

SAN DIEGO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT



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The San Diego Restorative Justice Health Impact Assessment is supported by a grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, with funding from The California Endowment. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Health Impact Project, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, or The California Endowment.

Introduction

About this HIA

Mid-City Community Advocacy Network (Mid-City CAN) and its Peace Promotion Momentum Team (PPMT) conducted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) that examines a proposal to permanently offer a restorative justice alternative to the traditional justice system for juvenile offenders in San Diego. This HIA aims to inform two decisions: 1- a decision by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to adopt a restorative justice alternative to youth incarceration for the Probation Department; and 2- the San Diego City Council to adopt a restorative justice alternative to youth arrest for the San Diego Police Department.

What is HIA

The HIA evaluates the potential health and equity effects of the proposal and makes recommendations that maximize benefits and minimize unintended consequences to the community. HIA is a research and community engagement process that brings together data, health expertise, and stakeholder input to identify the potential health effects of a proposal and to make recommendations that improve policies for health. HIA provides a framework for public and private sector stakeholders to engage with community members to inform proposed policies.

The HIA presents evidence from the literature, secondary data sources, and local data sources that describe what is known about the relationship between restorative justice, the traditional criminal justice system, and a set of selected health determinants. These health determinants - recidivism, perception of safety, community cohesion, and education - were selected by an engaged group of stakeholders that, among others, includes youth impacted by these policies and their families, City Heights residents, and individuals working within the juvenile justice system. The HIA determines how a proposed restorative justice alternative would impact these health determinants and, in turn, the health of juvenile offenders and their communities. This report provides a background on restorative justice and the restorative community conferencing pilot program, describes the proposal, reviews the HIA methodologies applied, portrays the conditions in San Diego and the community of City Heights, presents the findings related to health impacts, and offers recommendations.

What is Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a process that requires all parties affected by a crime or wrongdoing, namely: the person responsible for the crime or wrongdoing, the person harmed, and affected members of their communities to come together in order to develop a response to said crime based solely on addressing the needs of the person harmed, the responsibilities and obligations of the responsible person and the role of their communities in the development and execution of a restoration plan.

Put more simply, when a crime is committed, the current California criminal justice system seeks to answer the following three questions: 1) what law was broken? 2) who broke it? and 3) how do we punish him, her or them? Viewing criminal behavior through a restorative lens requires that a different set of questions be asked when a crime takes place: 1) who was harmed? 2) what are his or her needs? and 3) whose obligation is it to address those needs?

Description of the Restorative Community Conferencing Pilot Program

The Peace Promotion Momentum Team (PPMT) was created by City Heights residents who want to foster a safe, fair, and thriving community. Their vision is a safe community, established and maintained by engaged and informed residents. PPMT is comprised largely of City Heights residents, Restorative Community Conferencing Pilot Project participants, as well as members of local organizations that are faith-based, community networking-focused, or service-oriented, and members of other stakeholder groups interested in public safety, community cohesion, community-police relations, youth well-being/academic success, and racial justice. Since its onset, PPMT has focused on the application of restorative practices in order to address the aforementioned issues.

Following a series of meetings during which City Heights residents identified poor community-police relations and high rates of juvenile arrest as priority issues in need of improvement, PPMT began its concentrated efforts to establish a restorative justice alternative to incarceration for City Heights youth in 2010. After years of discussion, relationship-building and a variety of resident-led actions, PPMT elected the National Conflict Resolution Center as the organization to implement the Restorative Community Conferencing (RCC) pilot project in City Heights. The specific RCC model utilized in the pilot program was developed by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, which had successfully assisted in the establishment of various restorative justice programs throughout Northern California.

There are numerous programs that use restorative justice principles to address conflicts in different situations. There are victim-offender dialogues, circles of support and accountability, and peacemaking circles. Restorative Community Conferencing (RCC), also known as Restorative Group Conferencing or Family Group Conferencing, is the most prominent form of restorative justice used in the justice system.

RCC involves an organized facilitated dialogue in which a young person (known as the responsible youth) who has committed a wrongdoing meets face-to-face with the person s/he victimized (known as the person harmed), along with each of their supporters, other community members and, if appropriate, law enforcement officials. During this conference, the aforementioned group discusses the incident and develops a plan for the responsible youth to make things as right as possible with him or herself, his/her community and family and the person s/he harmed.

The implementing organization received funding in 2014 for a three-year pilot program that would allow youth who commit an eligible offense to be allowed to go through a restorative justice program instead of the traditional court process. In the process of advocating for the permanent implementation of a restorative justice alternative for juveniles, it became clearly evident to Mid-City CAN that an HIA would be a significantly useful document when approaching decision-makers regarding the proposal to potentially establish a permanent, county-wide restorative justice program for juveniles.

Restorative Community Conferencing

After a youth is arrested or apprehended for committing a crime, the referring agency (school, police, probation, district attorney or public defender) can choose to send the case to the RCC pilot program instead of going through the traditional juvenile justice system. The referring agency puts the case on hold (diversion) and does not drop the case or file charges. The RCC pilot program then assesses the case for eligibility.

In Restorative Community Conferencing, the youth who committed a crime meets with his or her victim along with their respective family members, community members, and other supporters as well as with any service provider(s) requested or deemed necessary during the preparation phase. All of the RCC participants come together to create an action plan for the youth to repair harm to his/her victim, family, community, and him/herself.

In order to be eligible to participate in RCC, the responsible youth must be under 17.5 years of age, there must be at least one identifiable victim, and the case should be eligible for diversion. Commercial burglaries, assaults, thefts, domestic/family violence, battery, vandalism, and weapons charges are ideal RCC Pilot Program cases because they typically have an identifiable victim. All of the above eligibility terms are listed in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Mid-City CAN, The National Conflict Resolution Center, San Diego Youth Services, San Diego County Probation Department, San Diego County District Attorney's Office, and San Diego County Office of the Public Defender. Per the MOU, cases involving homicides, arson, serious gang-related activity, or sexual assault are not eligible for referral to the RCC pilot program at this time.

After the youth has accepted responsibility and agreed to participate, the RCC pilot program facilitator reaches out to the victim to ask him or her to participate. Participation for all involved is fully voluntary and a referred case cannot proceed through the program without full consent from both the responsible youth and the person harmed. If a person harmed wishes for their case to proceed in the restorative community conferencing pilot project but does not wish to physically participate in pre-meetings or the conference, a surrogate may take their place.

The facilitator then conducts pre-meetings with the youth and the victim separately to determine amenability and safety. During these pre-meetings, the two parties independently assess the harms and needs resulting from the crime.

After both parties have agreed to participate in the RCC pilot program they schedule a joint conference. The RCC pilot program and the referring agencies have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that ensures that all communication about the crime that takes place in the RCC is confidential and cannot be used against the youth by the referring agency or the district attorney. This allows the youth to be honest about the crime, its cause and effects. It also encourages the participation of some victims that would like to hold the youth accountable but would not like to participate in a traditional legal process. The conference typically takes place in a neutral location, either at the implementing organization's office or neutral places in the community.

During the conference, the RCC Pilot Program facilitator uses restorative practices to guide the youth, his or her victim, their supporters, service providers and community members through a discussion about the crime and its causes and effects. The tone in the conference is usually firm yet supportive. The participants engage in self-reflection and story sharing, and encourage accountability and apologies. The restorative process allows the young people to understand the victim and make amends to the person harmed. The process also allows the person harmed to be heard and for his or her needs to be voiced. By creating a space for discussion and reflection, RCC creates a caring climate that facilitates an easier reintegration of the youth into the community. The conference culminates with the creation of an action plan to help the youth overcome any obstacles and repair relationships. The action plan encourages the youth to "do right" by his or her victim, family, community, and self. All parties must come to an

agreement on the plan and if they are not able to reach a consensus, or the youth fails to complete the plan, then the case is sent back to the referring agency and can proceed through the traditional court process. The action plan should take between three and six months to complete. During that time the RCC Pilot Program facilitator monitors the youth's progress and provides regular status reports to the referring agency. If the youth successfully completes the action plan, charges are never filed.

Scoping

During the scoping step, the HIA advisory committee gave input to help identify relevant health determinants, research questions, health indicators, data sources, and research methods to use for the assessment portion of the HIA.

Stakeholder Involvement in the HIA

Identification of Stakeholders

Mid-City CAN has established working relationships with the decision-makers and influencers necessary to complete this project. MCC's partners for this project include: San Diego Police Department, San Diego County Department of Probation, San Diego Unified School District Police, San Diego County District Attorney's Office, San Diego County Public Defender's Office and San Diego County Juvenile Court. Additionally, Mid-City CAN has relationships with offices of the County Board of Supervisors namely: Ron Roberts and City Council Members Todd Gloria, Marti Emerald (representing zip code 92105), Sheri Lightener, Myrtle Cole, David Alvarez, and Mayor Kevin Faulconer. The aforementioned decision-makers hold significant importance to the HIA process and were contacted for interviews or meetings during the Scoping and Assessment Phases.

In addition to the decision-makers listed above, key stakeholders include: the nonprofit organizations National Conflict Resolution Center and San Diego Youth Services who are responsible for implementation of the restorative justice pilot, the pilot's established steering committee (RCC SC) members, Peace Promotion Momentum Team members (see more detailed descriptions below) as well as formerly incarcerated youth and their families residing in zip code 92105.

Restorative Community Conference Pilot Project Steering Committee

In order to monitor the progress, successes and challenges of the pilot project, a steering committee composed of six system partners that signed the RCC MOU and three City Heights community members was established prior to the launch of the pilot project. This steering committee was a primary source of engagement, as it served as the foundation for the RJ HIA Advisory Committee.

HIA Advisory Committee

The HIA Advisory Committee (AC) was composed of the RCC SC. Additional stakeholders were added to the AC from the two-day HIA training presented by the Human Impact Partners and Mid-City CAN in May 2015. Other individuals identified during the screening process that expressed interest in

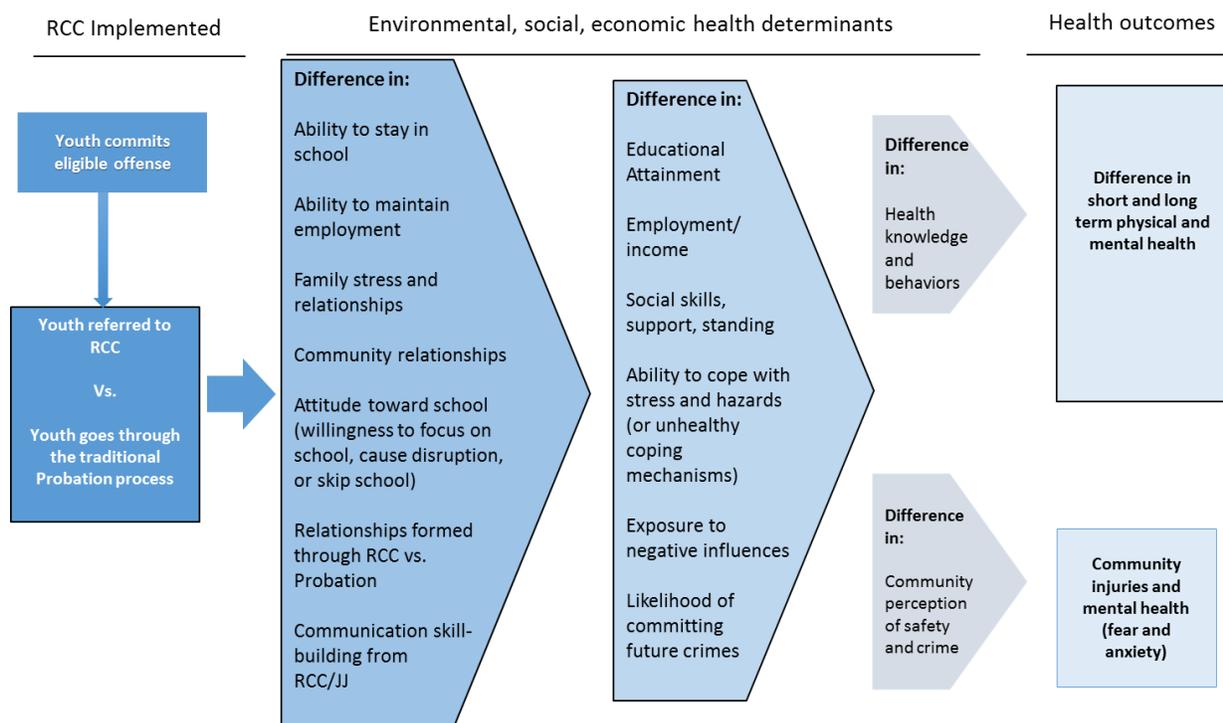
participating in the AC but did not attend the training were added as well, such as City Heights residents with an expressed interest in restorative justice and RCC participants.

