



CRIMINAL JUSTICE CLEARINGHOUSE EVALUATION

CalVIP Cohort II CMM Final Evaluation Report

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Research findings from the Criminal Justice Clearinghouse



Executive Summary

In response to the disproportionate rate of crime in National City, San Diego County's geographically smallest and oldest city, public and private stakeholders met in the winter of 2017 to partner on a California Board of State and Community and Corrections (BSCC) CalVIP proposal. Implemented by two non-profit organizations, South Bay Community Services (SBCS) and San Diego Youth Development Foundation (SDYDF), the CalVIP grant provided funding to address a gap in services in National City and provide evidence-based programming to youth ages 12 to 24 residing in the city. To document how the program was implemented and to what effect, an outside evaluator, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), conducted a process and outcome evaluation. The program period for this report was September 2018 to December 2020.

Background and Purpose

In late 2018, to support the youth and families living in National City, SBCS chose to implement the evidence-based program, Credible Messenger Mentoring (CMM), coupled with another evidence-based cognitive-based strategy, Interactive Journaling, to help guide youth toward making positive changes in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Additionally, to increase the connection with the community and build the capacity of smaller non-profits, SBCS subcontracted the SDYDF, a small, grassroots organization already providing mentoring in the community to provide additional services and begin using the CMM model. By merging these two evidence-based programs, CMM was designed to accomplish two goals:

Goal 1: Launch and maintain CMM for at- or high-risk youth aged 12-24

Goal 2: Increase long-term positive outcomes for youth and young adults

Program Components

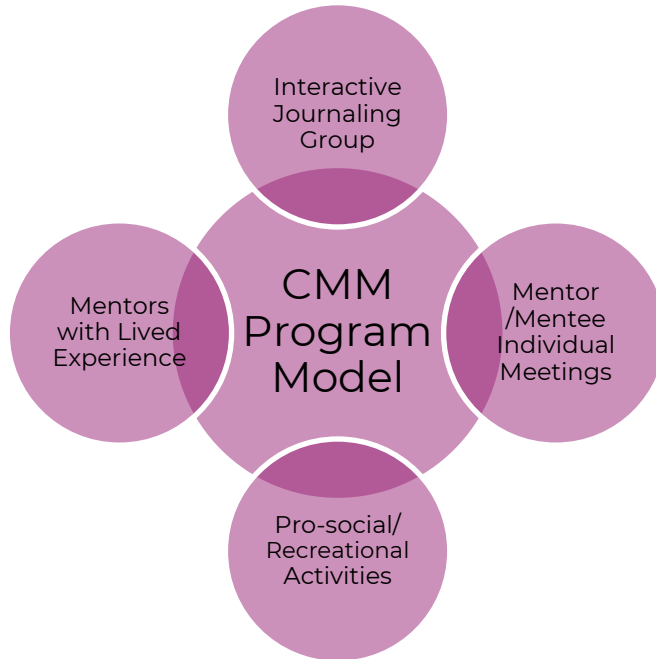
The program was comprised of four core components: recruitment of mentors with lived experience, open groups that met for approximately 60-90 minutes weekly and were facilitated by mentors using the Forward-Thinking Interactive Journaling curriculum,

CMM Core Program Components

1. Combination of two evidence-based practices: Credible Messenger Mentors and Interactive Journaling (a cognitive-based, trauma informed curriculum).
2. Weekly groups for mentees facilitated by mentors.
 - Mentors used Interactive Journaling at least twice a month to facilitate meetings
3. One-on-one meetings between mentor and mentee, utilizing a Life Plan (individual goals).
4. Pro-social activities including civic engagement, recreation, and sport activities.

bi-monthly individual mentor/mentee sessions, and group outings and pro-social activities (Figure ES1).

Figure ES1: CMM Program Model



Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

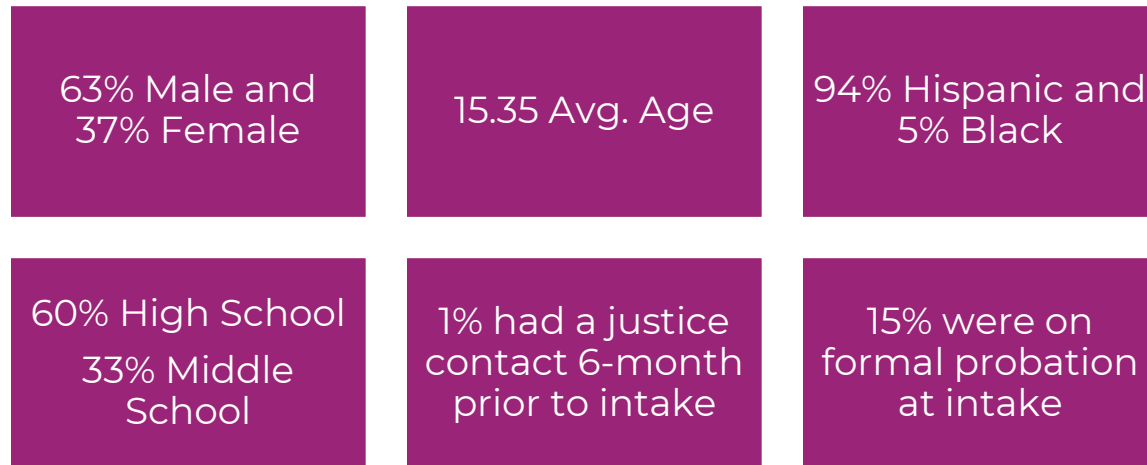
Program Accomplishments

CMM not only met its intended goals and objectives, but it also exceeded them. Specifically, CMM served more mentees, recruited more mentors, and successfully graduated a larger proportion of mentee than planned.

Accomplishment 1: *CMM served 174 youth exceeding the objective of 160 youth (80 youth per year).*

CMM mentees were recruited from local schools, National City Family Resource Center (NC-FRC), Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS), justice providers, and a community recreational center. Despite the California COVID-19 stay-home order which eliminated the primary referral sources due to shifts to virtual learning, CMM served a total of 174 youth. Mentees were mostly Hispanic and male, with slightly less than two thirds in high school and one-third in middle school. Almost all (99%) did not have an arrest within the six-months preceding CMM enrollment. However, 22% did have some prior or current contact with Probation, with 15% currently on formal probation supervision (i.e., 602 wards) at time of intake (Figure ES2).

