

CALL TO ACTION



2019

Kent Youth Call to Action – The Catalyst for Change –February 15, 2019

The Kent Youth Call to Action articulates the urgent need for the community in Kent to build on and expand existing programs and services for young people, develop new partnerships, and improve coordination of public and private programs to better serve our young people.

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**KENT YOUTH CALL TO ACTION – THE CATALYST FOR CHANGE –
FEBRUARY 15, 2019**

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INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, too many young people in Kent lack the social supports and face significant barriers to reaching their full potential. In 2018 the City of Kent convened stakeholders and led a process to engage community leaders, youth, and organizations to build a shared vision to address the barriers youth face. The process included efforts to identify goals and strategies that will ensure youth are safe and connected and have access to culturally responsive, engaging programs and services to ensure every young person can succeed and reach their full potential.

The Kent Youth Call to Action recommends strategies to build on and expand existing programs and services for young people, develop new partnerships, and improve coordination of public and private programs to better serve our young people. Understanding the interconnectedness of conditions that enable young people to thrive and ensuring we work together across sectors will achieve high impact results. The Call to Action focuses on youth 10 – 24 years of age with special focus directed to youth in the middle school years.

Background

In February 2016, several members of the community met with Mayor Cooke, Chief Thomas, and other City of Kent staff to discuss a substantial increase in youth violence. Following that initial meeting Mayor Cooke announced plans to implement a Kent Youth Initiative during her 2016 State of the City Address. Parks Recreation and Community Services Director, Jeff Watling, immediately convened key staff to discuss the opportunity presented. Over the next 5 months, staff from Recreation, Human Services, and the Police Department gathered data, researched how other communities were increasing positive youth outcomes, and held meetings with local community organizations to begin drafting an approach. The Kent Youth Initiative is a citywide, cross-sector approach to focus resources that will positively impact the community conditions that are most likely to ensure all young people, especially where disparities are greatest, thrive in life.

The internal team utilized the Forum for Youth Investments Big Picture Approach as a framework for moving forward. ¹ This framework suggests that to make broad-scale change that lasts, community partnerships must address the complex and interconnected challenges that impede progress. They need to take a *Big Picture Approach* to

¹ <http://forumfyi.org/thebigpictureapproach>

community change. A *Big Picture Approach* helps leaders build the infrastructure to manage change in their communities. This approach, created by the Forum for Youth Investment and Community Systems Group, follows five field-tested steps that align with the five steps of collective impact. (The Forum is a member of FSG's Collective Impact Forum.)



The *Big Picture Approach* guides leaders through the steps while adhering to these guidelines:

- Take a whole person or whole family perspective.
- Promote alignment with other community actors, across silos.
- Focus on local diagnoses of root causes and on broad systems change.
- Address immediate problems as part of an aspirational strategy for long-term well-being.

The *Big Picture Approach* works at multiple levels – from top leadership groups to neighborhood coalitions – and aligns the work across those levels by:

- Aligning** structures, goals and strategies.
- Assuring** mutually reinforcing interventions.
- Assessing** through shared measurements.

“We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends.”

-Mary Mcleod Bethune

Developing the Call to Action

A wide array of perspectives was sought during the development of the Call to Action. Input came through many avenues drawn from local and regional reports, and built on national research in what works to improve youth outcomes. More information about the local work and research can be found in the Appendix. Community input was gathered through focus groups, interviews, provider meetings, and youth surveys:

- 130 youth survey responses
- 3 youth forums
- 11 key informant interviews
- 21 organization survey responses
- 1 Safety Forum
- 160 individuals participated in Kent Service Providers Network meetings
- 19 Core team members met monthly

Learning from Local and Regional Reports and Key Stakeholders

In January 2014, the King County Council unanimously requested the formation of a Youth Action Plan Task Force and in April 2015, the Youth Action Plan was transmitted to the County Council. The Youth Action Plan vision states that "King County is a place where everyone has equitable opportunities to progress through childhood safe and healthy, building academic and life skills to be thriving members of their community." This vision encompasses principles that guide the work of the County: a commitment to equity and social justice; community-driven problem-solving; and a focus on early investments in children and youth to ensure that all children in King County have the opportunity to succeed in life. The Youth Action Plan is intended to guide and inform the County's annual investment in services and programs to ensure that all of King County's young people thrive. The Youth Action Plan inspired the inclusion of the Best Starts for Kids Initiative on the Fall 2015 Ballot.

In response to the passage of the Best Starts for Kids Initiative, staff from King County Housing Authority and the City of Kent convened stakeholders in Kent beginning in January 2016 to develop a plan addressing needs in Kent to align with the Best Starts for Kids strategies. Approximately 36 people from 23 organizations participated in the meetings. The array of partners (while not inclusive of every service, activity or community in Kent) convened an expertise in early learning, youth development, student academic success, community organizing, family engagement, dual capacity family engagement,

and whole family centered approaches. Existing data was utilized to inform the workgroup, including sources compiled from many recent community conversations and listening sessions, direct experience with families, and formal data available via Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Communities Count. The purpose of the Kent Best Starts Approach was to provide recommendations for the allocation of resources and funding to support capacity building, collaborations, and direct services. The document highlights the proposed overarching results desired for children and families in Kent and identifies potential activities to implement. The priority of the Kent Best Starts planning participants is to address disproportionality in outcomes for populations including ethnic minority communities, communities of color, immigrant and refugee, low-income, homeless, special needs, non-traditional families, incarcerated youth and other vulnerable and disenfranchised populations. (See Appendix for the 2016 Kent Best Starts Approach.)

The key recommendations from the Kent Best Starts planning include:

- Create a coordinated referral and communication system for “open doors” between institutions, community-based organizations and programs for young children and youth;
- Create a “Community Agreement” (set of guiding agreements) that describes the commitment organizations make to work collaboratively in the Kent Collaborative; creating a model for other collaborations as well;
- Create a map of services across Kent with gap analysis;
- Restorative justice practices adopted and used city-wide; and
- Trauma informed practices delivered community-wide;

In 2017, Best Starts for Kids partnered with Schools Out WA(SOWA) to complete an Out of School Time Landscape Scan.² The report outlined key findings, several of which were also heard during the convenings to develop the Kent Call to Action specific to the Kent Youth Call to Action. The SOWA Out of School Time Landscape Scan findings include:

The system wide findings include:

1. Transportation is a critical need.
2. Communities lack available space for Out of School Time programs.
3. Organizations need support around partnering.

Youth and Family Needs

1. There are significant challenges related to poverty and meeting basic needs.

² <https://roadmapproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/King-County-Out-of-School-Time-Landscape-Scan-Sept-2017.pdf>

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2. Mental health services are needed for children at all income levels.
3. Increasing family engagement and awareness requires a focus on service provision rather than traditional approaches.
4. Culturally aware/relevant, community-based programming delivered in multiple languages other than English is needed.
5. Parents want to support their children academically.

Programming needs

1. Organizations are challenged to find enough volunteers and staff, whether mentors, tutors, or program leaders.
2. Cost is a barrier to reaching low-income families, and scholarships present their own challenges.
3. Keeping kids engaged (beginning in middle school) is a perceived need.
4. Getting to scale presents several challenges for organizations.

The report also has significant information on system-wide recommendations and funding sources.

Youth Development Executives of King County (YDEKC) King County Social Emotional Learning Landscape Scan

During the 2017-2018 school year, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, YDEKC undertook a landscape scan to better understand how school districts and youth programs in the Road Map Project region (South Seattle and South King County, Washington) are addressing social and emotional skill development through the lens of a whole child, whole day approach. The scan aims to better explain what systems, strategies, and practices are in place that support whole child outcomes across the whole day, and what supports are available in each of the seven school districts across the Road Map region. A Kent School District Scan was completed in August 2018.