Members of the AC helped obtain strategic input and buy-in from a larger set of stakeholders, reviewed HIA materials, and were asked to provide technical expertise and when necessary, data and resources.

Identifying Health Determinants, Defining the Project’s Scope, and Prioritizing Research Questions

The Advisory Committee met during the established RCC Steering Committee meetings which occurred once a month. The primary emphasis of these meetings was to identify the central focus of the HIA. Members of the Advisory Committee who attended the May 2015 training created individual pathways during that time. Some of these pathways were incorporated during the early stages of the scoping process with the final Pathways being chosen via consensus decision-making on behalf of the AC. A copy of the pathway diagram is found below.

Figure 1. RCC Pilot Program Pathway Diagram



During one of its monthly meetings, PPMT provided feedback on the pathway diagram for the RJ HIA that has been previously examined by the AC. The Lead Practitioner then used the PPMT feedback in the development of research questions. The final scoping questions were then approved by the RCC Steering Committee.

The team decided on four social determinants of health to study: Recidivism, Perceptions of Safety, Family and Community Cohesion, and Education. Each health determinant had its own research questions associated in addition to questions about the vulnerable populations affected by the RCC Pilot Program.

Populations Affected

What are the characteristics of youth and the general population who live in the study area?

Demographics

City Heights is a neighborhood of the City of San Diego with a population of 77,697 residents[1]. It is an ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood with a large immigrant and refugee population. Latinos make up 59% of the population, which is significantly more than the 33% in the county of San Diego. African Americans make up 11% of the population of City Heights which is higher than the 4% of the county's population [1]. In addition to being ethnically and racially diverse, about 73% of families in City Heights have limited English proficiency [2].

City Heights is also a low income neighborhood with 60% of families with children under 18 having incomes that are than less 200% of the federal poverty level in comparison to 28% of San Diego County families[2]. The median household income in City Heights adjusted for inflation was \$33,409 compared to \$63,996 in the County of San Diego [1].

City Heights also has a very young population. The median age is 29.7, 30% of the population is under 18, and 42% of the population is under 25[1].

Table 1. City Heights Demographics

	City Heights	San Diego County
Low-Income Households¹	60%	28%
Limited English Proficiency	73%	61%
Median Income	\$33,409	\$63,996
Median Age	29.7	34.9
% of Population Under 18	42%	16%

Source: Building Healthy Communities, *City Heights Health Profile*. 2009, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

What are the demographics of the responsible youth² in City Heights?

We were not able to obtain the demographics for responsible youth in City Heights but were able to find data on youth on probation. The San Diego County Department supervises youth that live in many parts of the county. In 2013 the City Heights zip code 92105 was one of the three zip codes in the county with the highest concentration of youth under supervision by the probation department [3]. In 2014, the San Diego Department of Probation supervised 4,455 youth in the county. About 77% of the youth supervised by probation were male, and 23% were female. 17% were African Americans, 55% were Hispanic/Latino, 22% were White, 2% were Asian, and 4% were other races and ethnicities[4].

¹ Households with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level are considered low income

² The term "responsible youth" is being used in order to align with a restorative approach instead of the more traditional term juvenile offender.

A youth first comes into contact with the probation department through a referral when the youth commits an offense. City Heights falls under the jurisdiction of the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) and the San Diego Unified School District Police Department (SDUSD PD). SDPD and SUSD PD were among the top 4 referring agencies to the probation department in the County of San Diego and they accounted for 1,862 and 432 referrals respectively. Once probation receives a referral the case is sent to the District Attorney's office for evaluation. In 2014 there were 2,270 juvenile petitions filed. The petitions are categorized by the most serious offense. In 2014, 1,105 (49%) of petitions filed were for crimes against a person and 688 (30%) were for crime against property. Petitions are then either dismissed or found true by the court. About 62% (1,370/2,270) of all petitions were found true[4].

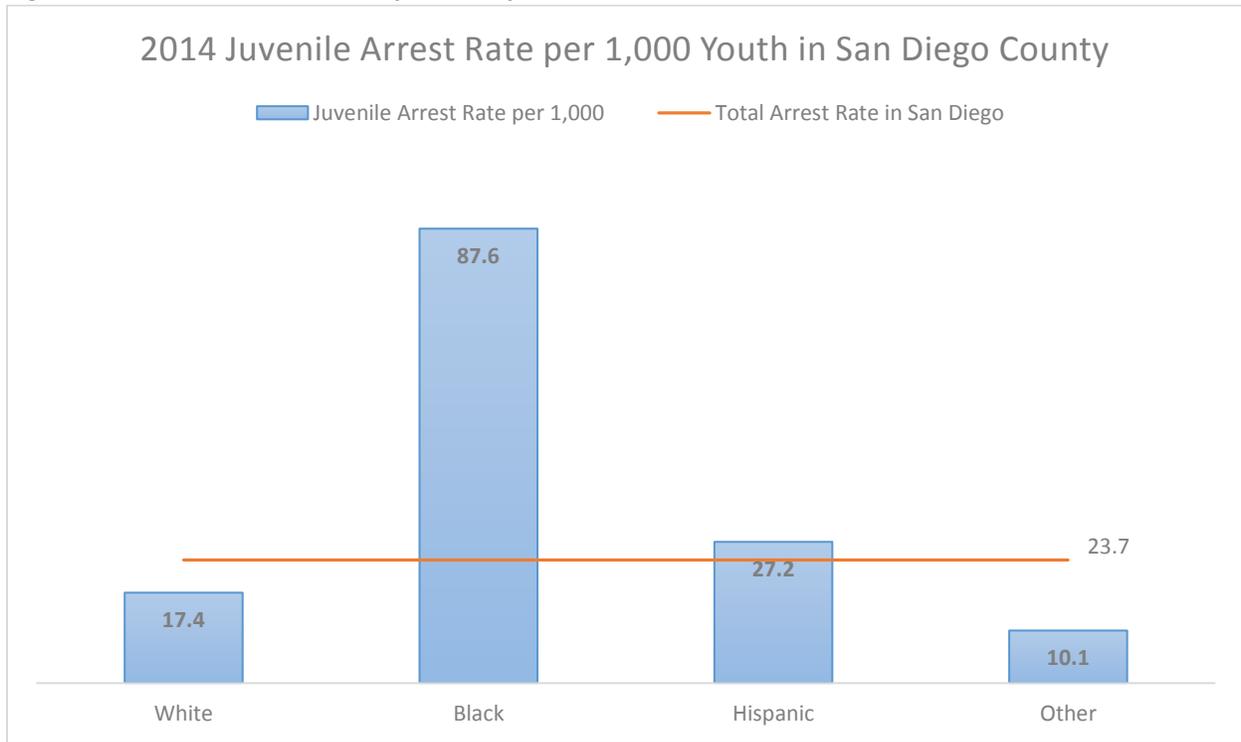
What are the characteristics of youth that are going through the criminal justice system? Are youth from minority backgrounds disproportionately targeted?

In 2008 the San Diego Association of Governments conducted a study to assess disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in San Diego. They found DMC at three points in the juvenile justice system: at arrest, pre-adjudication (after arrest), and institutional commitment. Black youth made up 6% of the population, 17% of arrested youth, and 24% of institutionalized youth [5]. Hispanic youth were somewhat over represented in the population of arrested youth but not institutionalized youth. White and other races were under-represented in both the population of arrested youth and institutionalized. Race was found to be a predictor of being detained pre-adjudication with Hispanic youth 2.8 times more likely to be detained compared to White youth, and Black youth 1.8 times more likely to be detained compared to White youth[5]. Although Black youth were significantly more likely to be institutionalized, race was not found to be a predictor of institutionalization. However, race was associated with other factors such as level of offense, and a host of other factors that were predictors of institutionalization[5].

The juvenile arrest rate for San Diego County in 2014 was 23.7 per 1,000, but it varied by race and ethnicity. African American youth had the highest arrest rate of 87.6 per 1,000 compared to White youth who have an arrest rate of 17.4 per 1,000. Hispanic or Latino youth had an arrest rate of 27.2 per 1,000. Other races had the lowest rate of 10.1 per 1,000[6].

Juvenile arrest rates in San Diego County decreased by 113% from 2010 to 2014, but also varied by race and ethnicity. White youth, Hispanic or Latino Youth, and Other youth experienced a 104%, 123%, and 117% decrease in arrest rates respectively, while African American youth experienced only a 60% decrease[6].

Figure 2. Juvenile Arrest Rates by Ethnicity

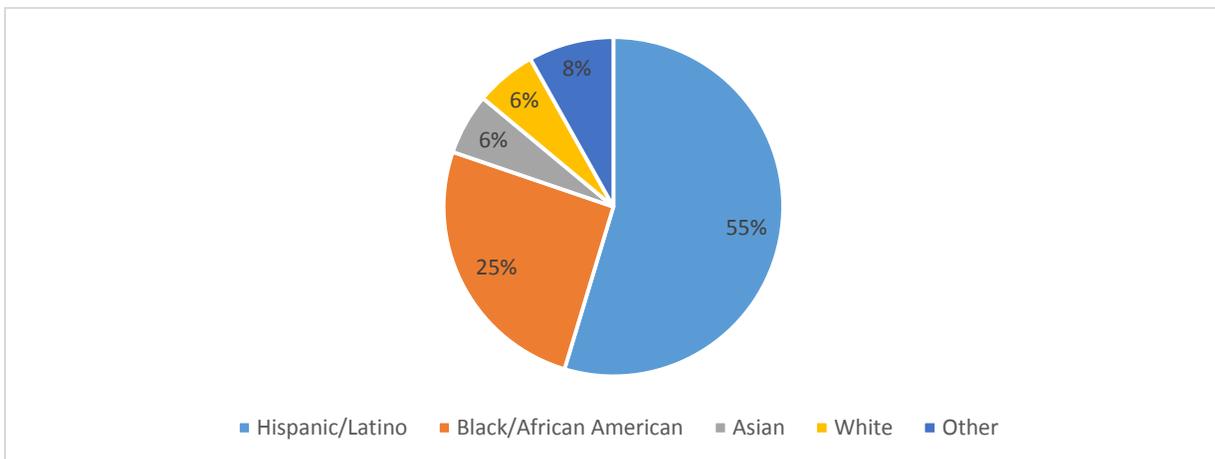


Source: Cynthia Burke, P.D., *Arrests 2014: Law Enforcement Response to Crime in the San Diego Region*. 2014, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)

What are the demographics of the responsible youth in the RCC pilot program and are they similar?

The RCC Pilot Program received 84 referrals since its inception in May of 2014. 55% of the youth referred to the RCC pilot program were Hispanic or Latino, and 25% were African American or Black. Asian and White youth each made up 6% of the referrals. The remaining 8% had more than one race, did not report their race, or reported another race.

Figure 2. Race and Ethnicity of Youth Referred to the RCC Pilot Program



Source: RCC Pilot Program Data

Assessment

Methods

A combination of a literature review, a review of secondary data, existing data from the RCC pilot program, and focus groups were used to answer the questions that were developed in the scoping phase of the HIA.

Literature Review

A literature review of both peer reviewed journal articles and other published reports was conducted in order to assess the relationship between the juvenile justice system and health. The literature review also examined the differences in the effect of the traditional juvenile justice system and restorative justice on four prioritized health determinants: recidivism, perception of safety, family and community cohesion, and education. Existing literature was also reviewed to assess the effect of the four prioritized health determinants on health outcomes.

Review of Secondary Data

Various data sources, such as the American Community Survey, SANDAG population estimates, and the California Health Interview Survey, were used to paint a picture of the existing conditions in San Diego and more specifically in City Heights. Data was used to understand the population characteristics, crime rates, educational outcomes, and health outcomes that served as a baseline for the HIA. These existing conditions served as the foundation to determine the quantitative effects of permanent implementation of a restorative justice alternative in the juvenile justice system.