Figure ES2: CMM Mentee Characteristics at Intake



Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

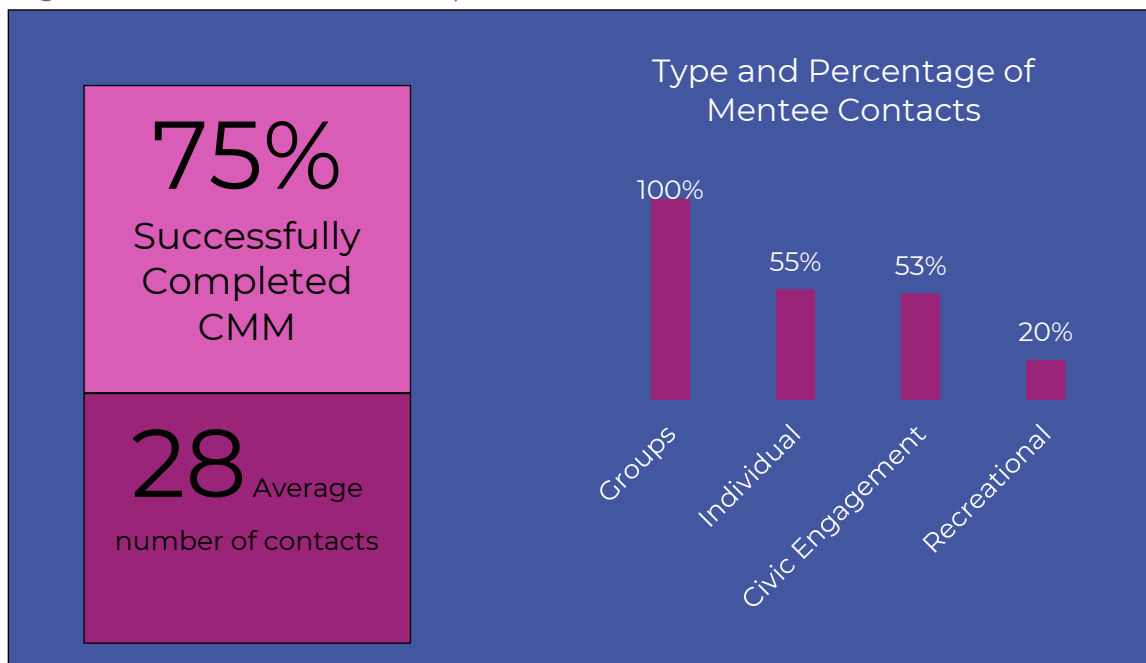
Accomplishment 2: *CMM recruited 15 mentors who received certificates in Credible Messenger Mentoring and Interactive Journaling*

The original program objective was to recruit a total of four mentors. However, SDYF's relationship and trust in the community attracted more interest, with a total of 15 individuals completing both of the mandated certificate trainings and participating in CMM. Mentors were required to complete two trainings: one for Credible Messenger Mentoring, which was completed through a local university, and another on the evidence-based Interactive Journaling curriculum.

Accomplishment 3: *CMM exceeded its goal of 70% of mentees successfully graduating the program by having 75% successfully graduate*

To graduate the program successfully a mentee had to complete at least 21 program activities. Of the 174 mentees, 75% met this requirement, exceeding the 70% objective. Overall, youth had on average 28.25 (SD= 14.24) contacts, spread across the four contact points: groups, individual meetings between mentor and mentee, civic engagement (e.g., community services), and recreational/sports activities (Figure ES3).

Figure ES3: CMM Mentee Completion Status and Contacts



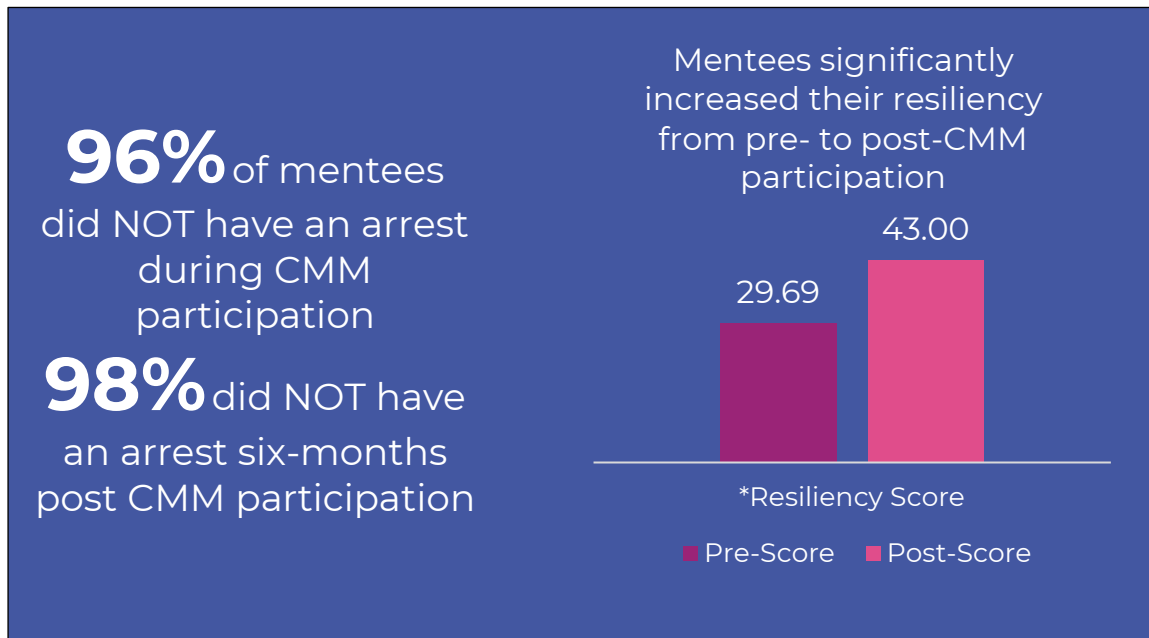
Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

Accomplishment 4: *CMM mentees significantly increased their resiliency factors after participation and almost all remained crime free during and post-CMM participation*

One measure to determine if CMM reached its goal of improving long-term outcomes for participants, was based on the San Diego Risk and Resiliency Checklist (SDRRC) assessment that each mentee completed with a mentor at program intake and exit. The SDRRC consists of 60 domains rating the risk to recidivate (e.g., delinquent peers, truancy) and protective factors (e.g., positive adult, prosocial activities). The combination of these scores provides a total resiliency score, with positive change indicated by a higher resiliency score. Overall, CMM mentees significantly increased their resiliency score following participation, with almost all (99%) who successfully completed CMM having an increased score.

An additional measure was the tracking of future contact with law enforcement (i.e., new arrest), either during and/or six-months post-program participation. Over nine out of 10 youth remained crime free, as measured by a new arrest either during or six-months following CMM participation (Figure ES4). Of the nine youth arrested, all but one was under probation supervision at time of intake. Of those youth who successfully completed CMM, 98% did not have an arrest during program participation or six-months following.

Figure ES4: CMM Mentee Outcomes



Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021



Project Description

In late 2017, public and private stakeholders, in response to the disproportionate rate of crime in National City, San Diego County's geographically smallest and oldest cities, met to partner on a California's Board of State and Community and Corrections (BSCC) CalVIP proposal. The partners included San Diego County Probation Department, Health and Human Services Agency, National City Police Department (NCPD), the Children's Initiative, and South Bay Community Services (SBCS). The partners shared the same concern and goal to improve supports for youth and young adults residing in National City. A gap analysis by the partners revealed that despite a continuum of prevention and intervention services, there was a lack of evidence-based mentoring services in the area to help redirect youth from crime and possible gang involvement. From this concern and the opportunity presented by BSCC, SBCS assumed the administrative lead and applied for and was awarded a Cohort II CalVIP grant. The grant period was originally from September 1, 2018 – August 31, 2020, however a no-cost extension was received extending the grant period to December 2021. The following evaluation report addresses the process and outcome research questions outlined in the original Local Evaluation Plan (LEP), detailing the program implementation and achievements.