For young people to succeed in school, work, and life, they must have access to learning environments where every child feels safe, supported, connected, and inspired to learn and thrive. A rich and growing body of research points to the idea that learning is inherently social and emotional (Aspen Institute, 2017). For academic skill development to occur - especially for youth that have been marginalized because of race, poverty, or other circumstances - families, schools, expanded learning providers, and community members must work together to build environments that promote social and emotional learning (SEL), inspire a sense of belonging, and reflect and value the diversity of the youth we serve. This comprehensive approach to SEL that includes school culture and climate as well as classroom instruction in both formal and informal (expanded learning) settings, has led us to use the phrase “whole child, whole day” to describe the broader context of SEL-related efforts.

Taking a whole child approach means weaving social, emotional, and academic skill development together in an environment that is welcoming, supportive, and inclusive for all youth. A whole child approach acknowledges that learning doesn't only happen during school time, but across the whole day in a variety of settings. A whole child, whole day approach recognizes that families, schools, expanded learning providers, and community members must work together to build an integrated system of supports for our youth.³

Youth Service Providers Network

Beginning in October 2016, organizations providing services to youth in Kent were invited to attend quarterly meetings. The meetings were intended to gather input for the proposed Kent Youth Initiative as well as understand the local landscape of other resources in the community. Staff of the Youth Development Executives of King County presented information about the Youth Program Directory and those attending the meeting had the opportunity to include their organization in the directory. The Many Minds Collaborative provided an update on their work in South King County to catalyze a youth mental health movement in South King County. Many Minds is a non-profit collaborative of mental health leaders, providers, non-profits, educators and government officials in King County. The Many Minds Collaborative serve as a strategic resource that works *with* stakeholders to:

- Catalyze and facilitate cross-sector collaboration
- Spur innovation
- Encourage public and philanthropic investment

Shelia Capestany (King County's Strategic Advisor for Children and Youth) attended two Youth Service Provider Network meetings to provide updates to the planning and implementation of Best Start for Kids. Randy Heath (Kent School District's Executive Director of Student and Family Support) presented a report on school discipline. One meeting focused on summer activities for youth including identifying barriers to participating and identifying potential solutions to the barriers. At least four meetings were specific to developing the vision, goals and strategies for the Call to Action.

Community Youth Safety Forum

In April 2017, a Community Safety Forum was organized by three community members: Kendrick Glover with GEM, Tye Whitfield with Youth Wave and Brian Steward, Kent Parks and Recreation Program Coordinator. The objectives established for the Forum were to: connect and learn from each other and to identify and mobilize around clear community priorities. Chief Rafael Padilla provided current data regarding violent crime in Kent and

³ Road Map region SEL Landscape Scan | Youth Development Executives of King County | 9.28.2018

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the increase in youth/ young adult gang related activity. Youth representatives from Community Passageways spoke about their experience and what has supported them on a pathway to success. Their advice to the attendees included:

- Help kids who want to leave the street.
- Kids have a mindset of no hope. There is a constant cycle of the same people and the same streets. It makes you want to go crazy. When life really hits you, you want to hurt somebody but when you get older you realize hurting others is only hurting yourself. Life really hits you when you are by yourself.
- Everyone wants a sense of belonging / something to do. Need to change the narrative of what is cool because currently the wrong things are considered cool.
- Show a different path to getting success.
- Kids need examples of success stories after leaving the streets to be able to change their ways.

Following the presentations, there was dialoged to begin to identify needs of youth and generate next steps. There is interest in continuing to host Safety Forums at least 2x a year so that the community can have access to data about violence and people can share resources.

Insights and Recommendations from Cultural Communities and Local Business

"We must learn to live together as brothers, or we will perish together as fools." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In light of the significant racial disparities present in the data and the need for an integrated, multi-sector approach, the City of Kent contracted a consultant to conduct further interviews with leaders in cultural communities and local businesses in Kent. The conversations delved into core questions on the state of young people in Kent, particularly youth with marginalized identities based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and class. Community leaders shared insights on where they saw gaps and opportunities in their community, how local businesses and major institutions impacting youth (such as the City of Kent and the Kent School District) could better support young people, and what they identified as top priority action items. Business leaders also shared their insights on gaps and opportunities for youth. Due to previously expressed concerns about behaviors such as shoplifting and loitering, business leaders were also asked to share the gamut of positive and negative/challenging experiences they may have had with youth and their leading recommendations on strategies which could help address these concerns while actively contributing to the Kent Youth Initiative's vision of ensuring that "all youth in Kent have what they need, when they need it, to be empowered and engaged in their community."

Below is an executive summary of key challenges and recommendations shared by local leaders. These recommendations are based on the premise of a cross-sector approach and would not be feasible if wholly reliant on the efforts of any sole entity. For a complete summary of all challenges and recommendations shared, including potential strategies, please refer to the table in Appendix I.

Core challenges impacting youth

- **Youth are not centrally involved in developing policies and programs that impact them.** While there are a few existing structures for youth input built into core community and city functions, these groups tend to attract youth from the same demographics and social networks year over year and do not represent the growing diversity in Kent. Their activities are more focused on youth leadership development and do not have significant impact on the broader community or systems change.
- **Silos exist between key players impacting youth,** primarily the City of Kent, the Kent School District, the Kent business community, and community-based organizations serving communities of color, immigrants and refugees, and the LGBTQ community. Both community leaders and business leaders shared that they often do not collaborate with one another by reaching out for resources (i.e. job readiness mentorships, employment opportunities, sponsorships, volunteers) or support (i.e. business referring a youth to services or support systems instead of calling police) because they do not know one another.
- **Mistrust also exists between some communities of color and the City of Kent and the Kent School District** due to past incidences of community needs being disrespected or disregarded. One community leader relayed an experience where a student in their community faced anti-Muslim harassment at school and when the organization tried to address this with the school and the district, they were disregarded. Undeterred, they reached out to the City of Kent in hopes of support or guidance on how to instigate change at the Kent School District but were told that the issue was outside of the City's jurisdiction – leaving this community with no avenue for resolution. Unfortunately, this type of interaction is not a singular occurrence and only lends to a greater shared sentiment that the City of Kent does not adequately advocate for and involve communities most impacted in institutional policies and decisions that impact them.
- **Lack of accessible youth-oriented spaces in Kent and lack of accessible transportation to existing spaces and programs**
Many youth congregate in places like Kent Station because there is a lack of youth-oriented, youth-friendly spaces in Kent. In addition, it is difficult for some youth and families to get to existing or even emerging youth spaces, like the upcoming YMCA, depending on where they live in Kent due to inadequate public transit routes.

- **The definition of public safety is too narrow** and is primarily interpreted as funding for policing and the criminal justice system. It often does not take into account nor address social and environmental factors that influence the occurrence of criminal activity. Instead, the concept of **community safety** should be considered, which is a wider approach concerned with ensuring that everyone has what they need to feel safe and stable in Kent, and includes prevention efforts, restorative justice practices, and cross-cultural education and programming to increase connections between the diverse communities represented in Kent.
- **There is not enough funding and support for existing culturally responsive services and programs and a need to develop more.** Communities of color, immigrant/refugee communities, LGBTQ communities need funding and increased visibility of programs and services that are culturally responsive, gender-affirming, and can navigate the often compounding impacts of racism, poverty, PTSD, migration, homophobia, and transphobia. Existing programs are under-funded and over-stretched, resulting in many people having to go outside of Kent for critical services – such as gender-affirming healthcare for the trans and queer community.
- **Parents and caregivers are not being actively engaged, respected, and supported in navigating systems impacting their children and family.**

The well-being of youth is integrally tied to their parents' or caregiver's ability to advocate for their needs and access relevant resources. However, many immigrants and refugees are unfamiliar with how to access and navigate various systems (education, immigration, basic needs, civic engagement, etc) in the United States as these structures were either quite different in their homeland countries or sometimes nonexistent. In addition, some communities have also experienced trauma, persecution, and violence at the hands of institutions which makes advocating for their needs even more fraught with fear. Therefore, it is critical that parents or caregivers are supported in understanding and navigating systems by 1) connecting them to culturally-responsive organizations who can understand their experience and help them navigate systems and gain self-advocacy skills; 2) working with institutions to examine how they can reduce barriers to services and create a welcoming experience for every community; and 3) ensuring that there are multiple access points where families can learn about culturally responsive resources (at school, local government offices, faith communities, etc).
- **Lack of access to stable pathways to develop work readiness and access living wage employment opportunities**

As the data conveys, many young people in Kent struggle to complete high school and lack access to multiple pathways for job readiness and future employment. Community and business leaders shared concerns that too much emphasis is focused on college as the only post-secondary option which is not the right fit for every youth. There needs to be more options such as trade schools, apprenticeships, etc.