Review of Data from the RCC Pilot Program

The RCC pilot program has collected data on program participants from its inception in 2014 to the present and submits this data to all stakeholders on a monthly basis. These monthly reports include information about program implementation such as the number and source of referrals and the number of cases completed. It includes demographic information about the youth it serves, as well as some key restorative justice evaluation measures such as recidivism and participant satisfaction. A copy of the most recent report can be found in the appendix.

Focus groups with RCC Pilot Program Participants

A total of three focus groups were conducted for this HIA. Two focus groups were conducted in City Heights with youth that participated in the Restorative Community Conferencing Pilot Program. Five youth participated in the first focus group that was conducted on May 26, 2016. The focus group consisted of two females and three males. Three of the five youth had both completed the RCC process and action plan, and 2 were in the process of completing their action plan. The second focus group was completed on August 6, 2016 and consisted of 5 male youth that had completed the RCC process and action plan. An additional focus group was done with 4 parents and guardians of youth that had participated in the RCC program.

Health Outcomes Associated with Traditional Criminal Justice Practices

There are many health outcomes that are traditionally associated with incarceration and they include substance abuse, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases, violence, mental illness, reproductive health problems, and other chronic diseases [7]. Not only does incarceration have direct health outcomes like the ones mentioned, it also has indirect effects on health through other social determinants of health because it impacts family structures, education, employment and income, political participation, and normative community values around sex, drugs, and violence [7].

While there are many studies that have found an association between youth involved in the criminal justice system and mental health, few have looked at the issue longitudinally. One study found that five years after being released from a detention center, more than 45% of males and nearly 30% of females had one or more psychiatric disorders. Substance use disorders were the most common disorders with males having higher rates. Females from the study had higher rates of major depressive disorder [8]. Another longitudinal study that examined the incidence of substance abuse disorder among youth released from a temporary detention center found that more than 90% of male and almost 80% of female youth, with median age of 28, had one or more substance use disorders, which are substantially higher than the general population.

In addition to affecting the health of the individual who is incarcerated and his or her direct family, incarceration can affect an entire community. One study found that neighborhoods with high levels of incarceration were associated with psychiatric morbidity even among community members that were not incarcerated. The study controlled for both individual and neighborhood level risk factors and found that individuals living in neighborhoods with high prison admission rates were 2.9 times more likely to currently have major depressive disorder and 2.5 times more likely to have any lifetime history of major depressive disorder across 3 waves of follow-up. Similar results were found for generalized anxiety disorder; individuals living in neighborhoods with high prison admission rates were 2.1 times more likely to currently have generalized anxiety disorder and 2.3 times more likely to have any lifetime history of generalized anxiety disorder across 3 waves of follow-up [9].

Health Outcomes Associated with Restorative Justice

Some research has been done on the health outcomes associated with restorative justice. Many studies on evaluation of restorative justice have been focused on the needs of the victim. Most studies have found that not only are victims more satisfied after going through restorative justice, they also have less fear and less anger after a face to face meeting with their offender[10, 11]. One study found that victims who participated in RCC and had met their offenders had lower post-traumatic stress symptoms scores both immediately after participation in the program, and six months after participation[12].

One experimental study was conducted in Canada to examine restorative justice's impact on participants' psychological and physical health by using standardized instruments. They found that participants, both victims and offenders, did experience a statistically significant positive change in physical health from pre-program to post-program. 84.8% of the participants noted a decrease in their psychological health scale indicating an improvement in psychological health after participation in a restorative justice program [13].

Qualitative Findings from our Focus Groups

In the focus group, youth were asked whether they thought that the victim's needs were met. The youth stated that the person harmed is able to get closure. One youth said that it shows forgiveness and it helps the person harmed feel better so that they don't feel bad, down, stressed out, or depressed. They felt that when they have all the RCC participants talk about the situation it helps them feel better.

The participants from the family and community focus group also felt that the harmed person's needs were met. They felt that it helped the harmed person have input in the process, feel better about it, know that justice was served, and feel that it would not happen again.

Assessment -Recidivism

Existing Conditions

What are the current crime rates for juveniles in the targeted area?

The national juvenile arrest rate has been steadily decreasing since its peak in 1996. In 2014 the national juvenile arrest rate was down to 30.1 per 1,000, which is a decrease of 38% from 2010. Locally, the arrest rate decreased 50% between 2010 and 2014 both in the County and City of San Diego. Despite this downward trend, San Diego County still had the highest juvenile arrest rate of 23.7 per 1,000 in comparison to other large California counties in 2014. There were a total of 7,779 juvenile arrests in the County of San Diego (2,061 felonies, 4,290 misdemeanors, and 1,428 status offenses)[6].

In the City of San Diego there were 3,718 arrests (726 Felonies, 1,920 misdemeanors, and 1,072 status offenses) with an arrest rate of 29.6 per 1,000, which is slightly higher than the rate in the county. The City of San Diego accounts for 48% (3,718/7,779) of the arrests in the County of San Diego. Eligible offenses for the RCC Pilot Program include felonies and misdemeanors such as burglary, assault, theft, battery, vandalism, family violence, weapons, and resisting arrest. In 2014, 1,229 arrests in the City of San Diego were for eligible offenses² [6].

The San Diego County Probation Department received 4,777 juvenile referrals in the County of San Diego and 1,297 (31%) of them were from the central region which includes City Heights. Twenty-eight percent of the referrals were for a crime against a person, 24% were against property, and 1% were related to possession of weapons. The remaining offenses that are not eligible for RCC are 18% status offenses, 10% are for drug and alcohol offenses, and 19% are for other offenses [4]. The major zip code for City Heights, 92105, had one of the highest concentrations of youth on probation in the County of San Diego[3].

What are the current recidivism rates for RCC eligible offenses³?

Recidivism rates are not available nationally, and are difficult to compare across sites due to the fact that recidivism is defined differently by different organizations. The Pathways to Desistance study is a multi-site, longitudinal study of serious youth offenders between 14 and 18 years old that serves as one of the major sources of knowledge on recidivism among youth. Over 1,300 youth were recruited between 2000 and 2003 and were followed for seven years in Maricopa County and Philadelphia County [14]. The study found that placing youth in an institution increased the rate of re-arrest. They also found that increasing length of stay in institutional placement did not decrease recidivism; it increased levels of antisocial activity in youth who displayed low levels of antisocial behavior at entry [15].

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation conducted a Juvenile Justice Outcome Evaluation in 2010. They looked at youth who were released between 2004 and 2005. Examining a few different measures of recidivism, the study found that three years after release, youth from the

³ Eligible offenses include: Burglary, assault, theft, battery, vandalism, family violence, weapons, and resisting arrest.

department of juvenile justice had an 81.1% arrest rate, with 56.5% returning to state-level incarceration. 62.2% of the youth were re-arrested one year after release[16].

We were not able to find re-arrest data in San Diego but were able to find some information about juvenile probationers. According to the San Diego County Probation Department's 2014 annual report 602 youth were released between 2013 and 2014. Those youth had a 31% juvenile recidivism rate[4]. Thirty-one percent might seem low compared to the state's one year re-arrest rate of 62% but the San Diego County Department of Probation defines recidivism differently. They define recidivism as a juvenile true finding while under probation supervision. This definition can be more closely compared to the state's recidivism measure of youth return or recommitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice which was found to be 33.8% over three years, or 22% over one year[16]. This state-level recidivism measure is more comparable to the probation department's measure of recidivism because they both do not include youth that may be arrested and not have a true finding or those who are committed to an adult institution.

The juvenile recidivism rate for the San Diego County Juvenile Probation Department has hovered around 30% since 2010 while the number of youth supervised throughout the years have decreased from 6,846 in 2010 to 4,455 in 2014 [4]. This decrease in number of youth supervised mirrors the overall decrease in crime nationally and locally, but shows a need for programs that can reduce recidivism. The 31% one year recidivism rate in San Diego County is also higher than the 22% one year recidivism rate found in the state of California.

We do have some information on re-arrest in San Diego County from a report conducted on the re-arrest of probationers in the San Diego region. They found that 18% of all juvenile arrests in San Diego County were of youth on probation. They also found that 27% of juvenile probationers in 2008 were rearrested in 2008, and 93% of those probationers were on active supervision at the time of arrest [17]. It is important to remember that these arrest rates are for youth that were currently on probation, and do not include youth that were re-arrested or who recidivated after being released from supervision.

Findings

[Are recidivism rates lower for responsible youth who successfully complete the RCC pilot program?](#)

Recidivism rates are lower for responsible youth who complete RCC. All youth who were referred to the pilot program were tracked for a year to assess recidivism. A total of 86 referrals were sent to the RCC Pilot Program between May 2014 and July 2016, and 50 youth participated in the program. Of the 17 youth that completed the program at least one year ago, 12% (2/17) were rearrested. Youth who were referred to the RCC pilot program, but did not participate in the program had a 24% (4/17) re-arrest rate one year after referral to the program. The recidivism rates for RCC pilot youth are lower than their non RCC pilot counterparts, but the number of cases is too low to determine statistical significance.

While we have preliminary evidence pointing towards reduced recidivism among RCC Pilot Participants, several meta-analytic reviews have been conducted on Restorative Justice and they have found that participating in restorative justice can reduce recidivism, have a positive effect on victim and offender satisfaction, and restitution and community service compliance.

A meta-analysis conducted by Sherman and Strang in 2007 found that numerous studies have found that restorative justice had a substantial reduction in repeat offending for both violence and property crime. In one Canadian study young adult offenders had an 11% reconviction rate compared to a matched sample of offenders who had been incarcerated and had a 37% reconviction rate [10]. They also found that restorative justice to be more effective and reduce recidivism when applied to more serious crimes with a personal victim than for crimes without them. Sherman and Strang also found that when restorative justice was offered to arrestees before charges were filed almost twice as many and up to four times as many offenses were brought to justice. This was due to the fact that restorative justice requires that the responsible youth admit guilt whereas in a criminal court proceeding the burden of proof is upon the prosecution[10].

A 2002 meta-analysis of 67 evaluation studies on restorative justice found that restorative justice programs were associated on average with a 7% reduction in recidivism. They found that restorative justice was effective on both juveniles and adults. Eleven of the 67 programs that were reviewed offered treatment to offenders, five programs included objective assessment of offender risk and need factors, and only one program met the standards of effective offender treatment. The program that offered treatment to offenders and met the standards of effective offender treatment showed a 31% reduction in offender recidivism.

Yet another meta-analysis conducted in 2005 that looked at 35 programs found that restorative justice programs on average yielded reductions in recidivism compared to non-restorative approaches and offenders who participated in restorative justice programs were significantly more successful at follow-up. They found that restorative justice programs are more effective at improving victim and/or offender satisfaction, increasing offender compliance with restitution, and decreasing recidivism when compared to traditional criminal justice responses [11].

Are crime rates for eligible offences in the targeted area lower after the RCC pilot is complete?

Many studies have shown that restorative justice programs have lower recidivism rates in comparison to other approaches. Due to this reduction in recidivism we would expect to see a reduction in crime.

Recidivism data is not available at the national level due to differences in collecting and reporting across states. The 62% one-year re-arrest rate is most comparable to the recidivism data collected by the RCC Pilot Program. We found that in 2014 there were 3,718 total juvenile arrests in the City of San Diego, and 1,229 of those arrests were for RCC eligible offenses. If we allowed all eligible offenses to go through RCC in 2014, and those cases had a 12% re-arrest rate and all other cases recidivated at the state rate of 62%, then we would have a total of 1,690 youth be re-arrested in 2015 instead of 2,305. That is a 27% reduction in the number of re-arrests for 2015.

Are the repeated offences for youth who complete RCC escalating in severity?

Of the two youth who were re-arrested in the year after completing RCC, one of the two youth was re-arrested for offenses that were escalating in severity. Of the youth who did not complete the RCC program and who were re-arrested in the year, 2 of the 4 were re-arrested for offenses that were

escalating in severity. These findings are based on a small sample of youth that were referred to the RCC Pilot Program; a larger sample is needed to establish statistical significance.

