KANSAS CITY, MO

Violence Prevention Fund

Annual Evaluation Report

Year 2 (2025)

February 2026

JSP

JUSTICE SYSTEM PARTNERS

Authors

Marijana Kotlaja
Sarah Jensen
Jennifer Lerch
J. Ra'Chel Fowler
Pete Ozegovic
Jovan Ozegovic
Todor Ozegovic
Ognjen Petrovic
Pavithra Nagarajan
Misty Campbell
Dylan Norris

Prepared by Justice System Partners (JSP) and in partnership with the Kansas City Health Department

Supported by the Violence Prevention Fund approved by Kansas City Council Ordinance No. 230716

Better Systems.
Brighter Futures.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Kansas City Health Department and thank Dr. Marvia Jones, Rashid Junaid, Brandi May, Kevin Humphries, and Renada Bedford for their leadership and ongoing support. As the administrators of the Violence Prevention Fund, the Kansas City Health Department plays a central role in this work, and we want to recognize the full Health Department team whose ongoing efforts in building, managing, and monitoring violence prevention programming are essential to the success of these initiatives.

We also extend our appreciation to the Kansas City Council members for their leadership and commitment to violence prevention through the approval and continued support of the VPF.

We extend our appreciation to Chief Stacey Graves and the Kansas City Police Department for allowing us to pull rearrest data, which was vital to assessing the efficacy of these programs.

This report would not exist without the community-based programs who opened their doors, shared their knowledge, and trusted us with their data and experiences.

We are profoundly thankful for their partnership, honesty, and dedication to strengthening violence prevention efforts across Kansas City.

Lastly, we acknowledge the individuals whose lived experiences are reflected in the data presented in this report.

Table of Contents

Introduction
Violence Prevention Fund

In 2023, Kansas City recorded 183 homicides and 511 nonfatal shootings, an unprecedented level of violence that demanded a new approach.

In response, Mayor Pro Tem Ryana Parks-Shaw and city council championed the creation of the Violence Prevention Fund (VPF), a $30 million investment over five years dedicated to funding community-centered, evidence-based programs that address the root causes of violence without relying solely on law enforcement and aiming to create neighborhoods where residents are healthy and safe.

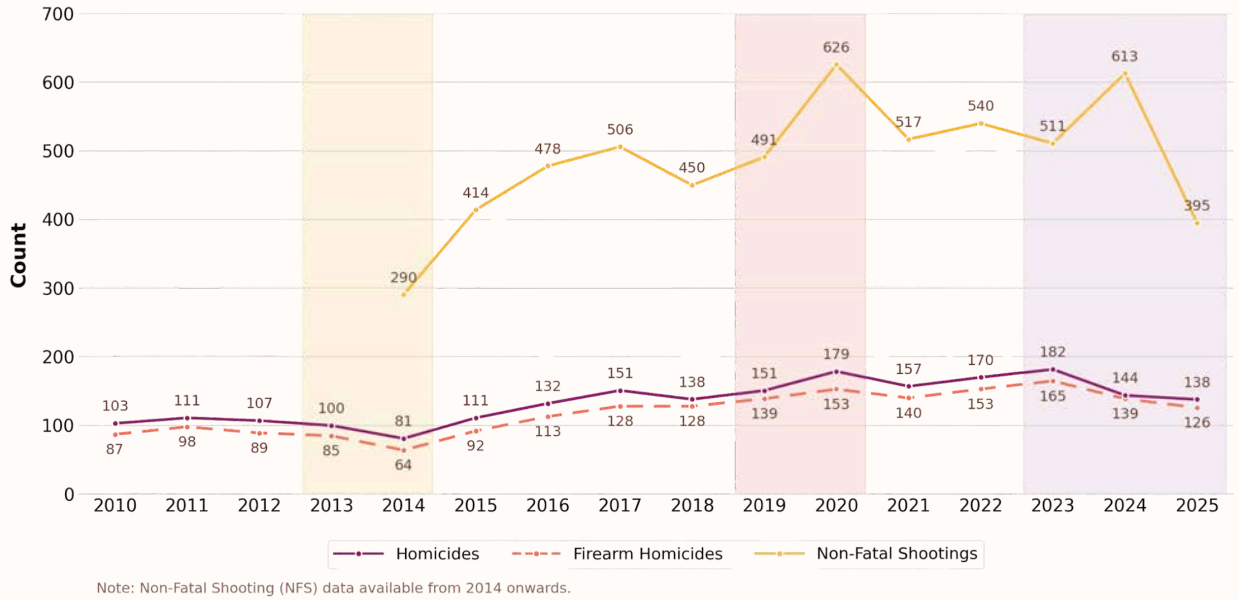
The results have been promising, but the job is far from done. In 2025, homicides in Kansas City dropped to 138 individuals who lost their lives to violence, along with 395 nonfatal shooting victims (Figure 1).

This report highlights findings that demonstrate the promise of community-centered violence prevention strategies to reduce harm, prevent and address trauma, and save lives.

This report highlights findings demonstrating the promise of community-centered violence prevention strategies.

The VPF invests in programs across several funding categories, each targeting a driver of violence reduction: reentry support for individuals returning from incarceration, summer youth programs that provide structured activities and mentorship, mental and behavioral health services for trauma-affected residents, and neighborhood associations working to strengthen community bonds and improve physical environments.

Figure 1, Kansas City Homicide Trends 2010 - 2025



Note: Non-Fatal Shooting (NFS) data available from 2014 onwards.

These strategies align with national research showing violence declines when communities invest in opportunity, connection, and support.[1]

Mandate of the VPF Evaluation Team at JSP

The Kansas City Health Department tasked a team of researchers at Justice System Partners (JSP) with evaluating the VPF.

The evaluation grant was transferred from the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) to JSP in July 2025. This transfer resulted in a seven-month pause in evaluation activities while the grant was processed through the city's administrative systems and established at JSP.

Following the transfer, JSP continued a multi-pronged approach to the evaluation.

The first prong established a monthly dashboard system requested by the Health Department to track metrics across all funded programs. These metrics included: number of activities among partners, recruitment and outreach activities, group sessions, number of participants, attendance, staff retention, outputs, and outcomes. This dashboard required significant development work with JSP's computer scientists and extensive collaboration with the Health Department to refine the system's specifications and functionality.

The second prong continued the measurement of the self-identified outcomes established by funded programs. JSP worked collaboratively with these programs to help operationalize these outcomes in ways that could be measured and evaluated. JSP also established consistent metrics across each of the funded program categories to provide important comparative context between funded organizations.

Finally, the evaluation team conducted interviews (n=73) with program participants, program staff, and community members to understand what they perceived as the root causes of gun violence, how well they perceived the respective programs addressed these causes, and what additional steps might be taken to reduce gun violence in their communities.

This evaluation assessed whether VPF-funded programs were:

- Achieving their stated goals
- Producing measurable outcomes across consistent measures
- Meeting the needs of participants and community members

JSP Evaluation Categories

The four funding categories described above, reentry, youth programs, mental and behavioral health, and neighborhood associations, reflect how the Department of Health classified recipients of VPF funding.

However, from an evaluation perspective, these administrative categories create some challenges. Programs within the same funding bucket often serve very different populations and operate on very different theories of change. Thus, comparing recidivism rates across programs without accounting for the populations these programs serve can produce misleading conclusions.

For these reasons, this report reorganizes VPF-funded programs into categories based on the nature of the intervention and the population being served.[2] This allows for more appropriate comparisons and clearer interpretation of outcomes. These evaluation categories include:

- Community-wide programs
- Targeted prevention programs
- Direct intervention programs
- Programs unable to be evaluated

Table 1,VPF Programs (n=13) within JSP Evaluation Categories

	Group 1 *2 Programs*	**Group 2** *6 Programs*	**Group 3** *3 Programs*	**Group 4** *2 Programs*
Type of Program	Community-Wide Programs	Targeted Prevention Programs	Direct Intervention Programs	Non-Evaluable Programs
Target Populations	Individuals impacted by violence in specific neighborhoods	Individuals with complex needs & at risk for system involvement	Individuals with history of patterned violence	Varies
Program Goals	Building collective efficacy & strengthening social ties	Preventing future criminal legal system involvement	Disrupt patterned violence	Varies
Outcomes Presented	Year-over-year changes in violent crime within neighborhoods	Rearrest rates of participants	Rearrest rates of participants	No common outcomes

Community-Wide Programs

Community-wide programs serve individuals who are most impacted by violence in specific neighborhoods. The funded neighborhood associations fall into this category.

These programs focus on interventions aimed at building collective efficacy, strengthening social ties, and creating the conditions that research has shown to reduce violence over time.

Because these strategies operate at the neighborhood level rather than tracking individual participants, we evaluate them by examining year-over-year changes in violent crime within the targeted geographic areas. It takes time to shift neighborhood-level indicators, and we would not expect dramatic changes in a single year but expect that any such changes could be observable within a five-year time span.

Targeted Prevention Programs

Targeted prevention programs work with individuals who have complex needs and are at risk of future legal system involvement. The goal is to prevent individuals from entering the legal system or moving further into system involvement.

Collective Efficacy

Shared belief among a group in their joint capacity to organize and achieve common goals, together.

For these programs, we track one-year overall rearrest rates, in addition to other targeted outcomes (e.g., library incidents like suspensions, resilience, self-efficacy).

Direct Intervention Programs

Direct intervention programs serve individuals who have already engaged in serious violence or who have significant criminal legal system involvement, including those returning from incarceration for violent felonies. This is the highest-risk population and the hardest to serve. We evaluate these programs using one-year rearrest rates.

Non-Evaluable Programs

A small number of funded programs could not be included in the outcome analysis.

One grantee who served adult men in the community was unable to share participant-level information needed to track outcomes. For another grantee who served community members through education, the intervention lacks a clear theoretical connection to violence reduction, making it difficult to construct a meaningful evaluation framework.

These programs are documented in the report, but their outcomes are not analyzed alongside the other intervention categories.

Rethinking How We Measure Violence

We encourage community leaders, funders, policymakers, and researchers to envision and adopt a broader definition of violence in Kansas City.

Official crime data captures only a fraction of the harm that occurs in neighborhoods: most violent acts are never reported to police.[3] Traditional definitions of violence fail to capture the full spectrum of harm between neighborhood residents, and they ignore violence embedded in organizational practices, social structures, and systemic racial and socioeconomic oppression.[4]

If the goal of violence reduction is to create neighborhoods where residents are healthy and safe, then efforts to reduce violence must address all forms of harm, not only those captured in the "official" record.

The ripple effects of violence shape real lives in measurable ways.

This evaluation aims to provide that broader view. We assess not just whether violence has decreased, but whether programs are addressing the conditions that give rise to violence in the first place.

This Report

This report focuses on programs funded under Year 2 (2025) of the VPF. In the sections that follow, you will find outcome data for each VPF program group,[5] comparative analysis within each category, key themes from community interviews, and recommendations for strengthening violence prevention efforts.

For historical context and citywide violence trends, readers may refer to the VPF Annual Report Year 1 (2024).

Evaluation
Design & Methods

This evaluation assessed whether VPF-funded programs were:

- Achieving their stated goals
- Producing measurable outcomes across consistent measures
- Meeting the needs of participants and community members

For this evaluation, the research team used a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative data (i.e., secondary administrative and survey data) with qualitative data collection.

Secondary Administrative Data

JSP uses secondary administrative data to examine program implementation and participant outcomes. The Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) provides arrest data for adults directly to JSP including the date, arresting offense, and individual information (approved through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).[6]

For youth, KCPD allows an approved JSP researcher to access files securely within their offices to identify if any of the youth program participants have police involvement. JSP uses these records to determine Future System Involvement (FSI) during the evaluation period and examine, at the program level, the proportion of participants who experience new police contact during participation.

Beginning in September 2025, the Kansas City Health Department requires programs to submit monthly programmatic metrics data. Programs report information including participant demographics, programming activities (e.g., group sessions, individual services, meetings with partner agencies), monthly participant counts, attendance by session and participant, and program-specific monthly outcome indicators.

Table 2, Descriptive Statistics of Participants Served

	Group 1 Community-Wide Programs		Group 2 Targeted Prevention Programs						Group 3 Direct Intervention Programs		
	CCF & Strong		*Pieces Peaces*	*Youth Guidance*	*Arts Tech (TNT)*	*KC Public Library*	*Camp C.H.O.I.C.E*	*Calvary*	*Second Chance*	*Journey to New Life*	
	NBHD Leaders	NBHD Residents								Case Mgmt	Peer-Led Groups
Participants Served (n)	45	N/A	41	370	20	158	19	171	85	40	121
Pre-Survey (n)	44	252	10	140	N/A	207**	14	51	46	6	23
Post-Survey (n)	43	N/A	IP	IP	20	IP	14	IP	IP	IP	IP
Gender											
Men	22.2% (10)	33.3% (81)	43.9% (18)	50.8% (188)	33.3% (6)	70.9% (112)	71.4% (10)	61.9% (45)	87.1% (74)	85.0% (34)	12.2% (5)
Women	78.8% (35)	64.6% (157)	56.1% (23)	49.2% (182)	66.7% (12)	28.5% (45)	28.6% (4)	38.1% (73)	12.9% (11)	15.0% (6)	87.8% (36)
Unknown Identity	0.0% (0)	2.1% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Race											
White	31.1% (14)	54.4% (131)	24.4% (10)	6.8% (25)	N/A	45.6% (72)	7.1% (1)	1.0% (1)	23.5% (20)	35.0% (14)	80.5% (33)
Black	60.0% (27)	34.9% (84)	73.2% (30)	73.2% (30)	N/A	50.6% (80)	78.6% (11)	95.4% (103)	68.2% (58)	45.0% (18)	7.3% (3)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.0% (0)	1.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	N/A	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.0% (1)	1.2% (1)	2.5% (1)	0.0% (0)
Asian	0.0% (0)	0.8% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	N/A	0.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)	0.0% (0)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	N/A	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Other Race	6.7% (3)	4.6% (11)	0.0% (0)	8.4% (31)	N/A	3.2% (5)	14.3% (2)	2.8% (3)	2.4% (2)	7.5% (3)	10.4% (5)
Bi- or Multiracial	2.2% (1)	4.1% (10)	2.4% (1)	6.2% (23)	N/A	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.7% (4)	7.5% (3)	4.9% (2)

N/A = not applicable to program; IP = In progress but not available yet; ** Surveys include library staff, library patrons, and program participants

Table Notes:
- Arts Tech Afterschool Club (Connectors) not included because they just began in December 2025.
- Group 4: Non-Evaluable Programs are not listed in this chart. These programs included Total Man CDC and Champ C.H.O.I.C.E- African History Saturdays

Programs submit this data using customized spreadsheet templates. JSP uses this monthly metrics data to assess the number of individuals served and intensity of activities and services provided across programs. JSP also is working with the Kansas City Health Department to increase data transparency and quality improvement, including the development of a public-facing data dashboard (Appendix B).

Program participants race and gendered varied across evaluation groups (Table 1). Among Group 1 programs, participants were mostly women, and on average, identified as either Black or white. Among Group 2 programs, participants were mostly men and identified as Black. And, in Group 3 programs, participants were mostly men and identified as either Black or white.

Survey Data

Surveys examine aggregate, group-level changes in participants' self-reported experiences, perceptions, and behavioral health over the course of program participation. When feasible, a pre- and post-survey assesses whether program participation was associated with changes in behaviors and perceptions.

Surveys include both standardized and non-standardized measures.

Standardized measures are research-based tools that use consistent questions and scoring to assess change over time, allowing comparisons across programs and shared measures.

Measures include resilience, self-control, mental health, social connectedness, and other domains relevant to each program's theory of change. The measures chosen for the VPF evaluation are reliable for use across the United States and with populations beyond Kansas City, allowing JSP to use national benchmarks to assess the impact of the VPF programs.

Additionally, JSP supported programs with collection of non-standardized survey items designed to capture participant experiences, satisfaction with program components, and qualitative feedback. These survey items were tailored to individual programs.

Program staff typically administered surveys at the beginning and end of programming. For some programs, staff and leadership are also surveyed to coincide with key program milestones (e.g., beginning new groups or major events). Participation was optional for all surveys, and not all participants completed both pre- and post-surveys due to timing and contractual constraints (e.g., programs that began service delivery

Table 3, Descriptive Statistics of Interview Participants (n=73)	
Participant Demographic	**% (n)**
Affiliation	
Staff	45% (35)
Program Participant	34% (25)
Community Members	21% (15)
Gender	
Men	37% (37)
Women	62% (45)
Non-Binary	1% (1)
Race	
White	22% (15)
Black	67% (49)
Hispanic/Latinx	3% (2)
Other/Mixed Race	8% (6)

prior to their VPF contract or during the transition of contract management from UMKC to JSP).

Across programs, participants could skip questions at will, resulting in missing data. This is why the number of responses for survey questions sometimes is less than the total number of survey respondents.

The specific standardized measures used are described within each program's results section, and a complete list of measures across all programs is provided in Appendix A.

Analyses focused on aggregate changes in measured perceptions and psychosocial indicators during program participation.

Additionally, survey findings with a lower number of respondents should be interpreted with caution. While the results provide useful insight into the trends of participant experiences and perspectives, the limited sample size limits the ability to generalize findings to the broader population.

Qualitative Interviews

We collected qualitative data through interviews with program staff, program participants, and Community Capital Fund (CCF) community members.

Each participant group had a tailored interview guide.

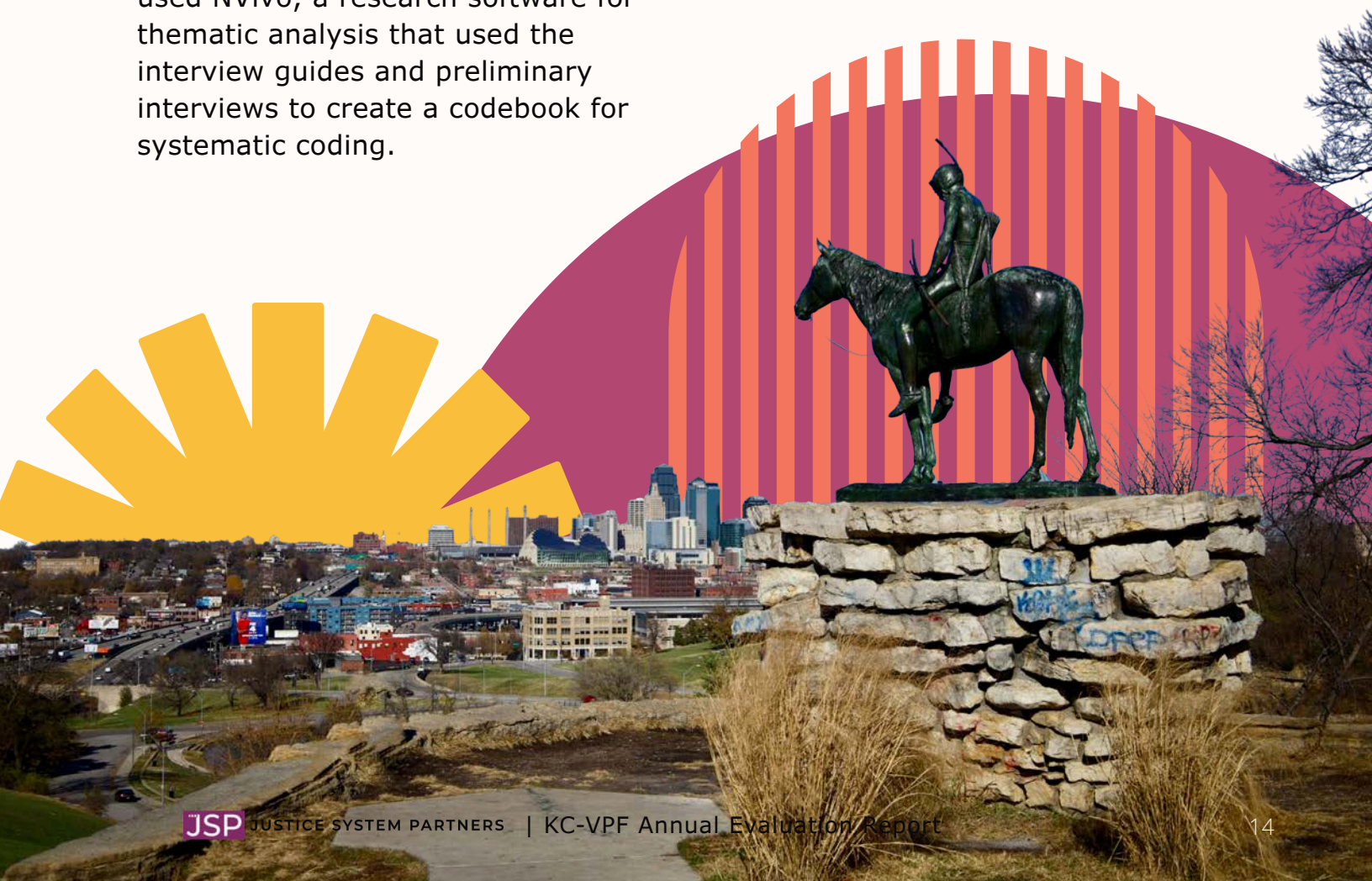
Some program participants were in youth or school-based programs, and therefore they were under 18. Researchers also created an interview guide specifically for youth under 18.

We completed a verbal consent process for interviews. Interview participants could decline to answer any questions or end the interview at any time. Participants were compensated for their participation.

Interviews were conducted primarily over Zoom, with options for phone or in-person interviews at each participant's request. Researchers used NVivo, a research software for thematic analysis that used the interview guides and preliminary interviews to create a codebook for systematic coding.

Fifty interviews were completed in Year 1 (2024) of the VPF grant, with an additional 23 interviews completed in Year 2 (2025). Interviews with Year 2 participants remain ongoing to total 50 interviews for the grant year.

The majority of interview participants, 62%, were women, 37% were men, and 1% of individuals identified as non-binary as shown in Table 3. More than half of participants, 67%, were Black individuals, 22% were white individuals, and additional 22% identified as another race or ethnicity.



Findings
Program Outcomes

This section presents evaluation findings for programs funded through the VPF, organized into four evaluation categories:

1. Community-wide programs
2. Targeted prevention programs
3. Direct intervention programs
4. Non-evaluable programs

Group 1
Community-Wide Programs

Programs

Community Capital Fund (STRONG Program)
Community Capital Fund (CCF) served as the organization responsible for overseeing 22 neighborhood associations through a 10-month program called STRONG to coordinate collective community improvement.

Neighborhood Council Groups
Neighborhood associations in the Blue Hills, Oak Park, and Santa Fe neighborhoods partnered with the city's Aim4Peace initiative to reduce violence through community-based outreach.

Target Population(s)

Individuals impacted by violence in specific neighborhoods.

Target Outcome(s)

- Year-over-Year changes in violent crime
- Improved perceptions across community domains by neighborhood leaders and residents

Key Findings

Community-wide programs supported by the VPF are working as intended, strengthening social ties and neighborhood capacity. However, these gains require time, sustained funding, and infrastructure support to avoid burnout among neighborhood leaders and translate these positive shifts to long-term reductions in violence.

Group 1
Community Capital Fund (STRONG Program)

Program Overview
Community Capital Fund (CCF) served as the organization responsible for overseeing 22 neighborhood associations through a 10-month program called STRONG to coordinate collective community improvement.

Target Population(s)
Individuals impacted by violence in specific neighborhoods

Key Program Outcomes
- Year-over-year changes in violent crime within neighborhoods
- Increased collective efficacy

Key Findings
- Community leaders expressed increased collective efficacy, indicating a stronger belief that community members would act collectively for the community's benefit
- Leaders'perceptions of safety, neighbor connection, and walkability improved moderately
- Twenty-two neighborhood associations hosted more than 44 community initiatives and events, which engaged over 259 youth and 716 adult residents

Community Capital Fund (STRONG Program)

Violence is highly concentrated. Eighty years of social science research has shown that poverty, relative deprivation, and a lack of community social cohesion create neighborhood environments in which disorder and violence can flourish.[7,8,9]

Given this evidence, the KC Blueprint recognized the need for broad community involvement in violence reduction efforts. Neighborhood associations and leaders were funded through the STRONG program as key drivers of collective impact, with the goal of building social cohesion and collective efficacy, factors consistently shown to predict better childhood outcomes and reduced crime.

Community Capital Fund (CCF) served as the organization responsible for overseeing 22 neighborhood associations through a 10-month program called STRONG to coordinate collective community improvement. CCF's primary mission in Kansas City is to improve the quality of life within underinvested neighborhoods by providing resources for communities to solve problems themselves, mobilize volunteers, build strong networks, and grow entrepreneurs and small businesses.

The STRONG program was comprised of monthly (either morning or afternoon) training sessions for neighborhood leaders to develop their skills further and strengthen their capacity to serve their neighborhoods.

The CCF STRONG program allowed our evaluation team to not only assess the perceptions of neighborhood leaders and neighborhood residents, but also to learn more about the events being held in the community.