Priority Recommendations

- **Youth need to be at the center of informing programs and policies that impact them.**

Youth thrive when they feel a sense of belonging, ownership, and worth in their community. Instead of creating new youth councils or other vehicles for soliciting youth voice, community leaders urged the City of Kent to reach out to existing youth councils and programs serving young people of color, such as the Arabic school or the Refugee and Immigrant Youth Advisory Council (RIYAC) run by the Coalition for Refugees from Burma. Partnering with these organizations would help ensure that future policies and programs reflected the diversity of Kent, publicly recognize and reinforce the value that the City of Kent places on community-based leadership, and would prevent the potential damage to existing community support systems if the City were to divert funds to its own newly created programming. Business leaders also encouraged outreach directly to youth, stating that “youth know what will be enticing and worthwhile to them.” They noted that some of the risky behaviors they encounter may be due to not enough high-quality programming for youth in the City and youth-friendly places for them to socialize, do homework, and engage in extracurricular activities.

- **Break down silos – build, leverage, and share relationships across sectors**

Youth and their families are impacted by all the major institutions and stakeholders involved in this initiative. Alone and disjointed, individual stakeholders can only do so much to mitigate the challenges listed above – at worse, they can even inadvertently become complicit in increasing those barriers. However, together and aligned, cross-sector partnerships allow a coordinated systemic approach to better supporting young people in our community and generating community safety for all. By building relationships between businesses and community organizations, the business community can increase their awareness of local resources to refer to and support, engage in partnerships that can help grow their consumer base and develop their future workforce, and when needed in incidences of problematic behavior (i.e. shoplifting, engaging in risky behaviors near/at places of business), offer alternative responses to punitive measures such as involving the criminal justice system. In turn, community organizations can creatively partner with the business community to explore the development of job readiness experience or employment pathways, leverage underutilized physical spaces in businesses to provide safe and constructive places for youth to socialize and engage in academic or extracurricular activities, and provide youth with more mentors.

Both community organizations and local businesses also cited needing stronger connections with the Kent School District, which could be achieved through programming like “coffee hour” for parents and school staff, “Principal for a Day,”

or institutions like the City of Kent helping to facilitate introductions. And while the business community at large shared a positive relationship with the City of Kent, there is still considerable trust to build between the City of Kent and some cultural communities. This could be built through quarterly events that convene and forge connections between City leadership, community partners, and business leaders, by City staff and elected officials visiting community-based programs and attending cultural events, but most of all – by engaging communities in policy and program development from the outset of those processes.

- **Educate individuals within institutions and the broader community about the histories, cultures, and experiences of the diverse communities represented in Kent.** Both business and community leaders shared that while there is general public awareness of the growing diversity in Kent, there is a need for more cross-cultural education, training, and story-telling to develop the type of relationships and open communication that lead to true community safety – one in which everyone feels safe and valued. Recommendations to achieve this included racial equity training at all levels of City government, training for teachers and school staff about the diverse cultures that their students come from - led by the communities themselves, and more community-wide gatherings, in addition to the Kent International Festival, that are designed in partnership with cultural communities. These events would help build relationships between community members, many of whom may live near each other but know little about the stories, histories, and experiences of their neighbors from communities of color, immigrants and refugees, and the LGBTQ community. Some possible ideas shared were a public-health oriented event like a community walk-a-thon with youth-led activities and free health screenings or new programming in Downtown Kent that could incorporate art and storytelling.



What Works

Positive Youth Development	Addressing Youth Violence and Gangs	Youth Employment	Youth Organizing	Public Health Approach
Engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups and families in a manner that is productive and constructive.	A balance of prevention, intervention, and gang suppression strategies is important for success in any community.	The Evans School is currently reviewing research, exploring opportunities to expand youth employment opportunities in Kent. Recommendations expected June 2019	Research shows that involvement in youth organizing contributes to the social-emotional and academic development of young people in powerful ways, while also promoting their civic engagement. ⁴	A public health approach that includes multiple, evidence-based prevention strategies can result in community-wide and sustained reductions in youth violence.

Youth Voice Matters

One of the core challenges identified through key informant interviews and through the youth convenings is that Youth are not centrally involved in developing policies and programs that impact them. A strong recommendation is that Youth need to be at the center of informing programs and policies that impact them. Youth thrive when they feel a sense of belonging, ownership, and worth in their community. Instead of creating new youth councils or other vehicles for soliciting youth voice, community leaders urged the City of Kent to reach out to existing youth councils and programs serving young people of color, such as the Arabic school or the Student Leadership Board run by the Coalition of Refugees from Burma. Partnering with these organizations would help ensure that future policies and programs reflected the diversity of Kent, publicly recognize and reinforce the value that the City of Kent places on community-based leadership, and would prevent the potential damage to existing community support systems if the City were to divert funds to its own newly created programming. Business leaders also encouraged outreach

⁴ Transforming Young People and Communities, Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

directly to youth, stating that “youth know what will be enticing and worthwhile to them.” They noted that some of the risky behaviors they encounter may be due to not enough high-quality programming for youth in the City and youth-friendly places for them to socialize, do homework, and engage in extracurricular activities.

Positive Youth Development

The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, a collaboration of 20 federal departments and agencies that support youth, has created the following definition of positive youth development (PYD):

PYD is an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people’s strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

PYD has its origins in the field of prevention. In the past, prevention efforts typically focused on single problems before they surfaced in youth, such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency. Over time, practitioners, policymakers, funders, and researchers determined that promoting positive asset building and considering young people as resources were critical strategies. As a result, the youth development field began examining the role of resiliency — the protective factors in a young person’s environment — and how these factors could influence one’s ability to overcome adversity. Those factors included, but were not limited to, family support and monitoring; caring adults; positive peer groups; strong sense of self, self-esteem, and future aspirations; and engagement in school and community activities.

Researchers and practitioners began to report that young people who possess a diverse set of protective factors can, in fact, experience more positive outcomes. These findings encouraged the development of interventions and programs that reduce risks and strengthen protective factors. The programs and interventions are strengthened when they involve and engage youth as equal partners, ultimately providing benefits for both for the program and the involved youth.⁵

Addressing Youth Violence and Gangs

The recent Juvenile Justice bulletin (PDF, 24 Pages), published by the U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP), presents a compilation of current research on gangs, including data on the state of gang problems in the United States today, why youth join gangs, the risk factors and attractions that increase youth’s propensity to join gangs, and how gangs form. The author examines how community

⁵ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>

members can begin to assess their gang problems and provide necessary enhancements to prevention and intervention activities. The bulletin also describes a number of effective and promising programs that may help prevent youth delinquency and gang violence.

The following are some key findings:

- Youth join gangs for protection, enjoyment, respect, money, or because a friend is in a gang.
- Youth are at higher risk of joining a gang if they engage in delinquent behaviors, are aggressive or violent, experience multiple caretaker transitions, have many problems at school, associate with other gang-involved youth, or live in communities where they feel unsafe and where many youth are in trouble.
- To prevent youth from joining gangs, communities must strengthen families and schools, improve community supervision, train teachers and parents to manage disruptive youth, and teach students interpersonal skills.

