we were there. What was his name? I forget it.

SH:

[undiscernible]?

JRW:

That doesn't ring a bell.

SH:

What was his name?

JRW:

Boy, I can't think of it. Well, let's just go ahead and move on. Mobilizing the CTCV community to fight back against violence.

SH:

So that's basically what Mike did.

JRW:

Right, yeah.

SH:

Yeah, with the neighborhood parties, the rallies that he would do in the neighborhood. He'd go out there with all his folks and he'd start to pull up with his big truck and food boxes and people would come out of their houses to go and get food. He just gave away food.

JRW:

Yeah.

SH:

And with the message of peace and let's take her neighborhood back in.

JRW:

What happened to the Hope Boyz and Hope Girlz?

SH:

That's it, that was him... the Hope Coalition.

JRW:

Oh, OK, I didn't know that. So, is Pastor Mohorko involved in this grant?

SH:

So Pastor Mohorko is not involved in the grant, but he basically is the one that got all these people started years ago. And then [undiscernible] passed it on down. But yeah, it's Hope Coalition and this guy was fabulous. He'd just come into a neighborhood and start passing out food. At Christmas time, he always made sure we had toys.

JRW:

Right.

SH:

And we had a great event. You know, he has always had his volunteers ready to go.

JRW:

OK, so we got three more questions here and these are summaries. What do you think is missing from the CalVIP project? Is there a hole somewhere in there?

SH:

Well, Since I became city manager, I think the hole has been... I don't want to say that. (laughing)

JRW:

OK. (laughing)

SH:

The hole has been the leadership of it, now. You know because I was always the one that made sure that everything was together and that we were doing something.

JRW:

Well, okay I'm a little confused on this. Are you saying that you're in a capacity where you wish that somebody else was doing this job or what am I missing here?

SH:

No, I wish that...

JRW:

Keep in mind before we [undiscernible] you can opt out of any question, so you can always say I'd rather pass on this.

SH:

Well, but you know what I'm going to pass on this question.

JRW:

Okay. Has involvement in CalVIP increased your interest in future similar projects?

SH:

So yes, and that was to really put a focus on human trafficking.

JRW:

Right.

SH:

And that's what our CalVIP that we had... we didn't have as much of a focus on human trafficking in that CalVIP, which is why we put that focus on the next CalVIP.

JRW:

When you say the next CalVIP... you're talking about the one that's going to be opening here real soon now?

SH:

No, the one that we're doing right now.

JRW:

OK. So, I've always gotten confused here because this evaluation is for the...

SH:

This is for CalVIP 2. Right now we're running CalVIP 3 and you did the LEP for CalVIP 3. Remember?

JRW:

Right. Well, I've done them all but the question I have is the human trafficking and you're talking about... those services are pegging for CalVIP 3.

SH:

The services came from CalVIP... you know that's we were doing CalVIP 2 we realized that a lot of the victims out there weren't being trafficked. And so that's what prompted us to say we're missing this from our current CalVIP, so that's reason why we put it in our new CalVIP.

JRW:

CalVIP 3?

SH:

Yeah,

JRW:

Got it OK. 'cause I wasn't aware of whether you were planning this for like another CalVIP, like CalVIP 4 down the road. So CalVIP 3, you do have a heavy emphasis on human trafficking.

SH:

Yes.

JRW:

OK. I think I'm gonna take out the last question. ? And the question I can tell you with the question is, are you aware of any clients, colleagues that have expressed opinions you want to share. But it's hearsay and I don't think that that really helps. I did ask the first person that and after asking the question, I realized "this is hearsay." I don't really want to ask, so I think we're done

SH:

OK. I think it's important to put in the evaluation that as soon as we started working the grant and the soonest that the police were out there working with the community, passing out cards for. Domestic violence and just using their there. I don't know, just having building that trust within the community, we noticed that our domestic violence calls went up.

JRW:

OK.

SH:

And the only thing that I could think and I and this is basically what the ladies did tell me, though the reason why it went up, it's because they finally felt like, oh, that there's something that can be done.