Background and Purpose

National City, the second oldest city in San Diego County, is located in the south bay region, just ten miles from the United States-Mexico Border. It is the smallest geographic city in the region, covering just 7.3 square miles, with a 2020 estimated population of 61,394. National City is more diverse compared to the overall San Diego region (64% Hispanic versus 34% for the region, 19% Asian versus 13% for the region) and 18% of National City's population is living in poverty. In respect to crime, National City had the highest property (18.62 per resident compared 14.77 for the region) and violent crime rate (5.63 per resident compared to 3.44 for the region) in the San Diego region in 2020 (the most recent data available; SANDAG, 2021 Estimates).

National City residents, while invested in their community, are dealing with several neighborhood factors (e.g., concentration of poverty, poor health outcomes, high crime rates, racial segregation) that place their youth at risk of victimization and/or involvement in crime. National City is and has been committed to tackling the challenges to move the health and prosperity of its residents toward positive outcomes. Its recent award of the Culture of Health Prize from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for advancing health, opportunity, and equity in 2021 demonstrates this commitment. Consistent with these efforts, the CalVIP grant strengthened existing services by providing evidence-based mentoring to youth ages 12 to 24 living in the community. The target population were

youth who may be disconnected from positive supports, are gang-involved, are at-risk for criminal justice involvement and/or recidivism, and/or have high-needs for social services.

To support the youth and families living in National City, SBCS chose to implement the evidence-based program, Credible Messenger Mentoring (CMM) along with additional supports. CMM was selected based on its positive outcomes, its roots in the community, and the need for mentoring in the continuum of services in the area. Additionally, CMM was coupled with another best practice, cognitive-based strategy, Interactive Journaling, to help guide youth toward making positive changes through their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Furthermore, to increase the connection with the community and build the capacity of smaller non-profits, SBCS subcontracted with San Diego Youth Development Foundation (SDYDF). SDYDF is a small, grassroots organization that was already providing mentoring in the community, albeit not using the CMM model. SBCS was actively involved throughout the project by meeting at-least monthly with SDYDF to train staff on the model, participating in the Train-the-Trainers Interactive Journaling, ensuring all grant and evaluation requirements were met, establishing portals for mentee referrals, and helping build the capacity of SDYDF to monitor program progress and fidelity by using the electronic case management information system - Efforts to Outcomes (ETO). Furthermore, SBCS supervisors provided supervision for SDYDF to support their growth and adherence to the CMM model.

CalVIP Project Goals and Design

The CMM program was guided by two goals and several objectives. As detailed in this evaluation report, the goals and objectives were met and exceeded in some instances. Below are the goals and objectives, along with a detailed description of the program design and components that were used to accomplish them.

Goal 1: Launch and maintain CMM for high-risk youth aged 12-24

Objective 1: Recruit and train at least four Credible Messenger Mentors in the first six months of implementation

Objective 2: Recruit 80 mentee participants per year

Objective 3: Provide group mentoring for eight, six-month cohorts per year, with 10 youth participating in each

Objective 4: Deliver CMM and Interactive Journaling models to fidelity

Objective 5: Ensure 70 percent of mentees successfully graduate (measured by participating in 21 sessions or program activities)

Goal 2: Increase long-term positive outcomes for youth and young adults

Objective 6: 85% of mentees who successfully complete CMM (i.e., participate six-months and have at least 21 sessions/contacts) demonstrate increased resiliency, measured by the Risk and Resiliency score at program completion

Objective 7: 95% of mentees who successfully complete CMM will have a meaningful relationship with an adult at program completion

Objective 8: Ensure 85% of mentees who successfully complete CMM will not be re-arrested within six months of leaving the program

Program Components

The program was comprised of four core components; recruitment of mentors with lived experience, weekly group facilitated by mentors either using the Forward-Thinking Interactive Journaling curriculum at least twice a month or another group topic of the mentors choosing, bi-monthly individual mentor/mentee sessions (that often occurred at the time of the group sessions), and recreational group outings and pro-social activities (Figure 1).

Figure 1: CMM Program Model



Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

Mentor training and requirements

Mentoring services were designed to be strength-based, trauma-informed, and culturally competent, with the intent of creating a safe and inclusive space for youth to establish a positive relationship with an adult. The mentors were from the community, with shared lived experience. Mentors were paid a stipend or volunteered, passed a background check, participated in two certification trainings (Mentoring and Interactive Journaling), and attended other relevant professional development trainings.

Originally, CMM planned to utilize the original Credible Messenger training out of New York, for the mentorship training; however, after meeting with the partners, SBCS became aware of a local mentorship training that was offered through Alliant International University. Thus, after examining the costs, logistics (e.g., flying all mentors to NY), and the time constraints (e.g., NY training schedule), SBCS and SDYDF decided it was more sustainable and feasible to have CMM mentors participate in Alliant's *San Diego Community Mentors Certification Training* program. Additionally, this local training involved similar content, but had the benefit of referencing local issues (e.g., local gangs and communities), and involving local leaders. Initially, the training was three days, but it was later divided across eight sessions to be more convenient working mentors. The course provided in-depth training on the value of mentoring, mentoring methods, restorative justice practices, law enforcement relationships, trauma-informed approaches, assessments, community supports, advocacy, and gangs. In February 2019, the first seven CMM mentors attended and received their certification.

The second core training component was the 3-day Train-the-Trainer on Interactive Journaling held in March 2019. The Interactive Journaling curriculum is a goal-directed, client-centered reflective writing process aimed at reducing deviant behavior using cognitive-based strategies. Mentors were trained to guide youth through a process of self-reflection, with the goal of helping the youth modify negative or violent behavior as they progressed through the stages of change outlined in the curriculum (see Figure 2). CMM utilized five different modules from the Interactive Journaling curriculum: Individual Change Plan, Responsible Behavior, What Got Me Here, Handling Difficult Feelings, and Relationships and Communication. The training was provided by The Change Companies – the developers of the Interactive Journaling curriculum. This initial training was attended by five mentors and supervisors from SDYDF and three SBCS supervisors. All eight participants received the certification and corresponding materials to train others in the Interactive Journaling curriculum. Subsequently, the SDYDF trainers instituted a plan to implement weekly trainings starting in April 2019 for all its mentors and SBCS applied their training to conduct fidelity monitoring of the groups facilitated by mentors.

A third training component was the on-going trainings conducted by SBCS through its agency's professional development. These trainings included Trauma-informed Treatment, Confidentiality, Child Abuse Reporting, Home Visitor Safety, and Telehealth Documentation.

Figure 2: Interactive Journaling Key Practices

**The Five Stages of Change:
Transtheoretical Model**

1. *Precontemplation*: Not intending to begin the behavior change in the next six months.
2. *Contemplation*: Intending to begin the behavior change in the next six months.
3. *Preparation*: Intending to begin the behavior change in the next 30 days.
4. *Action*: Practicing the behavior for less than six months.
5. *Maintenance*: Practicing the behavior for at least six months.