No programs have been developed specifically to prevent gangs from emerging. A balance of prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies is important for success in any community. Prevention programs target youth at risk of gang involvement and help reduce the number of youth who join gangs. Intervention programs and strategies provide sanctions and services for younger youth who are actively involved in gangs to push them away from gangs. Law enforcement suppression strategies and intensive services target and rehabilitate the most violent gangs and older, criminally active gang members.⁶

Utilizing a Public Health Approach

Youth violence is a significant public health problem that causes tremendous harm to young people, families, and communities. It's a leading cause of death and injury among youth and damages the physical, mental, and economic health of all residents. But it's not inevitable or unavoidable. Evidence from research and experience shows that we can prevent youth violence. A public health approach that includes multiple, evidence-based prevention strategies can result in community-wide and sustained reductions in youth violence.⁷

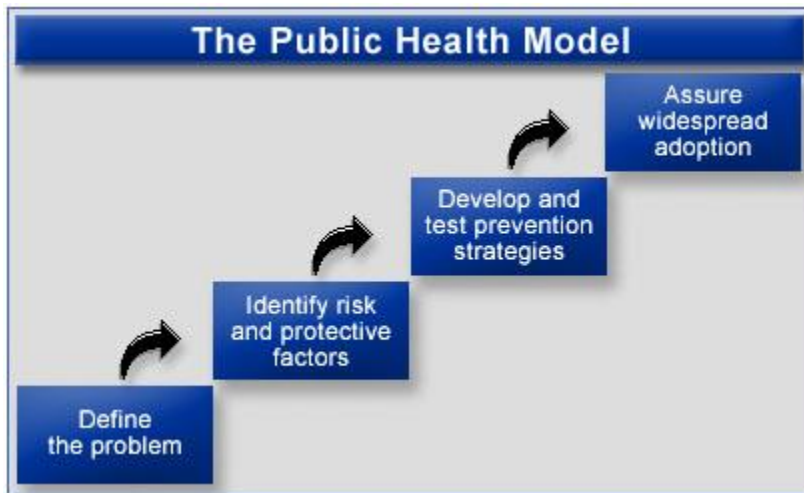
The public health perspective asks the foundational questions: Where does the problem begin? How could we prevent it from occurring in the first place? To answer these questions, public health uses a systematic, scientific approach for understanding and preventing violence¹. While violence prevention practitioners may not be involved in all steps, understanding each step and why they are necessary to assure the desired impact on community health is helpful in selecting and/or developing prevention strategies.

⁶ <https://youth.gov/feature-article/gang-prevention-overview-research-and-programs>

⁷ Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action

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The public health approach is a four-step process that is rooted in the scientific method. It can be applied to violence and other health problems that affect populations.⁸



Call to Action Purpose

The purpose of the Kent Youth Call to Action is to be the catalyst to changing the odds for youth in Kent especially youth dealing with stress and depression, lack of role models or mentors, need for volunteer opportunities, earning income through paid work experience and employment, and risk of gang involvement, drug and alcohol consumption, and other high-risk behaviors. We can no longer ignore the disproportionality in outcomes for youth of color in the child welfare, juvenile justice, education, mental-health, and health-care systems. The Call to Action provides an overarching vision, goals and strategies that stakeholders serving youth in the Kent community can align to improve conditions for youth and ultimately improve outcomes for youth. While this is not the first time a group of stakeholders have come together, this is the first document that has been developed.

This document should be used as a tool to:

- Utilize a data driven decision-making process to help communities and organizations move beyond talking about problems to taking action to solve problems.
- Identify and prioritize strategies to improve conditions for youth;
- Coordinate strategies to reduce duplication of programs and services, and expand on what is working;
- Secure funding and other resources to implement needed programs and services; and

⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/publichealthapproach.html>

- Track progress in implementation of strategies.

Our Unifying Vision and Priorities

VISION

All youth in Kent have what they need, when they need it, to be empowered and engaged in their community.

Priorities:

- Opportunities to learn and grow
- A safe neighborhood to call home
- A healthy lifestyle and environment

Why Us and Why Now

The data trends paint a rich and complex picture of evolving child and youth well-being in Kent:

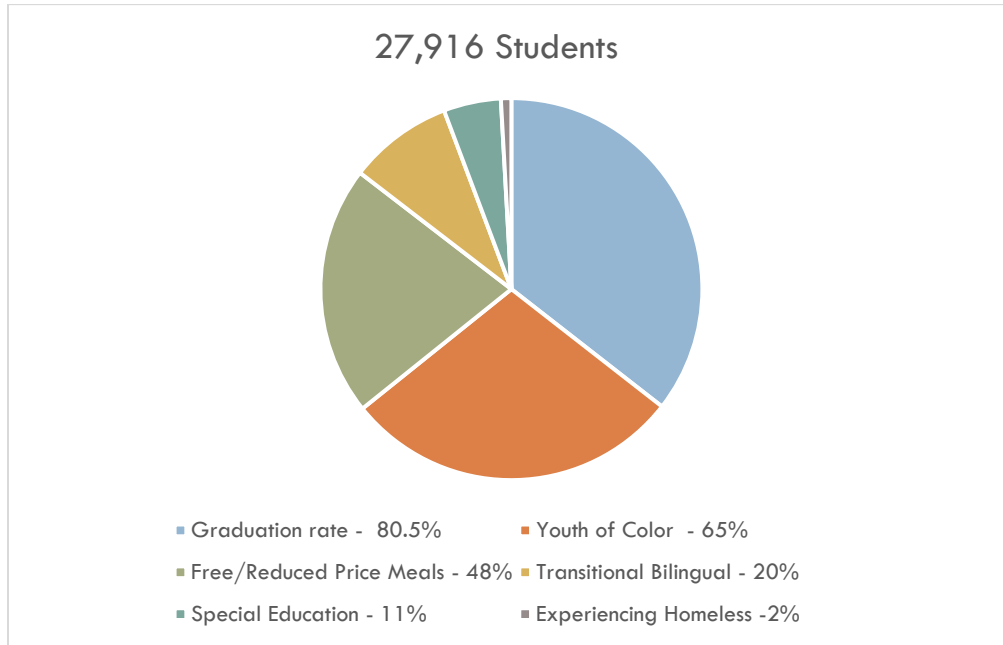
- There are too many youth in our community that have limited access to high quality culturally relevant programs and services;
- There are too many youth who are disconnected from school and work, and engaged in risky behaviors;
- There is limited coordination between providers and there are opportunities for increased partnerships; and
- There are unstable and underutilized resources.

Over the last twenty years, the City of Kent has transitioned into one of the most vibrant, dynamic and populous cities in Washington state. This transitioning demographic is largely due to the migration of immigrants, refugees, and people of color into Kent and South King County, as well as displacement from the Seattle area.

The demographics of Kent have changed dramatically over the past decade, shifting from a predominantly white population to an area rich in race and ethnic diversity, including residents reporting being Hispanic/Latino (16.4%), Asian (18.5%), mixed/multiple races (15.1%), and Black/African American (11.3%) based on the 2015 ACS. With over 127,000 residents, Kent is significantly more racially and ethnically diverse than King County overall. 34% of the population lives below the 200% Federal Poverty level. Approximately 48% of KSD students qualify for the Free and Reduced lunch program and 559 students