JRW:

Yeah, absolutely, and I'll tell you it kind of an example of this. Come there is a sheriff in Florida named Grady Judd. And the left hates him. The right loves him. I have never seen a guy give press conferences like this sheriff. He gets up there... I don't know if I ever showed you one of his videos; it's all over YouTube. He

picks up the pictures of the people he's picked up for crimes and he puts him out there and he tells the story about what this person did. What's happened though, in that in that community that county is people now report crimes. Because they feel like, well, this guy will do something about it and like as a perfect example on the other extreme, is San Francisco. They've been saying, "Oh, the number reported deaths has actually dropped."

SH:

I know.

JRW:

Nobody's reporting them anymore because they don't think you're gonna do anything about it,

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

Right, and so the fact that you're getting more reports of the crash. This face it, nothing has necessarily increased the number one COVID, but nothing is going to like dramatically increased the number of domestic violence incidents. If you're getting a higher reporting, it's because people are more comfortable telling you about it.

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

And that that is so often overlooked by the mainstream media, right? Like, well, we've had lower instances of theft? No, you haven't. People keep getting your stuff stolen. They just don't think anybody is going to come and help him get it back.

SH:

Yeah.

JRW:

(Off-topic conversation about law and order omitted.)

Conversation ends

Interview

Interviewer: John R Walkup (JRW)

Interviewee: Susan Bechara (SB), Director, Comprehensive Behavioral Services

8:31 pm PST, December 14, 2021

[Personal introductory talk omitted]

JRW:

So let me go ahead and go over the preliminaries. And of course, this is about the evaluation for the CalVIP grant. And it is due real soon, so that's the reason why the urgency.

SB:

Oh, OK. I see. I see. I didn't know that. OK, go ahead.

JRW:

OK, so for one this interview is being recorded only with your consent, so if you don't want it recorded, you gotta tell me now.

SB:

OK.

JRW:

And I will not share the recordings with anyone else with one exception, and that is the actual grantor, the BSCC. They may demand it, and if they demand it I have to give it to them. But I'm not going to give it to them unless they actually demand it.

SB:

OK.

JRW:

So, nobody else will actually be able to hear the recording.

OK.

JRW:

The program standards of the American Evaluation Association are guiding this evaluation. So, I'm following those.

SB:

OK.

JRW:

OK, if you want a response removed for the report let me know and I can remove it. Sonia has my email address. She can give it to you and you can simply email me. For example, you might mention something about somebody and you really want to take it back. I don't want to put anything in the grant report that's going to cause real hard feelings among people.

SB:

OK.

JRW:

And the questions themselves are guided by the formal evaluation plan that I developed and submitted to the grantor.

SB:

OK.

JRW:

As part of the formative process, I will summarize to the project manager, that is Sonia Hall any suggestions that I gleaned from the interview that can help her improve future CalVIP projects? So, if there's something that comes out and, you know, like, I think that she needs to know because the next CalVIP would be better, I will tell her.

SB:

OK.

JRW:

Interview questions are trimmed to take into account cultural, political sensitivities. In other words, there are questions that I probably should ask, but I'm not going to because it's a small town and I know that Parlier is pretty political. I've been working with the city for a long time, so I kind of want to make sure that. This goes through without causing any real issues. I understand that this interview sole purpose is to provide data for the evaluation. That's the only thing it's for.

SB:

OK.

JRW:

Transparency... I need to disclose that Sonia Hall and I have been pretty good friends for about 10 years. And that we have been business colleagues before, but we haven't actually coalesced on any business projects for at least a couple of years now. I cannot identify... let me try that again... I cannot possibly de-identify you in the report, which means that because there's so few people involved and it's such a small town, it's going to be pretty clear that you were the one that I was talking to.

SB:

I understand.

JRW:

Answers should be open ended, so I will ask you a question and I encourage you just to talk as much as you want about what comes to mind.

OK.

JRW:

For each prompt, please feel free to discuss impact by COVID.

OK,

JRW:

With that said, are you willing to conduct the interview?

SB:

Sure, OK.

JRW:

OK, you're free to opt out at any time, so if you just really don't want to continue the interview you can just simply say we're done and that will be the end of it.

SB:

OK, so let me ask... can I ask questions.

JRW:

Sure, sure.