First, we measured changes in perceptions among neighborhood leaders before and after the STRONG program to gauge residents' sense of community, disorder, and the perceived impact of neighborhood association initiatives.

Second, we gathered feedback from residents who participated in community-hosted events to understand their experiences and the program's reach.

Lastly, we collected attendance data from all events to quantify participation and engagement levels across the various initiatives.

Procedural Justice

Processes are fair because they are consistent, free from bias, respect parties, and include individual voice.

Table 4, STRONG Program Neighborhood Leader Demographics		
Leader Demographic	**Year 1 March 1 - December, 2024**	**Year 2 March 1 - December, 2025**
Total Leader Participants	**36**	**45**
Gender		
Men	25.0% (9)	22.2% (10)
Women	75.0% (27)	78.8% (35)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black Leaders	63.9% (23)	60.0% (27)
White Leaders	22.2% (8)	31.1% (14)
Hispanic/Latino Leaders	8.3% (3)	6.7% (3)
Bi- or Multiracial Leaders	8.3% (3)	2.2% (1)
Age		
25 - 34	11.1% (4)	7.0% (3)
35 - 44	25.0% (9)	13.0% (6)
45 - 54	13.9% (5)	20.0% (9)
55+	50.0% (18)	60.0% (27)

STRONG Neighborhood Leaders

Each of the 22 neighborhood associations that participated in the STRONG program had two neighborhood leaders. These leaders attended monthly CCF meetings, completed Health Department trainings, and oversaw the development of a VPF funded project in their neighborhood in collaboration with community residents.

We surveyed leaders prior and following STRONG participation to gain insights about their experiences with the program, perceptions of their neighborhood, and how these perceptions changed after participating in the STRONG program.

Table 4 displays the STRONG program neighborhood leader characteristics. A total of 45 neighborhood leaders were enrolled in the program, representing 22 unique neighborhood organizations. Majority of leaders were women (78.5%), Black (60%), and were age 55 or older (60%).

Program attendance was high, with 76% of leaders attending all six sessions and a median attendance of six sessions.

Neighborhood leaders completed survey questions asking about their perceptions of neighborhood collective efficacy (social control and trust subscales), walkability, procedural justice, community engagement, gun violence, and resilience, and social connectedness.

Questions asked leaders to score their answers on a 5-point scale, with 5 indicating positive perceptions. We received completed surveys (pre/post) from 36 neighborhood leaders.

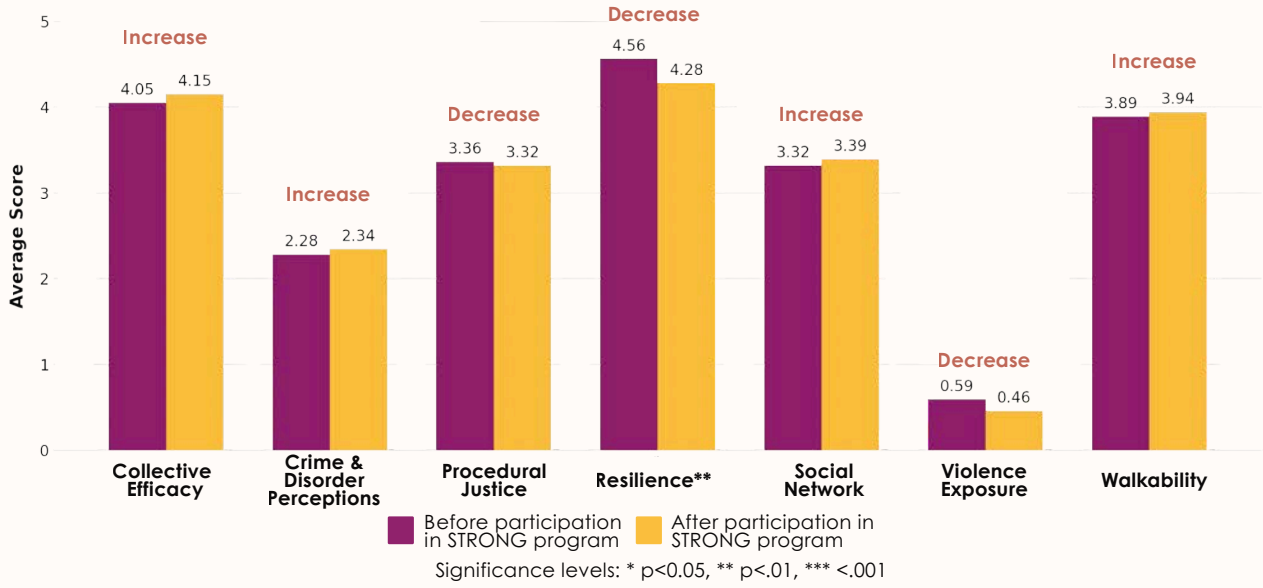
Figure 2 shows a before-and-after comparison of 37 neighborhood leaders across seven key outcome measures.

Neighborhood leaders reported increased collective efficacy defined as social cohesion, trust, and neighbors' ability to maintain social order.

Based upon the crime/disorder perceptions outcome, leaders viewed their neighborhoods as slightly safer (2.28 to 2.34), felt slightly more connected to their neighbors (2.28 to 2.34), saw their neighborhood as more walkable (3.89 to 3.94), and were less likely to be exposed to violence (0.59 to 0.46) after program participation.

However, leaders reported declines in procedural justice (3.36 to 3.32) and resilience (4.56 to 4.28). The statistical decline in resilience may indicate increased self-awareness and stress from program participation.

Figure 2,Program Impact: Neighborhood Leaders' Perceptions Before and After STRONG Program



Neighborhood Leaders Reflections

In December 2025, neighborhood leaders from across Kansas City gathered for the final STRONG program session of the year. CCF created a space for honest reflection on what worked, what didn't, and what these communities need moving forward.

The session highlighted that the STRONG neighborhood leaders are deeply invested in their neighborhoods, often stretched thin by the work, and searching for the resources and recognition that would let them do more.

Program Strengths

Leaders were grateful for the flexibility offered by CCF in leaders being able to change their initial project proposal idea to meet the needs of their neighborhood residents.

For example, a neighborhood that originally planned a block party shifted to hosting a safety workshop after a spike in property crimes in the neighborhood. This flexibility allowed neighborhoods to respond to real-time community needs rather than being locked into plans that might not fit their changing reality. One leader reflected,

> I love that this grant is so open to interpretation... Our grant has shifted throughout the year. We had this mindset that we're going to do these three micro events—we're doing a pay-it-back program now. We've shifted because needs have come to us.

The STRONG program created a space for neighborhood leaders' perspectives to be heard, shared, and developed for the benefit of their neighborhoods. Across all program meetings, leaders came together to develop their skills and strengthen the communities they serve. Often times, these meetings created a network of support that allowed leaders to be more efficient, and not working in isolation tackling social problems.

One leader described how the connections formed through the STRONG program began bridging divides that had existed for years,

> We have two community centers in our neighborhood... Those two community centers have never showed up at each other's events. Never. And they're starting to now. To see that connection happening, each other reaching out to say, 'Hey, we're having this Christmas event for the elderly—would you guys like to come?' It's so incredible.

Beyond building relationships, neighborhood leaders also learned about resources available in Kansas City, MO that they had otherwise not known about or shared with their residents.

One neighborhood leader described the impact of learning about the 311 app:

> Our residents really benefited from that. Our HOA board has seen less questions regarding when is trash rescheduled, when are they coming to pick up... All of that is on that 311 app. It's eye-opening for us to be able to pass that knowledge over to the residents.

Leaders also valued learning about city applications for sidewalks and other infrastructure, which were often resources many neighborhoods didn't know existed. When asked how many had applied for sidewalk improvements, most hands stayed down. One leader observed,

> Too many things that every neighborhood needs, some neighborhoods take advantage of all of them, and other neighborhoods don't even know they exist at all.

> **"You are all the backbone of our city. We don't have a city without our strong neighborhoods.**
>
> — Mayor Pro Tem Parks-Shaw

Program Challenges

The most passionate discussion under the STRONG program centered on infrastructure, or the lack of it in some neighborhoods. One senior leader noted,

> We don't have a home base. We don't have a community hub for all our community that is depending on us for information. Where do I go for housing? Where do I go for training and skills? We don't have a home.

Also, multiple neighborhood leaders talked about deteriorating parks and unresponsive city services. They also highlighted the imbalance between their work and the lack of resources that they have at their disposal.

Events

A total of 22 neighborhood associations hosted more than 44 neighborhood projects and initiatives in 2025, involving over 259 youth participants and 716 adult community members in these activities.[10] Additionally, participation totals reflect only neighbors that systematically tracked attendance; as a result, these numbers represent a conservative estimate of overall community engagement.

These activities reflect a wide range of neighborhood-driven efforts aimed at strengthening social connections, improving neighborhood conditions, supporting youth, and linking residents to resources. Neighborhood events encompassed diverse types of activities and initiatives designed to build community cohesion and promote resident wellbeing.

These included community engagement and celebration events (e.g., Family Fun Day, Night Out Against Crime, Neighborhood Night Out, Ice Cream Socials, Parties in the Park), meetings and capacity-building activities (e.g., neighborhood trainings, community council meetings, neighborhood discussions), resource and assistance fairs (e.g., Community Resource Fairs, Tenant Resource Fairs, Home Repair Assistance Fairs), youth-focused programming (e.g., youth life skills, youth programming, enrichment activities), and health, wellness, and beautification initiatives (e.g., Health and Wellness Fairs, Beautification Challenges, relationship-building initiatives).

Event Lessons Learned for Leaders

Neighborhood leaders shared their reflections in reports submitted to CCF upon completing their initiatives. These reports were assessed by our team and offered insight into what worked well, challenges encountered, and lessons learned for future activities.

First, leaders highlighted the importance of creating welcoming, informal spaces where residents felt comfortable connecting with one another. Specifically, events that included food, music, or hands-on activities (e.g., cooking, youth workshops, cleanup events, and social gatherings) were commonly described as effective in drawing participation and encouraging conversation among neighbors who had not previously met.

Leaders also noted that relationship-building and trust were central goals of many of the events they hosted. Several leaders noted that simply bringing residents together was instrumental in helping strengthen neighborhood bonds, improve communication, and increase residents' willingness to engage in future initiatives.

Youth-focused programming was noted as especially impactful, since not many opportunities exist in their neighborhoods.

At the same time, leaders identified a few areas for improvement. For instance, common challenges included weather-related disruptions, limited resources or supplies, and difficulty predicting turnout, particularly for first-time or outdoor events.

Some leaders noted the need for additional volunteers, earlier outreach, or stronger partnerships to support logistics and expand reach.

Others reflected on the importance of improving attendance tracking and documentation to better capture participation and outcomes.

Looking ahead, neighborhood leaders expressed interest in building successful event formats, increasing consistency in programming, strengthening collaboration with city departments and service providers, and offering more opportunities for youth engagement, skill-building, and access to resources.

These insights highlight that neighborhood associations are not only hosting events, but also are actively learning, adapting, and refining their approaches to better meet the needs of their communities.

Table 5, STRONG Program Neighborhood Resident Demographics		
Leader Demographic	**Year 1 March 1 - December, 2024**	**Year 2 March 1 - December, 2025**
Total Leader Participants	**31**	**252**
Gender		
Men	37.9% (12)	33.3% (81)
Women	62.1% (19)	64.6% (157)
Did not disclose gender	0.0%(0)	2.1% (5)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black	75.0% (23)	34.9% (84)
White	14.3% (4)	54.4% (131)
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.0%(0)	1.2% (3)
Asian	0.0% (0)	0.8% (2)
Bi- or Multiracial	3.6% (1)	4.6% (11)
Other	7.2% (2)	4.1% (10)
Age		
Under 18	4.2% (1)	2.6%(6)
18 - 24	4.2% (1)	4.4% (10)
25 - 34	8.3% (2)	13.2% (30)
35 - 44	25.0% (6)	25.4% (58)
45 - 54	12.5% (3)	18.4% (42)
55+	45.8% (11)	36.0% (82)

Resident Perceptions

During many of the neighborhood association community events, we had staff on-site to survey community members who attended the event.

The community member questionnaire contained the same key topics as the leaders' questionnaire including collective efficacy, walkability, procedural justice, community engagement, gun violence, and an inventory of neighborhood issues. Table 5 displays the STRONG program neighborhood resident characteristics.

Figure 3 displays survey results from residents who attended initiatives hosted by the STRONG funded neighborhoods.

Out of the 252 survey responses, we were able to calculate scores for 9 of the 22 neighborhoods in the STRONG program that had more than 5 surveys completed per neighborhood.

A few findings emerge to reveal both the shared strengths and differences in how residents experience their communities.

Across all neighborhoods, residents show remarkably high personal resilience (average = 4.4), indicating strong individual coping skills and determination.

Walkability scores are also consistently strong (mostly above 4), suggesting most neighborhoods offer pleasant, accessible environments for getting around on foot.

However, significant variation emerges in social connectedness and collective efficacy, which are measures that reflect how well neighbors know and support each other. View High Drive North, Ward Parkway, and Rockhill Gardens tend to score highest across these group-dynamic measures, with residents reporting strong social networks, high trust among neighbors, and confidence in their community's ability to maintain safety and order. In contrast, neighborhoods like South Round Top and Marlborough show

Figure 3, Resident Perceptions by Neighborhood

lower social connectivity and collective efficacy scores, suggesting residents may feel more isolated or less confident in their neighbors' willingness to work together. Crime and disorder concerns remain relatively low across all areas (under 2.5), though South Round Top residents express notably more concern than other neighborhoods.

These findings show that higher income neighborhoods like Ward Parkway (with a median income lower than $80,600) and Rockhill Gardens (upscale neighborhood by Country Club Plaza) show more favorable outcomes such as higher collective efficacy, stronger social networks, and minimal crime concerns. These neighborhoods benefit from greater resources, established HOAs, and residential stability.

However, lower income neighborhoods present a more diverse picture. South Round Top is a more economically disadvantaged neighborhood, and residents' responses were the highest for crime/disorder concerns (2.40) and lowest collective efficacy (3.56), which aligns with research that shows that economic disadvantage can deter cohesion and increase perceptions of disorders.[11,12,13]

Marlborough neighborhood (with a median income lower than 87-90% of U.S. neighborhoods, with 17-53% child poverty depending on the sub-area) shows particularly weak social connectivity (2.45), which is the lowest of all neighborhoods and may reflect high residential turnover, rental housing concentration, or residents working multiple jobs with limited time for neighborhood engagement.

Group 1
Neighborhood Council Groups

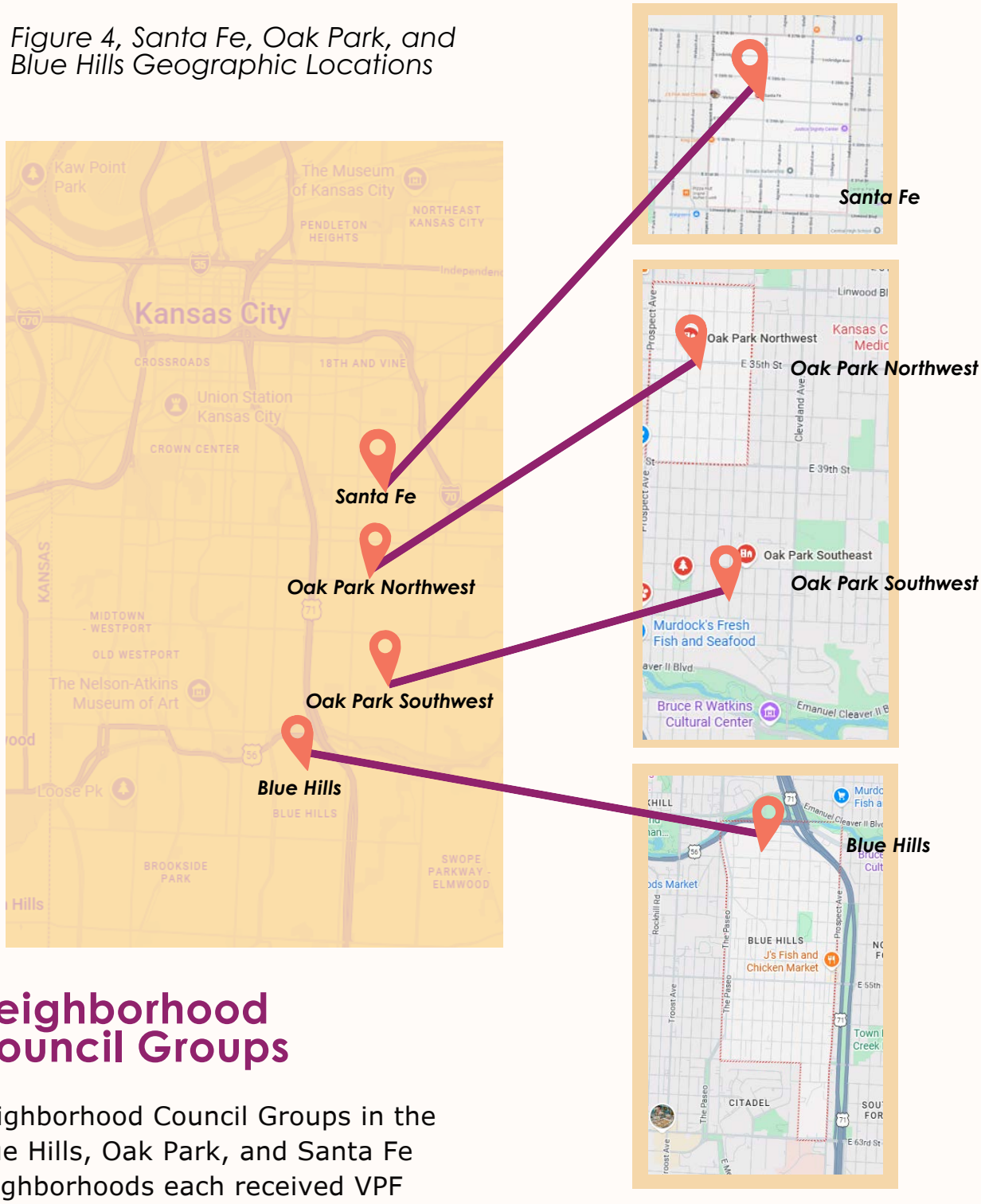
Program Overview
Neighborhood council groups canvased the Santa fe, Oak Park, and Blue Hills neighborhood with Aim4Peace and distributed nonviolence messaging, assisted Aim4Peace with providing wraparound services when violence occurred, and held other community events with Aim4Peace.

Target Population(s)
Individuals impacted by violence in specific neighborhoods

Key Program Outcomes
- Year-over-year changes in violent crime within neighborhoods

Key Findings
- Developed community strategies to better engage a wide variety of community members

Figure 4, Santa Fe, Oak Park, and Blue Hills Geographic Locations



Neighborhood Council Groups

Neighborhood Council Groups in the Blue Hills, Oak Park, and Santa Fe neighborhoods each received VPF funding to partner with the city's Aim4Peace initiative to reduce violence through community-based outreach. Figure 4 shows the geographic proximity of these neighborhoods.

Table 6, Demographic Characteristics in Santa Fe, Oak Park, and Blue Hills (2020 - 2024)

	ASC Demographic Measures								Shootings (2020-2024)	
Neighborhood	Pop.	% Black	% Hisp	% Pov	% Unemp	% SNAP	% Vac	% FHH	Fatal	Nonfatal
Santa Fe	2,398	89.8	2.4	42.8	8.0	37.3	20.7	43.9	9	132
Oak Park Northwest	2,519	83.8	5.7	20.5	10.6	35.3	25.7	56.3	16	162
Oak Park Southwest	1,913	82.3	9.8	17.1	6.9	16.4	25.4	47.3	11	158
Oak Park Southeast	1,528	77.4	13.0	41.7	15.9	25.3	20.9	49.5	7	119
Blue Hills	4,385	69.6	6.0	29.5	4.9	21.3	22.9	56.4	22	363

Note. Pop. = Total Population; % Black = Percent Non-Hispanic Black; % Hisp. = Percent Hispanic; % Pov. = Percent Below Poverty Level; % Unemp. = Percent Unemployed; % SNAP = Percent Receiving SNAP Benefits; % Vac. = Housing Vacancy Rate; % FHH = Percent Female-Headed Households; Fatal Rate and NF Rate = per 100,000 population. Demographic data from American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Shooting data from Kansas City Police Department (2020-2024).

Table 6 presents demographic characteristics and gun violence data for Santa Fe, Oak Park, and Blue Hills. All neighborhoods were majority non-Hispanic Black (from 69.6% in Blue Hills to 89.8% in Santa Fe) and show socioeconomic disadvantage.

Poverty rates varied across the three neighborhoods, from 17.1% in Oak Park Southwest to 42.8% in Santa Fe. However, the rate of female-headed households was consistent across the three neighborhoods, from 43.9% to 56.4%. The housing vacancies were consistently high, ranging from 20.7% to 25.7%. Between 2020 and 2024, these five neighborhoods experienced a combined 65 fatal shootings and 934 nonfatal shootings.

Given these metrics above, the goal of the initiative was for the three neighborhoods to focus on three areas of work.

First, they needed to canvas with Aim4Peace at least twice monthly and distribute nonviolence messaging and resources across their neighborhoods.

Second, when violence occurs in their neighborhood, they assist Aim4Peace's response and provide wraparound services for those individuals and families affected.

Finally, they organize and host at least one community event per quarter in coordination with Aim4Peace.

Implementation Challenges for Neighborhood Council Groups

While the initiative is new, there were several implementation challenges that were notable in the April to December 2025 period.

First, some neighborhood leaders relied primarily on volunteers to canvas and distribute materials, which affected consistency among the individuals who were able to complete the tasks.

Second, as JSP launched the dashboard system in partnership with the Health Department, there were many barriers to access in terms of availability of computer software (e.g., Microsoft Excel) and personnel to complete the spreadsheet monthly.

Lastly, aligning neighborhood schedules with Aim4Peace was also a challenge throughout some of the months of the grant.

Group 2
Targeted Prevention Programs

Programs

Pieces Peaces

Pieces Peaces hosts weekly support groups for all residents, individuals navigating substance use disorder, and individuals reentering the community after incarceration. They also provide transitional housing, and train and empower peer specialists to play a major role in violence prevention with participants.

ArtsTech - Teens in Transition & Afterschool Club (The Connectors)

ArtsTech's Teens in Transition (TNT) and Connectors programs provide year-round, after-school enrichment focused on art, technology, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) learning for youth and emerging adults. TNT serves emerging adults through creative arts, technology training, and career readiness activities that also build skills in conflict resolution, anger management, communication, and teamwork, while the Connectors program engages youth ages 11 to 15 in structured STEAM programming designed to strengthen academic engagement and positive development. Together, these programs integrate creative expression and skill-building to support social, emotional, and career growth.

Youth Guidance

Youth Guidance provides gender-responsive school-based group counseling programming. During respective programs, Youth Guidance focuses on topics of self identity and socio-emotional learning.

Camp C.H.O.I.C.E - Youth Right to Life Retreat "Behind the Selfie"

Camp C.H.O.I.C.E host the Youth Right to Life Retreat. The retreat brings together youth ages 12-17 for a weekend. The retreat relies on a trauma-informed model built on safety, connection, and improving coping skills.

Group 2
Targeted Prevention Programs

Programs

Calvary Community Outreach Network (CCON)

Calvary Community Outreach Network partnered with local parishes to support violence prevention. They implemented youth safe spaces, facilitated access to mental health services, such as therapy, and provided civic engagement messages to parishioners and the broader community.

Kansas City Public Library

The Kansas City Public Library's Peer Specialist program provides person-centered support to patrons facing complex social, behavioral health, and stability-related challenges. Peer specialists engage patrons by offering guidance, problem-solving support, and connections to community resources such as housing assistance, mental health services, and substance use treatment.

Target Population(s)

Individuals with complex needs and at risk of criminal legal system involvement.

Target Outcome(s)

- Rearrest rates of participants
- Prevention of future criminal legal system contact
- Improved mental health and wellbeing

Key Findings

These programs reported improved protective factors such as mental health self-efficacy and resilience. Additionally, only 12% of Pieces Peaces participants had police contact between January–October 2025, and KC Public Library Westport branch suspensions dropped from 15 in December 2024 to 0 in December 2025, demonstrating positive early findings.

Group 2
Pieces Peaces

Program Overview
Pieces Peaces hosts weekly support groups for all residents, individuals navigating substance use disorder, and individuals reentering the community after incarceration. They also provide transitional housing, and train and empower peer specialists to play a major role in violence prevention with participants.