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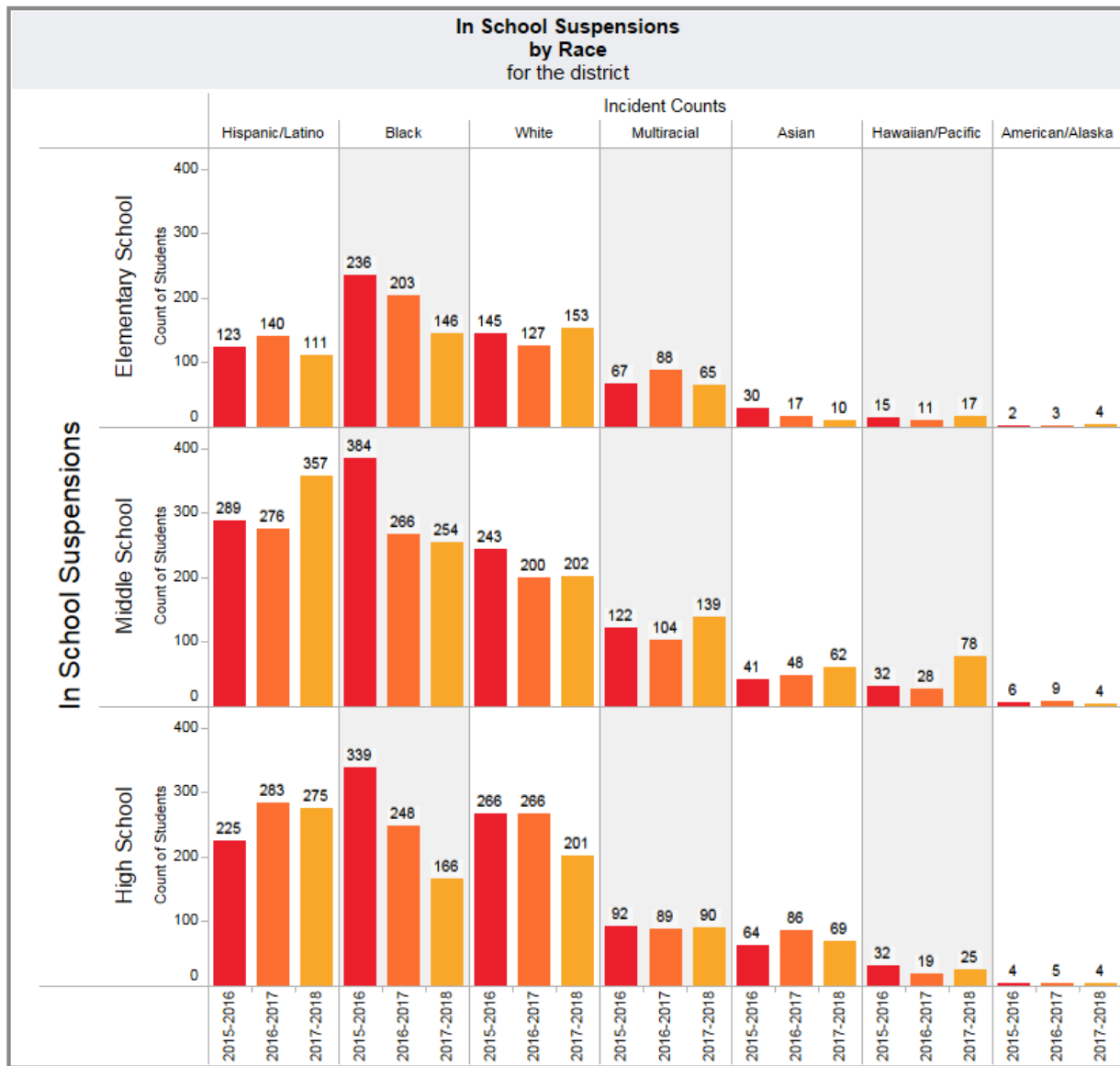
were reported as homeless in the 2016-17 school year. The Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate for the Class of 2016 was 80.5%⁹



The Kent School District School Discipline Report 2017-2018 presentation to KSD School Board identifies the following areas of focus:

- After a multi-year trend of steady decrease in exclusionary discipline there was an increase this past year.
- Both the number of suspensions and the percentage of Hispanic/Latino and Multiracial students who received suspensions have increased (primarily at the middle school level).
- Incident of "Assault of Staff" increased – mainly at Elementary (141 of 149 incidents that resulted in Exclusion).
- English Learners have highest suspension level in 3 years.

⁹ <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us>



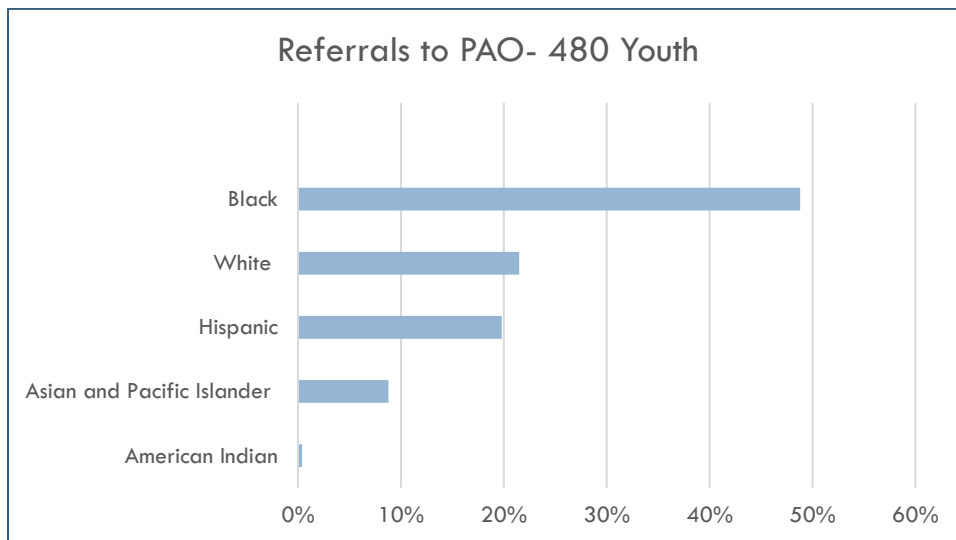
There is an inherent complexity in the data given that city boundaries and school district boundaries do not align, as well as the fact that low income families in particular have high mobility, whether moving from community to community, changing schools, or changing school districts. While the Kent and Kent School District data is highlighted, City staff are aware that youth living in Kent may attend school in the Federal Way School District, families living in Kent may attend schools located in Covington or Renton, and that youth living in Covington also attend schools in Kent.

Another important group of young people in need of supports are children and youth in foster care. Youth in Foster Care are, on average, two grades behind their peers. Nearly half of all youth in foster care require specific education and youth in foster care drop out of school at alarmingly high rates: fewer than half of youth in foster care graduate on time.

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¹⁰ Research tells us that this lack of education leads to further problems: nearly 25% of those living in foster care will become homeless as adults; 33% lie below the poverty line; and they will receive public benefits at five times the national rate.¹¹ In 2018, Treehouse Education Specialists served 45 middle school and high school students in Kent. During the last 15 years, 82% of all Kent youth who entered foster care were removed from their families and community and placed outside of Kent. Currently only 35% of the youth in foster care in Kent are originally from Kent. The other 65% are from elsewhere, meaning that they too were taken away. ¹²