Qualitative Findings

The lower number of rearrests and recidivism found in the literature and the RCC Pilot Program data were mirrored in the qualitative findings from focus groups conducted in summer of 2016. The youth felt that going through the RCC pilot really helped them. They said that it taught them to have a more mature perspective, not to repeat the same mistakes, and to take responsibility for what they had done.

The youth were asked if they felt that if the RCC program works to reduce crime, rearrests, or reoffending. Some youth felt it was really up to the individual going through the program, but they all agreed that that going through the program inspired them individually not to reoffend. One youth said,

“I say it reduces it completely because from my personal experience it opens up your eyes and it’s like – I did something wrong, I was dumb, and I’m speaking for myself, obviously people have different mentalities than I do. But, I made a wrong choice, I hurt people, and I don’t like to hurt people. As a person who has been hurt, I don’t like to hurt people because I know what it feels like so that’s why I haven’t done anything since then. But, again, that’s just me.”

Other youth said that the opportunity to go through the RCC pilot program gave them a second chance and they wouldn’t go back and do something to ruin it. Some youth also said that they would have been worse off if they went through the traditional criminal justice system. One youth said, “I am pretty sure if I had gotten arrested or fined I would have been pissed and I would have still been angry and still would have probably went out and did something else, so it [the RCC Program] is good.”

When asked about how the RCC process compared to the court system, all of the youth were unanimous in their opinion that the RCC process was better than the court system. They felt that the court system made them feel like they are bad people, delinquents, exiled, and that society looks down on them. They also felt they were not listened to and were judged based solely on their case because the courts don’t take the time to get to know them as individuals or their families, and they wouldn’t have been given a second chance. In comparison, going through the RCC process they felt included, integrated, and listened to; that they weren’t just bad people, they just made a wrong choice. They felt that the process allowed them to mature and not make the same mistake again. They also said that through the RCC program they were able to solve their underlying problems whereas in court they would have simply received a sentence. This ability to come to the realization that they made a mistake and the opportunity to solve their underlying problems may be the reasons that RCC youth are less likely to recidivate.

Do RCC community participants feel that RCC youth will be less likely to re-offend due to having gone through RCC process?

The family and community focus group participants also felt that the RCC program was a better response to crime than the court system. They talked about the fact that in court and the criminal justice system the youth feel labeled and it brings down their self-esteem. One participant who had a son who had also gone through the criminal justice system said,

“When you get a chance to say I did this, this is what I am going to do fix it. It’s a lot better than let’s lock you up and you’re criminal and you’re in here with all these criminals, everybody here is a criminal. So, your self-esteem is really low and the self-esteem issue for me is a big part of who he is. It makes him a better person to accept responsibility for himself. Whereas in the criminal justice system, you did it, here’s your punishment, you did your punishment and you’re out there but you’re still the same person, the same person who is going to do it over and over again if something doesn’t change, And this program was that change for him.”

Assessment - Community Perception of Safety & Crime

Existing Conditions

What is the current community perception of safety and juvenile crime in City Heights?

According to the California Health Interview Survey, in 2009 69% of children and teens in City Heights felt safe in their neighborhood compared to 91% of children and teens in San Diego County [2]. Only 26% of the children and teens surveyed felt safe at nearby parks and playgrounds at night compared to 52% of children and teens in San Diego County. Parents with children under 18 in City Heights were less likely to report that they trusted their neighbors in comparison to parents in the County of San Diego or the state overall. Only 69% of City Heights parents said that their neighbors could be trusted [2].

These results were mirrored in the California Healthy Kids Survey administered in the 2012-2013 school year in City Heights schools. Only 55% of the respondents reported that they feel safe or very safe in their neighborhood, and only 49% said they felt safe in their school [18].

When the participants in the focus group were asked if they felt safe, there were mixed feelings. Some said that they feel comfortable in their neighborhood because they know how to defend themselves, while others said they did not trust the people in their neighborhood. Many youth described their neighborhoods as having a lot of adults that were involved in criminal activity. One youth mentioned a police officer being killed in his neighborhood, helicopters flying over often, and gang members and homeless people walking around near his house. The family and community members lived in similar neighborhoods as the youth, and most said that they do not feel safe in their neighborhood.

What are the health effects of community perception of safety and juvenile crime?

There have been numerous studies that examine the relationship between physical environment and health outcomes. In a literature review conducted in 2008 thirty-seven of forty-five studies found a relationship between neighborhood characteristics and depression after controlling for individual level characteristics. A study in Los Angeles found that individuals who perceived their neighborhoods as unsafe had a BMI that was higher than did those who perceived their neighborhoods as safe [19].

In 2011, a study of older Korean adults in New York City found that after controlling for individual level variables, individuals who were less satisfied with their overall neighborhood environment were more likely to have a negative perception of their health and depressive symptoms. They also found a strong link between perceived neighborhood safety and depressive symptoms [20].

A study conducted using 2008 Arizona Health Survey Data found that the safer an individual felt in their neighborhood the less psychological distress they experience. They found that relationship could be partially mediated by feelings of powerlessness, social isolation, and mistrust [21].

What is the status of these health outcomes in the community?

Specific data for City Heights were not available, but according to the San Diego County Department of Health Behavioral Health Brief, 7.5% of adults in the County experienced psychological distress in the

past year, and 2.9% experienced psychological distress in the last month. 29.6% of high school students reported that they felt sad or hopeless almost every day for the last 2 or more weeks[22].

Findings

What are the effects of RCC participation on community perception of safety and juvenile crime?

Restorative justice program evaluations have often looked at perception of safety for victims, or “people harmed.” For example, one study found that victims had a reduced sense of fear and anger and an increase in sympathy after a face to face meeting with their offender[10]. Another study found that the victims were less upset about a crime and less fearful of the offender after a victim-offender meeting than before the meeting[23]. There is however less information on community perceptions of safety, or the offender’s perceptions of safety. We believe this is an area that is important to study because in RCC the local community plays an active role in the justice process. Victims along with other community members are empowered to resolve their public safety issues and action plans for the youth encourage reparation to the community as well as the victim. Also, given the high crime rates in City Heights we were interested in how the youth perceived community safety and crime in their neighborhoods.

Youth in our focus groups commented on feeling safer in their neighborhoods after going through the RCC program due to their newfound connections to community members that cared about them in their conference. Some youth said that going through the RCC program has helped them feel more comfortable in their community. One youth said, “Before I would probably be a little sketched about my neighborhood and, iffy about it but now it’s okay, now I could walk around there like really positive and see good things, not bad.” He was able to feel more comfortable because a lot of the people in his conference were from the community he lived in. The program made him aware of the many community members that were both involved in the neighborhood and helpful in drawing out the positive in the community despite it being a high crime area. Some youth mentioned that they found support in their community through the RCC process because they were able to confide in their facilitator, and they found programs in their communities in which they could participate in.

Some participants felt that the RCC program would definitely make their community safer because everyone would be able to talk to each other and it would bring the community together. One youth reported that through the RCC program he was able to talk out his problems and get things off his chest which allowed him to see things more positively and alleviate stress and feelings of hatred. Others shared similar views and thought the RCC program could allow community members to “let off some steam” and make them feel like everything is going to be fine. Another participant mentioned that RCC could have a significant impact on the community by getting everyone involved and creating good relationships especially with police and school police.

Other participants said that it made a difference for them as individuals because they were able to participate in the program, but it would not have an effect on others in the community. They felt that the crime around them was committed by adults and it would be harder for others to change their ways. When asked if they would feel safer if the people who participated in their conference made up their community some youth said they would feel safer, some youth said it would make them feel the same, and one youth said it would not make her feel safer.

Assessment- Cohesion with Family and Community

Existing Conditions

According to the California Healthy Kids survey, 60.5% of students in City Heights area schools said that they feel close to people at their school, and only 34% of City Heights students reported that their school has a process to confidentially and safely resolve conflicts (like restorative justice)[18].

[What are family and community relations like for youth that have gone through the juvenile court process?](#)

A study in San Diego found that 75% of high risk offenders reported that they had their first house visit from child protective services occurred when they were 6 years old. About a quarter of the youth reported having suffered emotional (23%) and physical abuse (28%) in their childhood [24]. These findings point to non-cohesive family life for high risk youth offenders.

[What are the health effects of community cohesion?](#)

Social cohesion is defined as “the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper [25].” Social cohesion has been previously studied in families and communities and is associated with various positive mental health and physical health outcomes. Social cohesion was shown to be protective against depression, and other studies have shown that higher levels of social cohesion are associated with better physical health, and lower prevalence of chronic diseases such as hypertension, myocardial infarction, and stroke [26].

Findings

[Do RCC-youth perceive cohesion with family and community to be stronger following completion of RCC process?](#)

While the evidence is limited, there are findings to suggest that RJ improves school climate. For example, for a pilot study of a restorative conferencing program in Minnesota, McMorris and colleagues (2013) report increased school connectedness and improved problem solving among students in a six-week follow up. Jain and colleagues (2014) also note that two thirds of staff perceived the RJ program as improving the social-emotional development of students, and 70 percent of staff reported that RJ improved overall school climate during the first year of implementation.

Qualitative Findings

[Are community and family relations improved by RCC?](#)

When asked if relationships had changed by going through the RCC process, some participants said that they are able to communicate better with their parents, reflect on how their actions affect their parents and consequently make better behavior decisions. Some of the youth mentioned that part of their action plan was to spend more time with their families, which helped them talk to their parents more

and open up to them. They also mentioned that the program helped their parents feel happier to see that their kids were doing better.

Many of the youth said they learned patience and confidence. They realized that there are people who would listen to them. Others said that they learned communication skills that enabled them to express themselves better. This increase in communication skills could be a factor in the youth's improved relationship with their families and community. One youth said that he was shy and would look the other way if he had to speak to a large audience, but now he can look them in the eye and communicate with confidence. Another youth shared that he learned to shake people's hands and it was a way for him to practice showing respect and behaving more maturely. When asked about his communication skills one youth said, "I was able to open up after going through certain things, like before, I would shut down when anybody tried to talk to me or I'd be mad and I'd, like, walk away. But now it's like I can sit there and comprehend what someone's trying to tell me or I can go and communicate with them in a good way."

Some parents of youth said that they were more open, and talked to their siblings more often, whereas before they used to be more argumentative and aggressive. They also mentioned that their youth now know better than to do things that are wrong. One parent said that things are much calmer in her house. One parent said that she didn't see much of a change since her son is an only child, but she did see that her son is less angry. She said,

"At school he makes better choices. He thinks about what he is going to do instead of just exploding. He is not the angry person he used to be. He thinks about it and then he usually doesn't act on his frustrations like he did before; and that's what got him in trouble before was he would act before he thought and he is not doing that now."

However, when the participants were asked if these skills could transform a community their responses were varied. Some said yes, or it depends on the individual, and others said no. One youth was very certain that his neighborhood would be transformed by a more restorative approach. He said that his neighborhood doesn't have a lot of people that would say "Hi" or "Good morning!" or "How's your day?" but he was sure that his neighborhood would become friendlier if more people were able to go through restorative community conferencing.

Assessment - Education

Existing Conditions – Education

How many days of school did the non-RCC youth miss due to mandatory court sessions or juvenile detention?

We were not able to find data on the number of days of school missed due to court sessions or juvenile detention because it is not collected and reported by the school district. We do know that the RCC pilot program only takes place after school is dismissed and therefore allows the students to attend school regularly while participating in the program. Effort is also made to include academic and school based resources as a part of the youth's action plan. Typically, most interaction that youth have with the traditional juvenile justice system in the form of court hearings or probation visits is during normal business hours which likely leads to missed days of school.

Chronic school absence and truancy have been linked to a various negative childhood and adult outcomes, including low academic achievement, high dropout rates, difficulties in obtaining employment, poor health, increased chances of living in poverty, substance abuse, increased risk of juvenile deviance, and violent behavior[27, 28] . San Diego Unified School District mapped chronic absenteeism and found that schools with a larger proportion of low income students and students of color that much higher attendance problems, and that problem worsened as grade level increased [29].

What are the graduation and dropout rates for non-RCC youth?

In City Heights 67% of the population over 25 years old has at least a high school diploma or the equivalency, and 13.5% have at least a bachelor's degree. These are lower proportions than the City of San Diego's, where 87.3% of the population over 25 years old has at least a high school diploma or the equivalency, and 42.3% have at least a bachelor's degree.