Mentee Services/Activities

CMM was designed to engage mentees in six-months of programming, using the evidence-based Interactive Journaling curriculum as the core vehicle to build relationships and affect thinking and negative behaviors. Groups were held weekly, and youth were allowed to attend any of the groups. Mentors were required to use the Interactive Journaling curriculum at least twice a month per group and could use the other weeks to incorporate other group topics as desired. SBCS and SDYDF used their relationships in the community to identify locations to recruit mentees and hold group meetings. Recruitment was done primarily through schools (Sweetwater High School, National City Middle School), school resources (National City School Attendance Review Board [SARB] and National City Family Resource Center [NC FRC]) and juvenile justice partnerships (Juvenile Justice Community and Court Schools [JCCS], Achievement Centers). Once a location and group of mentees were established the cohort would begin meeting, but the groups would remain open to allow for new mentees to join and also graduates to return if they wanted to drop-in. Mentors relied on their training to provide a safe and empowering space for mentees to overcome challenges and make ongoing, positive transformations. Meals were also provided during the in-person meetings.

In addition to group meetings, mentors incorporated recreational outings, sports, civic engagement (e.g., acts of service to give back to the community) and other pro-social activities to the weekly meetings. Furthermore, the mentors met individually with their mentee either at the same time as group meetings or another time each month. These meetings provided one-on-one check-ins and allowed the mentors to review the mentees life plan (e.g., a case plan). The consistent meetings also helped build the relationships between mentees and mentors.

Methodology

Research Design

To assess the project implementation and individual effects, SANDAG conducted a process and outcome evaluation. In October 2018, SANDAG research staff started meeting with project staff to refine the initial evaluation design, including identifying consistent data elements to be collected by all programs, how data elements were collected, in what data system, and how the final CMM implementation protocol aligned with reporting outcomes. This close collaboration between SANDAG and program partners continued throughout the project period, with SANDAG participating in the bi-weekly and subsequently monthly partner meetings. The process evaluation documented how well the model was implemented, including descriptive information on who was served and engaged, and factors correlated to success. The outcome evaluation used a mix-method, quasi-experimental pre/post design to measure change over time among participants. Outcome metrics included tracking recidivism (i.e., arrest) during participation and six-month post-program participation, the development of positive adult relationships, and increased resiliency.

Analysis Plan

Analysis was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. While a randomized control group would provide the most rigorous design, it was not feasible for this project. Therefore, a single-group, pre-test/post-test design (i.e., comparison of measures before and after CMM participation) was employed. Factors related to success, as well as reduction of risks, were compared over time using the appropriate level analysis (e.g., Chi-Square statistics, difference of means tests, and measures of effect size). Analysis for the outcome evaluation consisted of assessing recidivism on variables identified as factors predictive of recidivism (e.g., criminal history, ethnicity, risk and need level, program completion status). This assessment was accomplished using frequency distributions and Chi-Square statistics for nominal measurement (e.g., prior criminal history, education, instant offense, race/ethnicity), and differences of means tests for ratio level data (i.e., age). The analysis began with bivariate comparisons using the statistics previously mentioned. Multivariate analysis (i.e., regression) was planned to isolate factors related to success (e.g., reduced recidivism). However, because of the low number of recidivism events, multivariate analysis was not possible. Process measures provided a detailed description of the mentors and mentees, services received, and perception of services. Below are the process and outcome research questions addressed in this evaluation report.

Process Measures

The process evaluation documented what program components were employed and if CMM was implemented as designed. Data were gathered from multiple sources to describe the population served, the referrals and connection to services, level of attrition, satisfaction with services and implementation, and lessons learned. The process evaluation addressed the following questions:

1. How many mentors were recruited? How many mentors were trained in CMM?
2. How many and what were the characteristics (e.g., demographics, need level, criminal history) of individuals who were offered services and who accepted services? What factors were predictive of engagement?
3. How many cohorts of CMM were completed? What was the level of participation of mentee and mentors for these sessions?
4. Were Interactive Journaling and CMM implemented to fidelity?
5. What factors were related to successful completion of the program (e.g., prior criminal history, services received, treatment dosage)?
6. Was CMM implemented as designed? Were there any changes to the design and if so, what were the changes and what were the reasons for the changes?
7. What lessons were learned from these efforts? What challenges or successes did the project encounter?

Outcome Measures

The outcome measures were individual in nature and focused on how effective the project was and for whom. The outcome evaluation addressed the following questions:

1. Did the program increase resiliency from pre-program to post-program as measured by the San Diego Risk and Resiliency Checklist (SDRRC)?
2. Did the program result in meaningful relationships with adults?
3. Did the program prevent system involvement as measured by arrests during and six-months after the program?

Data Collection and Sources

A detailed description of each of the data sources and how data were collected are described below. During the startup process, great effort was taken to use existing databases whenever possible. Specifically, SBCS's ETO platform was used as the depository for program data and access was given to SDYF to input data. CMM participant demographics, SDRRC data, and treatment data were stored in ETO at SBCS. SANDAG downloaded the data from the system on a regular basis.

Program Screening Form Mentors/Mentees: The referral process for CMM was generated by SBCS. This form tracked the referral process from offer to acceptance to measure the first efforts of engagement for mentors and potential mentees. The form collected individual characteristics of youth engaged in the program. The data was entered into ETO.

San Diego Risk and Resiliency Checklist (SDRRC): To measure increase in resiliency (through increased protective factors and decreased risk factors), a SDRRC was completed with each mentee at intake and then again at exit. The SDRRC, a validated tool, was used by all programs working with Probation and its partners.

Attendance Logs: Attendance at each group for each cohort was tracked by the mentors and uploaded into ETO for analysis.

Exit Survey for Mentee: Once a mentee completed the program, she/he/they received an exit survey to gauge satisfaction with the CMM curriculum, places for improvement, and qualitative information on the relationship with his/her/their mentor. The survey was provided in both English and Spanish.

Crime Databases: Individual-level criminal history data was collected by research staff six-months prior to and up to six-months post-program participation. Level and type of instant offense, as well as prior criminal history was collected by research staff. Data collection included level and type of arrests, bookings, and sustained petitions. The data were gathered from the Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS; i.e.,

arrests) and the San Diego County Probations Case Management System (i.e., bookings, sustained petitions).

Training Documentation: To document efforts made to create a coordinated, cross-sector system of care for this population, the type, date, and number of trainings were tracked in ETO along with how many staff and from which entities attended each training.

Process and Outcome Results

Process Results

Impacts and Modification Due to COVID-19

The following section describes the CMM project results from the period of September 2018 to December 2020. However, as with all programming occurring during March 2020, when the public health guidelines curtailed and limited all in-person interactions, the results must be viewed within the context of the unknown effects these unprecedented times had on the outcomes. More specifically, in March 2020 the California Governor issued a stay-home order and San Diego County aligned its public health guidelines with the State and the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The pandemic effects were far reaching and for CMM the most immediate impacts were as follows:

- The referral sources for cohorts either stopped already planned groups (i.e., Sweetwater High School, National City Middle school, and local recreational centers) or no longer operated (National City School Attendance Review Board [SARB]) once the stay-home orders were put in place;
- Closing of in-person schooling curtailed access of mentors to school staff and therefore potential mentees;
- CMM in-person pro-social events were cancelled;
- Groups were no longer allowed to meet in person; and
- Mentors were not allowed to have in-person meetings with mentees.