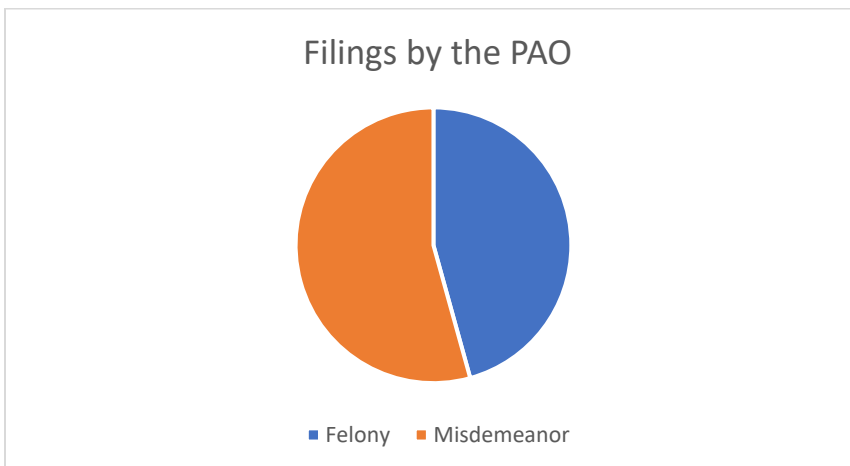
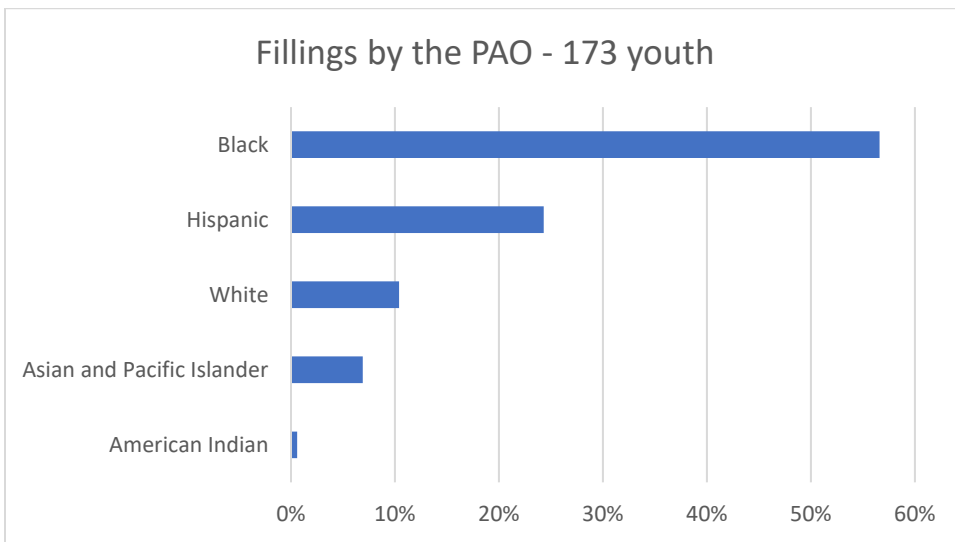
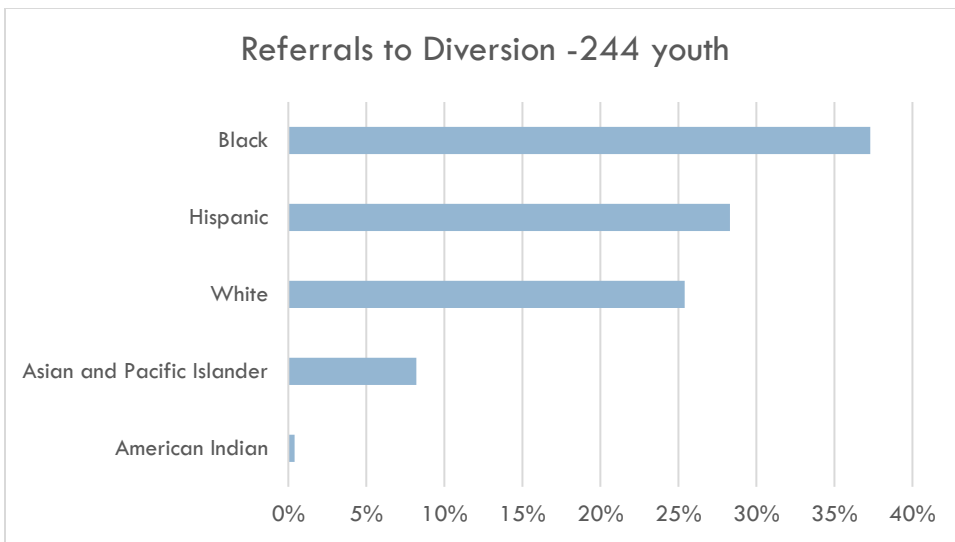
Data that requires focused attention includes youth that have been involved with the criminal justice system. In 2017 the King County Prosecuting Attorney Office reported the following:

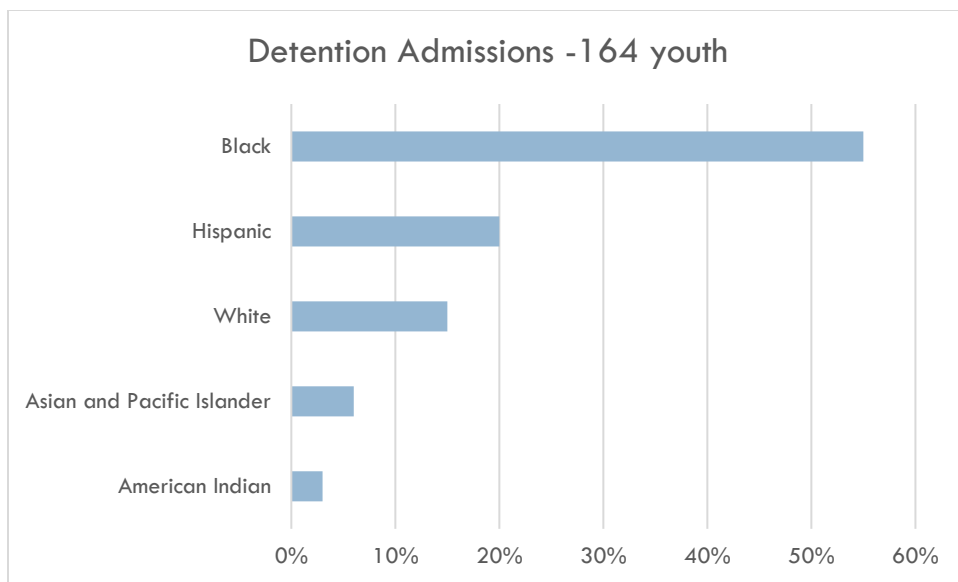


¹⁰ Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2013

¹¹ Casey Family Programs, 2011, Foster Care by the Numbers, Burley, Mason 2013, WSSIP Educational Outcomes for Foster Youth – Updated Benchmarks

¹² Keep Our Kids In Kent With MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™





Groups/Gangs and Youth Violence

Another important step in understanding the youth population is to review data from the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS). This survey is jointly sponsored by Washington State’s Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Department of Health, Social and Health Service Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, and the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board and has been administered to students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 every two years since 2002. Survey data are gathered from a simple random selection of public schools throughout Washington State. The HYS includes a number of questions that measure risk and protective factors for gang/group involvement, youth violence, and juvenile delinquency at the community, school, family, and individual/peer levels (Washington State Department of Health, 2016).

The Community Center for Children and Youth Justice, CCYJ completed a Community Assessment Update in June 2018. The following information is from this assessment.¹³ *Research indicates that group/gang joining typically begins between the ages of 13 and 18. However, youth begin “hanging out” with group/gang involved peers at ages 11 or 12; thus, joining is a process that can span from 6 months to 1-2 years (Howell 2013). Findings from a Seattle-based study indicate that 15-year-old youth were at dramatically increased risk of gang-joining – a year when students typically transition into high school (Hill, Lui, Hawkins 2001). Not surprisingly, there are numerous consequences of gang/group membership. Research findings show that group involved youth engage in higher levels of delinquency than their non-gang involved peers. In fact, group-involved youth are more likely to commit assault, robbery, breaking and entering, and felony theft; engage in alcohol and drug use; and have higher arrest and conviction rates (Hill, Lui, Hawkins 2001). These youth are also more likely to commit violent crimes and property crimes; are more*

¹³ LINC Regional Assessment, Maiké & Associates, LLC

than twice as likely to carry a gun, and three times as likely to sell drugs as compared to non-gang involved youth (Cahill and Hayeslip 2010; Spergel 1995; Thornberry 1998; Bjerragaard and Lizotte 1995). Moreover, group/gang involved youth are considerably more likely to be victims of violence than other individuals (Howell 2013).