San Diego Unified School District had a graduation rate of 89.4% for the class of 2014-2015, but the graduation rates at the two City Heights high schools are lower. Hoover High School and Crawford High School have graduation rates of 82.6% and 78.5% respectively [30].

San Diego Unified School District had a dropout rate of 3.5% for the class of 2014-2015, but the dropout rates at the two City Heights high schools are higher. Hoover High School and Crawford High School have dropout rates of 5.3% and 9.7% respectively[30].

A study was conducted by SANDAG of high-risk juvenile offenders in 2015 to understand their pathway to incarceration. In order to participate in the study the youth had to be at least 18 years of age or older and be under the supervision of the San Diego County Probation Department. The majority of the youth in this study were at-risk of not graduating from high school. When asked about their current school status, only 25% reported obtaining a high school diploma or GED, and 25% stated that they had dropped out [24].

Findings

How many days of school did RCC youth miss due to participation in RCC, and is it lower than court sessions or juvenile detention?

Almost all of the youth participants stated that they had not missed any days of school due to participation in the RCC program. Only one youth said that he may have missed one day of school.

All of the youth agreed that going through the traditional court system would have caused them to miss more days of school. A few youth shared that they have been to court for status offenses or tickets in the past and it took almost the entire school day. Oftentimes they were asked to come back the following day and they missed 2 days per offense.

What are the graduation rates for RCC youth?

Graduation rates for RCC youth were not collected and many of the youth were very young when they entered the program, so we do not have quantitative data. However, many of the youth who participated in the focus groups talked about their commitment to completing high school.

Many studies examining restorative justice in schools have found increases in graduation rates for schools that implement restorative justice in comparison to high schools that do not. One study found that from 2010-2013, RJ high schools experienced a 56% decline in high school dropout rates in comparison to 17% for non-RJ high schools. Four-year graduation rates in RJ schools increased significantly more than non-RJ schools in the past 3 years post-RJ intervention-- a cumulative increase of 60% for RJ schools, compared to 7% for non-RJ schools [31]. Some reports have also found that restorative justice in schools has led to improved academic achievement [32].

What was RCC youth's employment status before and after RCC?

Most of the youth did not have a job before or after participating in the RCC. This may be due to the fact that the majority of the youth were younger than 18. One youth did share that he had recently gotten a new job before the incident that led him to RCC. He said that the facilitator made extra effort to accommodate both his school schedule and work schedule. He said that had he gone through the traditional court system he probably would not have been able to keep his job due to the number of days he would have missed, and he probably would have gotten lazy and stopped going.

Another participant said that he did not have a job before participation but was now in the process of applying for jobs. He said that he learned self-motivation through his participation in the RCC and it has been helping him to apply for jobs. He also said determination and self-worth were important because he now felt worthy enough to go and try to apply for a job.

How will RCC-gained skills impact youth educational success and employment/income?

Self-motivation, self-confidence, self-worth, determination, and communication skills were some of the things that RCC youth said they gained by going through the RCC programs. All of the youth said it had an effect on their schooling. Before the program they were not as engaged, and after going through the program they looked forward to school more. One youth said, "Because back then I never used to do anything in school. I would just kick back." Some of the youth said that it made them recognize that they

should really study and graduate because they wanted to go down the right path. They also mentioned that it motivated them to succeed to make their family happy. One youth said, “RCC helped me motivate myself, like Francisco [The RCC Pilot Program facilitator] telling me about my work and what kind of college I want to go to and stuff really helped me, like, look in the text book and actually do my work.” They said that RCC helped make them aware of opportunities that they could have if they kept going to school and it gave them confidence to get better grades than they had before.

Some youth said that they were able to get a tutor or join programs at the library as a part of their action plan and it improved their schooling. Other youth said they learned to choose better friends.

One youth said, “Just self-confidence helped improve my grades just because I... had more worth I guess, I thought of myself as more worth going to school and trying to go to college instead of just going to school for your high school diploma and doing something after that.”

The parents said that participating in the RCC program helped their youth because the facilitators asked what their youth were interested in and were able to connect them to people in those careers. It made their youth feel that they can have future. One parent mentioned that her youth was truant often, but now he goes to the learning center, gets up at 7 am to go to school, and is interested in becoming a veterinarian. Another parent said that her youth already had good grades, but by learning to control himself it is helping with his education even more.

[How will changes in academic success impact health outcomes?](#)

According to a policy brief by the National Poverty Center, an additional four years of schooling lowers the probability of reporting being in poor or fair health by 6 percentage points. This means that if graduation rates were increased in City Heights due to restorative justice, then the percentage of people reporting fair or poor health in City Heights would potentially decrease from 25% to 19%. This would bring the percentage of people reporting fair or poor health closer to the averages seen in the San Diego County. They also found that people who are better educated are less likely to report a past diagnosis of both acute and chronic disease, and less likely to report anxiety and depression. In addition they found that individuals with an additional four years of schooling also report healthier behaviors. They are less likely to smoke, to drink a lot, to be overweight, or to use illegal drugs. The associations between education and health held up even after controlling for job characteristics, income, and family background. The differences in health due to education based on this study are summarized in the table below [33].

Health	
Heart Disease	↓ 2.0 percentage points
Diabetes	↓ 1.3 percentage points
Reporting fair or poor health	↓ 6.0 percentage points
Sick Days per year	↓ 2.3 days
Health Behaviors	
Smoking	↓ 11 percentage points
Drink a lot	↓ 7.0 percentage points
Overweight or obese	↓ 5.0 percentage points
Use illegal drugs	↓ 0.6 percentage points

Source: Cutler, D.M. and A. Lleras-Muney, Education and Health, in Policy Brief. 2007, The National Poverty Center.

Recommendations

The HIA found that restorative justice can have a positive impact on the health of both juvenile offenders and the community through a reduction in recidivism, an increase in perception of safety, increases in cohesion with family and community, and education. The long term goal is that the San Diego County Board of Supervisors adopts restorative community conferencing as the alternative to the court process and traditional sentencing for all RCC eligible cases. In order to move to this broader goal, we have the following recommendations.

The County of San Diego should continue to implement and expand Restorative Community Conferencing in San Diego.

Results from a review of the literature, preliminary evidence from the RCC pilot program, and focus groups found that youth who go through a restorative justice program have lower rates of recidivism when compared to youth who go through the traditional criminal justice system. Based on these findings, the County of San Diego should continue to fund implementation of restorative community conferencing.

Youth who completed the RCC pilot program had a 12% re-arrest rate one year after program completion. Youth who were arrested for similar crimes and were referred to the RCC pilot program, but did not complete the program had a one year re-arrest rate of 24%. These results are promising but are not statistically significant due to the small sample size. Despite high juvenile arrest rates in San Diego, the RCC pilot program did not receive a steady flow of referrals.

A comprehensive impact evaluation plan and process evaluation for restorative justice should be laid out before expansion.

The current pilot program data and the HIA shows that restorative justice may be a better alternative to the traditional criminal justice system due to lower recidivism rates as well as better health outcomes for the youth, the victim and the community. However, a continued process evaluation needs to be completed to ensure proper implementation and to maintain steady referrals, and a formal impact evaluation should be laid out in order to create systems to collect the necessary data to determine the efficacy of the program.

Anecdotal evidence from the focus groups around education is promising, but we recommend that quantitative data on school attendance, grades, and graduation rates be collected by the implementing organization or an outside evaluator in order to assess the effect of restorative justice on education. Also, while there is evidence of a strong correlation between school suspensions and expulsions, incarceration, and dropout through an examination of the cross sectional data, there haven't been any prospective studies conducted in San Diego. A prospective study examining school discipline, criminal justice involvement, and educational outcomes could be useful in painting a clearer picture of the school to prison pipeline in San Diego.

Expansion of the RCC pilot program should be focused on high crime areas in order to see the largest health impacts.

The HIA found that not feeling safe was associated with higher rates of psychological distress, depressive symptoms, and weight gain. It was also important to note that these studies were based on individual perception of safety which may be an easier target for intervention than actual crime. According to the literature, perceptions of safety could be mediated by powerlessness, social isolation, and mistrust. We found in the focus group that some youth felt safer after going through the program because they were introduced to people from their communities and neighborhood in their conferences. It allowed them to see that there are people in their community who care about them and who they could go to for help, which made them feel safer in their neighborhoods. This ability to make participants feel safer in their neighborhoods despite high rates of crime distinguished the RCC pilot program as being instrumental in impacting the health of individuals going through the program.

Communities that are targeted for expansion should receive extensive outreach and trainings in restorative justice.

We also recommend that communities that are targeted for expansion should receive extensive outreach and trainings in restorative justice in order to increase knowledge of the program and to create a larger pool of trained community members ready to participate in the program.

The RCC pilot program should continue to strengthen relationships with professionals from fields of study that youth are interested in and continue to include these professionals in community conferences.

According to the literature review, youth involved in the criminal justice system are more likely to drop out of high school and not pursue higher education, which can lead to poor health outcomes. However, youth who participated in the pilot program reported higher levels of self-worth after going through the program. This, coupled with exposure to careers in which they are interested, inspired them to be attentive at school. Youth mentioned that having people from careers they are interested in participate in the conference helped them see themselves in a career and motivated them to continue their education and not recidivate.

Promote RCC with parents and families.

Youth and parents who completed the RCC pilot program reported having better relationships within their families following participation. The HIA findings show that the youth gained an understanding of how their actions affected their parents, and parents said that their youth were more open and communicative after the program.

Through the literature review we found that unstable family life is a predictor of high risk youth offenders. RCC mitigates that risk by increasing family and community cohesion. We recommend that the RCC pilot program use this finding as a way to promote restorative justice for parents and families.

Restorative practices should be offered in other community settings with at risk youth and families.

We found that participating in the conference using restorative practices resulted in an increase in family cohesion. We recommend that restorative practices be offered in other community settings with at risk youth and families in order to mitigate the effects of poor family cohesion. Restorative practices could be taught in court ordered parenting classes, to foster care families, and in other family oriented community services.

The County of San Diego should provide funding to community based organizations specializing in restorative justice to provide training for school administrators, faculty, and school police.

In addition to the RCC pilot program, some schools in the San Diego Unified School District are moving towards using restorative practices in classrooms. It is important to have trainings with all school staff, school administrators, and school police to ensure proper implementation of restorative practices and to find ways to refer school based cases to the RCC pilot program.

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Appendix

Research Questions

Recidivism	
Existing Conditions Research Questions	Impact Research Questions
Proximate Effects	
Overarching impact research question: How does RCC affect recidivism rates of participating youth?	
What are the current crime rates for eligible offenses in the targeted area?	Are crime rates for eligible offenses in the targeted area lower after the RCC pilot is complete?
What are the current recidivism rates for RCC eligible offenses?	Are the recidivism rates for RCC youth lower than recidivism rates for non RCC youth?
Are the repeated offenses escalating in severity?	Are the repeated offenses for youth who complete RCC escalating in severity?
Health Outcomes	
Responsible Youth: What are the health outcomes that are associated with traditional criminal justice practices?	
Family: What are the health outcomes associated with having a family member that is incarcerated?	
Community: What are the health outcomes that are associated with high incarceration rates and living in high crime neighborhoods?	
Vulnerable populations	
What are the characteristics of youth and the general population who live in the study area?	What are the characteristics of youth that are going through the criminal justice system? Are youth from minority backgrounds disproportionately impacted?
What are the demographics of the responsible youth in City Heights?	What are the demographics of the responsible youth in the RCC pilot program and are they similar to the responsible youth in City Heights?
How are the responsible youth that are committing RCC eligible offenses in City Heights being sentenced?	Would the youth who are being offered RCC be sentenced to juvenile detention in the absence of the RCC pilot project?
What is the percentage of City Heights youth who experience adverse childhood experiences?	What is the percentage of responsible youth who have adverse childhood experiences?