Target Population(s)
Individuals with complex needs and at risk for system involvement

Key Program Outcomes
- Participant rearrest rates
- Improved mental health

Key Findings
- Peer specialists reported increased attendance over time, and increased participation by new residents
- Program participants reported increased ability and motivation to follow through with tasks
- Program participants reported increased resilience and emotional bandwidth for what they could handle day-to-day

Table 7, Pieces Peaces Demographics, Year 1 & Year 2		
	Year 1 June 2024 - May 2025	**Year 2 June 2025 - May 2026**
Total Participants	**66**	**41**
Gender		
Men	39.0% (26)	44.0% (18)
Women	61.0% (40)	56.0% (23)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black	70.0% (46)	73.0% (30)
White	24.0% (16)	24.0% (10)
Hispanic	6.0% (4)	0.0% (0)
Bi- or Multiracial	0.0% (0)	3.0% (1)

Pieces Peaces

Pieces Peaces hosts weekly support groups for all residents, individuals navigating substance use disorder, and individuals reentering the community after incarceration. They also provide transitional housing, and train and empower peer specialists to play a major role in violence prevention with participants.

This report spans two grant years for Pieces Peaces: Year 1 from 2024-25, and Year 2 from 2025-26. Participation is reported differently between the two grant periods. In Year 1 from June 2024 to May 2025, 66 unique individuals participated in Pieces Peaces programming.

Most participants were women, 61%, and Black, 70% (Table 7).

On average, participants attended six sessions (including across multiple months). Only 12% of Year 1 Pieces Peaces participants experienced any new law enforcement contact from January to October 2025.

From October to December 2025, the program had a total of 41 unique participants. Like Year 1, most participants were women, 56%; however, more men participated in Year 2 (44%). Overall, participants identified as Black, 73%, and were, on average, 36 years old, but ages ranged from 15 to 71. Participants participated in an average of 3.5 sessions per month.

Although there were a total of 41 Year 2 participants, only 10 completed the pre-survey at the beginning of Year 2 programming. Post-surveys were not collected in Year 1.

Half of participants who completed surveys reported being aware of the certified peer credentials (Certified Peer Specialist, Family Support Provider, Youth Peer Specialist, and Certified Reciprocal Peer Recovery) programs in Missouri. Over half (60%) indicated that they planned to take the training and become a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) in Missouri. Peer specialists undergo intensive training, which individuals involved in Pieces Peaces share helps staff support program participants.

Peer specialists shared that groups have expanded over time:

> I believe our first meeting was like 10 people, and our last one that we just had yesterday was like 17 or 18 people, bringing friends, people just walking in off the street and like, feeling comfortable to come in.

This demonstrates the ability of peer specialists to effectively engage participants and encourage them to invite others.

Participants reported substantial mental health challenges. However, 90% of participants scored high on self-efficacy, indicating that they generally have a positive outlook on their ability to accomplish their goals and complete necessary tasks, which could include becoming a peer specialist.

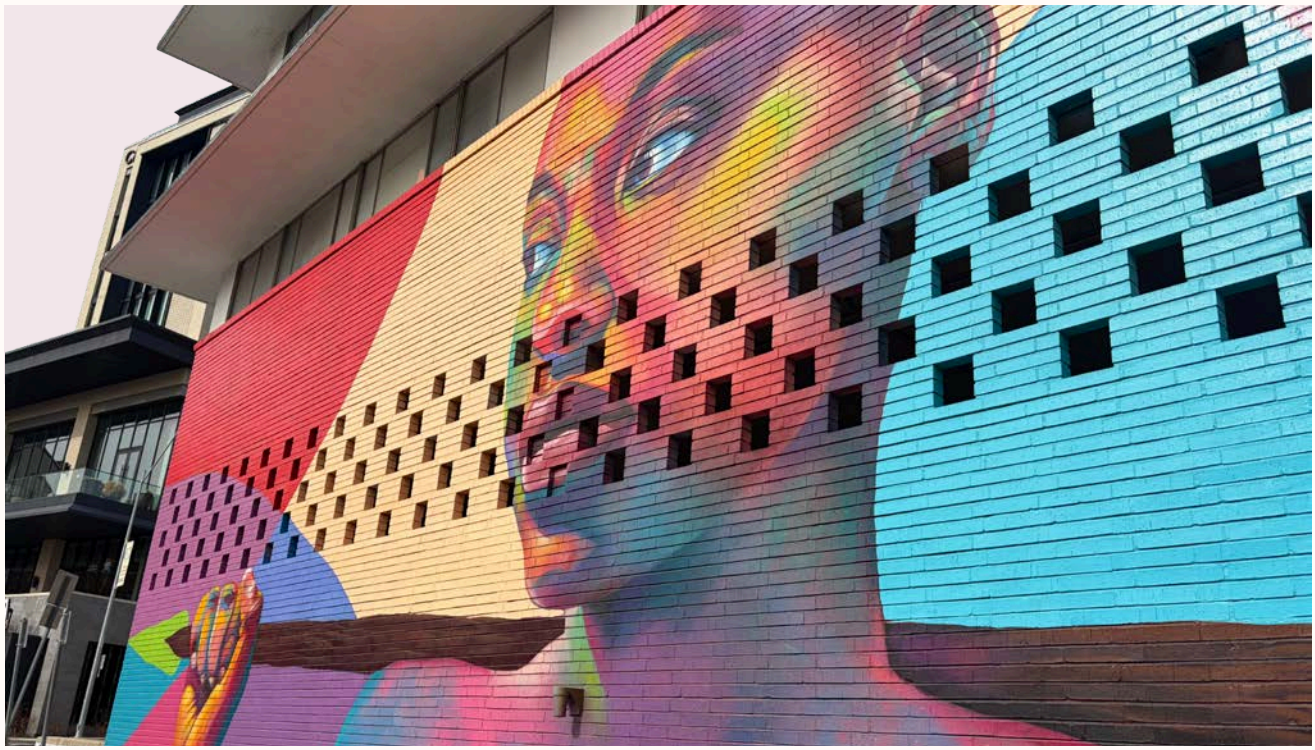
Sixty percent of participants shared that they experienced anxiety frequently compared to 40% experiencing depression frequently. However, despite high need for mental health treatment, 60% of participants generally agreed that they experience and display resilience on key subjects. Participants used this resilience to help them support their community. Two-thirds reported that they often or always offered help to those around them, demonstrating that participants are invested in supporting those around them and their community.

The program has experienced some challenges due to limited resources and funding. As one staff member shared,

> There's just not a lot of funding to do the things that we're doing. When it comes to life, we have the money to put on the actual meetings, but there is no other support like that is funded after that [for wraparound services].

Like other programs, transportation poses a challenge to bring people to engage in group sessions. As one staff person shared,

> It's really hard to send someone [to drive] 30 minutes. We're only being compensated for a certain amount of mileage, so volunteers are going to pick them up.



Group 2
ArtsTech-Teens in Transition

Program Overview
ArtsTech-Teens in Transition (TNT) offers art and technology activities, and career readiness for emerging adults. TNT supports growth in conflict resolution, anger management, communication, and team-building.

Target Population(s)
High school students referred by school resource officers

Key Program Outcomes
- Support education (artistic and technology) to improve employment readiness

Key Findings
- Students reported skill development, field trips, and social interaction were the most helpful parts of their participation
- Students reported improved technology literacy
- Forty percent of students returned from the prior year, demonstrating the value of program to students

Table 8, ArtsTech-Teens in Transition Demographics	
	% (n)
Total Participants	**18**
Gender	
Men	33.0% (6)
Women	67.0% (12)
Grade Level	
9th Grade	5.5% (1)
10th Grade	11.1% (2)
11th Grade	61.1% (11)
12th Grade	33.3% (16)
Unknown Grade	5.5% (1)
Year in Program	
First Year	60.0% (12)
Second Year	40.0% (8)

ArtsTech-Teens In Transition

ArtsTech-Teens in Transition (TNT) offers art and technology activities, and career readiness for emerging adults. TNT supports growth in conflict resolution, anger management, communication, and team building. The youth who participate in TNT are identified as at-risk for violence and referred by KCPD School Resource Officers and their participation in the program is voluntary. Historically, the program focused more explicitly on violence (non-VPF funded cohorts); however, while under the VPF funding, the program emphasized broader skillset development to prevent violence.

ArtsTech Teens-in-Transition (TNT) program received its first year of funding in 2025, and in June 2025 its first 10-week cohort began for high school students. Youth are paid $15/hour to participate, encouraging program completion.

Participants can choose from a variety of mixed-media arts programming including photography, painting, and ceramics, among other art forms. At the end of the program, TNT showcased participants' work with a photography group exhibit titled "Teens behind the Lens" in September 2025.

Students also develop digital literacy skills in overall basic computer and

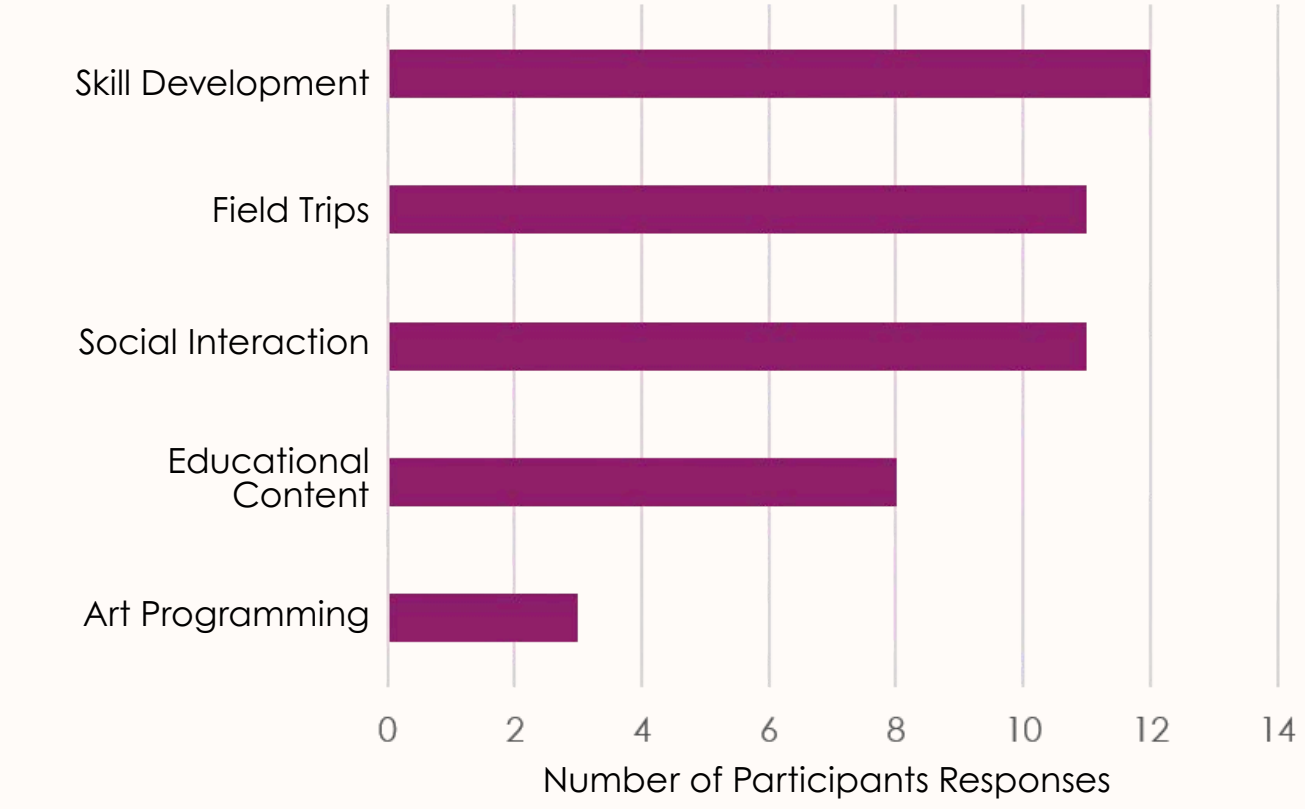
internet usage, email writing and sending, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint), and Google Docs. These are critical technical skills that allow youth to succeed professionally in the long term.

Students also learn about different career opportunities, which can encourage new pathways. For example, one student shared that she became interested in studying architecture following a TNT field trip. Data collection was designed and completed by ArtsTech independently.[14]

Twenty high school students completed the TNT program and completed follow-up assessments. Most participants were girls, in 11th grade. It was most students' first year participating in the program (Table 8).

Youth enjoyed several components of the programming and shared that they found skill development, field trips, and social interaction to be the most beneficial parts of the program. (Figure 5). This demonstrates the multi-dimensional benefits of Teens in Transition, from pro-social relationship-building to applied skills for future employment.

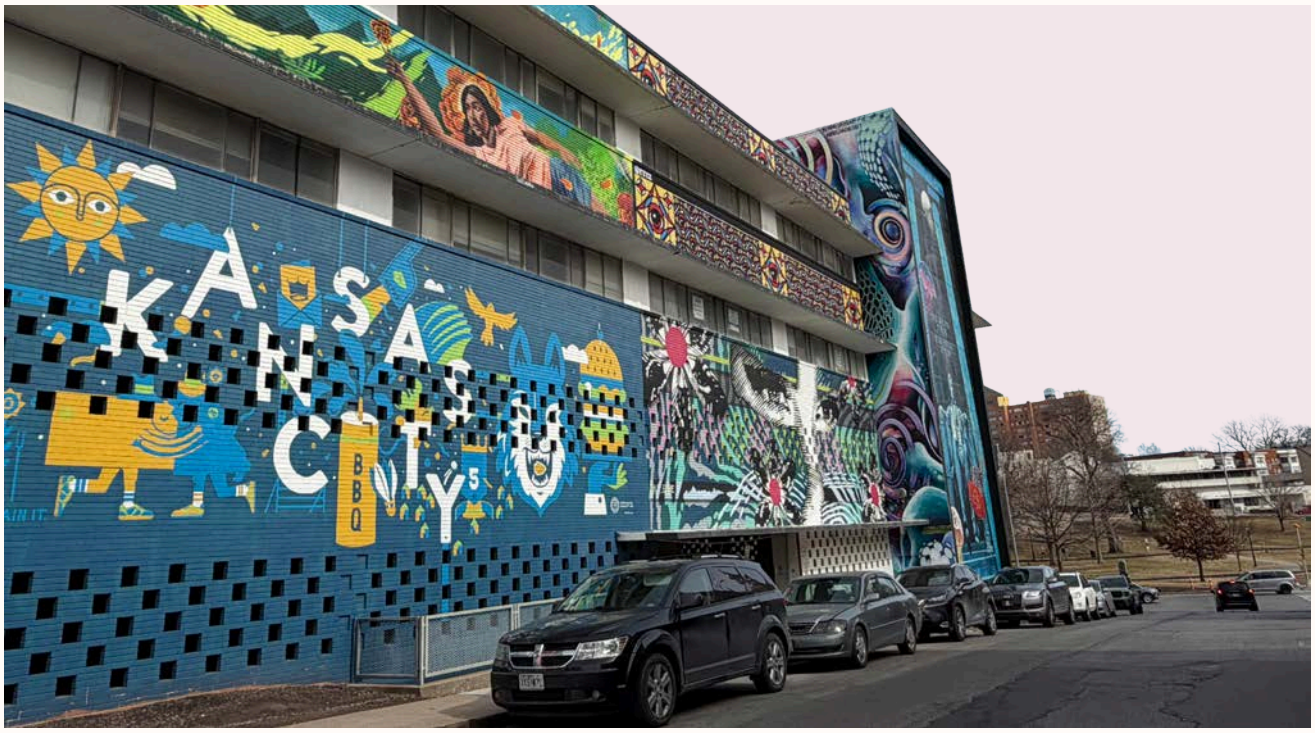
Figure 5, Most Valuable Programming Components



ArtsTech-Afterschool Club (The Connectors)

In December 2025, ArtsTech's year-round after-school program received VPF funding. The Connectors serves on youth 11 to 15 years old and focuses on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math).

Although the program began in late August 2025 at the beginning of the academic year, the contract for VPF funds did not begin until the winter. ArtsTech collected pre-assessment data at the beginning of the academic year, which will be used for future analysis.



Group 2
Youth Guidance

Program Overview
Youth Guidance provides gender-responsive school-based group counseling programming. During respective programs, Youth Guidance focuses on topics of self identity and socio-emotional learning.

Target Population(s)
Middle and high school students at risk for criminal legal system involvement

Key Program Outcomes
- Improved mental health, wellbeing, self-confidence
- Reduced law enforcement contact

Key Findings
- Youth Guidance engaged nearly 400 students during the academic year
- Students report improved relationships with family members and teachers

Table 9, Youth Guidance Participant Demographics

	% (n)
Total Participants	**370**
Gender	
Boys	51.0% (188)
Girls	49.0% (182)
Grade Level	
Black	79.0% (292)
White	7.0% (26)
Hispanic/Latino	7.0% (26)
Bi- or Multiracial	6.0% (22)
Other Race identified	1.0% (4)

Youth Guidance

Youth Guidance provides multiple gender-responsive programming options to students in middle and high school. Programming focuses on working with students who have experienced traumatic and stressful situations, particularly in under-resourced communities. Youth Guidance offered a series of different program activities, including group counseling, individual counseling, brief encounters (e.g., a check-in between classes), and other activities. Becoming A Man ("BAM") and Working on Womanhood ("WOW") are two of its primary programs supported by VPF funding. BAM and WOW are both school-based group counseling programs in which students explore topics of identity and socio-emotional programming.

In the words of one staff member, the goal of Youth Guidance programming is,

> To meet youth where they're at and build safe spaces for youth to learn about themselves, learn about their relationship with others, and learn about their relationship with the world, to where they can not only just succeed academically, but also in life.

From October to December 2025, Youth Guidance had a total of 370 unique participants. The program engaged, on average, 344 participants per month. Most Youth Guidance engagement is through brief encounters with students; however, they often relied on group counseling.

Youth Guidance engaged both boy and girls evenly, but predominately served Black youth, 79% (Table 9).

Youth Guidance administers a detailed intake with in-depth assessments regarding mental health and resource needs. The assessment includes the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA), among other mental health and wellbeing measures.

Youth Guidance participants generally scored as expected compared to typical youth who complete this assessment; however, a considerable and disproportionate number of students were found to have challenges in emotional control, assertiveness, empathy, optimism, learning interest, critical thinking, and school bonding (Table 10).

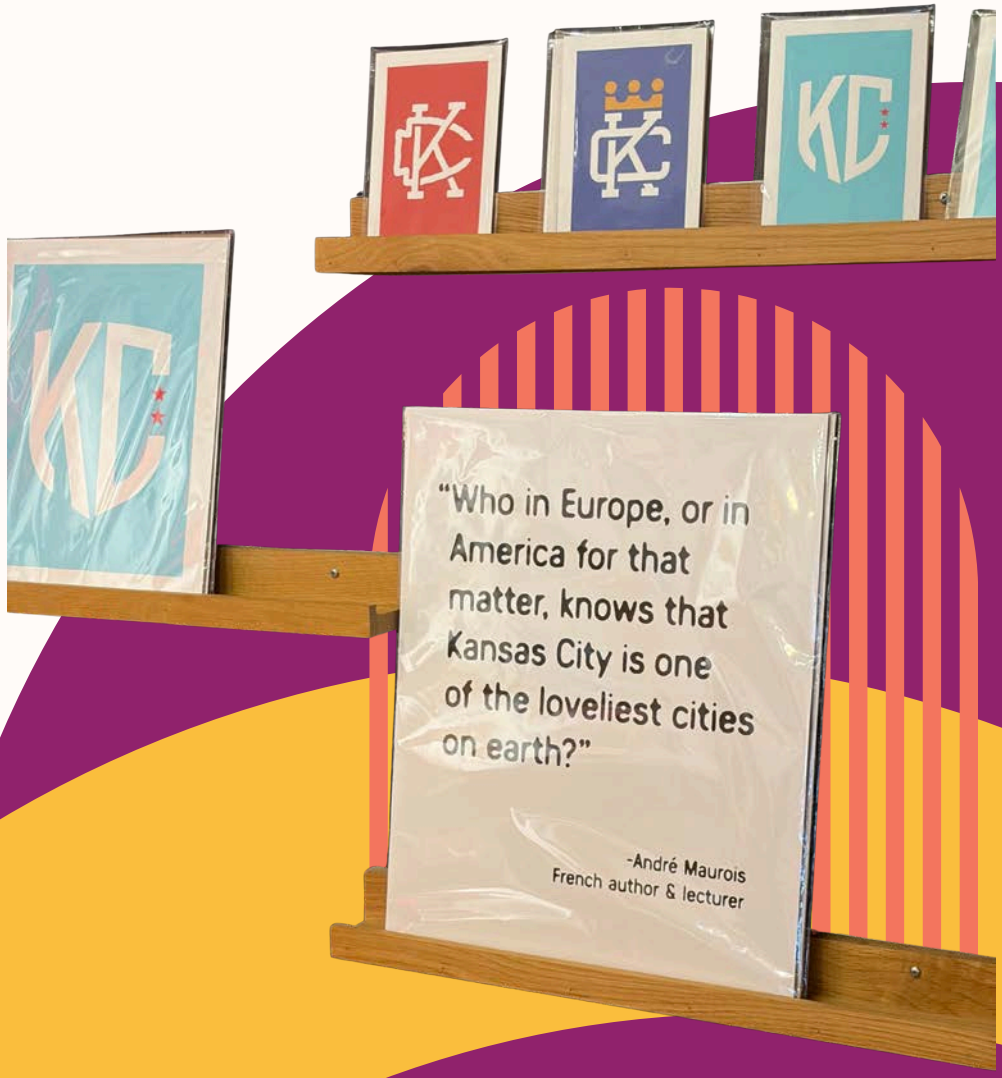
Following participation with Youth Guidance programming, student participants report improving relationships with family members and teachers because of their involvement in Youth Guidance. Similarly, family members also express gratitude because of the support that their children receive by participating.

Table 10, Youth Guidance Participant Holistic Student Assessment Baseline Scores (n=140)

Sub-Scale Item	Strength	Average	Challenge
Resiliency			
Action Orientation	17.1% (24)	67.1% (94)	15.7% (22)
Emotion Control	10.1% (14)	64.8% (90)	25.2% (35)
Assertiveness	12.1% (17)	65.7% (92)	22.1% (31)
Perseverance	13.7% (19)	72.7% (101)	13.7% (19)
Trust	24.3% (34)	52.9% (74)	22.9% (32)
Empathy	7.1% (10)	65.7% (92)	27.1% (38)
Reflection	11.5% (16)	79.1% (110)	9.4% (13)
Optimism	12.2% (17)	64.8% (90)	23.0% (32)
Relationships			
Relationships with Peers	18.6% (26)	68.6% (96)	12.9% (18)
Relationships with Adults	13.0% (18)	73.4% (102)	13.7% (19)
Learning & School Engagement			
Learning Interest	15.1% (21)	61.2% (85)	23.7% (33)
Critical Thinking	8.6% (12)	70.5% (98)	20.9% (29)
Academic Motivation	11.4% (16)	72.1% (101)	16.4% (23)
School Bonding	5.0% (7)	71.2% (99)	23.7% (33)

A unique challenge that Youth Guidance experiences is that their programming requires them to pull students out of class to participate, which can upset teachers and disrupt instructional time, creating tension between academic priorities and students' social-emotional needs.

Like other programs, Youth Guidance staff share that one of the most substantial barriers to their overall program (beyond BAM and WOW) is transportation throughout the summer and out-of-school programming.



Group 2
Camp C.H.O.I.C.E - Youth Right to Life Retreat

Program Overview
Camp C.H.O.I.C.E hosts multiple initiatives including their Youth Right to Life Retreat. The retreat brings together youth ages 12-17 for a weekend. The retreat relies on a trauma-informed model built on safety, connection, and improving coping skills.

Target Population(s)
Youth interested in opportunities to support and improve their mental health

Key Program Outcomes
- Improved mental health and resilience

Key Findings
- Youth participants reported increased self-efficacy and resiliency following the weekend retreat

Table 10, Camp C.H.O.I.C.E Participant Demographics	
	% (n)
Total Participants	**19**
Gender	
Boys	71.0% (10)
Girls	29.0% (4)
Race	
Black	79.0% (12)
White	7.0% (1)
Other Race identified	14.0% (2)
Grade Level	
Middle School	36.0% (5)
High School	64.0% (9)

Camp C.H.O.I.C.E Youth Right to Life Retreat

Camp C.H.O.I.C.E (Children Having Opportunities in Creating Environments) is a nonprofit organization focused on helping youth and families harness the power of choice through mentorship, life skills, and interactive programs. They focus on building confidence, resiliency and positive decision-making skills for youth, parents, and caregivers as well as anyone seeking guidance and support. Additionally, they provide educational programming to enhance equity and cultural awareness.

The organization takes a trauma-informed approach to all its work. Camp C.H.O.I.C.E. has multiple initiatives. The VPF supports separate initiatives: (1) Youth Right to Life Retreat and (2) African American History Saturdays learning series.

The 2025 Youth Right to Life Retreat was a weekend youth development program aimed at bringing together youth ages 12-17 during a weekend in October 2025. This year, the theme of the retreat focused on external presentations versus internal experiences of self to help youth contextualize the role of social media. The retreat was grounded in a trauma-informed model built on safety, connection, and coping. The retreat addressed challenging, real-world topics including violence and trauma, policing and community safety systems, technology addiction,

local homicide patterns, and self-regulation, which helped youth understand how systemic factors shape their daily lives. There were also intentional wellness breaks, physical activity, and community-building sprinkled throughout the retreat. Finally, the retreat hosted several adult chaperones and facilitators who modeled warmth, openness and high expectations across all days of the retreat.