Overall, HYS data indicate a larger percentage of 10th graders in the LINC districts believe there are gangs in their schools than the state average, with nearly one-in-four perceiving this to be true. Self-reports of gang membership among 8th grade youth was higher than the state average in all LINC districts except for Renton and Tukwila, with the highest rate reported in Kent. Among 10th grade youth statewide, 5 percent of youth self-identified as a gang-member (in 2016), with this percentage higher in both Federal Way and Kent. In Kent, more than one-in-ten 10th grade youth admitted to being in a gang. An estimated 800 students across the LINC region in grades 8 and 10 self-reported gang membership in the past year. Although gun carrying among 8th and 10th grade respondents is relatively rare, from 2.2 percent to 5.8 percent reported doing so in the past month. This equates to roughly 450 youth (8th and 10th graders) that self-reported carrying a gun for purposes other than hunting during the past month. Not surprisingly, across all analyzed categories, data showed significant differences in responses between gang-involved youth and youth who were not gang-involved. Specifically, comparison analyses indicated that gang-involved youth were considerably more likely to participate in problematic behaviors than non-gang-involved youth. Gang-involved youth were two to four times more likely to engage in physical fights, and seven-to-ten times more likely to carry a handgun on school property (numbers varied according to grade level, with highest numbers reported at the 8th grade level). Students that admitted group involvement were also less likely to engage in school and were more likely to perceive laws and norms favorable to drug-use as compared to non-group involved youth.

In developing a community wide plan, it is important to understand the level of services and programs available to youth and families. There are multiple organizations, partnerships, and regional entities focused on improving youth outcomes. Included in the Appendix is a Local and Regional Boards, Coalitions and Entities Landscape. Youth Development Executives of King County (YDEKC) created the Youth Program Directory which is currently hosted by 2-1-1. The Youth Program Directory strives to be a comprehensive, accessible, and timely source of information about youth programs and services available across King County.¹⁴ During the action plan development, service providers often highlighted the lack of awareness and availability of programs available to youth, lack of transportation options, and the need for facilities to host programs as needs within the community.

¹⁴ <http://youthprogramdirectory.org/about-us/>

Values Guiding the Kent Call to Action

Youth Voice: We honor the statement, "Nothing about us without us."

Race and Social Justice: We are committed to addressing the social inequities that make disparities more likely in certain communities and/or groups of people. The Call to Action prioritizes a focus on working to create a city where race, the neighborhood you live in, or the language you speak do not predict outcomes.

Community Engagement: The community has to be involved in caring for its youth, and the success of a community depends on including those most affected in defining the problem and shaping priorities.

Innovation: The status quo is not acceptable if it is not improving the lives of youth in Kent. We strive to think outside the box.

Shared Leadership: Community leadership ensures that strategies fit with local culture, history and context. A community is best able to meet the needs of young people through strong partnerships with local organizations and groups that have deep roots in the communities they serve.

Multi-Sector Collaboration: The notion that no one organization can meet the needs of all members of the community or address all the challenges facing Kent is reflected in the strategies. More can be achieved together than alone. By leveraging relationships among various sectors and drawing upon our collective knowledge, the goals set forth in this Call to Action will be more achievable.

Integrated Approach: Comprehensive, mutually-supportive strategies have greater long-term impact, and the activities presented in this Plan are designed to align and support other initiatives in King County, Washington state, and perhaps even nationally.

Efforts across a Continuum: The partners involved in the action plan are committed to ensuring that the strategies to support youth and young adults' successful transition to adulthood cover the continuum of promotion, prevention and intervention; youth development and youth organizing; and services and system change. There is an intentional focus to address gaps and leverage additional resources as well as to improve coordination and alignment.

Goals, Strategies, and Measures

Results: Improve health, academic, and economic outcomes for youth; and youth are engaged in and have positive attachment to community.

Goals

Goal 1: Build on and expand existing partnerships, programs and services for young people and coordinate public and private programs to better serve our young people.

Goal 2: Children, youth and families access and actively participate in high quality, culturally responsive, and engaging programs that promote positive child, youth and family development.

Goal 3: Promote safe and supportive environments that foster healthy youth and families.

Goal 4: Youth access and continue to utilize effective resources to support their positive development and ability to fully participate in community life.

Recommended Strategies

Engage a multi-sector advisory body, including representation from youth and caregivers.

- Examine the landscape of existing youth partnerships, programs and services to identify priority issues and opportunities for implementation and expansion.
- Establish use of a community dashboard or set of benchmarks to track key outcomes and coordinate data collection and information sharing between partners.
- Support the dissemination of information, data and trends, and evidence-based strategies and communicate successes and lessons learned.
- Engage and advocate for youth across Kent in civic and community initiatives until desired results are achieved.
- Identify opportunities to leverage existing resources.
- Develop a sustainable funding strategy for the Kent Youth Action plan.

Support existing youth advisory councils and utilize youth voice to provide input and guidance to developing and implementing policies and activities that affect youth and families in Kent. Ensure that youth ages 14-21 most impacted by barriers and challenges for youth in Kent or young people who are over-represented in systems have access to leadership development and participation in youth organizing efforts.

Establish a local afterschool coalition, including both City programs and community-based providers to:

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- Identify and enhance safe places for children and youth that promote high quality culturally responsive afterschool/summer/extended learning programs.
- Promote professional development and learning for those providing the service.

Identify opportunities to create and/or support community wide campaigns:

- Support the Kent School District Attendance Matters campaign.
- Establish or support a mentoring campaign that connects more young people to caring adults.
- Implement a youth employment campaign that encompasses career exploration, technical skill development and training, summer employment, pre-apprenticeships, internships and transitional jobs for young people who need temporary, wage-based employment as a stepping stone to develop work skills and enter the regular labor market.

Expand case management and multi-agency intervention teams supporting a multi-tiered system of supports.

- Implement a wrap-around model that can be implemented citywide and spans the school day into afterschool.
- Provide targeted wrap-around supports based upon unique needs of individuals, programs, and schools.
- Align with the Kent School District Multi -tier Student Support model.
- Provide intensive case management to help system-involved youth successfully return to or engage in the community.
- Equip police, juvenile court, schools, and nonprofits to facilitate appropriate referrals to prevention and intervention programs.

Measures of Success to Consider Monitoring (Potential Community Dashboard)

Outcome: On time graduation from high school (including a plan for college or career path and the necessary means to attainment)

Indicators:

- School absenteeism rates
- School discipline rates (including number of suspensions and number of days, as well as number of expulsions from school)
- Number of students/families accessing McKinney Vento funding to support homeless student needs

Outcome: Positive attachment to community

Indicators:

- Number of youth serving as volunteers, on boards, commissions
- Number of youth reporting positive interactions with caring adults
- Number of youth participating in after school and summer programs who report positive benefits

Outcome: Employment Experience

Indicators

- Number of internships available to youth
- Number of youth reporting meaningful, direction setting employment experience
- Number of Career Fairs and related events

Outcome: Community Safety

Indicators

- Youth involved in the Juvenile Justice System
 - Referrals to Prosecuting Attorney Office, Number and types of arrests or citations
 - Recidivism (in justice system) rates for participating youth
- Sex trafficking rates
- Neighborhood engagement rates
- Improvement in the built environment (including access to sidewalks, parks, and safe places)

Outcome: Access to Health Promotion Services and Activities

Indicator

- Number of youth connected with culturally responsive services that address their underlying needs
- Teen pregnancy rates
- Number of youth engaged in regular physical exercise
- Rates of food security

Outcome: Stable Housing

Indicator:

- Number of times a child moves during the school year (student mobility)
- Number of students experiencing homelessness in the Kent School District, including families and unaccompanied youth
- Number of families unstably housed (rent burdened)¹⁵

Outcome: System or Organizational Infrastructure and Capacity

Indicators:

¹⁵ Rent burdened is defined as spending more than 30% of income on housing)

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- Number and types of partners who participate in coordinating infrastructure
- Number and types of guidance documents developed and disseminated
- Number and types of staff receiving training or technical assistance
- Changes in connectivity among governmental and community-based organizations
- Capacity/readiness/willingness of community-based organizations and other youth-serving agencies to serve youth who come into contact with the justice system

Outcome: Equity

Indicators:

- Reduction in disparity of youth outcomes
- Process and outcome measures disaggregated by race/ethnicity, location, gender, age, and other youth/family characteristics
- Increased number of youth reporting a positive school climate
- Increased access to restorative justice practices

Proposed Initiative Structure to Create Community Level Change

Establishing an effective governance structure is essential for any partnership.¹⁶ Governance includes the establishment of a basic operating structure and the practices that guide the work. This includes staffing the work; identifying roles and relationships among leaders, partners, stakeholders and the community; establishing communication mechanisms, decision making structures, and any other resources needed to carry out the work and ensure progress on desired results. It is recommended that a structure begins to formalize and utilizes a network approach to governance, including several organizations that share management and oversight and relying on collaboration among networked organizations. The proposed structure is intentional in its design to be interconnected and ensure shared ownership and seamless communication. A Core Team is currently in place and is comprised of both public and private partners. This team shares responsibility for leadership of the system building work, including building out strategies and maintaining the momentum for the work. This could evolve over time into a different governance model in order to continue to reflect the community's needs and current context.