Although National City was a community that was disproportionality impacted by COVID-19 and the pandemic limited CMM momentum and outreach, it also made the

Figure 2: Results Highlights

- A total of **174** mentees received services.
- CMM recruited and trained **15** mentors exceeding its goal of 4.
- **75%** of mentees successfully completed the program.
- Over 9 out of 10 mentees remained crime free during (**96%**) and six-months post CMM participation (**98%**).

need for CMM presence more apparent. SBCS and SDYDF quickly adapted to the stay-home order to maintain contact with current participants and adjusted its outreach during this more restrictive environment. These adaptations and modifications included the following:

- Within a month of the stay-home order, groups and mentor/mentee contacts were switched to virtual sessions using a variety of platforms (i.e., Zoom, Go To Teams, iDevices, phones);
- SBCS reached out to its partners (e.g., San Diego Futures Foundation) to provide technology to those participants who did not have the needed electronics to connect (e.g., laptops, Chromebooks);
- SDYDF and SBCS offered referrals to low- or no-cost internet;
- SDYDF leaned on its strong community connections to communicate about the CMM services and reached out to possible new mentees by connecting with the local city recreational center; and
- A no-cost extension was requested and granted by BSCC to provide additional time for CMM to adjust outreach and sources for new mentees.

Overall, as the evaluation results show, despite the COVID-19 setback, CMM recruited more mentors and served more youth than expected.

How many mentors were recruited? How many mentors were trained in CMM?

The crucial element of CMM was the recruitment and training of mentors who not only had lived experience (including prior contact with the juvenile or adult justice system), but were also from the community, reflected the community, and/or were leaders in the community. The objective was to recruit four mentors and this objective was exceeded four-fold, with a total of 15 mentors participating in the program. SDYDF established relationships in the community and existing mentorship experience allowed SDYDF staff to quickly identify and recruit mentors within the first month of startup.

Once a mentor passed the needed background check, she/he/they needed to complete the San Diego Mentors Certification Training and the Interactive Journal training from a certified trainer. A non-certified mentor was still allowed to participate in groups when coupled with a certified mentor while getting his/her/their certification. A total of 21 mentors were recruited with 15 individuals (9 males and 6 females) completing both certification trainings.

How many and what were the characteristics of individuals who were offered services and who accepted services? What factors were predictive of engagement?

Program enrollment and mentee characteristics

Over the course of the grant, 187 mentees were referred to CMM, of which 93% (174 youth) were enrolled. Most mentees were male (63%), and 15.35 years old on average (SD=2.13,

range 12-21). All but 2% were in school at time of enrollment, with 60% in high school, one-third (33%) in middle school, and 4% in elementary. The remaining four youth had a high school degree, some college, or were not in school at the time of intake. Most of the youth identified as Hispanic (94%), 5% as Black, and 1% as multi-racial. Spanish was the primary language of 5%.

Data gathered on prior arrests or juvenile justice system showed that 2 mentees had an arrest, booking into juvenile hall, and/or sustained petition in the six-months preceding CMM intake. However, 22% (39 youth) had been or were currently involved with San Diego County Juvenile Probation, 15% (26 youth) of which were currently on formal probation at intake (i.e., a 602 ward of the court). Furthermore, mentees recruited through the JCCS and Achievement Centers, most likely had prior contact that fell outside of the six-month data collection period (Figure 3).

Figure 3: CMM Mentee Characteristic



Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

How many cohorts of CMM were completed? What was the level of participation of mentee and mentors for these sessions?

CMM Cohorts

The original CMM objective was to provide group mentoring for eight, six-month cohorts per year, with 10 youth participating in each, serving a total of 80 mentees. However, the idea of cohorts was modified to be more responsive to the population and not limit it to one group of youth. Specifically, a youth could attend different cohorts, leave and then return, or continue after graduating. The cohorts evolved and were defined by the locations and time that the youth entered, and the total amount of youth who attended at least one time rather than one-set of youth. In addition, due to COVID-19, and the subsequent California stay-home order implemented in March 2020, the number of cohorts occurring at different locations was limited. For example, CMM had two cohorts

set up in schools (i.e., Sweetwater High School and National City Middle School) at the beginning of 2020 that had to be cancelled when school transitioned to virtual learning.

Overall, the three sources for the mentee recruitment were schools (i.e., Sweetwater High School, National City Middle School, and JCCS, school resources NC FRC, SARB and community resources (i.e., Memorial Recreational Center, SBCS Achievement Center). The first cohort occurred at the National City JCCS in March 2019 and six more cohorts were started and ran through December 2020. It was at the beginning of 2020 when arrangements were being put in place for additional groups that the stay-home order ceased the start of new groups. However, SDYDF leaned on its partners and connections in the community to recruit another cohort of mentees who were involved in a soccer club at Memorial Recreational Center, which is a city park in the target community. Memorial Recreational Center has a history of shootings, violent acts involving various individuals involved in gangs, and was an appropriate setting for CMM. However, because of the COVID-19, the groups and contacts were virtual.

As Table 1 shows, three cohorts occurred at the JCCS, two at the NC FRC, one at Memorial Recreation Park, one at Sweetwater High School, and one at the Achievement Center. The Achievement Center is run by SBCS and provides a safe, therapeutic environment for youth under probation supervision to attend groups and prosocial activities after school and into the early evening. The cohorts ranged from 1 to 93 participants.