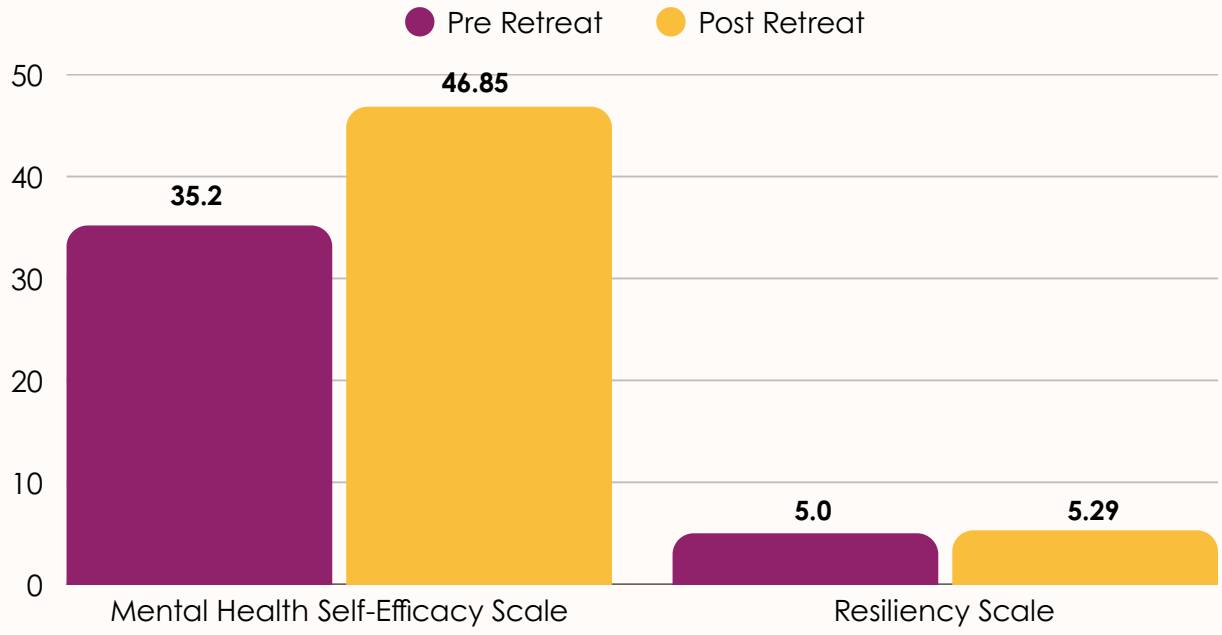
The retreat hosted 19 youths and 14 responded to the survey. Among youth respondents, 71% were boys, 80% identified their race as Black, and 64% reported they were in high school (Table 10).

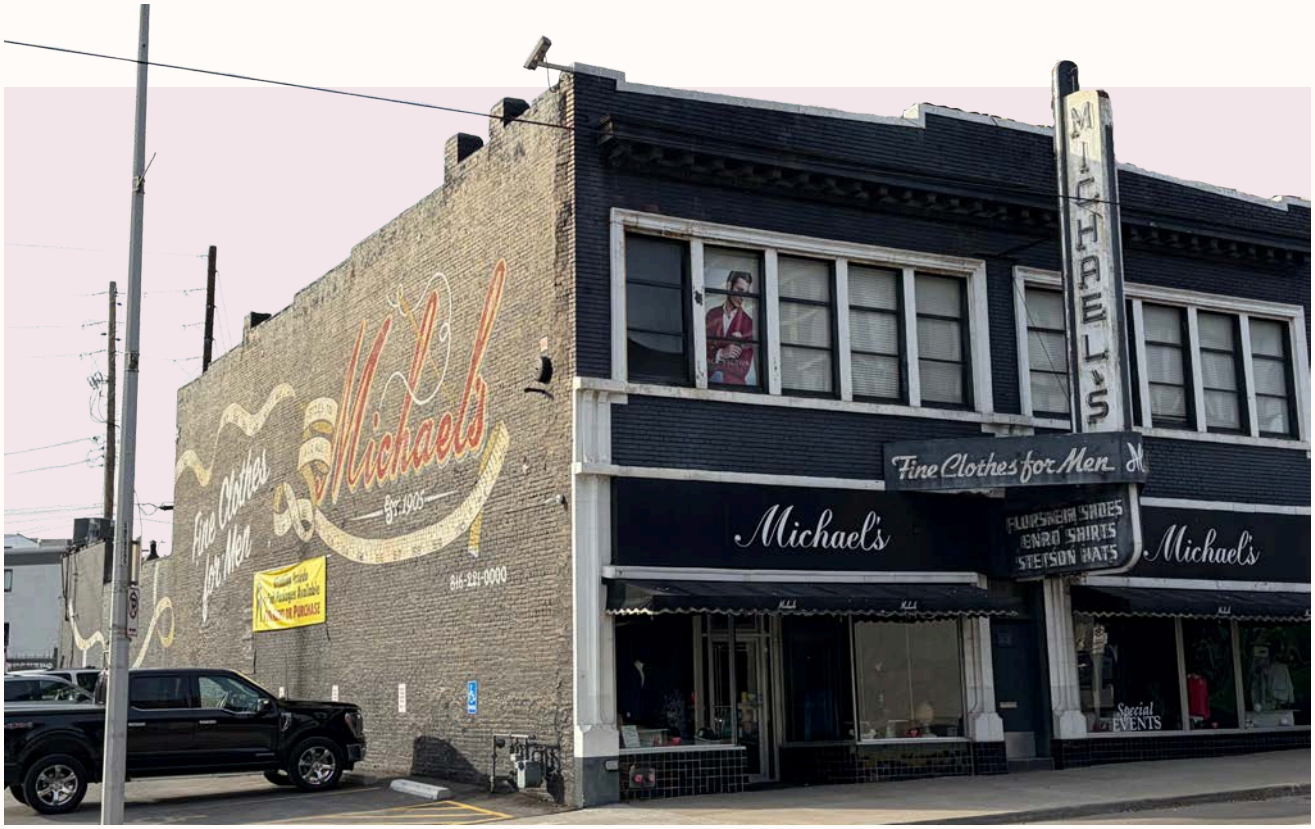
The survey focused on attitudes of resiliency and self-efficacy, aligned with the retreat content. Following participation in the retreat, youth participants reported a dramatic increase in their self-confidence in maintaining their mental health. They also reported increased resilience following programming (Figure 6). While promising, the data does not indicate if these perceptions of themselves sustained over time.

Self-Efficacy

An individual's belief in their capacity to complete necessary tasks to achieve specific goals.

Figure 6, Mental Health Self-Efficacy and Resiliency Outcomes





Group 2
Calvary Community Outreach Network

Program Overview
Calvary Community Outreach Network partnered with local parishes to support violence prevention. They implemented youth safe spaces, facilitated access to mental health services, such as therapy, and provided civic engagement messages to parishioners and the broader community.

Target Population(s)
Middle and high school students with mental health needs

Key Program Outcomes
- Improved mental health and welling being

Key Findings
- Nearly one-third of Year 2 youth reported feeling anxious weekly or everyday

- Despite reporting frequent feelings of anxiety, Year 2 youth reported improvements to self-efficacy

Table 12, Calvary Community Outreach Network Participant Demographics (n=118)

	% (n)
Total Participants	**118**
Gender	
Boys	38.0% (45)
Girls	62.0% (73)
Race	
Black	95.0% (112)
White	1.0% (1)
Hispanic/Latino	3.0% (4)
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0% (1)

Calvary Community Outreach Network

Calvary Community Outreach Network (CCON) received its first year of funding in 2024 and their second year of funding began in 2025.

Calvary implements violence prevention strategies through faith-based organizations. Calvary partnered with five to eight parishes supporting violence prevention. They implemented youth safe spaces, which offered formal and informal support to individuals based upon their needs. They also sought to destigmatize mental health and facilitate access to mental health services, such as therapy. They also provided regular civic engagement messages to parishioners and the broader community.

Calvary worked closely with middle and high schools to facilitate active engagement with students.

In the first year of the program, 124 youth participated in Calvary programming. One third of these youth (n=38) returned for a second year where total Year 2 participation included 118 youth. Calvary had contact with an average of 109 youth per month. The extent of participation could include: brief contact, one-time drop-in, and repeat participation.

Most of the participants were girls (62%), identified as Black (95%), and were in high school (Table 12). Youth completed a pre- and post-programming survey during Year 1 (n=81), and a pre-programming survey for Year 2. Based upon the timing of this report, we do not currently have data from post-

programming for Year 2 youth. However, JSP plans to provide targeted assistance to support higher survey response rates at the end of the 2025-26 academic year.

We focus specifically on the pre-programming survey results for Year 2 (Table 13).

Among youth respondents, 42% reported they never experience depression; however, 32% reported they feel depressed either seldom or often. In contrast, nearly one third of youth, 62.8%, report feeling anxious, either seldomly, often, or nearly every

Table 13, Calvary Participants' Mental Health Experiences

	Pre-Survey Year 1	Post-Survey Year 1	Pre-Survey Year 2
Youth Respondents	**81**	**43**	**50**
Youth reported they experienced depression...			
Nearly Everyday	3.7% (3)	11.6% (5)	0.0% (0)
Often	12.4% (10)	11.6%(5)	12.0% (6)
Seldom	11.1% (9)	25.6% (11)	20.0% (10)
Never	49.4% (40)	41.9% (18)	42.0% (21)
Don't Know	19.8% (16)	7.0% (3)	10.0% (5)
Did Not Answer	3.7% (3)	2.3% (1)	16.0% (8)
Youth reported they experienced anxiety...			
Nearly Everyday	4.9% (4)	15.6% (7)	5.9% (3)
Often	35.8% (29)	31.1% (14)	29.4% (15)
Seldom	24.7% (20)	31.1% (14)	27.5% (14)
Never	16.1% (13)	8.9% (4)	15.7% (8)
Don't Know	17.3% (14)	11.1% (5)	15.7% (8)
Did Not Answer	1.2% (1)	2.2% (1)	5.9% (3)
Among youth who experienced anxiety, they reported feeling anxious...			
Daily	13.0% (7)	34.3% (12)	15.6% (5)
Weekly	37.0% (20)	25.7% (9)	46.9% (15)
Monthly	29.6% (16)	8.6% (3)	18.8% (6)
Few times a year	18.5% (10)	25.7% (9)	18.8% (6)
Never	1.9% (1)	5.7% (2)	0.0% (0)
Youth reported their mental health as...			
Excellent	27.2% (22)	35.6% (16)	21.6% (11)
Good	49.4% (40)	53.3% (24)	68.6% (35)
Somewhat poor	3.7% (3)	4.4% (2)	3.9% (2)
Poor	0.0% (0)	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)
Don't know	19.8% (16)	4.4 (2)	5.9% (3)

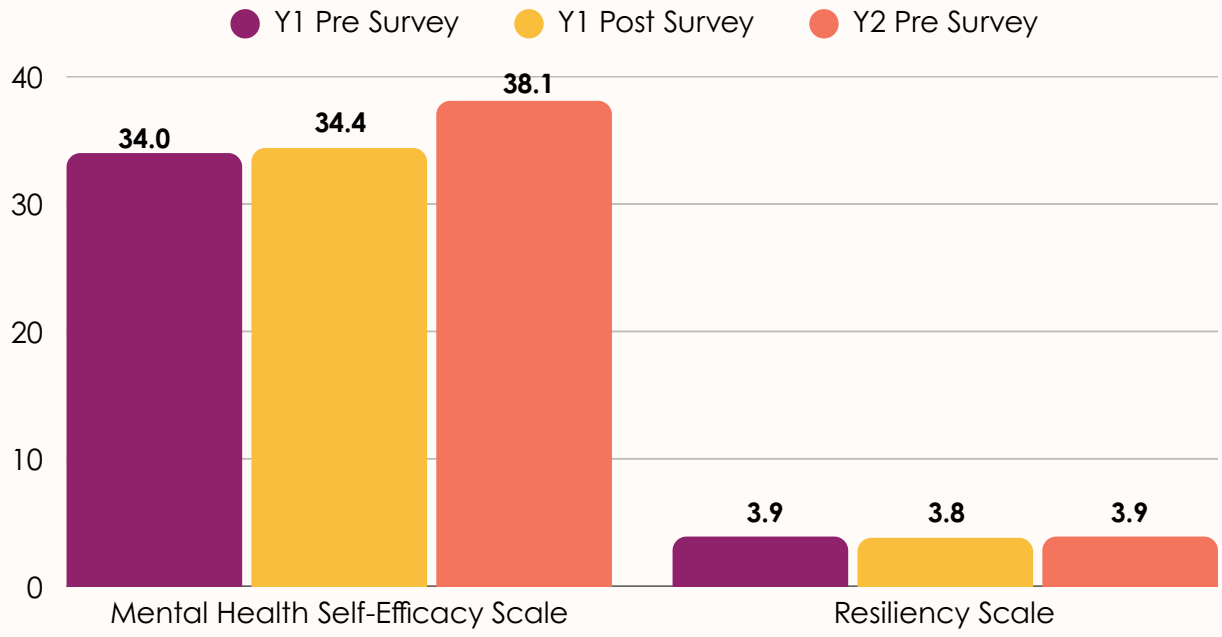
day. The survey asked youth to reflect specifically how often they felt anxious. Nearly half of youth, 46.9%, reported feeling anxious weekly.

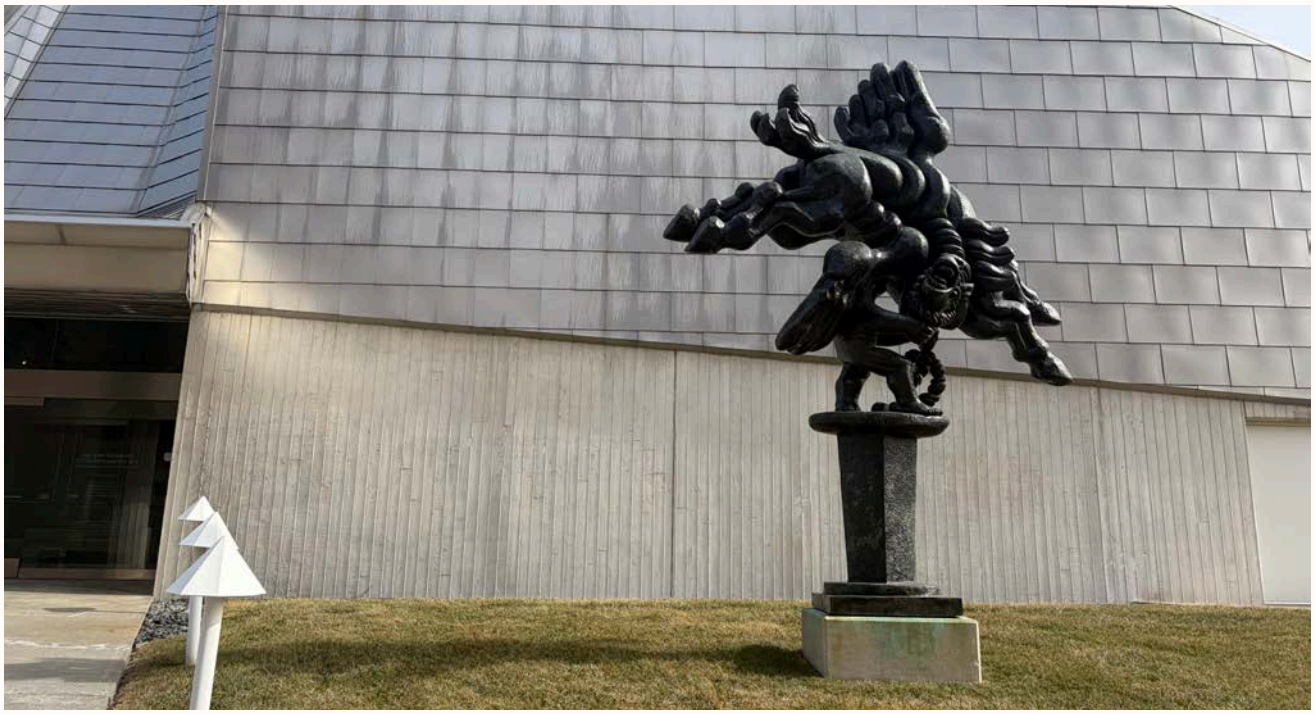
Overall, youth described their mental health as good or excellent, despite many reporting frequent bouts of anxiety.

Even among youth reporting depression and anxiety, youth generally displayed encouraging signs towards maintaining wellbeing (Figure 7). Seventy percent (n=37) scored high overall on self-efficacy, indicating that they generally have a positive outlook on their ability to accomplish their goals and complete necessary tasks.

Additionally, 63% (n=30) reported substantial confidence at maintaining their mental health in the upcoming month. Additional data and follow-up will continue to examine the impact of programming on youth target areas related to mental health.

Figure 7, Mental Health Self-Efficacy and Resiliency Outcomes





Group 2
Kansas City Public Library

Program Overview
The Kansas City Public Library's Peer Specialist program provides person-centered support to patrons facing complex social, behavioral health, and stability-related challenges. Peer specialists engage patrons by offering guidance, problem-solving support, and connections to community resources such as housing assistance, mental health services, and substance use treatment.

Target Population(s)
Library patrons facing complex social, behavioral health, and stability-related challenges

Key Program Outcomes
- Prevent future law enforcement contact and arrests
- Reduced library suspensions

Key Findings
- Early feeback demonstrates strong perceptions and experiences with peer specialists
- Generally, people feel safe inside and immediately outside the library branches
- Staff report some safety concerns, especially when security is absent or patrons get agitated

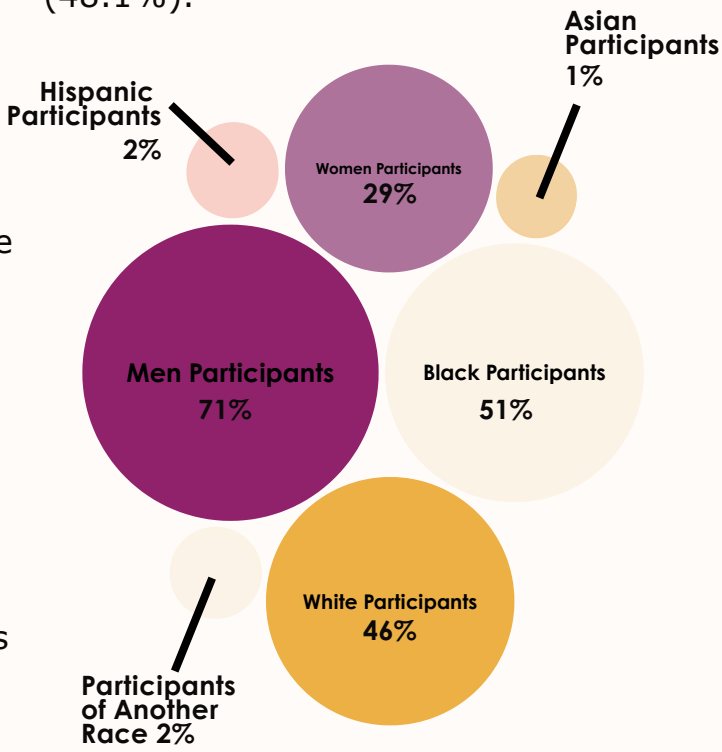
Kansas City Public Library Peer Specialist Program

The Kansas City Public Library's Peer Specialist program integrates trained individuals with lived experience into library spaces to provide person-centered support to patrons facing complex social, behavioral health, and stability-related challenges. Peer specialists engage patrons through respectful, trauma-informed interactions, offering guidance, problem-solving support, and connections to community resources such as housing assistance, mental health services, and substance use treatment.

By meeting individuals where they are and leveraging shared experience to build trust, the program helps reduce barriers to services while reinforcing the library's role as a welcoming, supportive community anchor for residents with diverse needs.

During the first year of funding, the program was unable to fully launch as planned due to implementation challenges associated with initiating the programming at the original Bluford branch location. These early logistical and operational barriers delayed startup activities and prevented full use of Year 1 funds. In Year 2, the Westport branch began peer specialist services in September 2025.

Since this time, the peer specialists have had 158 interactions (104 first time interactions and 54 repeat interactions). These interactions have involved outreach (73.4%) and providing support or referrals (48.1%).



Overall, most of the participants were men (70.9%), Black (50.6%), and either in their 40s (29.7%) or 50s (36.2%).

Table 14, Kansas City Public Library Survey Respondent Demographics (n=207)

Demographic	Peer-Specialist Program Participants	Staff	Patrons
Total Survey Participants	**49**	**18**	**140**
Branch			
Plaza	0.0% (0)	55.6% (10)	37.9%(53)
Westport	100.0% (0)	27.8% (5)	32.9% (46)
North-east	0.0% (0)	16.7% (3)	29.3% (41)
Gender			
Men	73.9% (34)	11.1% (2)	55.0% (77)
Women	23.9% (11)	33.3% (6)	40.7% (57)
Non-Binary	2.2% (1)	5.6% (1)	2.1% (3)
Did Not Disclose	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.1% (3)
Race			
Black	45.7% (21)	0.0% (0)	36.4% (51)
White	43.5% (20)	33.3% (6)	34.3% (48)
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.9% (4)
Asian	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (5)
Other	2.2% (1)	5.6% (1)	7.9% (1!)
Bi- or Multiracial	6.5% (3)	5.6% (1)	13.6% (19)
Hispanic Origin			
No	78.0% (32)	27.8% (5)	78.6% (110)
Yes, Mexican	4.9% (2)	11.1% (9)	7.1% (10)
Yes, Cuban	2.4% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.7% (1)
Yes, Puerto Rican	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.7% (1)
Yes, other origin/did not disclose	14.6% (6)	61.1% (11)	8.6% (12)
Age			
Average (years)	45.1	Unknown	45.2
Position			
Library Assistant/Associate	N/A	72.2% (13)	N/A
Administrator/Other	N/A	27.8% (5)	N/A
Position Tenure			
Average (years)	N/A	2.4	N/A

JSP surveyed peer specialist participants, peer specialist staff, and library patrons. JSP only surveyed participants at the Westport branch, but surveyed staff and patrons at three branches: Plaza, North-east, and Westport.

Peer Specialist Participant Surveys

Paper forms of these surveys were distributed over a two-week period by the Peer Support Specialist to any participants they interacted with at the Westport library branch. The participants were instructed to return

the completed paper survey to the JSP staff at the library on November 18, 2025. Additionally, the JSP staff member allowed any participants seen that day to volunteer to complete the survey. Participants were given $10 gift cards to complete the survey. The surveys were then entered into Qualtrics by the JSP staff. The next collection for these surveys will occur in early 2026. The Peer Specialist Program participant surveys provide measures assessing feelings of anxiety and/or depression, generally, perceptions of the program, and feelings of wellbeing and safety inside and around the library.

Peer Specialist/Library Staff Surveys

Staff surveys were collected via Qualtrics links sent to the staff by email from KCPL leadership. The staff surveys provide measures about their perceptions of the peer specialist program and their feelings of wellbeing and safety inside and around the library. The next collection for these surveys will occur in early 2026.

Library Patron Surveys

JSP staff members collected Library patron surveys in-person at the Westport (September 15 and 17, 2025), North-east (September 18, 2025), and Plaza (September 14, 2025) branches. These surveys were collected over 1 or 2 days with the goal of 50 surveys per library branch. They were collected via paper forms at the library and then entered by JSP staff into Qualtrics. The patron survey measures patrons' feelings of wellbeing and safety inside and around the library as well as their experiences when visiting the library. The next collection for these surveys will occur in early 2026.