Perception of Safety and Crime	
Existing Conditions Research Questions	Impact Research Questions
Proximate Effects	
<p>What is the current community perception of safety and juvenile crime in City Heights?</p>	<p>What are the effects of RCC participation on community perception of safety and juvenile crime?</p> <p>Do RCC community participants feel that RCC youth will be less likely to re-offend due to having gone through RCC process?</p> <p>Do RCC community members gain a positive impression of RCC and does it contribute to a better perception of safety?</p> <p>Do RCC community members gain a better understanding of juveniles that commit crime and are they more likely to see these juveniles in a more positive light?</p> <p>Are RCC community members more likely to employ, assist or otherwise positively interact with youths after having gone through RCC process?</p>
Health Outcomes	
<p>What are the health effects of community perception of safety and juvenile crime (e.g., anxiety, isolation, mental health effects)?</p>	
<p>What is the status of these health outcomes in the community?</p>	

Cohesion with Family and Community	
Existing Conditions Research Questions	Impact Research Questions
Proximate Effects	
How do youth that have gone through the juvenile court process perceive cohesion with their family and community?	Do RCC youth perceive cohesion with family and community to be stronger following completion of RCC process?
What are family and community relations like for youth that have gone through the juvenile court process?	Are community and family relations improved by RCC?
Health Outcomes	
What are health outcomes that are associated with having a cohesive family?	
What are health outcomes that are associated with living in a cohesive community?	
How do improved relations with family and community affect mental health and stress levels in youth and their families?	Do RCC youth, families, and community members have reduced stress levels?

Education	
Existing Conditions Research Questions	Impact Research Questions
Proximate Effects	
Overarching impact research question: How would RCC affect a responsible youth's level of academic success and employment?	
How many days of school did the non-RCC youth miss due to mandatory court sessions or juvenile detention?	How many days of school did RCC youth miss due to participation in RCC, and is it lower than court sessions or juvenile detention?
What are the graduation rates for non-RCC youth?	What are the graduation rates for RCC youth?
What was non-RCC youth's employment status before and after arrest for an RCC-eligible offense?	What was RCC youth's employment status before and after RCC?
What skills are gained through RCC process that increase youth's chances of obtaining educational success and maintaining a current job or achieving new job attainment?	How will RCC-gained skills impact youth educational success and employment/income?
Health Outcomes	
What are the health outcomes associated with educational attainment or academic success? What is the status of these health outcomes for the study area and a comparison area?	How will changes in academic success impact these health outcomes?
What are the health outcomes associated with employment or income? What is the status of these health outcomes for the study area and a comparison area?	How will changes in employment status or income impact health outcomes?

RESTORATIVE COMMUNITY CONFERENCE PILOT PROJECT

STATUS REPORT
MAY 2014 THROUGH JULY 2016

AUGUST 1, 2016



**NATIONAL
CONFLICT
RESOLUTION
CENTER™**

Overview

The Restorative Community Conference (RCC) Pilot Project is an alternative method to address juvenile delinquent behavior. Unlike traditional juvenile court and diversion, RCC requires voluntary participation of the youth responsible for the crime, the victim, and the community.

After a series of meetings to prepare each person individually, all participants (including the youth responsible for harm (“juvenile offender”), their families, the persons harmed (“victim”), community members, and community based social service providers) convene for a confidential joint meeting, the RCC.

The goals of RCC include: 1) holding the youth accountable in a non-punitive manner; 2) having a victim centered dialogue; and 3) collaborative creating a voluntary plan for the youth to complete to repair harm caused to victim, community, family and self. If no agreement on the plan is reached, the case is returned to juvenile court.

Statistics

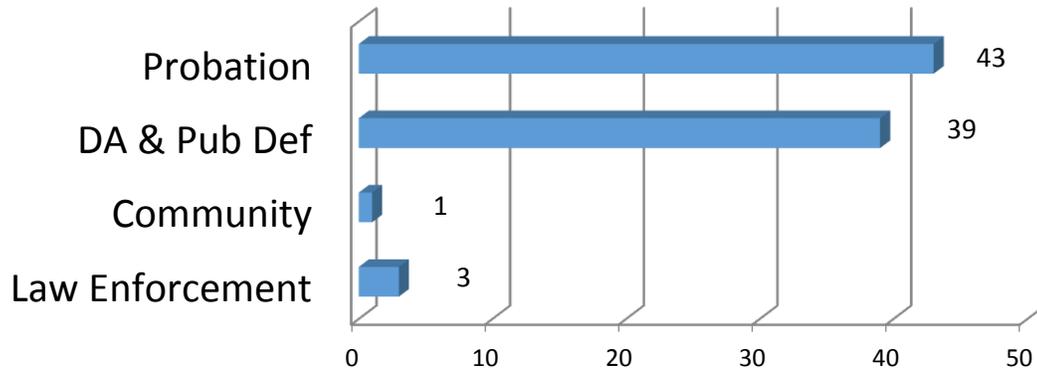
Total Referrals	86
Screened out⁴	42% (36)
RCC Agreement Rate	100% (50 of 50)
Plan Completion Rate	98% (49 of 50)

The statistics in this report include data from the program inception, May 2014 through July 2016

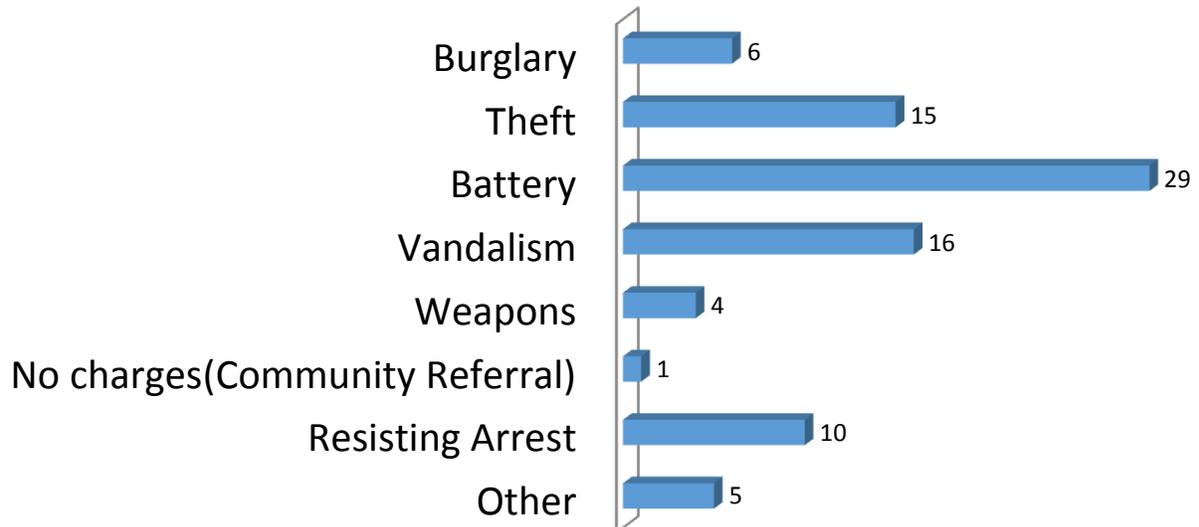
⁴ Reasons for screening out cases include: youth not accepting responsibility, victim declines, facilitator determines process would not be beneficial to all participants, youth or victim unavailable, and statute of limitations.