Table 1: CMM Cohorts and Mentee Participation

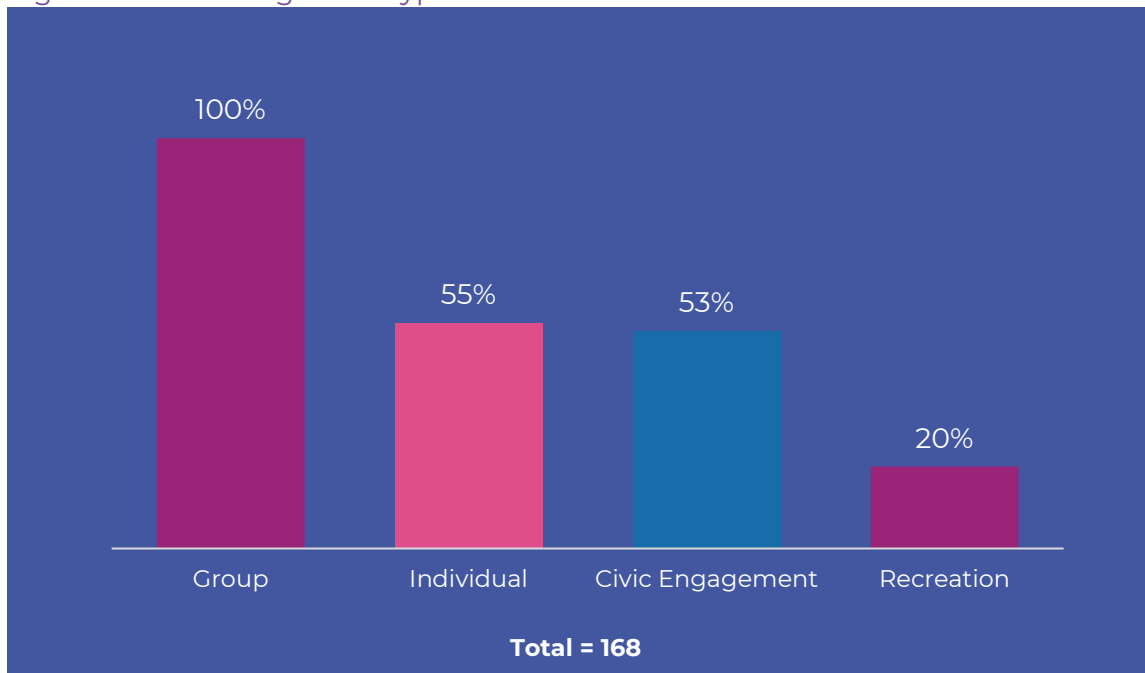
CMM Cohorts and Mentee Participation				
Cohort	Start Date	# of Participants	Avg. # Contacts	
JCCS	March 2019	15	18.5 (SD=11.6)	
NC FRC	March 2019	10	13.5 (SD=7.9)	
JCCS	May 2019	4	25.25 (SD=12.3)	
JCCS	Aug 2019	1	1	
NC FRC	Aug 2019	13	14.2(SD=7.8)	
Sweetwater HS	Sept 2019	21	22.9 (SD=9.8)	
Achievement Center*	Nov 2019	17	2.1 (SD=2.3)	
Memorial Park	May 2020	93	38.5 (SD=5.2)	

Note: *The Achievement Center’s schedule was shorter than the groups, so the 17 youth involved in CMM while there were not able to complete the 21 sessions (i.e., definition for successful completion).

Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

A mentee could engage in four types of contacts including the Interactive Journaling group, individual meetings with mentor/Life Plan Goals, civic engagement, and/or recreational/sports. Through these 8 cohort locations, 174 mentees received an average of 28.25 contacts (SD=14.24; Range 1-61). All mentees participated in groups, with a little over half also having individual meetings with their mentor (55%) and participating in some form of civic engagement activity (53%), and 20% participating in a recreational activity (Figure 4). It is important to note the impact of the stay-home order, which reduced the opportunities for civic engagement, recreational/sports activities, and one-on-one mentor and mentee meetings (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Percentage and Type of CMM Mentee Contact



Note: Cases with no contacts are not included in the total.

Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

Were Interactive Journaling and CMM Implemented to Fidelity?

Three practices were utilized to ensure CMM was being implemented as designed these included frequent and consistent communication and oversight, formal training of the evidence-based programs, and formal observations of facilitators when implementing the programming.

Communication

During the startup phase of CMM, program partners met twice a month to finalize the design and implementation of the project. These meetings continued monthly to ensure the program was being implemented as designed. Numbers were reviewed, challenges and success were shared, and modifications were discussed, especially when pivoting

due to COVID-19 and the public health guidelines. This frequent and consistent communication provided the framework to ensure fidelity to the program’s model.

Formal Training on Evidence-Based Programming

A second component to ensure fidelity was the required formal training and subsequent certification in both credible messengers mentoring through Alliant International University and Interactive Journaling through The Change Companies. As noted earlier, 15 mentors received certification in both mentorship and Interactive Journaling and SDYDF and SBCS program supervisors were also certified in Interactive Journaling in order to observe and monitor its implementation.

Formal Observation of Facilitators (i.e., mentors)

The third metric to monitor and measure fidelity was the formal observation by SBCS supervisors of the Interactive Journaling groups. The program team agreed to conduct one observation a year of a group session and rate it by using an observation checklist created by the Change Companies. The observation outcome tool consisted of 44 questions rating the facilitator’s engagement skills, knowledge and teaching skills, interactions with participants, group management, and safe environment. After observing the group, the supervisor would provide feedback to the mentor who was facilitating. During the project, three groups were observed, resulting in scores indicating high adherence to the fidelity of the model. Using a scale from 1 “strongly agree” to 4 “strongly disagree”, the average fidelity score for all three observations was 1.51 (SD=1.47), indicating strong adherence to the model.

What factors were related to successful completion of the program (e.g., prior criminal history, services received, treatment dosage)?

An objective of CMM was to have 70% of mentees successfully complete the program. Successful completion of the CMM was defined as attending at least 70% of the 21 Interactive Journaling sessions. CMM exceeded this objective with three-quarters (75%) of participants successfully completing the program.



75% of
mentees
successfully
completed
CMM

Analysis of factors (i.e., gender, race, grade, six-month prior justice involvement) related to successful program completion showed a few notable associations between demographics and completion status.¹ Specifically, youth whose primary language was Spanish or those who identified as Black were less likely to complete the program successfully than those who spoke English (22% compared to 78%, respectively) and who identified as Hispanic or Multi-racial (none of Black youth compared to 79% of Hispanic and 50% of Multi-Racial). In addition, younger mentees were more likely to successfully complete the program (15.0 years old [SD=2.1]) than older ones (16.4 years old [SD=1.7]).

¹ Due to the small number of youth who were either Black or spoke Spanish (8 and 9), a Fisher exact test was applied and statistical significance at $p < .05$ was found. However, because of the small numbers caution should be taken in making any generalizations about this finding.

Unfortunately, there was not sufficient sample size and statistical power to produce predictive analysis by creating a logistic regression model. However, these bivariate analyses suggest there is value in discussing any additional observational factors that may have influenced these groups of youth not completing the program successfully.

Was CMM implemented as designed? Were there any changes to the design and if so, what were the changes and what were the reasons for the changes?

Overall, CMM was implemented as designed with the most significant changes occurring as a result of COVID-19 and the public health mandates restricting face-to-face contacts. The pandemic required CMM to shift to virtual contacts, decreased access to possible mentee enrollees, and reduced access to youth through the schools. Table 2 provides a detailed account of the original design, reason for change, and subsequent modification.

Table 2: CMM Program Design Modifications

CMM Program Design Modifications		
Original Design	Reason for Change	Design Modification
Cohorts of 8-10 youth in the program for six-months.	Mentee intakes were fluid and therefore groups needed to adapt to youth entering at different points in time to accommodate all referrals.	Open groups to allow new mentees and graduates to return. Cohorts were based on location, not group population.
Credible Messenger Training in New York	During startup, SBCS became aware of a local mentoring training based on the Credible Messenger model that was provided by Alliant International University. It was more feasible, cost-efficient, and included local information to conduct the training locally.	Partnered with Alliant International University to conduct the certification training for the mentors.
In person groups, mentee/mentor meeting, civic engagement, and recreational activities.	COVID-19 stay-home order prohibited face-to-face contacts.	Shift to virtual meetings. Ensured that each mentor and mentee had access to the needed technology to participate in the meetings.
Recruit at-risk mentees through SARB, Juvenile Court Schools, FRC, and local schools.	COVID-19 stopped all in person schooling, SARB review hearings, and NC FRC in-person operations. These closures severely limited the referrals and the ability of the mentors to recruit mentees.	SDYDF conducted outreach in the community and reached out to their connection with Memorial City Park to recruit and hold group meetings.

Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

Outcome Results

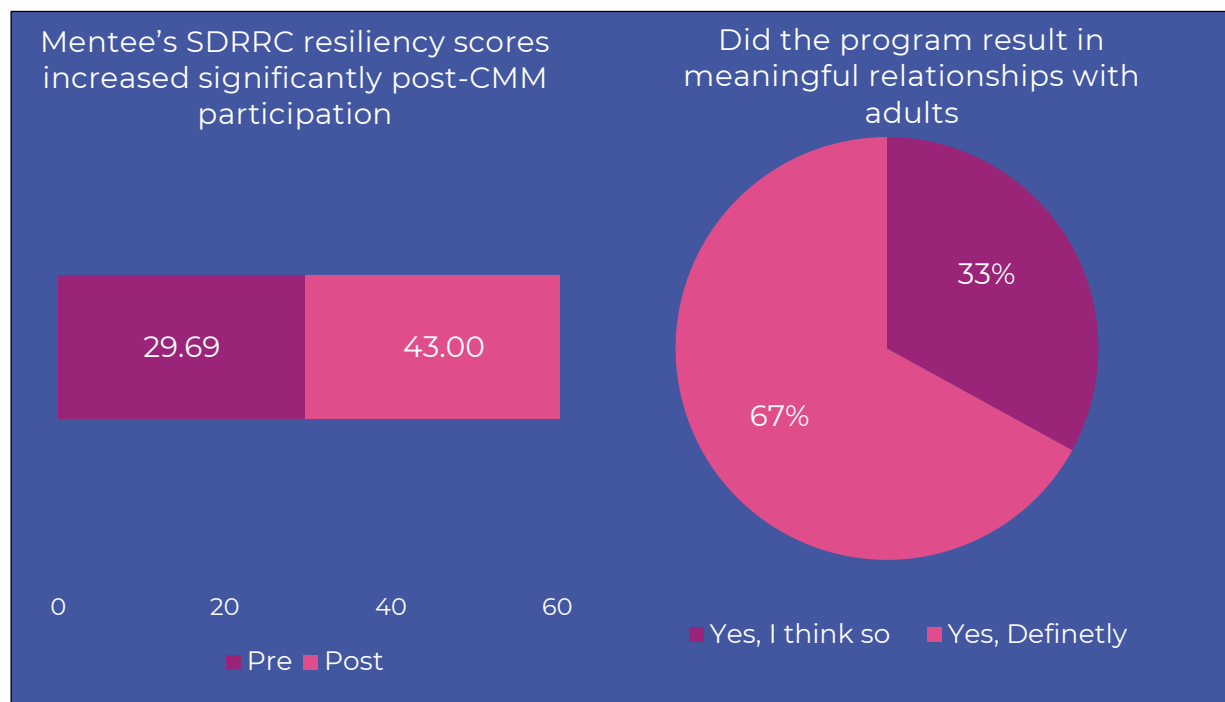
Several metrics were used to measure CMM's accomplishment of its second goal: *Increase long-term positive outcomes for youth and young adults*. In addition to documenting any subsequent arrests, changes in youth's resilience as measured by the SDRRC, as well as self-reported improvement with adult relationships were also tracked. On each of these metrics, positive changes were observed with nearly all youth remaining arrest free both during and post-CMM participation.

Did the program increase resiliency as measured by the San Diego Risk and Resiliency Checklist? Did the program result in meaningful relationships with adults?

Results from the SDRRC pre- and post-resiliency and self-reports from youth about the program show increased resiliency and establishment of a meaningful adult relationship. The SDRRC is comprised of 60 domains that measure both protective (e.g., buffer against the risk to recidivate) and risk (e.g., increase risk to recidivate) factors. A resiliency score is generated when these two scores are combined. A higher resilience score indicates the youth have more buffers or protection from recidivating. Comparisons between the mentee's pre- and post-resiliency scores showed a significant increase following CMM participation (average score 29.69 [SD=15.50] to 43.00 [SD=10.76]). In addition, of almost all (99%) youth who completed CMM successfully experienced an increase resiliency score. This increase suggests the youth exited CMM with additional resources, supports, and/or strengths that increase a youth's resiliency, especially to avoid delinquency and/or criminal activity.

In addition, in a post-program survey, youth were asked to respond using a four-point scale (4 being "yes, definitely" and 1 being "no, definitely not") to a question that asked whether they created at least one positive relationship with an adult (either family or community) since starting CMM. All (100%) mentees responded positively, with one-third (33%) replying "yes, I think so" and 67% replying "yes, definitely" on the post-survey (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Post CMM Mentee Resiliency and Adult Relationship Outcomes



Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

The post-survey also included additional questions to learn more about the program from the mentee's perspective. As shown in Table 3 almost all (97%) respondents felt respected by the mentors and staff and 84% felt the program helped them "a lot" to deal with their concerns more effectively. According to responses, over-two thirds (69%) reported that the mentors provided them with enough information, support, or referrals. In addition, two questions were asked to measure satisfaction level with CMM; if the mentee would recommend the program to a friend in a similar situation and if they would seek the connection and services again if needed. All respondents reported that they would recommend CMM to a friend, with eight of ten (80%) selecting the highest rating of "yes, definitely". All youth reported they would consider returning to the program if they needed it again, with two-thirds (67%) selecting, "yes, definitely" they would come back.

Table 3: CMM Mentee’s Post-Satisfaction Survey Results

Satisfaction with CMM		
	Somewhat/ I think so	A lot/ definitely
Did you feel that mentor/staff learned about and respected your needs as an individual?	3%	97%
Did the mentoring you received help you deal more effectively with your issues of concern?	16%	84%
Did you feel the program mentors provided you with enough information, referrals and/or support you needed?	31%	69%
Would you recommend CMM to a friend?	20%	80%
If you needed help again, would you come back to your mentor or CMM?	33%	67%
Total	131	