SB:

OK, what is... why is it important for me to be the one responding to this evaluation? Is it because of the continuation of the grant for next... about the next three years again, or what? What is the purpose of the evaluation right now? I know it's a requirement, right?

JRW:

This is a requirement for the existing grant and this is the end of the grant evaluation report, so part of that is to interview people that were involved in the project to get their reflections on how well the project, you know, succeeded.

SB:

Yeah, that would be easy for me. Yes, because technically I'm... I'm the one doing everything right now, OK?

JRW:

Good deal. If you want to respond, go ahead.

SB:

I... I can only speak about what our organization is doing, absolutely yeah, and that's all you need to. OK, OK, it is special, yeah. Understand a person I I don't do that, I just get to the fence. Yeah I'm a straight shooter and I just tell you my outcome and my challenges. That's what I'm going to talk about right OK?

JRW:

First question, qualitatively speaking, how is your agency been able to expand grant funding on schedule?

SB:

To expend the grant funding on schedule?

JRW:
Right.

SB:
Can you explain that to me again without really means? Is it from the funds that we have right now or are we talking about the matching funds or the expansion of the grant?

JRW:
No, the funds that were given to you by the grant. Have you been able to receive them on time and spend them on time?

SB:
Yes.

JRW:
OK, qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to serve the targeted population?

SB:
Oh, to serve the target population... I think it is great, but I think if we have more funds we could hire even more people to be more effective with the target... Mostly exactly how the grant was written to... "How would you like to not to eliminate, but to actually put a dent in the violence that is going on at the school?" And also in the community, because my agency has been doing it for the last 34 years,

JRW:
Right.

SB:
And so as we were able to operate the first nine years, even without any funds, because we are very dedicated people and so with the grant money that was given to us this year, with the help of the City, we were able to be more effective in addressing those issues.

JRW:
OK, thank you. How has your agency been able to meet challenges and overcome them?

SB:
Well, because of the expertise and the experience of our [undiscernible], and because of my connection and working very closely with the Department of Probation and Police Department, so we have a three-pronged approach. We had intervention and prevention approach and also a suppression approach. And my model of my program is very strictly on accountability, responsibility, and consequences, and that has been very effective so that when we address those clients that we have... that we're targeting that population... they pretty much are already aware on how we conduct our business. So, it wasn't anything new for us and all my staff are well trained so it's really nothing new. It's just helps us with this grant to actually execute it more effectively.

JRW:
OK, thank you. #5, how has your agency been able to maintain quality in your services?

SB:

Maintaining quality is our integrity. Making sure that services are provided accurately and we also make sure that the [undiscernible], because when we handle the caseloads we have three prongs also. The papers are being handled as soon as the clients come in, we process them within 72 hours, and we make contacts and the services will be provided immediately. Within the 72 hours period.

JRW:

OK, thank you. In our estimation, how have the following been carried out? Grant funded trainings... have you participated in grant funded trainings or have you delivered any?

SB:

The training for me, would you mean the training that I provide in the grant?

JRW:

Yes, training.

SB:

I'm a trainer.

JRW:

Right, OK, can you talk about that?

SB:

Oh yes, uh technically, I've been providing training throughout the community. I have provided a mental health first aid training. I provided [undiscernible] on what gangs are all about and we're gonna be actually be more actively involved in that. We haven't really intensively done a formal training yet, but that's one of the things that we're working on right now immediately on gang redirection, training and awareness of gangs, and also behaviors that triggers these children. Why they behave the way they do. But as for myself, I've been doing training for my staff. All the time, every month.

JRW:

OK, thank you, uh, number seven. How have you been able to carry out community outreach?