Kansas City Peer-Specialist Program Perceptions

Program Participants

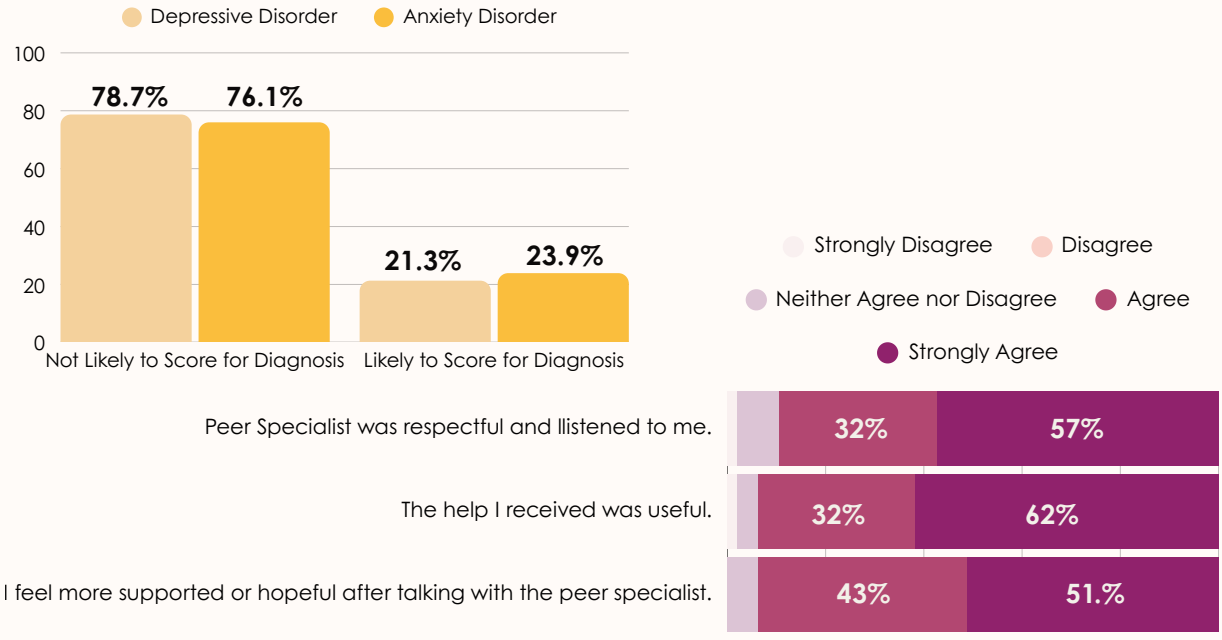
The survey relied on two screening assessments to understand the likelihood the individual may have a depressive-mood (GAD-2) or anxiety-disorder (PHQ-2). The recommended cutoffs for these screeners to indicate an increased probability of an anxiety or depression disorder is 3.

Over half of the participants scored as not likely to have a depressive (78.7%) or anxiety disorder (76.1%) (Figure 8).

For most of the participants, this was their first time meeting with a peer specialist at the library (79.2%), and majority reported they planned on following up on the resources provided to them by the peer specialist (68.1%, n=32). Many participants reported very positive feedback about the assistance they received from the peer specialist (Figure 8). Recommended improvements for the program included increasing the availability of resources within the community for the peer specialist to make more referrals.

> **Keep this in place, and keep up the good work! Just need more resource, other than that all good.**

Figure 8, Participant Mental Health Scores & Perceptions



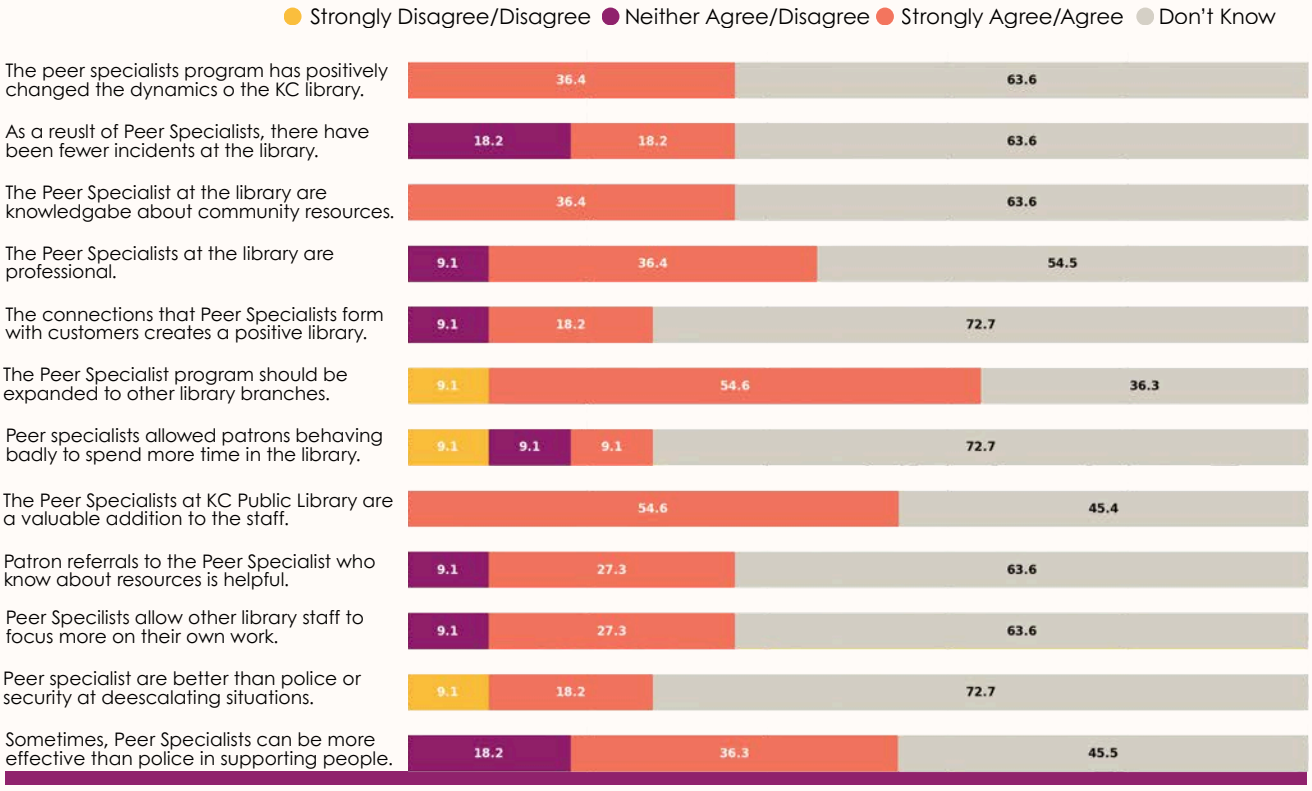
Library Staff

Library staff responded to several questions related to the peer-specialist program. Overall, staff who had awareness of the program viewed the program very favorably. For example, 54.6% of survey respondents felt that the peer specialist program was a valuable addition to the staff.

However, many staff surveyed did not have enough information to answer the questions about the program in large part because the program does not exist at their branch. Among the staff who have experience with the program, 54.6% felt it should be expanded to other KC public library branches.

Among staff at the Westport branch where the peer specialist program resides, some staff report making at least four referrals to the program. Staff reported at times they could not make referrals and explained they did not make referrals because: (1) the peer specialist was not available, (2) they did not know how to reach out to the specialist, or (3) another reason.

Figure 9, Staff Perceptions of Peer-Specialist Program



Kansas City Public Library Safety Perceptions

Inside the Library

Overall, peer specialist program participants, staff, and patrons feel safe or very safe inside the library; however, about one third of staff reported that there are places or times inside the library they do not feel safe.

One staff member shared,

> Overall I feel safe in the library. There have been times where an intense situation will happen that will set staff on edge for a while. We have had patron's assaulted on property and patrons bring in weapons. It can feel scary then, but I don't sit in fear during my shifts.

Table 15, Perceptions of Safety at Kansas City Public Libraries

	Peer-Specialist Program Participants	Staff	Patrons
Total Survey Participants	**49**	**18**	**140**
How safe do you feel inside the library?			
Very Safe	61.2% (30)	17.6% (3)	49.3% (69)
Safe	34.7% (17)	52.9% (9)	40.0% (56)
Neither safe nor unsafe	2.0% (1)	29.4% (5)	10.7% (15)
Unsafe	2.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Very Safe	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Are there any places or times inside the library where you don't feel safe?			
Yes	10.2% (5)	64.7% (11)	13.6% (19)
No	89.8% (44)	35.3% (6)	86.4% (121)
How safe do you feel getting to and from the library (like at your bus stop, parking lot, or on your way home?			
Very Safe	34.7% (17)	31.3% (5)	35.7% (50)
Safe	49.0% (24)	31.3% (5)	44.3% (62)
Neither safe nor unsafe	14.3% (7)	25.0% (4)	17.9% (25)
Unsafe	2.0% (1)	12.5% (2)	2.1% (3)
Very unsafe	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
How do you usually travel to the library?			
Walk	N/A	5.6% (1)	33.6% (47)
Rideshare (e.g. Lyft, Uber)	N/A	5.6% (1)	1.4% (2)
Public Transportation	N/A	11.1% (2)	31.4% (44)
Car	N/A	72.2% (13)	30.0% (42)
Bicycle	N/A	5.6% (1)	3.65 (5)
Are there any places or times outside the library where you don't feel safe?			
Yes	29.8% (14)	50.0% (8)	19.9% (27)
No	70.2% (33)	50.0% (8)	80.1% (109)

Getting to the Library & Safety Outside the Library

Overall, staff and patrons reported they relied on a car to get to the library, although patrons also relied on public transportation.

Across respondent groups, overwhelmingly they reported the feel their journey to the library is safe or very safe. One staff member shared when they sometimes feel unsafe getting to the library,

> [I don't feel safe] When some patrons see me getting in and out of my car in the parking lot, or at stop lights on the way to/from [the library]

Similarly, across all groups, respondents reported feeling that the space directly outside of the library across all groups, respondents reported feeling that the space directly outside of the library was also safe.

Respondents reported that while they overall felt safe outside the library, some reported witnessing someone in mental health crisis on the day of their visit (9.3%) and half reported they encountered individuals who are experiencing houselessness (53.7%).

Overwhelmingly, patrons reported that if they witnessed any violence, substance use, or individuals in a behavioral health crisis they would report these events to library staff.

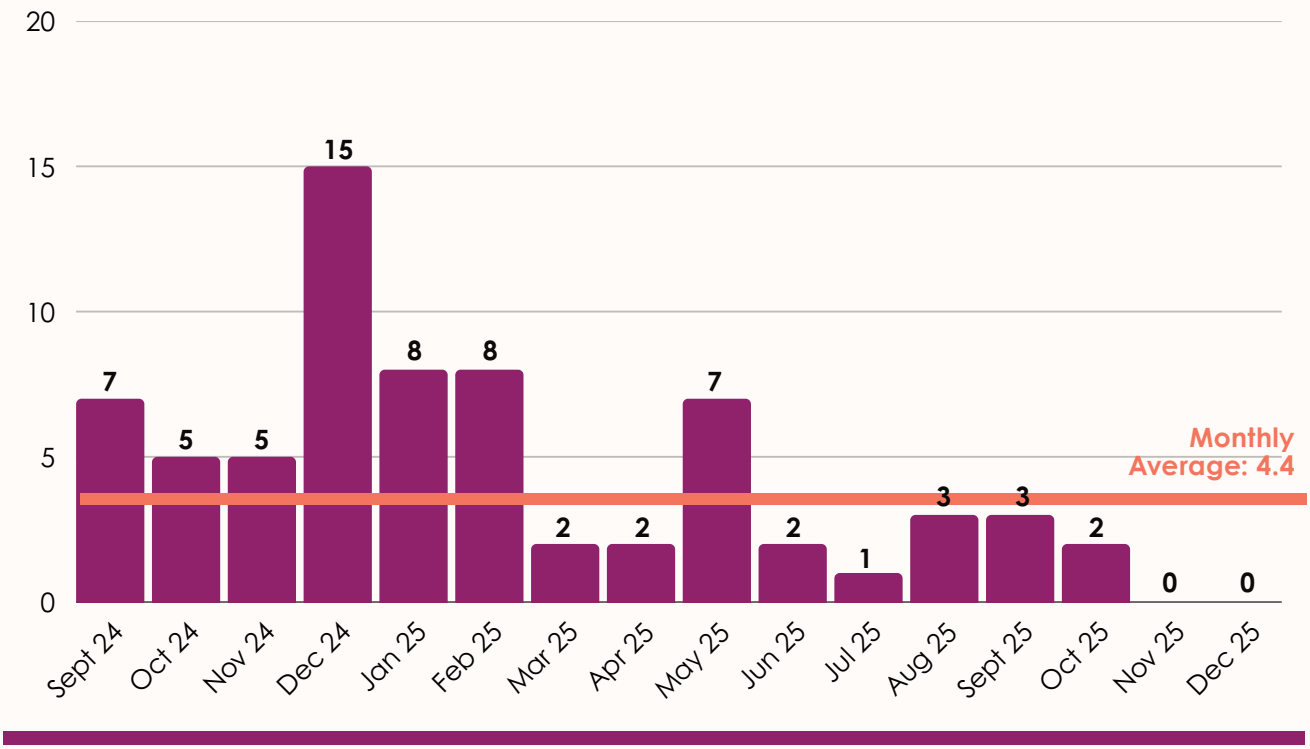
Kansas City Public Library Suspensions

JSP also examined the number of library suspensions (barring individuals from entering the library) at the Westport Branch from September 2024 to December 2025.

Suspensions typically occur because of vandalism, substance uses on property, or disturbing patrons. The length of suspensions vary by library branch but could range from as little as one day to many months.

Figure 10 shows the number of suspensions over time. During December 2024, the Westport Branch recorded their highest number of suspensions (15); however, the next year, the Westport Branch experienced declines in suspensions with the last two months of the year absent from suspensions.

Figure 10, Westport Branch Suspensions, Sept 2024 - Dec 2025



Group 3
Direct Intervention Programs

Programs

Second Chance

The Second Chance Program provides culturally responsive reentry support to adults returning to their communities from incarceration, with a particular focus on individuals on felony probation or parole, including those with current or prior violent felony convictions.

Lyrik's Institution

Lyrik's Institution is a grassroot organization reducing violence through cognitive behavior modification approaches to disrupt thought patterns which produce violent behavior.

Journey to Life

Journey to New Life provides two specific programs for participants: case management and peer-led groups. Case management includes holistic goal setting and connection with essential community resources, guiding participants step-by-step toward long-term independence and resilience. Peer-led recovery groups provide support, reentry navigation services, and structured social events.

Target Population(s)

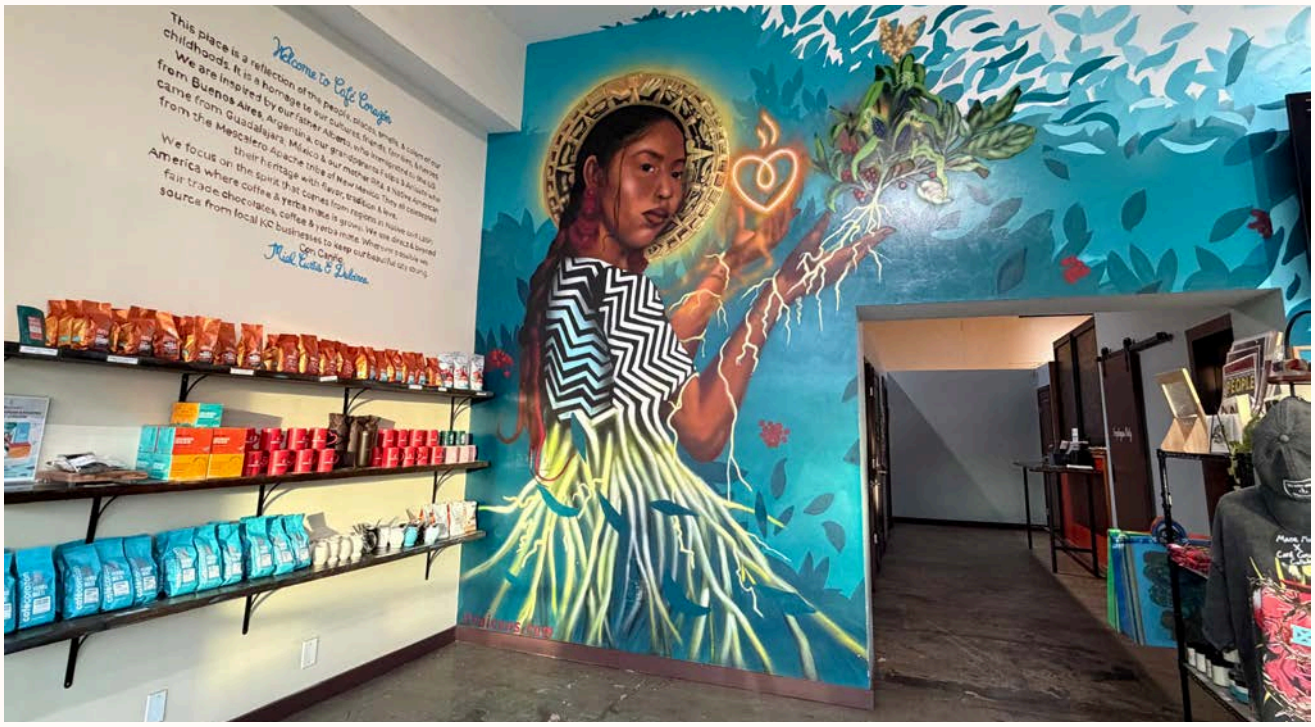
Individuals with a history of patterned violence.

Target Outcome(s)

- Reduced rearrest rates of participants

Key Findings

These programs reported reduced rates of police contact among participants, ranging from 0% to 17%. When continued police contact occurrerd, low-level offenses accounted for most of these rearrests. Overall, program participants showed significant improvements in resilience and reductions in impulsivity over time.



Group 3
Second Chance

Program Overview
The Second Chance Program provides culturally responsive reentry support to adults returning to their communities from incarceration, with a particular focus on individuals on felony probation or parole, including those with current or prior violent felony convictions.

Target Population(s)
- Individuals with history of patterned violence
- Individuals under probation or parole supervision with a felony conviction, including violent felony convictions

Key Program Outcomes
- Reduced rearrest rates of participants

Key Findings
- In Year 1, 83% of participants had no subsequent police contact within 12 months of program complemention
- Year 1 participants reported reduced impulsivity and increased resilience
- In Year 2, 100% of participants had no subsequent police contact, although data for the full year is not complete

Second Chance

The Second Chance Program provides culturally responsive reentry support to adults returning to their communities from incarceration, with a particular focus on individuals under felony probation or parole, including those with current or prior violent felony convictions.

The program addresses key barriers to successful reentry by offering employment readiness and job placement assistance, connections to education, behavioral health and substance use services, and support navigating supervision requirements.

With funding from the VPF, Second Chance expanded its capacity to serve additional individuals recently released from local jails and prisons, strengthened outreach efforts, and deepened partnerships with community-based organizations. The VPF-supported expansion also introduced evidence-based reentry strategies and participant incentives, such as stipends for completing training milestones, promoting engagement and stability.

Through a comprehensive, coordinated service model, the program works to reduce recidivism and support long-term successful reintegration of individuals back into their communities after incarceration.

JSP collected most demographic characteristics from the monthly metrics provided by the program. However, JSP collected demographics related to highest education level, relationship status, children, and health insurance coverage from participant surveys. The demographics presented represent the 72 participants who completed the Year 1 survey and 46 participants who completed the Year 2 survey. Year 2 data presented here includes participant demographics for individuals participating in the program from May to December 2025 (Table 16).

Second Chance served 95 participants in the first year and 85 participants in the second year. Across the years, most participants were men, (86.3% year 1, 87.1% year 2). The program primarily served Black (64.2% year 1, 68.2% year 2) and white participants (30.5% year 1, 23.5% year 2) who were, on average, 37 years old. Many participants also had at least a high school diploma or GED (56.9% year 1, 60.9% year 2) and were single/never married (78.8% year 1, 62.8% year 2). Across program years, more than half of participants (55.2% year 1, 52.2% year 2) were uninsured and among those who did have health insurance coverage, they primarily relied on public health insurance.

Table 16, Second Chances Year 1 and Year 2 Program Participant Demographics

	Year 1 May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025	Year 2 May 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026*
Total Participants	**95**	**85**
Gender		
Men	86.3% (82)	87.1% (74)
Women	13.7% (13)	12.9% (11)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black	64.2% (61)	68.2% (58)
White	30.5% (29)	23.5% (20)
Hispanic	2.1% (2)	2.4% (2)
Native American/American Indian	1.1% (1)	1.2% (1)
Bi- or Multiracial	2.1% (2)	4.7% (4)
Age		
Average (years)	36.8	37.0
Highest Education Level		
Less than high school	19.5% (14)	19.6% (9)
High school/GED	56.9% (41)	60.9% (28)
Technical/trade/vocational	8.3% (6)	2.2% (1)
Some college	9.7% (7)	10.9% (5)
Associate/Bachelor's degree	4.2% (3)	6.5% (3)
Graduate/professional degree	1.4% (1)	0.0%(0)
Relationship Status		
Single, never married	78.8% (52)	62.8% (27)
Married	1.5% (1)	11.6% (5)
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	15.7% (10)	20.9% (9)
Living with Partner	4.5% (4)	4.7% (2)
Number of Children under 18		
Average	2.2	1.6
Health Insurance Coverage		
Public	32.8% (22)	32.6% (15)
Private	11.9% (8)	13.0% (6)
Uninsured	55.2% (37)	52.2% (24)

*Although the Second Chances program runs from May 1, 2025 to April 30, 2026, data presented here only includes participant demographics for individuals participating in the program from May to December 2025.

Changes in Self-Reflection Measures

The Second Chance survey contained measures for self-control (score can range from 1-5), self-esteem (score can range from from 4-12), resilience (score can range from 25-175), anxiety (score can range from 0-63), and depression (score can range from 0-63).

Respondents also answered questions about their thinking patterns (all subscales scores can range from 10-50). These questions asked respondents to reflect on their: insensitivity, response disinhibition, justification, power orientation, grandiosity, and social desirability.

Insensitivity

A limited capacity to recognize how personal actions affect others, often minimizing harm or impact.

Response Disinhibition

A tendancy to act impulsively without pausing or considering consequences, or regulating behavior.

Justification

The tendency to rationalize or excuse harmful or rule-breaking beahvior by reframing it as reasonable, necessary, or someone else's fault.

Table 17, Changes in Self Reflection Measures for Second Chance Participants

Survey Category	Year 1 Pre-Survey	Year 1 Post-Survey	Year 2 Pre-Survey
	Avg Score	Avg Score	Avg Score
Self-Control	2.3	1.9	2.3
Self-Esteem	8.2	7.2	9.4
Resilience	78.5	84.9	85.5
Anxiety	9.8	10.8	5.1
Depression	12.1	11.3	5.6
Thinking Behaviors			
Insensitivity	21.3	14.6	15.8
Response Disinhibition	27.6	25.0	23.0
Justification	25.6	22.1	19.7
Power Orientation	25.3	20.1	21.0
Grandiosity	23.5	19.1	19.0
Social Desirability	32.4	33.6	36.3

Self-Control

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 2.3 points on measures of self-control. However, following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported a significant decrease in this measure to 1.9, indicating they perceive themselves as acting less impulsively following the program. Interestingly, respondents in Year 2 reported similar starting scores as respondents in Year 1.

Self-Esteem

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 8.2 points on measures of self-control. However, following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported a decrease in this measure to 7.2. This does not mean the program reduced self-esteem. In reentry work, several dynamics may explain this shift. For example, there may be increase self-awareness and the change in measure reflects a more realistic view of challenges and their own growth areas. Additionally, initial scores may reflect guarded optimism; however, as trust builds for participants in the program, they may have responded more honestly on the follow-up survey. Interestingly, respondents in Year 2 reported higher starting scores than respondents in Year 1.

Power Orientation

A belief that control, dominance, or coercion are legitimate and effective ways to navigate conflict or achieve goals.

Grandiosity

An inflated sense of self-importance or superiority that justifies bending rules or seeing oneself as except from consequences.

Social Desirability

The tendency to present oneself in a favorable light, sometimes minimizing problems or denying wrongdoing to gain approval.

Resilience

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 78.5 points on measures of resilience. Following participation, respondents reported an increase in this measure to 84.9, indicating stronger perceived ability to adapt to stress and recover from challenges after program completion. Respondents in Year 2 reported slightly higher starting scores than those in Year 1.

Anxiety & Depression

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 9.8 points on measures of anxiety. Following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported an increase in this measure to 10.8. Reentry programs often increase exposure to real-world barriers (background checks, stigma, supervision compliance). These changes may reflect the realities of navigating these structural barriers or the complex responsibilities of returning home.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 12.1 points on measures of depression. Following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported a slight decrease in this measure to 11.3, indicating modest improvement in depressive symptoms after program completion. Interestingly, respondents in Year 2 report significantly lower starting scores related to anxiety and depression.

Thinking Behaviors

Overall, Year 1 findings indicate meaningful reductions across key criminal thinking domains following participation in Second Chance. Participants reported decreases in insensitivity, response disinhibition, justification, power orientation, and grandiosity, suggesting reduced endorsement of impulsive behaviors, dominance-based beliefs, rationalizations for harmful conduct, and attitudes that minimize the impact of one's actions on others. Together, these shifts reflect movement toward more prosocial thinking patterns and improved behavioral regulation. While social desirability scores increased slightly, this modest change does not overshadow the broader pattern of reductions across criminogenic thinking constructs.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 21.3 points on measures of **insensitivity**. Following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported a decrease in this measure to 14.6, indicating reduced endorsement of attitudes that minimize harm to others or disregard the impact of one's actions. Year 2 participants reported similar starting scores as Year 1 participants.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 27.6 points on measures of **response disinhibition**. Following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported a decrease in this measure to 25.0, indicating fewer self-reported tendencies toward impulsive or unregulated behavior. Year 2 participants reported lower starting scores than Year 1 participants.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 25.6 points on measures of **justification**. Following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported a decrease in this measure to 22.1, indicating reduced rationalization of harmful or rule-breaking behavior. Year 2 participants reported lower starting scores than Year 1 participants.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 25.3 points on measures of **power orientation**. Following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported a decrease in this measure to 20.1, suggesting a reduced belief that dominance or control is necessary to resolve conflict or achieve goals. Year 2 participants reported similar starting scores as Year 1 participants.