Partners with a Role to Play

- Public Health of Seattle-King County
- DSHS Children and Family Services
- Kent School District
- Kent Library
- City of Kent Parks, Recreation and Community Services
- Law Enforcement
- Fire District/First Responders

¹⁶ The Finance Project, A guide to successful public private partnership

- Kent Chamber of Commerce/Business Community
- Civic Organizations
- King County Housing Authority
- Arts/culture/environmental communities
- Juvenile Court
- Community based organizations
- Youth serving agencies
- Youth, families and caregivers
- Faith communities
- Local government

Recommendations to build a sustainable structure:

1. Establish a Leadership Roundtable whose members will meet at least annually to discuss mutually beneficial and aligned outcomes for youth in our community. Members would include: City of Kent Mayor and City Council, Kent School District Superintendent and School Board, Kent Chief of Police, Executive Leader of King County Housing Authority, King County Council members, Kent Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director, and other stakeholder leaders.
2. Promote effective city-school collaboration through regular meetings between the Mayor and City Council, KSD Superintendent and School Board that focus on shared priorities and development of joint plans of action.
3. Continue the work of the Core Team: The Core Team will function as a steering committee for the Youth Call to Action. The key focus is to stay apprised of current community work and partners, gain a clear understanding of priority issues, utilize data to improve sound decision making to support youth, identify root causes, achieve consensus for change, and engage and advocate for youth across Kent in civic and community initiatives until desired results are achieved. This group could serve at the point of contact for the Youth Initiative to help ensure that implementation efforts stay on track and key stakeholders are following through on commitments. Given that the Core Team has no dedicated funding, the scope of work the Core team will be able to undertake will depend on funds and other resources members are able to provide through in-kind contributions or through grant development efforts. The Core Team will be made up of about 20 members that include: Youth Serving Community Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, Kent School District, Higher Education, City of Kent Housing & Human Services, City of Kent Parks and Recreation, Kent Police Department, businesses, youth and parents.

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4. Develop processes to ensure Youth Voice - It is essential that future policies and programs be guided by the voice of the key stakeholder – Kent's youth. Including Youth Voice in the structure will provide insight into the challenges faced by Kent's youth, the skills and resources they lack, and the strategies our community needs to employ. The target group will be youth ages 14-18 representing a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, citizenship statuses, and levels of academic involvement (especially those disengaged from the traditional school system) who face disproportionate barriers to success.
5. Continue to expand the Youth Providers Network. This Network provides input and feedback to the Core Team, networking opportunities, and helps promote a coordinated youth development system.
6. Establish workgroups, Action Councils or Collaboratives. As work related to the strategies within the Call to Action progress there will be a need to establish subcommittees, short-term work groups and other structures to do the work and track success.
7. Define the role of the City of Kent. The City is the current convener and facilitator of the Youth Call to Action. Recommendations for City involvement include:
 - a. Keeping the collaborative moving along, focus on systems level work, and support aligned strategies;
 - b. Cultivating community engagement and ownership;
 - c. Connect and broker relationships between business and cultural organizations
 - d. Hosting the Youth Initiative on the City's website including:
 - A dashboard/shared measurement;
 - Links to youth program resources and services as well as the Youth Program Directory;
 - Reports and research; and
 - Community mobilization efforts
 - e. Connecting to regional youth-focused efforts;
 - f. Providing staff support to the Core Team, Youth Leadership Core Team, Provider Network and workgroups; and
 - g. Strengthen internal relationships between departments serving or engaged in improving youth outcomes. An internal team including Police, Human Services, Recreation, Human Resources and the Mayor's Office has been meeting.
8. Connect and align the work to other local and King County collaboratives and initiatives:
 - Kent Police Youth Board

- Drug Free Coalition
- Building Better Futures
- Keeping Kids in Kent
- Federal Way Youth Action Committee
- Best Starts for Kids
- Opportunity Youth
- Road Map
- Youth Development Executives of King County
- Center for Children and Youth Justice (CCYJ)
- SOAR
- King County Zero Youth Detention

Conclusion

Ideally, this Call to Action will be a catalyst for further development and refinement of effective program delivery and resources that enhances healthy development for youth. The Call to Action presents a vision, goals and strategies to contribute to the healthy development of youth and teens in Kent. The Call to Action recommendations build on and expand existing programs and services for young people, develop new partnerships, and improve coordination of public and private programs to better serve our young people.

City of Kent Staff will work with the Core team and other partners to determine an implementation plan to maximize community resources, provide the quality communication regarding available youth programs and services, meet resident need and develop engaged youth in Kent. This Plan might additionally inform community groups and community-based agencies regarding potential collaborations and partner with the City to enhance and/or develop youth services that meet the plan goals.

Grants may be sought to further advance the goals and recommended strategies in the Call to Action. An annual progress report will be assembled to include review of the progress made and update data trends and measurement analysis.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the individuals below that participated in interviews or played a critical role in developing the Kent Youth Call to Action.

Barbara Smith – Kent Downtown Partnership Association
Brian Steward - City of Kent Parks, Recreation, and Community Services
Carol Cleveland - IGRAD
Chief Padilla, Kent Police Department
Cynthia Boyd – Kent Station
Derek Dykman – Denali Federal Credit Union
Greg Haffner – Curran Law Firm
Hira Bhullar – Starbucks
Lori Hogan – City of Kent Parks, Recreation, and Community Services
Makayla Wright - SOAR
Marcus Stubblefield, Criminal Justice Strategy & Policy Section Manager, King County
Marty Jackson – Boys and Girls Club of King County, SE Network Executive Director
Mona Han – Coalition for Refugees from Burma
Pastor Jane Prestbye - Kent Lutheran Church
Risho Sapano – Mother Africa
Satwinder Kaur – City of Kent Councilmember, Punjabi community
Stacy Judd, Kent Police Department
Taffy Johnson – UTOPIA, Pacific Islander community, LGBTQ community
Tyree Mailey – Credible Messenger
Tye Whitfield – Community Advocate
Vince Vaielua – Project 253
Yahya Algarib & Marwa Sadiq – Iraqi Community Center of WA

Youth initiative Core Team Members:

Andie Lyons - Public Health - Seattle King County
David de la Fuente - Communities in Schools - Kent
David Lujano - Centro Rendu and Alive and Free-YMCA
Dee Klem -Parent Representative
Janet Gboluma-Kalonji - First Five Years and Beyond
Jarod Kasner - Kent Police Department
Jason Clark - King County Superior Court
Julie Stangle -City of Kent Parks, Recreation, and Community Services
Kendrick Glover - Glover Empowerment Mentoring
Latasha Jackson-Rodriguez -RAP
Liz Chick - Puget Sound Educational Service District
Lori Guilfoyle – City of Kent Housing and Human Services
Marco Sauri - Consejo Counseling and Referral Services
Mike Heinisch - Kent Youth and Family Services
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Randy Heath -Kent School District
Rebecca Hershey - King County Library Systems
Rev James - BEST
Robert Harris – Community Member
Ted Dezember - King County Housing Authority
Uriel Varela – City of Kent, Mayor’s Office

Members of the Youth Service Providers Network – see Appendix for a complete list