SB:

All we've done a lot of the community outreach. Also depending on on the different types of outreach effort, you know, food delivery, like you know like. Giving out to the to the people that needs food that is very basic kind of thing, but we have a very involved with the with the Police Department doing all these neighborhood block party and then we will very involved in. We've been involved with the Red Ribbon week for anti-drugs and we've been involved with... doing also outreaches to the schools every month. To provide information on the kids about drugs and about violence. And we provide it in a very unique way. It's not just about training and preaching and talking. We bring in people who've been there and done that. You know, that's actually been through it a lot. So. it's a lot of testimonial, kind of information that we provide. And because we're pretty connected because we've been very connected in the street. So, a lot of the clientele that we work with, they already know who we are. [This] is nothing new so we were able to be very effective in those outreaches and stop the violence before it actually started. I wouldn't be doing this if not for 34 years. That's why we know with the funds. But now with the funds being here, it makes us even stronger than ever because without the funds we struggle. But [we would still do it] because we believe in keeping the community [safe]. We believe that we need to have a proactive approach rather than just

suppression... suppression. We need everything. That's why I use my intervention-to-prevent rather than prevention-intervention. It's intervention to prevent these young people, and the people we work with, intervene to prevent them from being caught with the drugs and the violence... intervene to prevent them from going to jail, intervene to prevent them from getting killed. So, that's why the word "intervention" comes first before "prevention" in our model. So, with my accountability response [undiscernible] the model is to hold every person accountable. And to be able to be responsible... to fix the problem on their own and giving them the tools and the skills to do that, and the consequences of it if they don't do it. So, it's a very simple model and this model has been around since 1994 when I put it together. So, to me it's just executing it with the right people that are not afraid and the right approach. So, it's very radical approach, but it's effective because if we're talking about CalVIP, that's exactly what it is. We gotta be out there, you know. We can't be doing things in the office. We can't do that. We have to do a lot of outreach.

JRW:

OK, thank you #9. In your estimation, what is your biggest accomplishment in serving your target audience? Do you have any good stories that you would like to tell?

SB:

Of course, [undiscernible]. One of the main things is that a lot of our plan tells that have completed our program because of the way we are. We run our program. [undiscernible] First, when they are referred to us, we mentor them and then if we find that there's risk factors that need to be addressed. Every one of our clients have to stay within the program at least three months. And they have to follow the protocol. They get drug tested. And then a lot of them have turned their life around by being involved in sports now and actually playing in sports. We monitor their grades, their attendance every single week on all of those case notes that we have. So, it's very structured program. We don't just talk to them, we don't just, you know, play games with them, but we actually have them on our caseloads and those caseloads are very much for making sure the family is involved. We also make sure attendance at school [undiscernible] is involved with drug testing them and we work very closely with the school district. We work very closely with the Police Department making sure that in order for that client to complete our program, they have to have good attendance, they have to make sure that they're drug free. And that the school performance has improved. And I have graduated many of them. But because of the way we structure it is not something that we do, like, monthly because all of these students come in at different times. So, as soon as they complete the three-month program, we evaluate them and we also have after-care relapse intervention program. So, I would say this... my success rate is at least 78 to 80% and recidivism is very low. Oh, because we monitor them, they get jobs. They are in school. Their grades are good. I had one young man who hasn't been in school almost the whole middle school year. And ever since we got him back in the school, he has been playing football. He's been involved in football and his school grades has completely went up. And I have another young man who asked [undiscernible] a lot and now he's actually completed the whole program. He's going to get... he's getting off probation and he's also working. So, there's a lot of stories I can tell you. Different stories, many of them.

JRW:

OK, good thank you. What about social media campaigns? Have you engaged in any? When I talk about social media...

SB:

Of course.

JRW:

... I mean online like Facebook, Twitter.

SB:

Yeah, we put it out there on Facebook and everything. Every time we have events and outreach we do put it out there. And we also show, you know, kids who are graduating and stuff like that. We do put it out there. OK, [undiscernible] stopping the violence and stuff like that. We just currently... just did an event like that last Saturday and it had a beautiful turnout then. You know, we attract the audience based on... the culture right now. Like, a lot of times they come. There's a lot of rap song that is very negative, but we turn that around with the kind of music they like but the words are different. So, it's all testimonial.

JRW:

I see. OK...

SB:

We actually even done yet. I mean we have a lot to do right now before Christmas were going out to every school. To do that, we've been out in the middle school and high school and the continuation. And we actually had it all planned out until the end of the school year. To go back there and do the, you know, those testimonial performances and stuff.

JRW:

OK, thank you. How would you characterize your agency's involvement? Success with and I'm just going to give you the names of these. They may not ring a bell if they don't, you can just simply say I'm not familiar and I'll move on to the next one. OK, start strong building healthy teen relationships model.

