



July 2008

Statistics on Disconnected Youth

- In many distressed communities across the country, more than 40% of homicide victims are under the age of 24. (*Center for Law and Social Policy, 2008*)
- More than 2.5 million youth enter the juvenile justice system each year. (*Congressional Research Service, 2008*)
- Three-quarters of state prison inmates and 59% of federal inmates are high school dropouts. (*Department of Justice, 2003*)
- 1 in 77 older youth 18 to 24 years old are behind bars. (*Pew Center, 2008*)
- Young adult gang members at a community forum in San Diego indicated that jobs with a future would be the best alternative to gangs. (*San Diego Gang Strategic Action Plan, 2007*)



CCRY Network 2008 Summer Meeting: Using the Workforce and Youth Development Delivery Systems to Serve Gang Involved Youth

Summary of the June Network Meeting

The [CCRY Network](#) aims to support communities across the country in creating comprehensive service delivery systems, strong collaborative partnerships and innovative peer-to-peer networking to improve the lives of youth. The CCRY Network, convened by the [Center for Law and Social Policy](#), met in Boston, Massachusetts on June 23rd and 24th for its 2008 summer meeting to hear from policy makers and practitioners around the country working on innovative approaches to using the workforce and youth development delivery systems to serve gang involved youth. The goal of the meeting was to highlight commu-

nities that have created and are currently implementing comprehensive strategies that decrease gang and youth violence and are effectively serving youth through strong public/private partnerships – collaborative efforts by law enforcement, the workforce development and education systems, and community-based organizations.

While there is significant discrepancy in the research on the local, state, and national level as to how many youth are actually engaged in gang activity and over the language used to define gang involvement, the real question that Network communities are asking is what does it take to move youth out of harm's way, lessening their

chances of victimizing or victimization, and provide them with real opportunities for educational and labor market attachment that ultimately improves their life outcomes.

The [agenda](#) for the day-and-a-half meeting consisted of five panel sessions: Intervention and Recovery Strategies; Partnering with Law Enforcement; The Youth Perspective; Community-Wide Efforts to Address Gang Violence; and Garnering Political Support, Resources and Action to Make Youth a Priority. The sections throughout this newsletter highlight the key lessons learned from the meeting.

A Diverse Gathering of Participants

Over 50 participants from across the country gathered in Boston for the Network's summer meeting. Network members from Arkansas, Baltimore, Boston, Brockton, Hartford, Philadelphia, and San Diego as well as many of their community partners came together to share their expertise and learn from other meeting participants from community- and faith-based organizations, state and

national policy organizations, and Boston's mayor's office and private industry council.

Network members were asked what knowledge they hoped to gain from the meeting. Their responses fell in three categories: leveraging funding, leveraging partnerships, and service delivery.

Highlighting the importance of

partnership with law enforcement were officials from the district attorney's office, county sheriff's department, school police unit, probation and two police departments. The Superintendent of the Boston Police Department kicked off the day-and-a-half meeting by sharing the history of Boston's youth violence reduction strategies over the last 30 years.



Left to Right: Deputy Superintendent Gary French, Boston Police Department (BPD) and Sgt. Michael Talbot, Boston School Police, BPD

“What we realized was that we were much more powerful with dealing with issues of crime when we partnered with multiple agencies, not only with other law enforcement agencies, but with the community and with the clergy.”

- Paul Joyce,
Superintendent of the
Boston Police
Department



Left to Right: Christian Mitchell, District Manager for Reentry, Department of Youth Services, MA and Mark Prisco, Chief of Probation, West Roxbury District Court, MA

Intervention and Recovery Strategies: From Big Picture to Street Level

The first of five panel sessions “Intervention and Recovery Strategies: From Big Picture to Street Level—Examples from Massachusetts” underscored the major theme of the meeting; suppression alone can not solve the problem of gang and youth violence. It is necessary to find a balance between prevention, intervention, and suppression techniques while leveraging the critical partnerships to help achieve such balance.