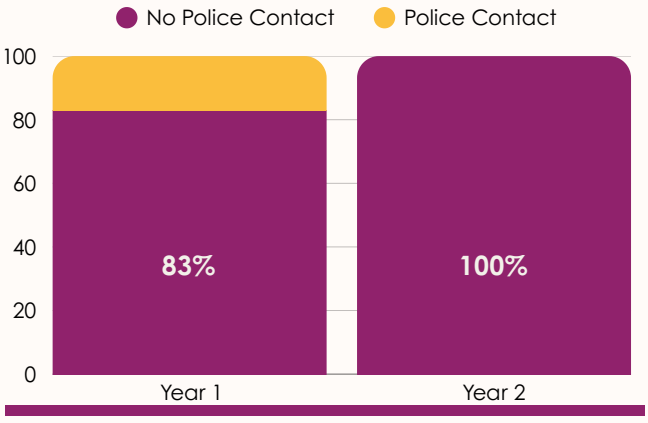
In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 23.5 points on measures of **grandiosity**. Following participation in Second Chance, respondents reported a decrease in this measure to 19.1, indicating lower endorsement of inflated self-importance or perceived exemption from rules. Year 2 participants reported similar starting scores as Year 1 participants.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 32.4 points on measures of **social desirability**. Following participation in Second Chances, respondents reported a slight increase in this measure to 33.6, suggesting a modest increase in the tendency to present oneself in a favorable light. Year 2 participants reported higher starting scores compared to Year 1 participants.

Participants' Subsequent Police Contact

Of the 95 participants in the first year, 83% did not experience a subsequent police contact after starting the program. Among those who did experience police contact, most of the contacts were for minor violations and summons (6 cases), and warrant-related contacts (7 cases). The majority were low-level contacts (summons/ordinances vs. serious crime).

Figure 11, Participant Police Contact



Group 3
Lyrik's Institution

Program Overview
Lyrik's Institution is a grassroot organization reducing violence through cognitive behavior modification approaches to disrupt thought patterns which produce violent behavior.

Target Population(s)
Young adults with previous criminal legal system involvement, often for violent offenses

Key Program Outcomes
- Reduce rearrest rates
- Improve mental health and wellbeing

Key Findings
- Participants reported carrying a firearm less frequently at the end of the program
- Of participants with prior arrests, 42% had no subsequent rearrests within six months of program completion

Lyrik's Institution

Lyrik's Institution is a grassroot organization reducing violence using cognitive behavior modification approach to disrupt thought patterns which produce violent behavior. They focus on programming for youth and emerging adults aged 13 to 25. Moreover, Lyrik's seeks to address how participants successfully navigate structural barriers by deepening participants' connections with educational and professional skills, resources, and opportunities.

Lyrik's Institution launched iBuild in March 2024. The specific program helps youth and young adults rethink violence using cognitive-behavioral modification strategies. The program challenges participants to reflect on how violence affects their daily lives and communities.

iBuild is rooted in an acceptance and celebration of urban culture that does not denigrate the value and contributions of the urban context. It uses this premise as a foundation to debunk the use of violence as a coping mechanism for handling interpersonal conflict and/or as an act of frustration or survival. Additionally, the program emphasized educational goals and career building strategies. By the program's end, participants were expected to have developed healthier coping mechanisms, expanded their career opportunities,

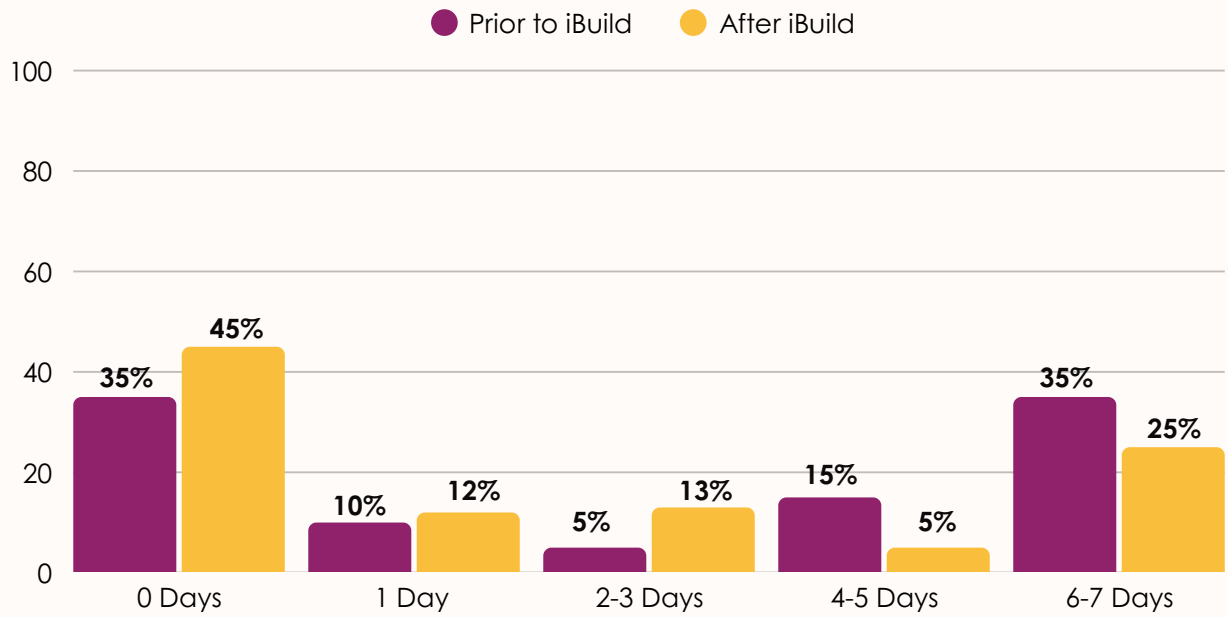
Lyrik's iBuild is rooted in an acceptance and celebration of urban culture.

and strengthened their connection to their communities. Youth and emerging adult participants attended weekly meetings held for two hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays over the course of six months. These meetings include guided discussions, skill-building exercises, and career exploration to help participants reframe their thinking and develop nonviolent coping strategies. Participants were paid weekly for their involvement in the program and, if needed, transportation assistance was provided.

Sessions were led by Culture Coaches, who had firsthand experience living in the same high-violence neighborhoods as participants. A Culture Coach reflects,

> At Lyrik's, we are able to establish strong relationships in a very quick matter of time. Meet like literally in one encounter. And from that, we are able to impact great change, because I again, I can speak to your specific challenge and give you resources and application on how to maneuver through it.

Figure 12, Changes in Weekly Firearm Carry



Changes in Carrying Firearms among Participants

Following participation in iBuild, firearm carry behaviors shifted meaningfully toward less frequent use. Prior to iBuild, 35% of participants reported carrying a firearm 0 days per week, compared to 45% after completion of the program. At the same time, the proportion of participants carrying firearms 6–7 days per week decreased from 35% to 25%, and those carrying 4–5 days declined from 15% to 5%.

While there were modest increases in participants reporting carrying 1 day (10% to 12%) and 2–3 days (5% to 13%), these shifts appear to reflect movement away from the highest-frequency carrying group rather than increased overall use. Taken together, the data indicate an overall reduction in weekly firearm carrying following participation in iBuild, aligning with the program's cognitive-behavioral focus on disrupting violent coping patterns and promoting healthier conflict resolution strategies among youth and emerging adults.

Data indicate an overall reduction in weekly firearm carrying following participation in iBuild.

Group 3
Journey to New Life - Case Management

Program Overview
Journey to New Life's Case Management program pairs participants with case managers. Case managers use a holistic, strengths-based approach to help participants identify their unique needs, set achievable goals, and connect with essential community resources, guiding them step-by-step toward long-term independence and resilience.

Target Population(s)
Individuals with a history of patterned violence and returning to their communities

Key Program Outcomes
- Reduce rearrest rates

Key Findings
- 90% of participants did not have subsequent police contact within 12 months of program completion
- Participants reported strong resilience and self-efficacy reflections
- Participants reported challenges with economic stability and loneliness

Journey to New Life: Case Management

Journey to New Life's Case Management Program provides personalized, comprehensive support. Through this program, everyone is paired with a dedicated case manager who serves as a consistent advocate and partner in overcoming the many barriers to successful reentry. Case managers understand the structural barriers program participants must navigate during reentry and how navigating and experiencing poverty complicates this process. One staff member said,

> Around returning from incarceration, or just the way that we look at the how we look at this is how it ties into violence prevention. Specifically, is like doing anti-poverty work is violence prevention, in my mind. So if we're addressing the drivers of poverty and taking care of people's like basic needs, like in that Maslov hierarchy of needs to get them out of crisis. Well then you that's violence prevention.

Many case managers have lived experience with incarceration or previous substance use disorder, allowing case managers to serve as credible messengers for program participants. One staff member reflects,

> Over 60% of the staff working has lived experience with incarceration, and… an even higher number of that is in recovery… that is why we are really responsive to the needs of the population that we're serving.

Case managers use a holistic, strengths-based approach to help participants identify their unique needs, set achievable goals, and connect with essential community resources, guiding them step-by-step toward long-term independence and resilience. One staff member offered,

> **"So our tagline for our agency is progress is personal. We celebrate the small wins all the time.**

JSP collected most demographic characteristics from the monthly metrics provided by the program. However, JSP collected demographics related to highest education level, relationship status, children, and health insurance coverage from participant surveys. These demographics represent the 39 participants who completed the Year 1 survey and 6 participants who completed the Year 2 survey.

Table 19, Journey to New Life Case Management Participant Demographics

	Year 1 September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025	Year 2 September 1 2025 – August 31, 2026
Total Participants	**91**	**40**
Gender		
Men	76.7% (66)	85.0% (34)
Women	23.3% (20)	15.0% (6)
Race		
Black	35.7% (30)	45.0% (18)
White	53.6% (45)	35.0% (14)
Native American/American Indian	3.6% (3)	2.5% (1)
Asian	1.2% (1)	2.5% (1)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1.2% (1)	0.0% (0)
Other race	1.2% (1)	7.5% (3)
Bi- or Multiracial	3.6% (1)	7.5% (3)
Age		
Average (years)	43.6	47.0
Highest Education Level		
Less than high school	20.5% (8)	16.7% (1)
High school/GED	41.0% (16)	50.0% (2)
Technical/trade/vocational	2.6% (1)	16.7% (1)
Some college	28.2% (11)	16.7% (1)
Associate/Bachelor's degree	7.7% (3)	0.0% (0)
Graduate/professional degree	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Relationship Status		
Single, never married	63.2% (24)	50.0% (3)
Married	2.6% (1)	0.0% (0)
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	26.3% (10)	33.3% (2)
Living with Partner	7.9% (3)	16.7% (1)
Number of Children under 18		
Average	1.1	0.8
Health Insurance Coverage		
Public	16.7% (4)	50.0% (4)
Private	79.2% (19)	16.7% (1)
Uninsured	4.2% (1)	33.3% (2)

Although the Journeys to New Life Case Management Program runs from September 1, 2025 through August 31, 2026, Year 2 data presented here only includes participant demographics for individuals participating in the program from September to December 2025 (Table 19).

Journey to New Life provided case management to 91 participants in the first year and 40 participants in the second year. Across the years, most participants were men, (76.7% Year 1, 85.0% Year 2). The program primarily served Black (35.7% Year 1, 45.0% Year 2) and white participants (53.6% Year 1, 35.0% Year 2) who were, on average, 45.5 years old. Many participants also had at least a high school diploma or GED (41.0% Year 1, 50.0% Year 2) and were single/never married (63.2% Year 1, 50.0% Year 2). Across program years, 79.2% of Year 1 participants carried private health insurance compared to 50.0% of Year 2 participants who relied on public health insurance.

Changes in Self-Reflection Measures

The Journey to New Life Case Management survey contained measures for resilience (score could range from 25-175), self-efficacy (range from 1-5), and key domains without social determinants of health,

Social Determinants of Health

The social and economic conditions people in which people are born, grow, work, and live shapring their health, stability, and overall wellebing

SDOH: Economic Hardship

Financial strain limiting access to basic needs.

SDOH: Life Satisfaction

An individual's overall sense of contentment and perceived quality of life.

SDOH: Social Support

The availability of trusted relationships providing emotional, practical, or informational assistance.

SDOH: Loneliness

The feeling of social isolation or lack of meaningful connection with others.

SDOH: Social Capital

The strength of social networks and community ties enabling individuals to access opportunities and resources.

including economic hardship (range from 0-5) , life satfiscation (range from 1-2), social support (range from 1-2), loneliness (score range from 1-2), and social capital (score range from 1-2).

Resilience

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 84.9 points on measures of resilience. Following participation in Case Management, respondents reported a slight decrease in this measure to 83.7. Respondents in Year 2 reported similar starting scores compared to Year 1 participants, suggesting relatively stable baseline resilience across cohorts.

General Self-Efficacy

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 4.2 points on measures of general self-efficacy. Following participation in case management, respondents reported an increase in this measure to 4.4, indicating modest growth in confidence in their ability to achieve goals and manage challenges. Respondents in Year 2 reported similar starting scores as those in Year 1.

Social Determinants of Health Domains

Overall, findings across the social determinants of health domains reflect a mixed pattern of change following participation in Journey to New Life's case management. In Year 1, participants reported slight increases in economic hardship and loneliness, alongside modest decreases in life satisfaction, social support, and social capital at post-survey. At the same time, Year 2 participants entered the program with higher baseline economic hardship, loneliness, life satisfaction, and social capital compared to the Year 1

Table 20, Changes in Self Reflection & Social Determinant of Health Measures for Journey to New Life Case Management Participants

Survey Category	Year 1 Pre-Survey	Year 1 Post-Survey	Year 2 Pre-Survey
	Avg Score	Avg Score	Avg Score
Resilience	84.9	83.7	84.7
General Self-Efficacy	4.2	4.4	4.4
Social Determinants of Health Domains			
Economic Hardship	2.8	2.9	3.5
Life Satisfaction	1.8	1.8	2.0
Social Support	1.8	1.7	1.8
Loneliness	1.3	1.8	1.5
Social Capital	2.7	2.2	3.0

cohort, while social support levels remained relatively similar across cohorts. Together, these findings suggest that while participants may experience ongoing structural and relational stressors during reentry, the incoming Year 2 cohort faced comparable—and in some domains heightened—social and economic challenges at program entry.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 2.8 points on measures of **economic hardship**. Following case management support, respondents reported a slight increase in this measure to 2.9. Respondents in Year 2 reported higher baseline economic hardship scores compared to Year 1 participants, suggesting greater financial strain among the more recent cohort.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 1.8 points on measures of **life satisfaction**. Following case management support, respondents reported a decrease in this measure to 1.5. Respondents in Year 2 reported slightly higher baseline life satisfaction scores compared to Year 1 participants.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 1.8 points on measures of **social support**. Following case management support, respondents reported a slight decrease in this measure to 1.7. Respondents in Year 2 reported similar starting scores as those in Year 1.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 1.3 points on measures of **loneliness**. Following case management, respondents reported an increase in this measure to 1.8. Respondents in Year 2 reported slightly higher baseline loneliness scores compared to Year 1 participants.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 2.7 points on measures of **social capital**. Following case management support, respondents reported a decrease in this measure to 2.2. Respondents in Year 2 reported higher baseline social capital scores compared to Year 1 participants.

Table 21, Changes in General Health among Journey to New Life Case Management Participants

Survey Category	Year 1 Pre-Survey	Year 1 Post-Survey	Year 2 Pre-Survey
General Health			
Excellent	17.1% (6)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (1)
Very Good	Option Not Provided	Option Not Provided	16.7% (1)
Good	74.3% (26)	90.0% (9)	50.0% (3)
Fair	8.6% (3)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (1)
Poor	0.0% (0)	10.0% (1)	0.0% (0)

Changes in General Health Perceptions

Across cohorts, participants generally rated their health as "good" or better, suggesting that individuals entering Journey to New Life's Case Management program perceive a relatively stable baseline of general health despite the broader life challenges they may be navigating.

In Year 1, responses consolidated around "good" at post-survey, which may reflect a stabilization effect as participants engaged in structured, strengths-based case management and began addressing core needs.

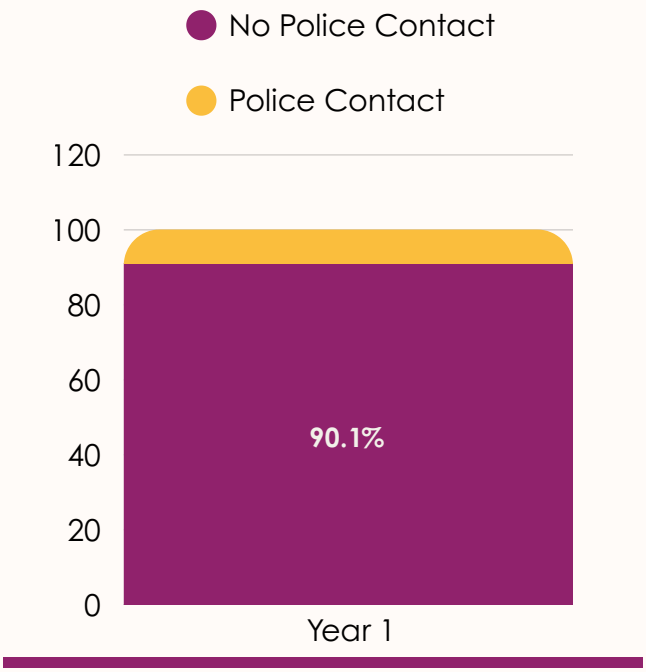
The Year 2 cohort entered with a more varied distribution of health ratings, indicating differing levels of perceived well-being at intake.

Taken together, the pattern suggests that while participants may not report dramatic shifts in overall health status, the program operates within a context of steady but nuanced health experiences, reinforcing the importance of holistic resilience.

Participants' Subsequent Police Contact

Of the 91 participants in the first year, 90.1% did not experience a subsequent police contact 12 months following the end of case managment services. Among those who did experience police contact, most of the contacts were for minor violations including trespassing and warrant-related contacts.

Figure 13, Participant Police Contact



Group 3
Journey to New Life - Peer-led Groups

Program Overview
Journey to New Life's Peer Support Program provide immediate assistance with essentials such as clothing, hygiene items, food, and help obtaining identification. The weekly peer-led recovery groups provide ongoing one-on-one support, reentry navigation services, and structured social events that foster belonging, build confidence, and reduce isolation throughout the reentry process.

Target Population(s)
Individuals with a history of patterned violence and returning to their communities

Key Program Outcomes
- Reduce rearrest rates

Key Findings
- 94% of Year 1 participants had no subsequent arrests within 12 months of program completion
- Year 1 participants demonstrated measurable gains in resilience and self-efficacy, factors linked to long-term stability

Journey to New Life: Peer-led Groups

Journey to New Life's Peer Support Program offers critical connections for individuals returning to their communities after incarceration, grounded in support from people with lived experience. One staff member reflected,

> What I think is a crown jewel of like our agency, is the fact that we are working on building community and so and a lot of that lives in the peer support space like the community groups that we offer.

Peer support specialists provide immediate assistance with essentials such as clothing, hygiene items, food, and help obtaining identification. The weekly peer-led recovery groups provide ongoing one-on-one support, reentry navigation services, and structured social events that foster belonging, build confidence, and reduce isolation throughout the reentry process. One staff member said,

> We really intentionally made our space accessible to people. Just having a computer lab and having a clothing closet downstairs where our services are free to the people that are using them so they don't have to, like, there's not a lot of barriers to get access to us.

By connecting individuals with others who have successfully navigated similar challenges, Journey to New Life helps participants develop resilience, access community resources, and strengthen the social support for long-term stability and reduced risk of recidivism.

JSP collected most demographic characteristics from the monthly metrics provided by the program. However, JSP collected demographics related to highest education level, relationship status, children, and health insurance coverage from participant surveys. These demographics represent the 25 participants who completed the Year 1 survey and 23 participants who completed the Year 2 survey.

Although the Journeys to New Life peer-led group program runs from September 1, 2025 through August 31, 2026, Year 2 data presented here only includes participant demographics for individuals participating in the program from September to December 2025 (Table 22).

Journey to New Life facilitated peer-led groups for 273 participants in the first year and 121 participants in the second year. In the first year, men (49.7%) and women (50.3%) were evenly served; however, in Year 2, groups mostly served women (87.8%).

Table 22, Journey to New Life Peer-led Group Participant Demographics

	Year 1 September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025	Year 2 September 1, 2025 – August 31, 2026*
Total Participants	**273**	**121**
Gender		
Men	49.7%(90)	12.2% (5)
Women	50.3% (91)	87.8% (36)
Race		
Black	26.1% (46)	7.3% (3)
White	67.6% (119)	80.5% (33)
Other race	1.1% (2)	4.9% (2)
Bi- or Multiracial	5.1% (9)	10.4% (5)
Age		
Average (years)	42.0	40.0
Highest Education Level		
Less than high school	20.0% (5)	13.6% (3)
High school/GED	40.0% (10)	50.0% (11)
Technical/trade/vocational	8.0% (2)	4.5% (1)
Some college	24.0% (6)	27.3% (6)
Associate/Bachelor's degree	8.0% (2)	4.5% (1)
Graduate/professional degree	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Relationship Status		
Single, never married	33.3% (8)	36.4% (8)
Married	20.8% (5)	0.0% (0)
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	41.7% (10)	63.7% (14)
Living with Partner	4.2% (1)	0.0% (0)
Number of Children under 18		
Average	1.5	1.5
Health Insurance Coverage		
Public	56.0% (14)	78.3% (18)
Private	16.0% (4)	4.3% (1)
Uninsured	28.0% (7)	17.4% (4)

*Although the Journey to New Life peer-led groups run from September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2026, data presented here only includes participant demographics for individuals participating in the program from September to December 2025.

The program primarily served white participants both years (67.6% Year 1, 80.5% Year 2) who were, on average, 41.0 years old. Many participants also had at least a high school diploma or GED (40.0% Year 1, 50.0% Year 2) and separated, divorced, or widowed (41.7% Year 1, 63.7% Year 2). Across program years, participants primarily relied on public health insurance (56.0% Year 1, 78.3% Year 2).

Changes in Self-Reflection Measures

The Journey to New Life peer-led group survey contained measures for resilience (score could range from 25-175), general self-efficiacy (1-5), mental health self-efficacy (0-10), and key domains of social determinants of health, including economic hardship (0-5), life satfiscation (1-2), social support (1-5), loneliness(1-2), and social capital (1-5).

General Self-Efficacy

Refers to a person's overall belief in their ability to handle challenges, solve problems, and achieve goals across many areas of life.

"I can handle what life throws at me."

Mental Health Self-Efficacy

Refers specifically to a person's confidence in their ability to manage their emotions, cope with stress, and use strategies or supports to maintain their psychological wellbeing.

"I can manage my anxiety, stress, or emotional triggers effectively."

Table 23, Changes in Self Reflection & Social Determinant of Health Measures for Journey to New Life Peer-led Group participants

Survey Category	Year 1 Pre-Survey	Year 1 Post-Survey	Year 2 Pre-Survey
	Avg Score	Avg Score	Avg Score
Resilience	78.8	86.4	83.6
General Self-Efficacy	4.2	4.5	4.2
Mental Health Self-Efficacy	7.2	7.7	7.3
Social Determinants of Health Domains			
Economic Hardship	1.4	1.0	1.9
Life Satisfaction	1.9	1.9	1.9
Social Support	1.9	2.0	2.0
Loneliness	1.5	1.2	1.6
Social Capital	3.0	3.0	7.3

Resilience

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 78.8 points on measures of resilience. Following participation in Journey to New Life's Peer Support Program, respondents reported an increase in this measure to 86.4, indicating strengthened ability to adapt to stress and recover from challenges. Respondents in Year 2 reported higher starting scores than Year 1 participants, suggesting that incoming participants continue to enter the program with relatively strong baseline resilience, which may be further reinforced through peer-led support.

General Self-Efficacy

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 4.2 points on measures of general self-efficacy. Following participation, respondents reported an increase to 4.5, indicating modest growth in confidence in their ability to achieve goals and manage reentry-related challenges. Respondents in Year 2 reported similar starting scores to those in Year 1, suggesting consistent baseline levels of perceived capability across cohorts.

Mental Health Self-Efficacy

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 7.2 points on measures of mental health self-efficacy. Following participation, respondents reported an increase to 7.7, indicating greater confidence in managing stress, emotions, and psychological challenges. Respondents in Year 2 reported comparable starting scores, reinforcing the program's relevance in strengthening coping capacity through lived-experience mentorship and recovery-oriented groups.