SB:

Is that an agency?

JRW:

Well, that's OK. It's an actual program, but if you're not familiar with it, I'll move on to the next one. OK, a cultural competency training and cultural competency.

SB:

Well, I do that all the time. I don't know if you're talking about agency, but most of these things I do with myself, yes.

JRW:

That'll be fine. I mean, you are part of the agency.

SB:

OK, yes I do that.

JRW:

OK, peace over violence model. Oh all the time, yes. \

JRW:

OK, how would you characterize your involvement with that?

SB:

Very much. That's actually our message all the time. It's our mission statement.

JRW:

I see. OK, Sexual Assault Response Team, Domestic Violence Response Team.

SB:

Well, I'm involved in that too because I I'm actually a certified domestic violence counselor, so I'm very involved in that... very familiar with that.

JRW:

OK, this next one you're probably not familiar with, but I'll put it out anyway. Developmental assets, protective factors.

SB:

That's, typically access to work...

JRW:

No, it's a K-12... basically, character development type of thing. Or the K-12 development [undiscernible] It's called developmental assets.

SB:

No, not developmental assets, but I do know something similar to that from for the K-12, you know, but no, not really.

JRW:

OK, mobilizing the community to fight back against violence.

SB:

Yes, we do participate in that. Like when we do block parties and everything else we can reach out to the community to get them involved. Yes.

JRW:

OK. And these next couple of questions are summaries.

SB:

OK, just to add to that one too, we help out with the continuation school and they received an award for that. You know, like a model school for continuation. We were a part of that partnership.

JRW:

OK, it... was it blue ribbon school?

SB:

Yes.

JRW:

OK. What do you think is missing from the CalVIP project? Is there something there that you think "Gosh, I really wish we had this with the COVID... say, with the CalVIP grant"?

SB:

I'm still feeling like it's not so much missing that we haven't really addressed it as much. I would say parent involvement in the CalVIP needs to be addressed because in a small community like that, you have to look at the dynamics of it. I've done this kind of program and intervention for 34 years. One thing that's always missing... if we want to hold these kids accountable it basically starts from the home and it's missing. We're not making it mandatory for parents to get involved.

JRW:

OK.

SB:

It's all voluntary. And to me, when we can hit the parents... and you know what it's missing. Honestly, we need to be more holding parents accountable through the child welfare and attendance and the school needs to get more involved in actually executing the rules and regulations about attendance because that would be very helpful. In order... in other words, there has to be a part in the CalVIP that will hold parents accountable. Somehow, I don't know how to explain it, but to get them more involved, you know what I'm saying.

JRW:

I see what you mean.

SB:

Yeah, yeah... it has to start from the home because a lot of times we felt that once we get the kids and parents are not involved... it's almost like a voluntary thing. So, somehow in the accountability we need to make sure that the parents understand that once that child is in trouble or something, we're going to hold them accountable. Getting involved some... somewhere in the [undiscernible] that needs to be addressed there, you know.

JRW:

Finally, has involvement in CalVIP increased your interest in future similar projects?

SB:

Definitely

JRW:

OK, I do need to go back over the first question

SB:

... but it's also about teen... teen pregnancy to uhh.. OK, do you want to talk a little bit more about?

[Minor technical problem]

JRW:

OK, I'm sorry, go ahead and repeat what you said.

SB:

Yeah, what I'm saying is that we need to talk about more healthy type of relationship... healthy relationships that involves sex you know, and pregnancy and all that with teens because we covered that part [undiscernible]. Relationships... healthy relationship that would be put up. I know you said domestic violence, but it doesn't always

have to be... everything is domestic violence. We need to address about healthy relationship with our clients, you know.

JRW:

OK, I do need to ask you the first question again because I had a glitch on the recording here, so I'm going to go back to it... OK, so this is question number one. Again, qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to fill grant funded positions?

SB:

The CalVIP grant has helped us filled out some of the void that we weren't able to do in some of the areas like outreach and mentoring into the schools... into the homes... That has helped us to fill in the, you know, fill in the void in those areas.