Statistics

Referral Sources

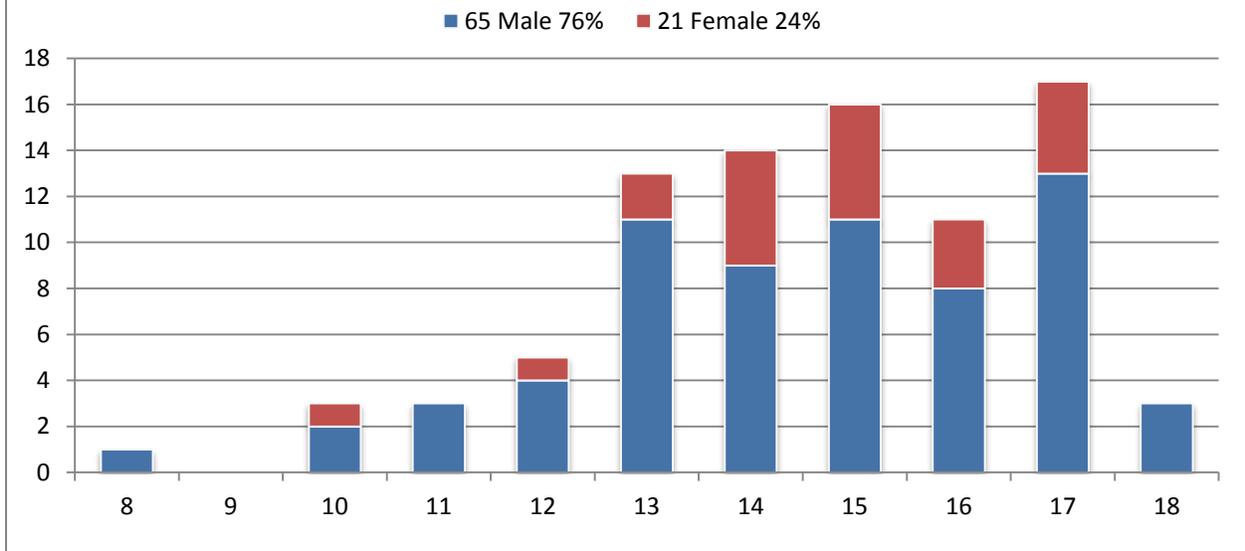


Primary Charges

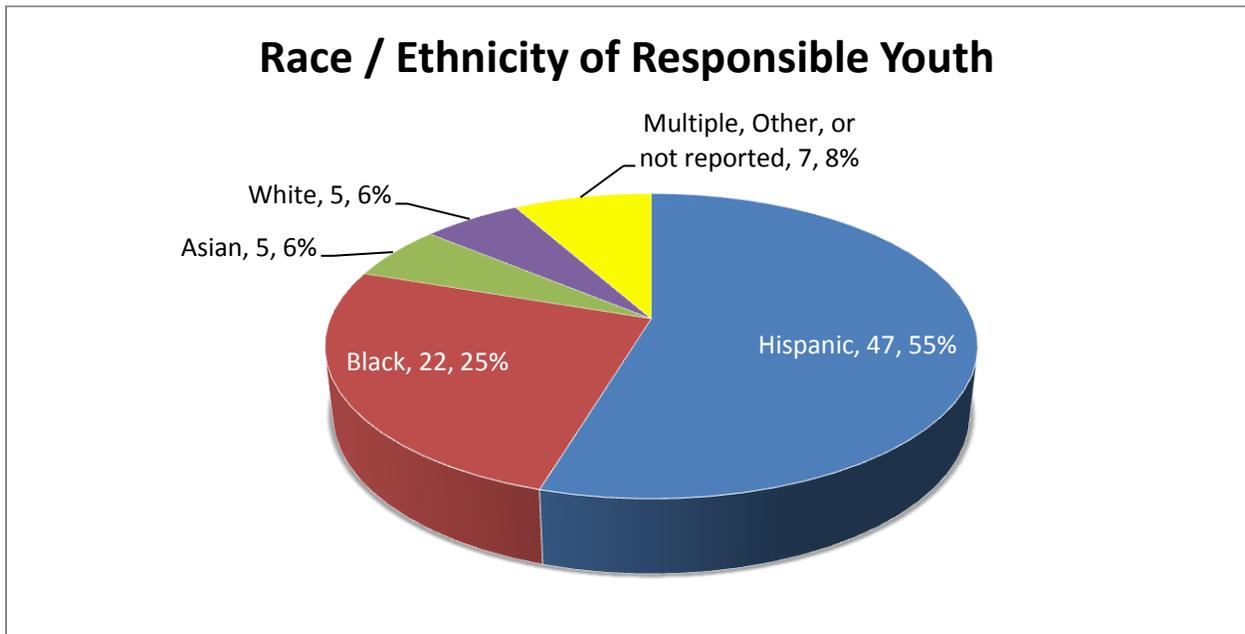


Demographics

Age & Gender of Responsible Youth



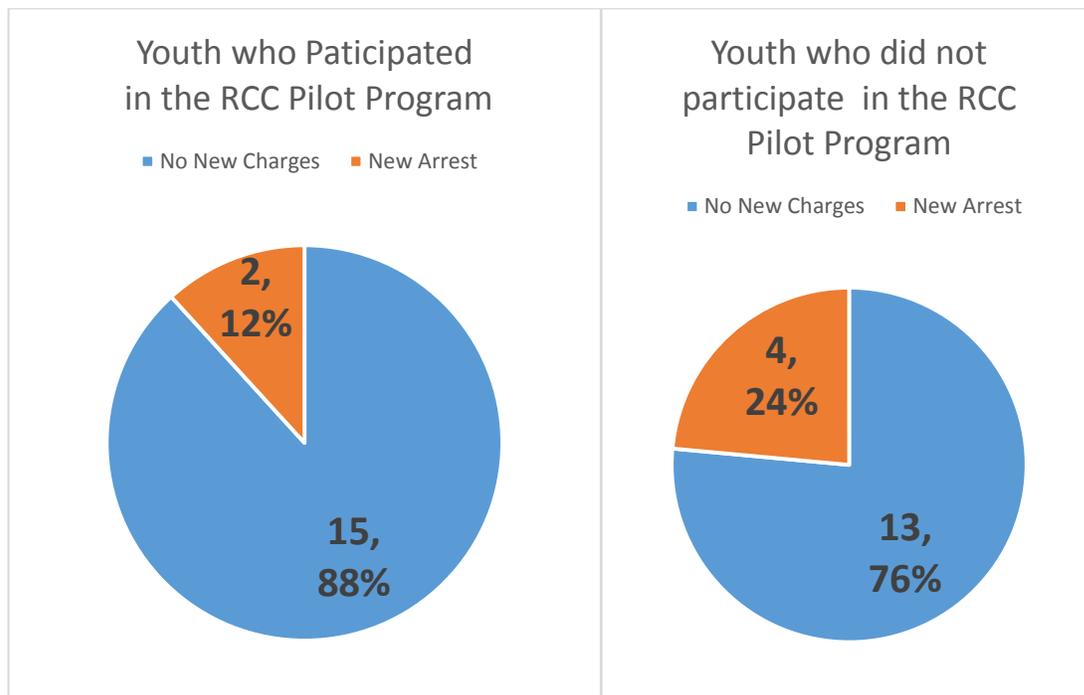
Race / Ethnicity of Responsible Youth



Recidivism

This analysis is of the 34 cases referred that have been closed at one year. Seventeen of the cases participated in the RCC Pilot Program, and 17 were referred but did not participate in the RCC Pilot Program. The reasons for screening out cases included: the youth not accepting responsibility, victim declined, facilitator determines process would not be beneficial to all participants, youth or victim unavailable, and statute of limitations.

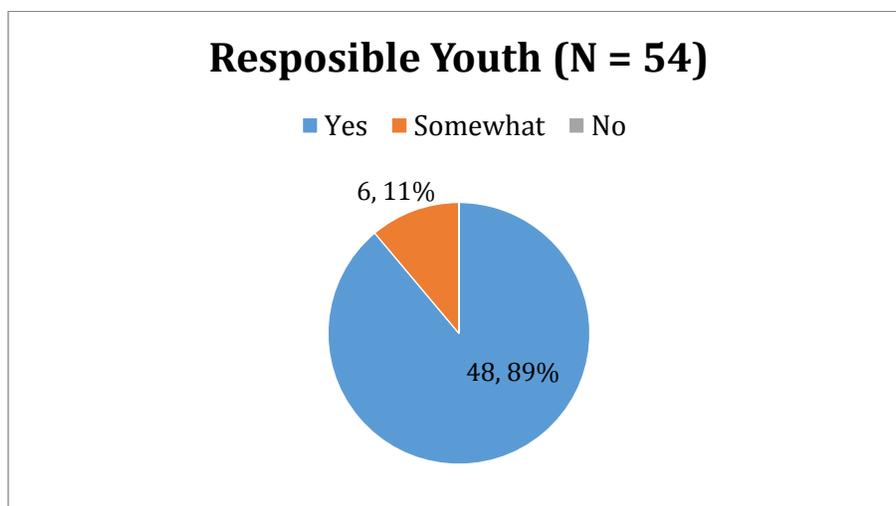
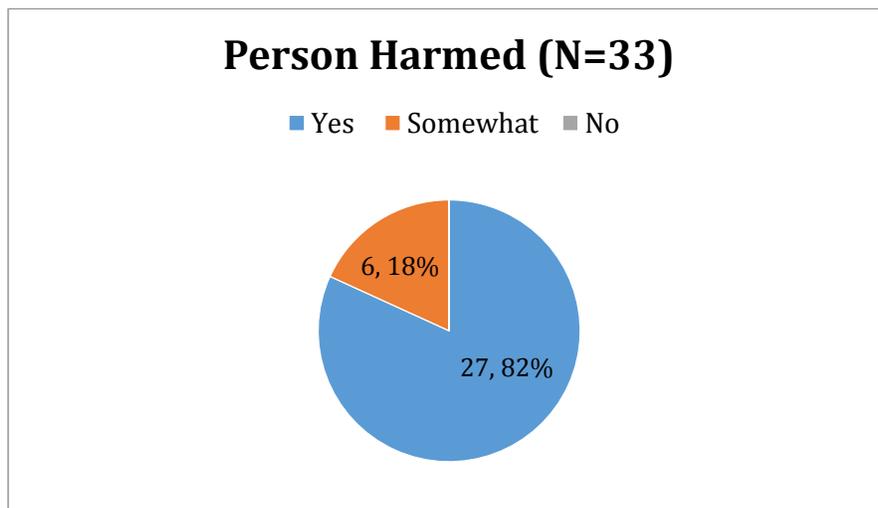
There were two new arrests within the cohort of cases that had completed the RCC Pilot Program which led to a 12% recidivism rate. Comparatively, of the 17 youth whose cases were closed without an RCC, there were 4 new arrests, 24% recidivism.



Post Conference Surveys

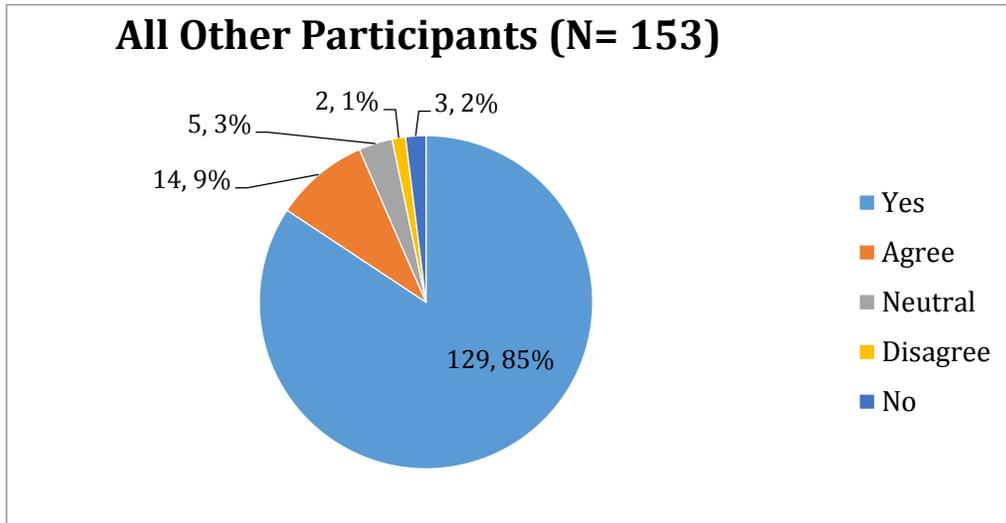
At the end of the RCC, participants are asked to complete an evaluation survey. The surveys are customized for: 1) youth; 2) person harmed; and 3) all other participants.

Q: Was the RCC helpful to you?



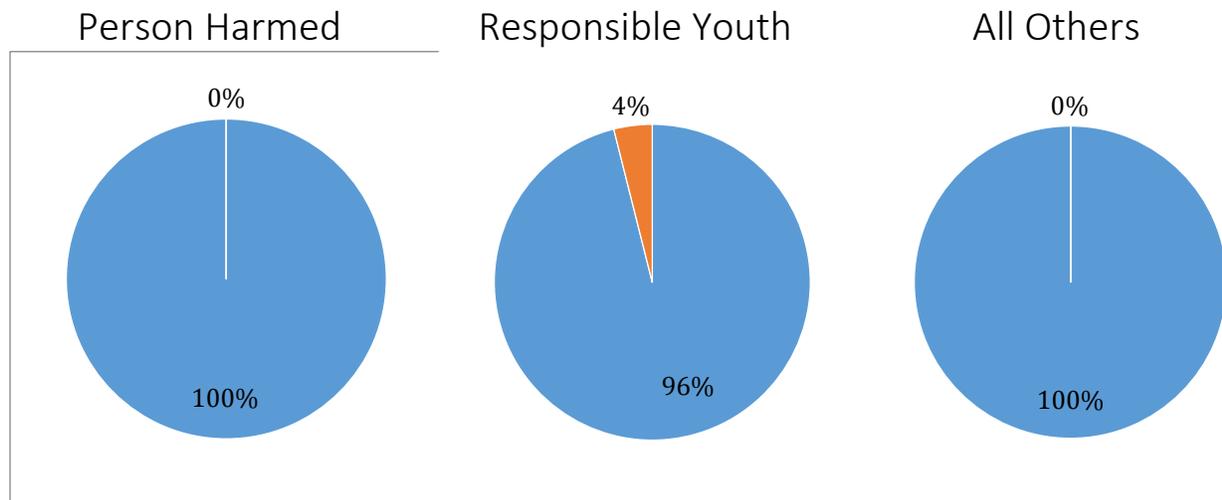
Post Conference Surveys

Q: Was the RCC meaningful to you?



Q: Would you recommend the RCC process to others in a similar situation?

■ Yes ■ No



Partners



Qualitative Research Findings: Restorative Community Conferencing Pilot Program

Two focus groups were conducted in City Heights with youth that participated in the Restorative Community Conferencing Pilot Program. Five youth participated in the first focus group that was conducted on May 26th, 2016. The focus group consisted of two females and three males. Three of the five youth had both completed the RCC process and action plan, and 2 were in the process of completing their action plan. The second focus group was completed on August 6th 2016 and consisted of 5 youth. An additional focus group was done with 4 parents and guardians of youth that had participated in the RCC program.

Recidivism

Does RCC make the person harmed feel better and feel that their needs have been met?

All of the youth said that they believed that RCC works. When asked if it made the person harmed feel better they stated that the person harmed is able to get closure. One youth said that it shows forgiveness and it helps the person harmed feel better so that they don't feel bad, down, stressed out, or depressed. They felt that when they have all the members talk about the situation it helps them feel better.

The participants from the family and community focus group also felt that the person harmed needs were met. They felt that it helped the person harm have input in the process, feel better about it, and know that justice was served, and feel that it would not happen again.

Does RCC teach a lesson to the responsible youth?

The youth felt that going through the RCC pilot really helped them as well. They said that it taught them to have a more mature perspective, not to repeat the same mistakes and to take responsibility for what they had done. Some youth also said that it helped them create a better relationship with their family and feel safe in their community. They also said that it made them feel safer being able to talk to people, learn to communicate and express themselves, and see how people act the way they due for a reason.

“Yeah it was good, it was—I’m pretty sure all of us, alternative instead of going to juvenile hall or facing consequences and it did impact my family and I _____[02:38:00] and stuff and just made me feel safer being able to talk to people and being able to communicate and express myself in groups or with just a certain individual, it made me look differently at the community and how people act and showed me that they do stuff for a reason, people are hurt all the time so.”

The community and family focus group participants also felt that the RCC helped the youth. They felt that youth learned that there were people in the community who cared about them, and it helped them open up, build more confidence and self-esteem. One family member said that the program taught her son to accept responsibility for his actions without feeling a criminal and that helped him be a more confident person.

Is it a better or worse response to crime than the court system? Why?

All of the youth felt that the RCC process was better than the court system. They felt that in the court system they felt like they are bad people, that they are delinquents, that society looks down upon them,

and that they are exiled. They also felt they were not listened to, and were just judged based on their case because the courts don't take the time to get to know them as individuals or their families, and they wouldn't have been given a second chance. In comparison, they felt that by going through the RCC process they felt like they were included, integrated, and listened to, that they weren't just bad people but had just made a wrong choice. They felt that the process allowed them to mature and not make the same mistake again. They also said that through the RCC program they were able to solve their underlying problems whereas in court they would have simply received a sentence.