Social Determinants of Health Domains

Across the Social Determinants of Health domains, findings suggest that Journey to New Life's Peer Support Program plays a stabilizing and, in some areas, strengthening role during reentry. In Year 1, participants reported reduced economic hardship and loneliness, alongside modest increases in social support, patterns that align closely with the program's emphasis on immediate resource provision, peer connection, and structured social engagement. Life satisfaction and social capital remained relatively stable, indicating consistency in overall well-being and community connection as participants navigated reentry.

Notably, the Year 2 cohort entered the program with higher baseline economic hardship and loneliness, underscoring continued structural need, while also reporting strong social capital. Together, these findings reflect the dual reality of reentry: persistent material challenges paired with the critical importance of relational support and community connection in promoting long-term stability.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 1.4 points on measures of **economic hardship**. Following participation, respondents reported a decrease to 1.0, indicating reduced financial strain. Respondents in Year 2 reported higher baseline economic hardship compared to Year 1 participants, suggesting that newer cohorts may be entering the program with greater material need, underscoring the importance of immediate resource assistance.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 1.9 points on measures of **life satisfaction**. Following participation, respondents reported similar scores at post-survey, indicating stability in overall perceived quality of life. Respondents in Year 2 reported comparable starting scores, suggesting consistent baseline life satisfaction across cohorts.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 1.9 points on measures of **social support**. Following participation, respondents reported an increase to 2.0, reflecting modest growth in perceived access to supportive relationships. Respondents in Year 2 reported similar starting scores, reinforcing the program's ongoing role in strengthening relational networks through peer connection.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 1.5 points on measures of **loneliness**. Following participation, respondents reported a decrease to 1.2, indicating reduced feelings of social isolation. Respondents in Year 2 reported slightly higher baseline loneliness compared to Year 1 participants, further highlighting the importance of structured peer groups and social engagement opportunities.

In Year 1, during the pre-survey participants scored, on average, 3.0 points on measures of **social capital**. Following participation, respondents reported similar scores at post-survey, suggesting stability in perceived access to community networks and resources. Respondents in Year 2 reported notably higher baseline social capital, indicating that newer participants may be entering the program with stronger existing community ties, which peer support services can help sustain.

Table 24, Changes in General Health among Journey to New Life Peer-led Groups Participants			
Survey Category	**Year 1 Pre-Survey**	**Year 1 Post-Survey**	**Year 2 Pre-Survey**
General Health			
Excellent	17.4% (4)	17.6% (6)	10.0% (2)
Very Good	Option Not Provided	Option Not Provided	30.0% (6)
Good	56.5% (13)	73.5% (25)	45.0% (9)
Fair	26.1% (6)	8.8% (3)	15.0% (3)
Poor	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)

Changes in General Health Perceptions

Across cohorts, participants in Journey to New Life's Peer-Led Groups Program generally reported stable to improved perceptions of their overall health, with notable shifts toward more positive ratings following participation. In Year 1, the proportion of participants rating their health as "Good" increased substantially from 56.5% at pre-survey to 73.5% at post-survey, while reports of "Fair" health decreased from 26.1% to 8.8%. This movement away from lower health ratings suggests that engagement in peer-led groups, grounded in shared lived experience, consistent social connection, and recovery-oriented support, may contribute to improved perceptions of well-being and day-to-day stability.

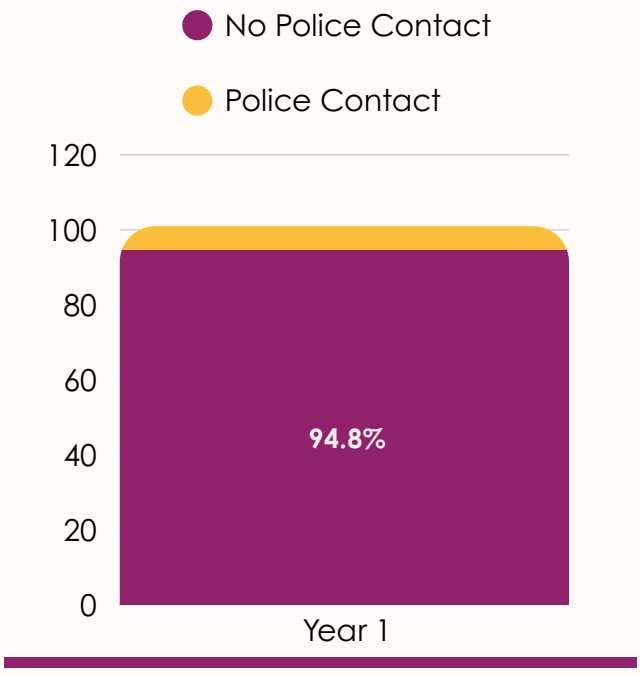
The Year 2 cohort entered with a more varied distribution of health ratings, including a higher proportion selecting "Very Good," indicating that incoming participants may differ in how they conceptualize and report their health. Taken together, the pattern suggests that while the program may not dramatically shift participants into the highest health category, it appears to support movement out of poorer health perceptions and into more stable self-assessments, an outcome consistent with a peer support model focused on belonging, encouragement, and incremental progress during reentry.

Participants' Subsequent Police Contact

Of the 273 participants in the first year of the Peer-led Groups, 256 individuals, or 94.8% (Figure 14), successfully had no subsequent arrests within 12 months.

Among the 17 individuals (6.2%) with subsequent police contact, most of the contacts were for minor violations and trespassing (20 cases), and warrant-related contacts (11 cases). The majority were low-level contacts (summons/ordinances vs. serious crime) and only 1 warrant-related case was for a person-based crime (simple assault).

Figure 15, Participant Police Contact



Group 4
Non-Evaluable Programs

Programs

Total Man

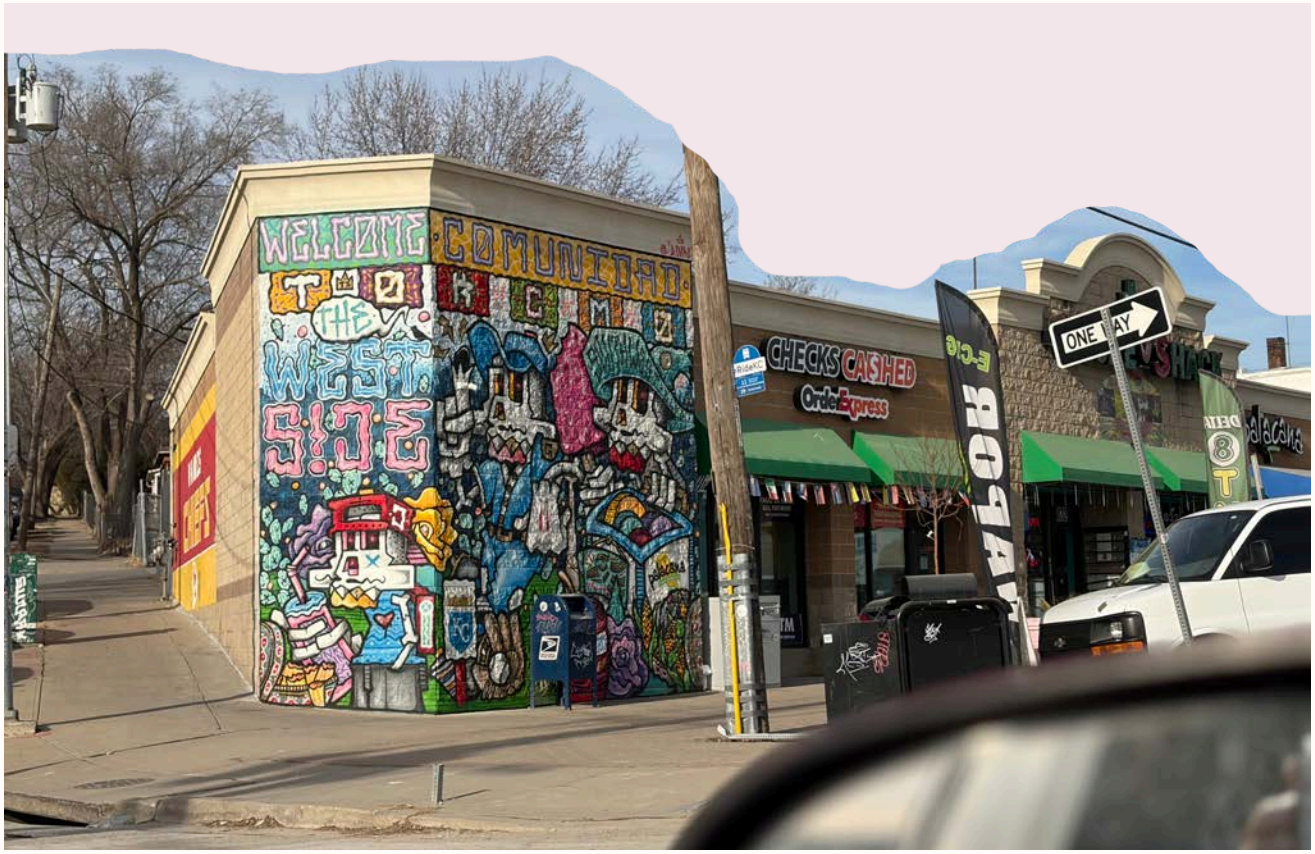
Total Man CDC's VPF-supported Fatherhood Program combines peer-led fatherhood development with structured mental health awareness and support. Participants meet twice weekly for 10 weeks in facilitated group sessions led by a peer support leader, creating space for skill-building, reflection, and connection. The program integrates parenting education, emotional wellness strategies, and community-building activities designed to strengthen fathers' mental health and overall wellbeing.

Camp C.H.O.I.C.E - African American History Sessions

Camp C.H.O.I.C.E.'s African History Saturdays is a ten-part, community-based education series designed to strengthen families and neighborhoods through culturally grounded learning, dialogue, and intergenerational engagement-building.

Non-Evaluable Programs

These programs are considered non-evaluable due to both data limitations and lack of alignment with the funding framework's required violence prevention outcomes. In Year 1 and Year 2, contractual and operational constraints—including the inability to collect identifiable participant information necessary to assess post-program law enforcement contact—resulted in incomplete datasets that do not support reliable outcome analysis. Additionally, the African History Saturdays series, while successful in fostering community engagement and participant satisfaction, did not target a violence-impacted population or collect outcome measures connected to violence reduction, making it outside the scope of evaluability under the VPF requirements.



Group 4
Total Man

Program Overview
Total Man CDC's VPF-supported Fatherhood Program combines peer-led fatherhood development with structured mental health awareness and support. Participants meet twice weekly for 10 weeks in facilitated group sessions led by a peer support leader, creating space for skill-building, reflection, and connection. The program integrates parenting education, emotional wellness strategies, and community-building activities designed to strengthen fathers' mental health and overall wellbeing.

Target Population(s)
Men looking for mental health awareness and parenting support

Key Program Outcomes
- Improved mental health awareness
- Improved parenting skills and connections with children

Total Man

Total Man Community Development Corporation (CDC) is a locally rooted nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening individuals, families, and communities through holistic support and development initiatives. Through partnerships and events that build connection and resilience, Total Man aims to empower men to thrive socially, economically, and personally.

The VPF funded portion of this program integrates a Fatherhood Program with mental health awareness and support. Each group is led by a peer support leader, meeting twice a week for 10 weeks. The primary goal for Total Man is to enhance the wellbeing, especially focused on mental health, through a Fatherhood program.

The Year 1 cohort began in September 2024, and 21 pre-surveys were completed by participants. Total Man is a targeted program for men, mostly white (60.0%), and either had some high school education (35.0%) or high school diploma (30.0%) (Table 25).

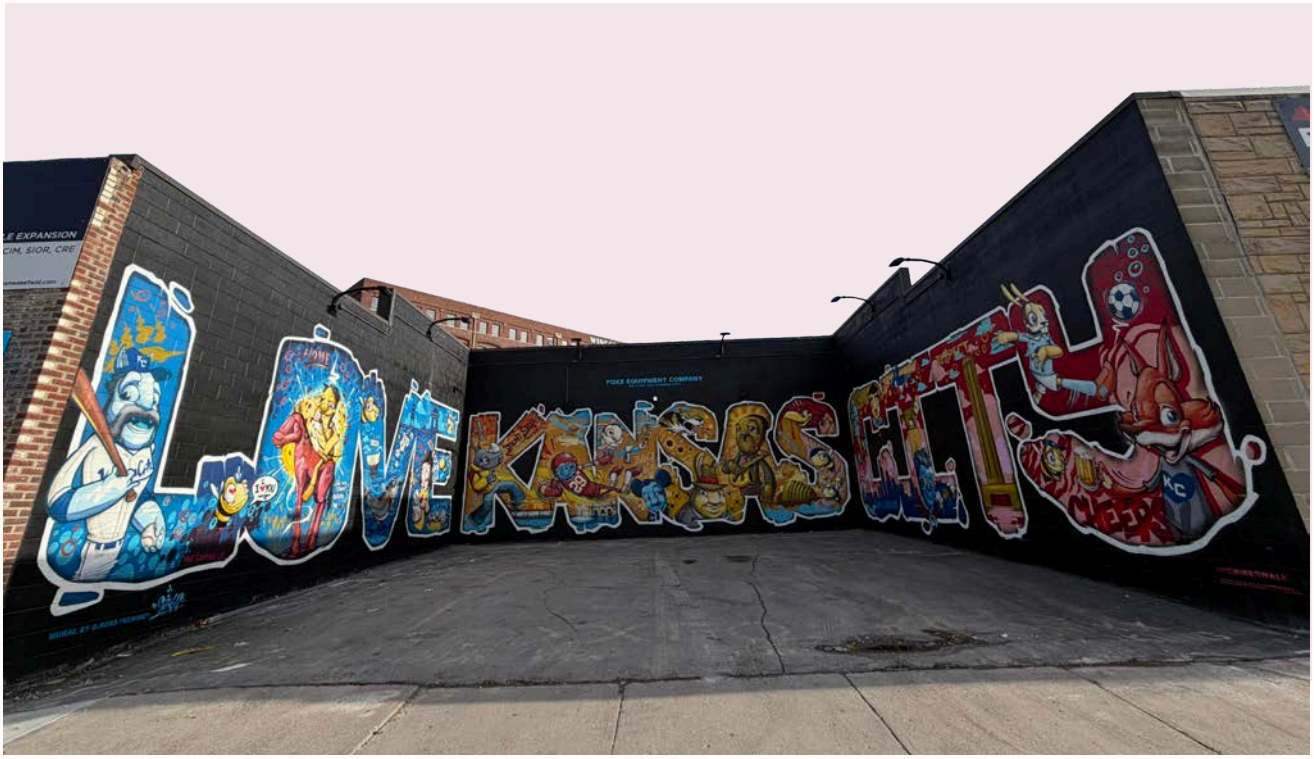
Table 25, Total Man Participant Demographics

	% (n)
Total Participants	**21**
Race	
Black	35.0% (7)
White	60.0% (12)
Bi- or Multiracial	5.0% (1)
Hispanic Origin	
No	19.0% (4)
Yes, Mexican	5.0% (1)
Age	
Average (years)	44.0
Highest Education Level	
8th grade or less	20.0% (4)
Some high school	35.0% (7)
High school diploma/GED	30.0% (6)
Some college	10.0% (2)
Technical School	5.0% (1)

During Year 1, program implementation, several contractual, and operational limitations significantly constrained the outcome evaluation. As a result, the evaluation team was unable to assess whether Year 1 participants had future contact with law enforcement or the criminal legal system after program enrollment.

Additional challenges emerged in Year 2 related to data collection and evaluation feasibility. The program expressed concerns about collecting identifiable participant information and the potential use of that information to assess post-program police contact. Despite ongoing discussions and collaborative efforts involving JSP, Total Man, and the Health Department, a resolution could not be reached that would allow for the collection of the minimum data necessary to continue evaluation under the funding requirements. As a result, funding could not continue for the program under the VPF evaluation framework.

Collectively, these limitations resulted in an incomplete dataset across Year 1 and Year 2. As a result, the available data do not provide a sufficient basis to draw reliable conclusions about program outcomes or impact, including its relationship to violence reduction.



Group 4
Camp C.H.O.I C. E. - African American History Sundays

Program Overview
Camp C.H.O.I.C.E.'s African History Saturdays is a ten-part, community-based education series designed to strengthen families and neighborhoods through culturally grounded learning, dialogue, and intergenerational engagement. building.

Target Population(s)
Primarily adult residents

Key Program Outcomes
- Perceived programming satisfaction
- Perceived quality of sessions

Key Findings
- 83% of series participants agreed speakers were knowledgeable
- 73% of series participants said they would reocmmend the series to others

Camp C.H.O.I.C.E - African American History Sundays

Camp C.H.O.I.C.E.'s African History Saturdays is a community education series that reached 120 individuals between June 2024 and July 2025. Camp C.H.O.I.C.E. held ten African History Saturdays: five in 2024 and five in 2025. The series created a space for learning and dialogue aimed at the organizations broader mission of strengthening families and communities through education and positive engagement.

This series engaged an adult population who were, on average, 48 years old, with attendees ranging from 18 to 66 years of age. Most of the participants (76%) were from Kansas City, MO, with additional participants (24%) coming from Kansas City, KS and neighboring Missouri cities.

Based on survey responses from the 15 attendees, 83% of participants reported the series speakers were knowledgeable. Additionally, 73% reported they were satisfied with the series and would recommend African American History Saturday’s to others.

The program is non-evaluable because it does not have a clear connection to violence prevention (or the population engaged in violence), nor is there any data collected that could support changes in a manner that impacts violence.

Findings
Resident Experiences

This section presents findings from qualitative interviews with Kansas City residents most impacted by community violence: youth in intervention programs, adults with lived experience of incarceration and housing instability, and frontline staff working in violence prevention and intervention.

The community perspectives presented address three central questions:

1. What do community members understand as the root causes of local violence?
2. What are community perceptions of the VPF program?
3. What do community members perceive they need to strengthen their community?

Perceptions of Root Causes of Local Violence

Three themes emerged with respect to interviewees' perceptions of root causes of violence: access to guns creating opportunities for crime, system inequalities contributing to disparate outcomes, and a lack of opportunities for individuals, community investment, and collaboration.

Access to Guns Creates Opportunities for Crime

Many interviewees shared their concerns that gun access is a key contributor to crime in Kansas City. Fear of threats from other people emerged as the most common perceived motivator for carrying a firearm. One staff member offered,

> Only one reason...fear. Fear of being hurt, robbed, stolen from, and killed.

Other staff and participants shared similar sentiments, with a participant offering,

> I think people is like scared to not have self-defense when somebody is looking for them.

This emphasis on personal protection was a key rationale across the people that we interviewed. Importantly, participants reported they had witnessed different types of violence in their lives, and the exposure to violence served as a constant reminder they could be victim to violence. The exposure reinforced both fear and desire for protection. One youth participant said,

> **I have family and a lot of friends who are shot. Many seeing shootouts, have been around shootouts...violence means nothing to me...because it's so normal. I've been around it my whole life.**

Some individuals characterized easy access to guns as key to why individuals carry firearms. Participants referred to the no permit requirement to acquire or possess a firearm (e.g., rifle, handgun, or shotgun) in Missouri. As one staff explained,

> In Missouri, we are a second amendment state, so you don't have to go get a permit. You can just walk into the store, and as long as you pass that background check, you can buy a whole store if you want to. So that's another reason for the increase of our violence... the urban neighborhoods who are really struggling with people being able to just go purchase guns whenever they want to, and say it's stolen and now your cousin, auntie, uncle has a gun, who is not eligible to get a gun.

This is consistent with state policy, which shows that Missouri does not have foundational gun violence protection laws. In 2007, Missouri repealed an 80-year-old law that required a permit to purchase firearms, which corresponded to an increase in nonfatal shootings and gun homicide rates of up to 27-30%.[15]

System Inequalities Contribute to Disparate Outcomes

Participants identified systematic and structural inequalities as root causes of violence in their communities. For instance, many participants noted the historical segregation, generational policies, and discriminatory policies that created conditions in Kansas City for violence to flourish. One participant described how residential segregation created lasting generational poverty,

> Generational poverty! Most definitely... Those people were below that, that white line that you couldn't cross back in the 1950s and 70s and 80s, and you were able to do it after maybe 1960, 70 something, but those families are still ingrained in that. That's generational poverty. That's where a lot of the violence that stems from our urban core.

For this participant, there is a "white line that you couldn't cross," pointing to limited economic mobility for Black families. Another participant focused on welfare rules that they believe incentivized family separation and contributed to household instability. As one participant characterized it:

> There is a deep, rooted, systemic challenges, problems that are inherent in many of our communities that go back to the welfare system, the welfare system that encouraged and mandated their fathers not be [in the home] in order to get a check, in order to get your rent paid, in order to get some food.

Other interviewees described how the physical environment of their neighborhoods reflects and reinforces inequality. One participant pointed to the concentration of liquor stores and fast-food restaurants and the absence of other critical resources as a marker of community disinvestment. Another interview participant said,

> You're conditioned by the environment that you live in. So if the environment you raise then is forcing you to survive... if you go in the hood, all you see is liquor stores.

Taken together, these reflections suggest that residents see violence not as a problem of individual behavior, but as the result of policies rooted in structural disinvestment.

Absence of Opportunities, Investment, and Collaboration

Interviewees described community and organizational-level factors that they perceive to influence gun violence in their communities. Staff said that the decrease in resources, activities, and safe places emerged as a critical concern for increasing gun violence.

Staff and community members reflected on the community resources that they remembered in their youth. Some activities that were mentioned as no longer present in the community included sports and after-school access to school sports fields and gyms, community-based programs, and summer jobs. For example, as one community member described:

> When I was growing up, we had what is called 24th Street Minutes Circle Friendly House. They provided for the whole community. For the seniors, for the youth, there were places that they could go for recreation. That funding is no longer there, so that haven is gone.

A staff member described the lack of summer programming for youth present today:

> Swope Park had swimming every day, and the community centers had pools. Everyone had pools. Also, kids could just play basketball... pick-up games or whatever. You don't have that opportunity anymore.

Another staff member elaborated on the disinvestment they have witnessed in youth programming, emphasizing that interventions need to start earlier and involve the whole family.

> I believe that we need to have more programs that are set up for youth, and I'm not talking about by the time they're 14/15 years old. I'm talking about starting at the elementary age. I think, if you have more youth programs, and also have the parents be involved along with whatever program you put together for a young person, that adult that's in that house needs to be a part of it.

Participants highlighted the importance of youth programming as a protective factor, and necessary to keep young people engaged and out of trouble. One staff member talked about the decline in summer opportunities they had seen in the city,

> I grew up with summer opportunities, but I just don't see them... Boys and Girls Club counselor, and that was like a common position... Urban League used to have programs... freedom school was everywhere back in our day... You had those type[s] of opportunities that kept you busy. There was education involved. There was fun involved.

One participant who had been through the foster care system and a transitional living program spoke directly about the link between having activities and staying out of trouble, and the types of resources they would like to see for youth,

> I say more mentor for the youth, because that drove me to be the person I am today. Because if it wasn't for this program or my case managers or whatever, I wouldn't have been here today. I would have been probably dead or in jail... they kept us busy, like finding a job, keeping a job, and then when we wasn't working, they took us out on like, group visits... Basically, because if you're not busy, when I was a teen, if I wasn't busy, I'll try to find something and get in trouble.

These community voices suggest that reinvestment in safe spaces and structured activities for youth is vital to violence prevention.

Perceptions of the Violence Prevention Fund as Community Solution

Participants describe both the critical benefits of VPF programming and the barriers that limit its reach.

Overall, three key benefits emerged: access to key services, rebuilding confidence and hope, and increasing employment and economic stability. Participants also identified resource constraints and transportation as major challenges with accessing programming.

Benefits of VPF Programs

Access to Basic Needs

VPF helped program participants access resources that allowed them to achieve stability and succeed. When individuals do not have their basic needs met and their neighborhood is under-resourced, they have fewer positive options and are more likely to turn to unlawful activities.[16,17]

Providing resources acts as both violence prevention and an investment in these communities' thriving and growing. Interview participants explain the difficulties they experience accessing basic needs during reentry.

As one staff participant explained,

> Clothing, hygiene, identification, those are the first things that you need when you're coming out of incarceration. Those are the things you need when you're homeless. You know, that's a huge thing. And then case management will fall in there, because some people come home, or they come in and they have no clue of different resources.

VPF programs that offer these items set individuals up for success, particularly those who are in the greatest need and at the most risk for instability and potential criminal legal system involvement. Offering those services and resource navigation is a critical role and a major contribution of VPF programs. As one program participant explains,

> [VPF programming] helped me with my utility bills. They gave me resources for rental assistance. They bought my clothes, like winter clothes. They helped me with house supplies and with the food pantry. I have no, no covers and sheets at my house, and they bought me a bed. They help a lot. If you need it, nine times out of ten they can help you with it, right?