JRW:

OK, and can I ask you again just in case I didn't get the recording... I think you said for number 2 — expend grant funding on schedule — that there were no problems.

SB:

There's not really any problems on that...

JRW:

I would like you to go back over #3 again just in case. Qualitatively speaking, how has your agency been able to serve the targeted population?

SB:

Oh, you want me to respond to that again?

JRW:

Yeah, can you please? I appreciate it.

SB:

Yes, definitely, because number one. Our agency has a history of 30s over park over 30 years, providing specifically the targeted population in the CalVIP Grant. So it is nothing new for us, but because of the grant we were able to actually actually execute it more effectively. In in, in the areas where we need to address and so that has been very, very helpful. Yes, we we are able to actually address it more effectively. And it's also because it's a smaller town. So because of the number of years we've been involved in their community. Prior to the grant, we have what we call the connection on the streets. Al among the population that we're trying to serve, that's definitely true. So it has helped alot.

JRW:

OK, well, thank you so much. I appreciate it. Are you from Parlier?

SB:

I'm actually not from Parlier, but I have been in Parlier for almost 10 years because of the needs to address some of the violence and some of the gang violence and the problems... behavior problems because I work with probation very, very closely. For the last 28 years or so, when we when... we went to Parlier almost ten years ago, we were there to provide services to those clients that are on probation in Parlier. So that's why we have a good history over there and then the City has been very helpful in providing us the facility. So, when the grant came out with the

CalVIP they technically got me involved in it because they know that it's not a new program... we've been around. We have a very good reputation with law enforcement and also with probation and with the Community and that is why we were able to be there now... and more effectively because of the grant.

JRW:

OK, I really appreciate you calling me and doing this on such short notice.

SB:

No, because it's... it's easy for me because we are actually doing it. That's why. It's not something I have to plan it out and say the right thing. And I'm comfortable saying it because we're actually doing it as we are sitting here and talking. Actually, to be honest with you, we stopped a lot of the violence and the shooting just recently... within the last three. At 2-3 weeks, because we were able to collect guns because we had such a good rapport with the kids and the clientele we serve. They would talk to us before anything happened. So, we were able to actually help out, too. To make sure that no one gets hurt. Of course, we can't do it in every case, but we did make a dent. You know, before the violence happened, that's what it's all about, you know, so we have to build that rapport. So, a lot of time. With the kind of work we do, the real stuff that we do is not something to look beautiful. We have to pretty much worked undercover in some ways. You know to make sure that the people in the street knows that we're not snitching on them, but they know they need the help and then all the officers are working proactively with us, too. So, we had to take care of it before the violence got out of hand and somebody can get killed, you know, like homicide. So, we were able to do that a lot because it's not something new for us and we're not afraid to do it. And the people that we hire, our people, that's been there and done that. That's what makes the difference. You see. I have people that's been there and done that, so they're not afraid to be out there. I mean, writing a good grant is one thing. Telling about what services we're going to be providing is one thing, but to actually do it like the foot soldiers, that's what we're very good at. And that's why we're very effective. And this grant has helped us to actually be able to do more because it has the money... so I can hire more people to actually do the footwork. It's not somebody who's just out of college doing it... and they study about crime, they study about gangs. No, no. These are people who've lived it and they have made their life turn around. So, we were able to connect with the clients. You know what I'm saying, right? But, that makes a lot of difference. It's a real-life experience kind of approach.

JRW:

Well I appreciate it. You sound very passionate about what you do.

[personal discussion omitted]

SB:

OK, yes, I have been wanting me to be involved for awhile already, but we finally did it this year. Yeah, and I'm not going anywhere. Like I said, you know, I'm very passionate about it. I know what I'm doing. It's... I'm comfortable with it because we know what we're doing. We're not creating a new program, we're not trying a new program. It's actually a program that has been going on. The difference is that now that talent is here, we're just doing it through CalVIP now even more effectively.

JRW:

Right. OK, well, thank you so much. I appreciate it. I'll let you get back to what you were doing.

SB:

Thank you so much. So where do we go from here?

JRW:

Alright, I'm just going to write the report up and you could talk to Sonia about the next steps.

SB:

Sounds good, alright. Thank you.

JRW:

Thank you.