The family and community focus group participants also felt that the RCC program was a better response to crime than the court system. They also talked about the fact that in court and the criminal justice system the youth feel labeled and it brings down their self-esteem. One participant who had a son who had also gone through the criminal justice system said,

"When you get a chance to say I did this, this is what I am going to do fix it. It's a lot better than let's lock you up and you're criminal and you're in here with all these criminals, everybody here is a criminal. So, your self-esteem is really low and the self-esteem issue for me is a big part of who he is. It makes him a better person to accept responsibility for himself. Whereas in the criminal justice system, you did it, here's your punishment, you did your punishment and you're out there but you're still the same person, the same person who is going to do it over and over again if something doesn't change, And this program was that change for him."

Do you think the RCC program works to reduce crime? How about re-arrest and re-offending? Why or why not?

The youth were asked if they felt that if the RCC program works to reduce crime, rearrests, or reoffending. Some youth felt it was really up to the individual going through the program, but they all agreed that that going through the program inspired them individually not to reoffend. One youth said,

"I say it reduces it completely because from my personal experience it opens up your eyes and it's like – I did something wrong, I was dumb, and I'm speaking for myself, obviously people have different mentalities than I do. But, I made a wrong choice, I hurt people, and I don't like to hurt people. As a person who has been hurt, I don't like to hurt people because I know what it feels like so that's why I haven't done anything since then. But, again, that's just me."

Other youth said that the opportunity to go through the RCC pilot program gave them a second chance and they wouldn't go back do something to ruin it. Some participants said that the RCC pilot program allowed them to see how their actions affected their family and society. One participant said "I feel like as youth we're not really aware of what we are doing to our parents. After the meeting I opened my eyes and knew I hurt my mom so much."

Some youth also said that they would have been worse off if they went through the traditional criminal justice system. One youth said, "I am pretty sure if I had gotten like arrested or fined I would have been pissed and I would have still been angry and still would have probably went out and did something else, so it [the RCC Program] is good."

How do you think having the opportunity to go through RCC makes youth feel?

Many youth said that they felt secure and supported because the facilitators and people in the conference let them know that they have made mistakes as well. They also said that they felt respected, on the same level as everyone else, and not looked down upon or thrown out. One participant said she felt that sad for the other victim (empathy). Some youth said they felt scared because they realized that they could be going through the traditional criminal justice system. Another youth mentioned that he felt accomplished for having completed the program.

How do you think the court process makes youth feel?

While the youth felt positively during the RCC program, they said that their interaction with the courts made them feel dehumanized, bored, labeled, scared, and nervous. They felt that they would get punished no matter what. One youth said, “No matter what you always get punished. Probation or juvie you just take the lesser of two evils.” Other youth mentioned that they already have low self-esteem but going through the court system would break their confidence. A lot of the youth felt that in court they were judged and defined by their crime, and were not seen as individual.

“It makes it worse because they look at you like, they look at the file, and they don’t care, just that you messed up. We don’t get a second chance. I think it’s so hard for most of us because we come from this type of community to open up to certain people. It’s so hard to let people in. People just think – oh, this kid has a bad attitude, this kid has problems, when they don’t even know what you’re going through. For example, this kid probably messes up because of always being molested or something, but they don’t know that. They would know that if they took the time to actually try to know.”

A lot of the youth mentioned that they felt bored and disengaged from the court process and were just waiting for their sentence. One youth said,

“They don’t really care what you do or what you did just as long as you get – like you pay the price for what you did. It’s kind of like wouldn’t say worthless all the way, but somewhere in between that like your just...another person like they don’t really care about what you do or what you did like you’re nothing.”

One parent shared that when her son went into the criminal justice system he was angry and when he came out he was probably worse than when he went in. Some parents said court was intimidating, others said that they weren’t involved in the court process.

For a young person who already has experienced a lot of trauma or other really challenging situations in their lives, could the court system make it worse?

All of the youth said that the court system would definitely make the lives of someone who had already experienced a lot of trauma worse. Many of the youth shared stories of the trauma and challenging situations in their lives and how going through the RCC process helped them deal with their underlying issues and significantly change their lives.

One participant said of the girl involved in her case,

“With her whole backstory if she would have went there she would have gotten way more mad and stuff, like they wouldn’t hear her out... It probably would have made her madder at the world.”

Another youth said,

“I’ll speak personally because I’ve been through trauma...I grew up with a lot of anger towards everybody. I was a very angry person. I hated everybody. I didn’t talk to anybody. I’d get home, I’d close my door, and I’d be in my room all day. I had anxiety. I had depression, and I was extremely angry. Now going through a court system would totally make that worse because 1) I’m already angry at everybody. I already hate everybody. I wish everybody was dead. I’m being honest. Ok, this is how I was. If I met you before, I didn’t care who you were. I’ll be honest. If I went through a court system, I see this judge, I hate this judge already because he is going to determine where I go. I know I already did something bad so I know it’s not going to be good. Then I meet people who give me attitude for no reason and that agitates me more, which makes me more angry, and then they’re going to use that against me. But they don’t know what I’ve been through, or what I’m going through, and how it is going to affect me later on.”

Some parents said that the court system can just add to the trauma that they have had in their life because going through that process can be traumatic as well. They felt that the court system may not account for what the youth is thinking, feeling, or why they did it. Other parents said that there wasn’t anything positive about going through the court system. They just got through it and went home.

Safety

Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?

When the participants in the focus group were asked if they felt safe, there were mixed feelings because the youth lived in different areas. Some said that feel comfortable in their neighborhood because they know how to defend themselves, but others said that they did not trust the people in their neighborhood.

Many youth described their neighborhoods as having a lot of adults that were involved in criminal activity. One youth mentioned a police officer being killed in his neighborhood, helicopters flying over often, and gang members and homeless people walking around near his house. Many of the youth live in similar high crime areas, while others live in somewhat safer neighborhoods.

The family and community members lived in similar neighborhoods as the youth, and most said that they do not feel safe in their neighborhood.

How do you think that going through RCC impacts how you feel about your safety in your neighborhood and community?

Some youth said that going through the RCC program has helped them feel more comfortable in their community. One youth said, “Before I would probably be a little sketched about my neighborhood and like iffy about it but now it’s like, it’s okay, now I could walk around there like really positive and see good things not bad.” He was able to feel more comfortable because a lot of the people in his

conference were from the community that he lived in. The program made him aware of the many community members that were both involved in the neighborhood and helped him to see the positive in his community. Some youth mentioned that they found support in their community through the RCC process because they were able to confide in their facilitator, and they found programs they could participate in.

If everyone or many people in your neighborhood went through RCC, would that make you feel safer or less safe?

Some participants said that it would definitely make their community safer because everyone would be able to talk to each other and it would bring the community together. One youth said that through the RCC program he was able to talk out his problems and get things off his chest that allowed him to see things more positively and get rid of stress and feelings of hatred. Others shared similar views and thought the RCC program could let community members let off some steam and make them feel like everything is going to be ok. Another participant mentioned that RCC could have a huge impact by having everyone involved and it could create good relationships especially with police and school police.

Other participants said that it made a difference for them as individuals because they were able to participate in the program, but it would not have an effect on others in the community. They felt that the crime around them was committed by adults and it would be harder for others to change their ways. When asked if they would feel safer if the people who participated in their conference made up their community some youth said they would feel safer, some youth said it would make them feel the same, and one youth said it would not make her feel safer.

The family and community members shared that they didn't feel that youth were the ones making them feel unsafe. They felt that the problem was the adults in the neighborhood.

Cohesion with Family and Community

Do you think you bring any of these RJ skills home and use them with your family? With your community?

Many of the youth said they learned patience, confidence, and that there are people that would listen to them. Others said that they learned communication skills and were better able to express themselves. One youth said that he was shy and would look the other way if he had to speak to a large audience, but now he can look them in the eyes and has better communication skills. Another youth shared that he learned to shake people's hands and it was a way for him to practice showing respect and behaving more maturely. When asked about his communication skills one youth said, "I was able to open up after going through certain things like before I would shut down when anybody tried to talk to me or I'd be mad and I'd like walk away but now it's like I can sit there and comprehend what someone's trying to tell me or I can go and communicate with them in a good way. A few youth also mentioned that they learned not to reoffend or make the same mistakes again, and not to be involved in conflicts.

Some parents of youth said that they were more open, and talked to their siblings more often whereas before they used to argue more and be aggressive. They also mentioned that their youth now know better than to do things that are wrong.

Is there potential for RJ skills to change a whole neighborhood because youth are learning them and then using them at home and with other community members?

However, when the participants were asked if these skills could transform a community their responses were varied. Some said yes, or it depends on the individuals, and others said no. One youth was very certain that his neighborhood would be transformed by a more restorative approach. He said that his neighborhood doesn't have a lot of people that would say "Hi" or "Good morning!" or "How's your day?" but he was sure that it could become more like that with more restorative practices.

How have your relationships with your family changed by going through the RCC process?

Do you feel like you get along better with your family and community after participating in RCC?

When asked if relationships had changed by going through the RCC process some participants said that they are able to better communicate with their parents, see how their actions were affecting their parents and make better decisions based on how it would make their parents feel. Some of the youth mentioned that it was part of their action plan to spend more time with their families and it helped them to talk their parents more and open up to them. They also mentioned that the program helped their parents feel happier to see that their kids were doing better.

One parent said that things are much calmer in her house. One parent said that she didn't see much of a change since her son is an only child, but she did see that her son is less angry. She said,

"At school he makes better choices. He thinks about what he is going to do instead of just exploding. He is not the angry person he used to be. He thinks about it and then he usually doesn't act on his frustrations like he did before and that's what got him in trouble before was he would act before he thought and he is not doing that now."

Education

Did you miss any days of school due to participation in the RCC pilot program?

Almost all of the youth participants stated that they had not missed any days of school due to participation in the RCC program. One student said she was hoping that she could miss school, but was disappointed that all of the meetings occurred after school hours. Only one youth said that he may have missed one day of school.

Do you think that you would have missed more or less school if you had to go through the traditional court system?

All of the youth agreed that going through the traditional court system would have caused them to miss more days of school. A few youth shared that when they have been to court for status offenses or tickets in the past and it took almost the entire school day. Often times they were asked to come back the following day and they missed an average of 2 days per offense.

Did you have a job before or after the RCC?

Most of the youth did not have a job before or after participating in the RCC. This may be due to the fact that the majority of the youth were younger than 18. One youth did share that he had recently gotten a new job before the incident that led him to RCC. He said that the facilitator made extra effort to accommodate both his school schedule and work schedule. He said that had he gone through the traditional court system he probably would not have been able to keep his job due to the number of days he would have missed, and he probably would have gotten lazy and stopped going.

Another participant said that he did not have a job before participation but was now in the process for applying for jobs. He said that he learned self-motivation through his participation in the RCC and it has been helping him to apply for jobs. He also said determination and self-worth because he now felt worthy enough to go and try to apply for a job. Also, he said that he has become more caring and that has helped him to be able to talk more and communicate well.

What kind of skills did you learn through going through the RCC process or completing your action plan, and do you think these skills will help you with school or work?

Self-motivation, self-confidence, self-worth, and determination, communication skills were some things that they youth said they gained by going through the RCC programs. All of the youth said it had an effect on their schooling. Before the program they were not as engaged, and after going through the program they looked forward to school more. One youth said, "Because like back then I never used to do nothing in school like I just kick back." Some of the youth said that it made them recognize that they should really study and graduate because they wanted to go down the right path. They also mentioned that it motivated them to succeed to make their family happy. One youth said, "Yeah, RCC helped me motivate myself, like Francisco telling me about my work and what kind of college I want to go to and stuff really helped me like look in the text book and actually do my work." They said that it helped make them aware of opportunities that they could have if they kept going to school and it gave them confidence to get better grades than they had before.

Some youth said that they were able to get a tutor or join programs at the library as a part of their action plan and it improved their schooling. Other youth said they learned to choose better friends.

One youth said, "Just self-confidence helped improve my grades just because I... had more worth I guess, I thought of myself as more worth going to school and trying to go to college instead of just going to school for your high school diploma and doing something after that."

The parents said that participating in the RCC program helped their youth because the facilitators asked what their youth were interested in and were able to connect them to people in those careers. It made their youth feel that they can have future. One parent mentioned that her youth was truant often, but now he goes to the leaning center, gets up at 7 am to go to school, and is not interested in becoming a veterinarian. Another parent said that her youth already had good grades, but by learning to control himself its helping with his education even more.