Paul Joyce, Superintendent of the Boston Police Department, began by giving a history of strategies employed by the Department in the late 1980’s to address the crack and gang violence epidemics and the subsequent lessons they learned along the way. “It seemed as though violence increased over night. We were always trained that suppression is our primary duty. So, we made hundreds of arrests

and took hundreds of guns off the streets, but shootings were still going up.” As partnerships among law enforcement and other governmental and community-based organization were developed and strengthened, the Department began to see real change. Joyce highlighted operations such as Nightlight (bringing probation and police together), Ceasefire (bringing gangs together) and Summer of Opportunity (offering jobs for youth)—comprehensive approaches that demand strong partnerships—that have yielded success.

Conny Doty, Director, Mayor’s Office of Jobs and Community Services and Kimberly Pelletreau, Deputy Director, Youth Options Unlimited (Y.O.U.—formerly Youth Opportunity Boston) presented the [Y.O.U. program](#) as a workforce development model with public safety at its core. To

demonstrate Y.O.U.’s close partnership with law enforcement, they acknowledged that 50% of its budget is supported by the Executive Office of Public Safety (a grant managed by the Boston Police Department).

Michele Streitmater, Grant Coordinator, and George Almeida, Detective, Brockton Police Department discussed the role of the Impact (gang) Unit and the value of the [Shannon Grant](#), a state grant that brings law enforcement and community-based programs together in a strategic way—targeting those who are most active in gangs—through coordinated programs for prevention and intervention.

This discussion, along with the content from the other sessions, presented real policy and practice implications at the local, state and national levels. [Click here to view key implications put forward.](#)

The Importance of Partnership

As a testament to the strength in collaboration among law enforcement and community- and faith-based organizations serving youth in Boston, Y.O.U. pulled together a panel of 12 of their partners, which included officials from the district attorney’s office, county sheriff’s department, school police unit, probation, several from distinct units within the police department and two representatives from the faith community.

This session, entitled “Partnering with Law Enforcement and Other Community Partners,” highlighted the need to support a

collaborative approach that leverages the efforts made across agencies and departments within a community.

Two major points were strongly emphasized. First, partnerships among those who work with youth are essential. They are not developed overnight, but over time, and require a tremendous amount of trust to be able to share confidential information and to work towards authentic alignment of resources, policies and procedures. It is also necessary to have partners “who want to do the work” at the table and who

can be champions for the larger goal.

Second, building relationships with youth on the street is critical. Christian Mitchell, Department of Youth Services, proposed a strong focus on solving the gang “member” issue in order to solve the gang issue. “If you can try and match what the kids think the gangs are providing them and offer them alternatives, like jobs, getting them a Mass ID, or a learner’s permit. If you can fill those needs, get some money into their pockets and keep them safe, you have had some success.”

Garnering Support to Make Youth a Priority

Neil Sullivan, Boston Private Industry Council, Conny Doty, Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services, and Jorge Martinez, Project R.I.G.H.T Inc, presented the coordinated advocacy and legislative efforts on the local level in Boston and around the state.

Project R.I.G.H.T has been working to strengthen and coordinate existing services and programs for their community through grassroots organizing of neighborhood residents. Recently, in collabora-

tion with other advocacy efforts, Project R.I.G.H.T. helped to increase appropriations for youth to \$13 million in the last legislative session from \$4.5 million in previous years.

Youth Transitions Task Force, a coalition of non-profit organizations and government agencies convened by the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) has also been working to promote a common frame for positive youth development and youth violence reduction that legislatively would

require collaboration among public health, public safety, labor, and education departments through the alignment of policies and a shared investment of resources.

Mr. Sullivan presented the Task Force's report from 2006 [Too Big to be Seen](#) which breaks down the cost of a dropout over a lifetime, making a strong case for policymakers and tax payers to become involved in the dropout crisis. The report also makes recommendations to policymakers on ways to increase student success.