Note: Cases with missing information not included

Source: CalVIP Cohort II; CMM Final Evaluation Report, 2021

Mentee Story

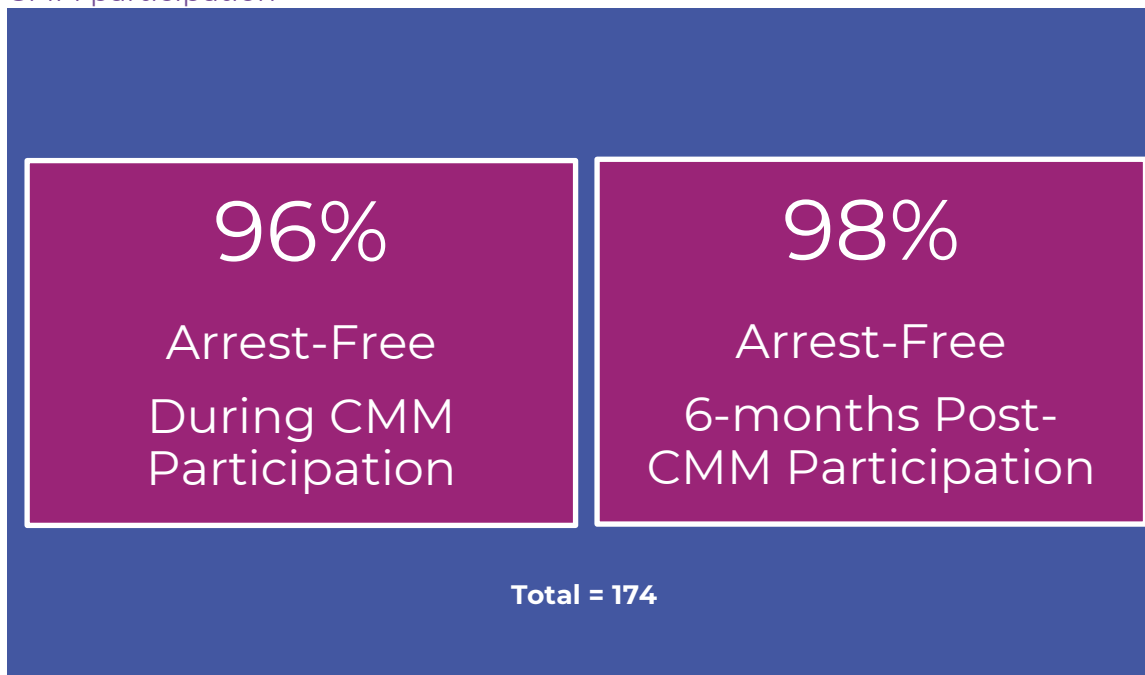
“Thankful for the mentors at San Diego Youth Development - not only did they teach me about journaling circles, but they empowered me to be committed to being the best version of myself. During our program one of my closet friends was shot and killed and the mentors showed up at his memorial and funeral to be with youth and his family through this process. They helped us during the pandemic and kept the program going even when we didn’t know about school reopening and many youth started becoming depressed. They showed us that they were not just here for us during the program, but they were here for us whenever we needed them. Youth need this in their lives, and I am so thankful to have experienced this firsthand.” - *Male Youth Mentee, 2019*

Did the program prevent system involvement as measured by arrests before, during, and six months after the program?

The goal of CMM was to provide youth living in a community with high-rates of crime and other stressors that correlate with living in and around low-socioeconomic areas an opportunity to connect with a supportive adult and engage in supports to make positive choices. As such, CMM mentees did not have to be involved directly in the justice system to be eligible for the program. In fact, most mentees (99%) did not have justice contact

within the six-months prior to enrollment, however the average intake resiliency score of 29.69 (SD=15.5) out of a possible 60 suggested the youth were at risk for criminal justice involvement. In addition, 15% of youth were involved with Probation and this was a factor for future contact. Because some of the mentees were 18 years or older, arrest was chosen as the metric for recidivism (i.e., because not all youth would be in the juvenile Probation data system) and data were collected at two-points of time (during program participation and six-months post-participation). Almost all youth did not have an arrest during (96%) and six-months (98%) post-CMM participation (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Percentage of CMM Mentees without an Arrest During and Six-Months post-CMM participation



Examination of the seven youth who did have new arrest during the program showed that all (100%) of these youth were currently under probation supervision. The highest charge level for five were for a misdemeanor and two for a felony offense. Wardship was also significantly related to arrest in the six-month follow-up period, with three of the four youth currently under probation supervision. The highest-charge level for all four mentees with an arrest post-participation was for a felony. As for type of crimes mentees were arrested for during and post participation, five were for a violent offense, four for a property, two for other, and one for a status offense. It is important to keep in mind that these youth were part of the cohort (i.e., Achievement Center) that did not have the needed time to complete the CMM program, and therefore none of them received the full dosage of the intervention. When examined by completion status, all but 2 or 98% of those youth who successfully completed the program remained arrest-free in the post-period.

Because of the small number of youths with a recidivism event, further predictive analysis could not be conducted. It should also be noted during 2020 (when stay-home order and public health guidelines were strictest) arrests for juveniles and adults were down substantially, in the County and across the nation which could have contributed to the low arrest incidents.

Summary

In the fall of 2018, SBCS was awarded a BSCC CalVIP Cohort II grant to address a gap in services for youth ages 12 to 24 years old living in National City. SBCS partnered with a smaller non-profit, SDYDF, that was already providing services in the community to implement the evidence-based Credible Messenger Mentors (CMM) combined with the cognitive-based Interactive Journaling curriculum. Mentors with lived experience were recruited from the community and participated in certificate level trainings in both CMM and the Interactive Journaling model. Mentees were recruited from schools and justice partners in the area and participated in six-months of programming.

As with all activities occurring during the pandemic (starting March 2020), CMM implementation was impacted and required adjustments, with the most notable change being a switch to virtual groups and individual meetings.

CMM recruited and trained 15 mentors and served 174 youth. Most of the youth identified as Hispanic, were male, and around 15 years old on average. Of these youth, 75% completed the program successfully. In addition to participating in the Interactive Journaling groups, mentees also met one-on-one with their mentors, participated in prosocial/recreational activities, and engaged in community service. On average, mentees received 28.24 contacts (SD=14.24; Range 1-61).

Data gathered on risk to recidivate and progress made to establish a positive relationship with his/her/their mentor or another adult, showed improvement after participating in CMM. Additionally, data gathered on criminal justice involvement (i.e., new arrest) showed almost all youth did not have an arrest either during (96%) or six-months post-CMM participation (98%).

Lessons Learned

Over the course of the grant, lessons were learned that can inform future programs with similar populations. These lessons are noted below.

Consistent communication is critical to program success: From its inception, CMM partners met regularly to collaborate on the design and implementation of CMM. At these frequent (bi-monthly and monthly) meetings, partners discussed administrative and programmatic issues, partnered on solutions, and built trusting relationships. In addition, data were provided to help monitor and inform the progress of the program. Importantly, this collaborative foundation was essential when COVID-19 protocols forced in-person contacts to be halted, as the partners were able to quickly pivot and adjust services so the program could continue.

Open groups were the preferred model: Originally the groups were designed as closed cohorts, but it was quickly realized that allowing youth the flexibility to enter and leave groups as needed was better for this population. This flexibility led to 75% of mentees successfully completing the program.

Utilize and build capacity of smaller providers located in the community: SBCS is one of the largest and most established CBO's in the San Diego region. For this project, SBCS partnered with the smaller SDYDF, which benefited the community and SDYDF. SDYDF was able to quickly recruit mentors because of its existing network and relationships in the community and accessed these connections during COVID-19 to enroll mentees when the school pathways were no longer available. Further, SBCS helped build SDYDF's capacity to gather data, to monitor program progress, and to create systems to report grant metrics. This type of partnership between a larger and smaller agency proved beneficial for both agencies and the community, and suggests further replication of this type of partnership. .

Mentee Story

"I am so happy that I got to experience a program that was committed to youth. The journals helped me look deeper in myself and the circles helped us to become comfortable with talking about our feelings. I will say that we were so shocked with all the support during the pandemic. The support they (e.g., CMM mentors) provided helped us not only learn a different way to communicate and to express ourselves, but so much more." - *Male Mentee, 2020*