Community-Wide Efforts to Address Gang Violence

This Network meeting also highlighted the numerous efforts that are currently being employed to expand community-wide infrastructure and partnerships to address issues related to gang and youth violence. Presenters from San Diego, CA, Montgomery County, MD, and the National League of Cities (NLC) shared some of the strategies being used within their communities.

NLC is working with 13 cities in California, creating partnerships

under the California Cities Gang Prevention Network and shared the findings from the Network report titled [Implementing a City-Wide Gang Violence Reduction Strategy](#). One of the participating cities in the Network, San Diego, presented their [Strategic Action Plan](#) which is an effort to bring cooperation and accountability within the city to quell gang-violence. The plan includes the use of technical teams composed of various city agencies, including a strong workforce component,

that would meet monthly and be responsible for producing reports to the Commission on Gang Prevention that the action plan would create.

Montgomery County's Youth Violence Prevention team, housed in the Department of Health and Human Services, is also working hard to create partnerships across systems and to promote an equal balance between prevention, intervention and suppression efforts.

Reconnecting Youth in Action: Youth Panel

The success stories of youth re-entry into productive, safe and healthy lifestyles are often overlooked and underreported. The youth panel, consisting of four Youth Options Unlimited (Y.O.U.) participants allowed CCRY Network members and audience participants to hear their stories and the support Y.O.U. has provided them in their reconnection process.

Y.O.U.'s focus on team-building and career-oriented work, that simultaneously makes a difference

in the community of these young adults, has created an effective continuum of services and supports for youth, where 71% of Y.O.U.'s participants are engaged in an educational placement or are working on receiving necessary credentials.

These four young people highlighted the intimacy and family-like connections they felt throughout the program and the change in their perspective on life that comes with age, shifting their priorities to

establishing a career that can support them and their families. These youth felt that the only support really missing from social service programs, like Y.O.U., was greater housing assistance. Staff agreed that housing is a tremendous challenge for both youth and providers.

The session elucidated the need for meaningful jobs for youth and the importance of a second chance that fosters the development process that young adults experience as they transition into adulthood.

“Y.O.U. put me in a position to be responsible and try to grow from it. It gave me a chance to have a career and not just a job. I’m thinking about my future now.”

*-William
(Youth Panelist)*



CCRY Network: Next Steps



The CCRY Network community representatives discuss next steps for action.

Common to all CCRY Network meetings, the last session on the agenda deals with reviewing Network goals and accomplishments and determining its future actions. From its inception, the Network gathers semi-annually to achieve three main objectives: to provide an opportunity for peer-to-peer networking and learning exchange, to concentrate attention on a specific content or issue area and to develop ways to increase the voice and visibility of communities who are working to address systemic problems faced by youth.

The last two Network meetings, Hartford, CT (June '07) and Houston, TX (January '08) discussed the need for increased employer engagement in educating and training youth and on the development of a [pipeline model](#). The design of the model was vetted in Houston and presented at the Department of Labor's [Developing Youth Talent: A Business-Driven Solutions Forum](#) in May. Baltimore, Brockton, and Hartford are all committed to leveraging existing partnerships in their community to promote and

implement (with additional resources) the pipeline model.

The group also discussed several areas that the Network could engage in: issues around postsecondary access and success, green jobs and the new green economy, and Peace Promotion.

The CCRY Network will meet again in January 2009. Agenda, dates and location will be determined soon and will be posted on the Network website's [Conferences and Proceedings page](#).



CCRY NETWORK

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The Communities Collaborating to Reconnect Youth (CCRY) Network

The Network's mission is to empower communities to create effective, innovative partnerships among local youth-serving systems to improve young people's opportunities and well-being. Through collaboration and peer-to-peer networking, the CCRY Network member communities share ideas, challenges, lessons and best practices for reconnecting youth.

Network communities have established links between a range of agencies working to reconnect youth to school and educational opportunities, work and civic life. The CCRY Network aims to support communities in creating comprehensive service delivery systems and innovative peer-to-peer networking to improve the lives of youth.

For more information on the CCRY Network, visit www.ccrystnetwork.org.