This program participant, like many others, dealt with food insecurity and inconsistent access to resources that could keep him warm.

By providing these critical resources, programs are helping meet his basic needs.

Rebuilding Confidence and Hope

Participants in VPF programming often experienced hardships that led them to at times lose hope and confidence. The loss of possibilities and hopelessness can lead to alternative approaches to meet basic needs, even by unlawful means.

Staff shared how VPF programming helped individuals gain self-confidence and regain hope, which allowed them to grow in other parts of their life.

> **There's a moment when you're first meeting a client, and you can tell they're just a little bit kind of maybe beaten down. By like the immensity of all the things that they need to do, or what they've gone through and all of that. Their kind of belief in themselves, and the belief that they actually have an option at something better, is pretty small.**
>
> **So, when you can help grow that in somebody, and you see that like little spark of hope, that fire. It's in the back of their eyes. It's in the way that they hold their shoulders. It's in all of the nonverbal communication … and it's so awesome.**

The staff member continued,

> It's so awesome when you have a client who was coming in with maybe more of a negative outlook has got a little skip in their step the next time you run into them, and they're telling you all of these. It's why we celebrate the small things and those little wins along the way, because it creates that momentum for people, and it helps build that hope. … That's the biggest change I see: people who didn't have hope or didn't really believe in it, start having that belief and I think that's really powerful.

Similarly, another staff member shared,

> I think that seeing somebody walk in for the first time and seeing somebody who's been [in the program] for a year, the amount of self-confidence that they have in themselves is [the big difference]. … It could also be that someone learns about how to access some new service and then connects their family, and they bring that new self-confidence to the rest of their family and their kids.

Having this confidence allows program participants to reinvest in their own lives and strive for long-term success, which translates to a reduction in illegal or violent activity and an increase in employment and pro-social activity.

One program participant shares how this confidence translates to patience and how that benefits him:

> Patience is what I learned...I learned that I had to have a lot of patience and to really put the trust in the process...So, if I learned anything, it was patience and how to communicate in a different way.

Even before adulthood, one youth participant shared how VPF programming helped him build self-confidence,

> It helped me overcome some of my anxiety. … I feel like I gained a lot of confidence ever since I joined. For example, I remember, like when I was in middle school, when I played on a [sports] team, I was honestly nervous against people who were who seemed stronger, bigger than me. But now, when I came in next year, I was playing against people who were bigger than me all the time, but I never lost confidence at all. … [Program] impacted in my life a lot. At first I was like, 'Am I really gonna get the impact out of this?' But then after the first year, I just kept coming back. … I can't remember the last time I ever skipped the day.

High school is a particularly formative time for youth to shape their long-term outcomes. Having the support from VPF programming to build confidence at a young age benefits individuals in long-term outcomes. The benefits of this self-confidence spread across all aspects of an individual's life, including employment and economic stability.

Increased Employment and Economic Stability

Another major role of VPF programming is to help individuals attain employment and economic stability. Kansas City has a much higher poverty rate, 14.5% compared to the country average of 10.6%.[18]

Applying for a new job is daunting in the best of circumstances, but for someone who is involved in the criminal legal system or at risk of violence, there are additional barriers. As one staff member shared,

> I think employment is a huge [benefit], having someone that is there for them to create resumes or help, fish out jobs and stuff, that's a big one.

VPF programs help translate that newly restored hope and self-confidence directly to employment. One staff member described these effects in action with program participants,

> **"One of the most amazing things about this organization is to watch people come in that have never had jobs or don't have any idea how to make a resume or even fill out an application, and then gain employment and get the stability after getting the employment, and have the money coming in, and you just see them blossom and bloom.**

Staff directly observe how their programming can connect to long-term economic stability by targeted skill development and assistance in applying for jobs, as well as restoring self-esteem for broader success. Similarly, another staff member shared the benefits of VPF programming through this anecdote:

> I've seen the effect that it's had on people. Like, how depressed and sad and unmotivated they've been to do things such as get a job or get up and take a shower in the morning. [Then] like working the programs and going to the groups, and like, the therapeuticness [sic] of working on themselves and getting relationships back. I've seen how it's affected them. I've seen girls further their education to getting degrees as soon as they had those relationships back with [family members] in their lives. And I've seen people get promotion after promotion of their jobs because they just kept working on themselves. And in turn, everything that they were doing with working on themselves repaired those hurt relationships and everything that they had with their family members, and they just continued to blossom and blossom and bloom more within themselves, with those relationships, with everyone else being restored.

Employment and education are beneficial to individuals overall, from financial stability to mental health and general well-being. VPF programs offer a critical service that has a holistic impact through employment support, which has implications for the broader community beyond the individual.

Challenges for VPF Programming

Lack of Programmatic Resources

Across all programs, most staff expressed that limited resources constrain their reach, either by limiting the full scope of services they can offer or by limiting the number of people who can access available services. Program participants have a wide range of the level and type of resources that they need for success, and typically one single program does not have all the services necessary. Staff express a desire to help more people but often lack the capacity to do so. One staff member shared,

> Challenges would be not being able to help as many people, not having the amount of funds that we need to provide each person [to ensure that] their basic needs being met.

A lack of resources within and between organizations creates gaps in services and challenges for programs and individuals in need of support. One staff member shared a common, challenging scenario from their work:

> You have someone that walks in and they're struggling, and they want something different, and they want to change. You call ten different places and there's not a single bed available for them. Or, [the program] tells you, 'Oh, I could do an intake screening with them three days out.' Like you don't know if that person's going to go out and die within that three day time, or if they're going to make it back to do that in three days, or what's going to happen? I feel like when people want to change and they're ready, like, you have to catch them right there and start right then. And it makes it really hard to do that when there's just not any availability or space or anywhere for them. And it also makes them feel like, 'Well, I tried, but there's nothing that anybody can do, so screw it. I'm just going to go back out to what I was doing.' They feel defeated.

Program participants often have multiple needs, and rarely can all needs be met by one provider. When other services do not exist or are unavailable, program participants cannot benefit as much as they could if all of their needs could be met.

While VPF programs still provide critical services and meet many of their needs, a lack of opportunity in other programming areas poses broader challenges for program participants and limit the efficacy of VPF programming.

Staff are often tasked with a wide range of roles, even those that they do not have proper training for and are beyond their position. As one staff member explained:

> Are we being therapists? Because I'm not a therapist and we're being psychiatrists. I can't write prescriptions. I'm not here to handle anyone who wants to [hurt themselves]. I can be a first aid responder to you and that has happened to me multiple times to the point the supervisor had to step in twice.

This staff member further explained that they try to connect people with resources but are sometimes met by resistance and then feel pressured to offer those services in-house.

In this role, they are unable to provide the specialized support that program participants need as well as experiencing burnout themselves. This presents a major challenge to VPF programs.

Lack of Transportation

When asked about barriers to programming, transportation was top of mind to most programs. As one staff member shared,

> I would say transportation is the biggest thing that's always a huge barrier. So even with buses being free right now, still the bus routes aren't always great. Kansas City itself is, like, a super spread out town.

The issue is exacerbated when the weather is cold and unsafe for people to stay outside for extended periods of time. As a different staff member said,

> Transportation is also an issue, especially with the weather being cold. Most of the people just live wherever they can, and they rely on the bus. And it's great if you come into our organization and we're able to give you a bunch of clothes and whatever hygiene [items] we can, but it's also a barrier, if you have to carry those in below freezing weather, or aren't able to do that because it's so cold.

Additionally, individuals typically engage more than one service, beyond exclusively one single VPF program. This poses additional challenges, shared one staff member:

> I think that that's probably the biggest thing as far as transportation goes: having residents that are in the facilities that have appointments and need to get there, and we're only able to offer that for them their first two or three weeks of coming out, just because we have so many that have so many different places [to go for different programs], and we don't have staff or availability to get them to all of those things or transport them as well.

Program staff highlight that the number of different wraparound services and programs individuals need require additional travel. Staff comment that the number of program offerings is irrelevant when the cost or travel is inaccessible at all. Staff note that the lack of transportation greatly impacts the effectiveness of programs and the ability for clients to maximize supports.

Several programs have offered creative solutions to transportation challenges, such as using rideshare like Uber, but those solutions require having adequate funding and program participants having partial access to their own transportation.

One participant reflected on how program staff offer direct transportation support,

> I drove some days. But if I don't drive, then [program lead] give me a ride, because where I work at they help me get the job, and it's not over here, and it's awesome. My boss and [program lead] are really good friends, so they ordered Ubers to and from.

While a combination of driving and Uber can be effective for some participants, if programs do not have the resources to cover the cost of rideshare or individuals do not have a driver's license (which VPF programs sometimes assist program participants in attaining), then participants may not be able to access the critical services that VPF programs provide.

Perceived Path Forward for Kansas City Communities

Among participants, major themes arose about the best path forward to reduce violence in Kansas City. These primary themes included the importance of economic stability, community connection and belonging, building communication and conflict resolution skills, and prioritizing prevention strategies. These priorities directly address the root causes of violence interviewees named.

Economic Stability is Essential to Violence Reduction

Among participants, the major themes that arose about the best path forward to reduce violence in Kansas City were: the importance of economic stability, community connection and belonging, building communication and conflict resolution skills, and prioritizing prevention strategies.

People described violence arising from economic struggle, including the inability to maintain a stable income, housing, and meet basic needs. When these required needs go unmet, people face limited options and violence can become one pathway to survival.

Individuals shared examples of how crime and violent acts may not be borne out of malice or a want to inflict harm but rather emerge because of a lack of opportunity and options to meet basic needs. One participant speculated,

> If people were financially stable... everybody can make $40 now. How much of the violence you think would be cut out? Hell yeah. Everybody got money. So, everybody wins, so everybody eats. So, there's no need for me to go over here and rob him, because I got it myself.

Another participant explained how they felt everyone from their neighborhood has goals and dreams,

> These gang bangers have dreams. Like just now, they really want to make music... They want to travel. They want to meet different women. They want to eat different food. They have dreams... in order to do any of that stuff, you gotta have money. And right now, they don't see chance... it's way too far away from them.

For this participant, it is the limited choices and structural contraints that encourage individuals to participate in violence in pursuit of actualizing goals.

Staff members described how impactful it is to provide support to individuals to take the first step forward. Staff reflected that often individuals are cognitively overloaded by surviving, they do have limited reserve to navigate social systems. As one staff member described:

> The amount of people that we get that just walk in and don't have a birth certificate or an ID, nor know how to go about getting one. Like, how can you ever expect those people to get a job without any identification? How do you expect it when they don’t know how to do these simple things?

The staff member continued,

> But if you give that little bit of motivation towards someone, or [help] them be able to have those things, that's opening the door for them to be able to do something different. [To] make a change to where they're not having to commit crimes to get money to survive or just taking care of their basic needs.

Another staff member discussed how supporting individuals’ stability through employment and housing makes a big difference,

> I think…the houses…we're providing that option for people to not have to go back to things, giving them stability, it's still autonomy to, you know, to do what is right, you know…We have employment services, so we're trying to provide people with those jobs that are going to get them into housing that's not, probably not in the same neighborhoods that we would have naturally gone to because they accept our background, or because they don't even check the background, or things like that.

A young program participant explained how they helped support their transition into taking on adult obligations to build their economic stability,

> [Program helped with] how to get a job. And kind of, you know, keep your like, keep, keep what you got. Keep so, like, make sure you prepare for time when you are 18 and you want to buy apartment, or, you know, and you want to have good credit score. You can, you can have your good credits.

However, another participant talked about how the problem is bigger than just finding any employment, and explained that employment must support an individual not to return to offending behavior,

> I was able to find a job, thankfully, maybe like six months ago, I worked at [employer]. I stayed there for maybe four months. I was so proud of myself, I told the [program], they was happy for me, so they let me slow down and come into groups so I can, you know, bring in a little income. I was making nothing. I was making 12.50 an hour, getting 12 hours a week. So, I was wasting my time again…So, it's like, if I go out here and sell this pack, I'm going to make more than sitting around in these classes and all of this extra stuff. I'm not making any money. It was like, I have court fees, I have classes, I have all this stuff to pay for, but I'm not bringing in no income.

Ultimately, staff and participants overwhelmingly expressed the need to invest in non-punitive, community-led strategies that support people to achieve economic stability by way of employment with a living wage, secure housing, and reliably meeting basic needs.

These perspectives underscore that economic stability is not ancillary to violence reduction—it is foundational. When people can meet their basic needs through legitimate means, violence becomes less necessary.

Importance of Community Connection and Belonging

Strong community bonds emerged as a protective factor against violence. Participants described how knowing neighbors, feeling connected to place, and having law enforcement embedded in the community all contribute to accountability and safety.

Nearly all interviewees described how important it is to have a strong community bond among the residents and for law enforcement to serve the neighborhoods. As one staff member characterized discussed this,

> I've been on a block in neighborhoods we've known all our lives. We know the people I generally feel like I can walk up and down the neighborhood and feel safe where I stay at now, hell no, but my mom's neighborhood, everywhere I go, for the most part, I feel safe in my city, because I feel like I know enough people that if something was to happen to me, I feel unsafe, that I have the resources to be able to in that moment, call for help.

Interviewees overwhelmingly expressed how strengthening the sense of connection within communities will motivate people to be more accountable to each other and be less likely to commit violent acts. As one staff member stated,

> Safety is centered around familiarity.

One staff member talked about how navigating economic pressure to meet basic needs can get in the way of being able to build the community connections necessary to a safe and healthy environment:

> People are just trying to survive. People are working more jobs than they can handle. It's a problem for mental health, emotional health, the fabric of society itself crumbling because those [community] relationships are what make it all stronger.

Several community members mentioned how important it is that law enforcement reflect and be a part of the community they serve. Many community members described how connected police used to be with the communities they served and a wish to return to that connection. One staff described that they felt residency requirements for police to live in Kansas City would be helpful, and the current lack of this requirement impacted how police officers perceive and interact with the communities they police. One staff member reflected,

> **"I think that you need police officers that are in your community to [to be living] in the community for it to be their community as well. [It'll bring] more compassion for the people that they're working with daily.**

In all, reducing violence depends on people feeling connected to the community and law enforcement being part of that community. This supports how important it is to support long-term community engagement strategies that are community-led to reduce violence, such as the programs supported under the VPF.

People Want to Enjoy Their Neighborhood

Overwhelmingly, participants expressed a desire for their neighborhoods to be a place where people feel connected and look out for one another. Those who described feeling safe, often highlighted knowing their neighbors, building trust, and having mutual accountability. One participant described this directly,

> That type of community, that 'we got each other's back' type mentality... We've been taking control our own neighborhood.

A staff member elaborated on this a bit more within their neighborhood,

> I feel safe because even in the neighborhood, we take care of one another... we bond with one another, and not just the neighborhood, the whole community... I feel safer walking down 24th street than I would out in Overland Park.

Participants living in neighborhoods with lower levels of gun violence often highlighted their connection with neighbors.

As one participant said,

> We're trying to make it a more close-knit neighborhood, which we've done pretty good with... I've got to know a lot more neighbors. I know neighbors just because I walk through my neighborhood.

Several people pointed to activities and everyday practices that could be protective against gun violence.

> **I think, if you have more youth programs, and also have the parents be involved along with whatever program you put together for a young person... We are teaching them to walk the neighborhood. Know your neighbor, feel comfortable in your neighborhood. You know you can do some of the simplest things that can make a difference.**

Other people were unsure why they had not experienced gun violence like nearby neighborhoods. One participant reflected on this uncertainty:

> I've lived there for five years and nothing has ever happened to me. So it's semi safe. I do see other people struggle. And I do see and hear the sirens... I do see the violence. It can be a safe neighborhood...

They continued,

> ...But I don't know why we don't take care of it like we need to. Like, why doesn't it look like this, like this neighborhood, when the people that live it take care for their neighborhood.

This quote captures a sentiment shared by many people in Kansas City: a desire not just for personal safety, but for neighborhoods to be visibly cared for and invested in by the community, itself.

Building Skills for Conflict Resolution

Interviewees identified the inability to resolve conflict peacefully as a direct pathway to violence. Several interviewees discussed the importance of building people's skills when it comes to communication and conflict resolution. One participant discussed how these skills can save lives,

> I think that people should just listen to understand each other's point of views. And it's many other ways that they can handle this conflict. I mean, yeah, they can play a game against each other, like basketball. Like, it's many different ways to resolve this conflict instead of somebody having to get buried.

Another participant connected this to building the communication skills that people need to negotiate difficult conflicts and be able to see situations from other points of view:

> They talk, they give you, like the talks that you need, like the talks that you need to have with each other, so everybody can understand, like, Hey, you it doesn't always have to, you know, go the way that you want it to go. You can also be like the bigger person, understanding each other's point of views and leave it at that without anybody being violent or anything. I think because sometimes we go over communication skills. I think communication skills can be one of the best ways to help resolve violence.

Teaching communication and conflict resolution skills, especially to youth, emerged as one critical violence prevention strategy.

As one community member described teaching, conflict resolution skills to youth can prevent incidents from escalating to gun violence.

> And I think that somehow as far as a long term, we have to change the way we're teaching children at that age, so that they grow up knowing how to deal with conflict right to deal with because I think conflict resolution, more classes and things on that, more people in the community teaching that, and because, unfortunately, right now, the conflict resolution is showing in the gun violence. It's that's the way they people are resolving their conflict, not only with the gun violence, but just with just all of the violence that's going around in the city.

In summary, the participants felt strongly that violence is partially driven by the inability to communicate and resolve conflict without violence. Supporting programs that teach these skills to youth, as well as adults, have the potential to reduce community violence.

Prevention Over Reactive Responses

Generally, interviewees expressed the desire to focus on prevention when it comes to gun violence rather than being reactive or crisis driven. They shared that they wished that prevention programming received more attention and support, especially compared to widespread interest and attention about violent incidents.

As one staff member explained,

> **We're doing some generational work here. And that's saving lives, but it won't make the news because nobody hears about the gun that wasn't bought, right? Nobody hears about the gun that wasn't raised. Nobody hears the alternative decision. That's not making the news. It's just not.**

This staff member raises an important point about the way that prevention helps a community flourish, even if it does not get the same attention or media coverage as a violent offense or major incident. Prevention leads to fewer headlines and incidents in the future, but it is not as tactile of a concept for the community to discuss and see in their daily lives. Similarly, another staff member shared,

> We reside on the prevention side of violence. And so you may not really see our work in the streets, in Walmart. You may not see the work, but I promise you, you see it. You just don't know you see.

The lack of awareness of the work that is being accomplished and the positive impact it has on the community, both immediately and long-term, can lead to prevention work being overlooked or dismissed during major conversations about funding or program investments.

Ultimately, residents, program staff, and participants all believe a focus on prevention is the most effective approach to reducing violence. Fortunately, the VPF is unique in that it aims to support exactly that, which is a key contribution to the Kansas City community long term.

Moving forward, one approach would be to spotlight individuals and communities that were able to transition violent interactions into more positive means of interacting. Another approach may be to focus on community-defined measures of success for violence reduction instead of over-relying on arrest as the primary indicators.

Findings

VPF Implementation Challenges

It is important to acknowledge that the VPF operates within a complex landscape shaped by existing policies on gun regulation, the distribution and accessibility of firearms, and the enduring impacts of structural inequality.

We have addressed some of these contextual constraints throughout this report but reiterate them here to underscore the areas where the Violence Prevention Fund has the capacity to drive meaningful change and those that fall beyond its scope of influence. Aside from these constraints, we identified two issues across our qualitative interviews as well as our regular interactions with funded organizations. These include:

- Funding distribution
- Training and technical assistance

Funding Distribution

The VPF provided a unique opportunity for grassroots organizations to receive the necessary funds to amplify their work.

Within early engagements, it was often disclosed that many organizations were uncertain about the best way to submit funding, setting effective action items and deadlines, and managing the increased reporting needs.
It would be useful to establish additional grant onboarding and subsequent training and technical assistance for beneficiaries. It is important that ongoing support is easily available but not mandatory or cumbersome to those who are not in need of it.

Once awarded funding, these organizations also expressed challenges with managing such funds. Some beneficiaries noted that they

did not receive starting funds, taking out small personal loans to initiate their programming. Others noted that the reimbursement model provided challenges for them to meet increased hiring and material purchase needs within the scope of cashflow.

We recommend examining this funding model to make adjustments that would reduce waiting time for reimbursement, as this is particularly challenging for smaller grassroots organizations that do not have those funds in their existing budgets. For beneficiaries who did not receive the upfront starting funds, it is vital to assess where the breakdown occurred.

Training and Technical Assistance

Prior to submitting their request for funding, organizations should identify their populations served, and the number of individuals anticipated to serve under the grant. There were some organizations whose anticipated numbers were drastically reduced to the extent that evaluation was not possible.

For organizations that are new to funding at scale, it would be useful to provide resources and support related to program inputs.

Members of the JSP team provided training and technical assistance during early meetings, including the collaborative logic model development.

Further assistance was provided in the utilization of the data portal and with data entry from pre/post-tests.

Moving forward, continued investment in early-stage evaluation support and data infrastructure will be critical to ensure programs are positioned to generate meaningful and evaluable outcomes.

Next Steps
Implications & Recommendations

This evaluation demonstrates that community-centered violence prevention works.

Programs showed strong public safety outcomes, meaningful behavioral gains, and deep community engagement. However, implementation challenges particularly around funding structures, economic stability, and workforce capacity threaten these gains.

The following recommendations build on evaluation findings to strengthen and expand Kansas City's violence prevention infrastructure.

Recommendation

Continue to invest in and scale prevention-focused, community-based strategies found to be effective at improving community safety outcomes.

Programs generally showed strong public safety outcomes. On average, greater than 80% of program participants had no police contact within 12 months, and those who did have contact were for low-level criminal behavior. These results suggest that prevention-focused, community-based approaches can effectively support public safety.

Recommendation

Sustain and strengthen programs that support behavioral and social wellbeing while expanding resources focused on economic stability.

Participants demonstrated measurable gains in key behavioral factors such as resilience, impulsiveness, criminal thinking, self-efficacy, and social connectedness. However, economic instability remained a persistent challenge. The gains in behavioral factors may be difficult to maintain without addressing underlying financial stability. Participants need both psychological support and material resources to succeed.

Recommendation

Expand the ability of community-centered violence prevention and intervention programs to support basic needs, particularly transportation.

Qualitative findings reinforced the importance of economic stability, access to services (e.g., transportation), and community connection with neighbors as protective factors against violence.

Programs that address basic needs, while rebuilding hope and confidence showed promising results.

However, transportation emerged as a critical barrier. Consider allocating dedicated transportation funding within VPF grants or establishing a partnership with RideKC to provide transit support for VPF program participants.

Recommendation

Revise the reimbursement model by providing upfront seed funding, particularly for organizations with limited operating budgets.

Smaller grassroots organizations reported substantial challenges with the reimbursement funding structure, which requires upfront capital that these organizations often lack. Provide seed funding, particularly for organizations with limited operating budgets. Additionally, consider multi-year funding cycles (3-5 years) rather than annual renewals, which would allow programs to build trust with participants and demonstrate impact over time.

Recommendation

Expand support for communication and conflict resolution programs, particularly those focused on youth.

Community members consistently identified the inability to resolve conflict without violence as a root cause of gun violence. Staff emphasized that these skills need to be taught starting at a young age.

Conflict resolution and communication skills programs, particularly those beginning at the elementary school age and involving families, were found to be particularly beneficial. These skills represent a long-term investment in changing how communities handle disputes.

Recommendation

Fund programs at staffing levels that account for intensity of the work and support staff wellbeing.

Multiple programs reported staff burnout, high caseloads, and workers stretched beyond their job descriptions. Staffing shortages exacerbate these challenges as well limit the ability to maintain metric collection and outcome tracking without additional support. Consider providing additional resources to incentivize mental health support for frontline workers.

Recommendation

Develop communication strategies highlighting prevention success of VPF programs.

Prevention work is difficult to measure and communicate because it prevents events that never happen. Staff expressed frustration that their work goes unrecognized. This invisibility leads to prevention being undervalued compared to reactive responses to violence. Use media platforms to highlight VPF outcomes, including not only crime reductions, but jobs gained, families stabilized, and communities strengthened.

Next Steps

These recommendations reflect what works and what remains challenging in Kansas City's violence prevention ecosystem. Implementing them requires sustained investment, structural changes to funding models, and recognition that prevention is both effective yet invisible work.

The Violence Prevention Fund has demonstrated its value. The next step is ensuring these programs have the resources and support to reach their full potential.

Upcoming activities in 2026:

- Continued data collection from participants, staff, and community members
- Ongoing collection of KCPD arrest data and police contact analysis, and examine additional outcomes such as library suspensions and neighborhood crime rates
- Onboard new programs funded under Year 2 and Year 3 of the VPF

Conclusion

The second year of VPF marked a significant step forward for community safety and resilience in Kansas City through the VPF. With 10 programs and 22 neighborhood associations receiving funding, VPF has made a tangible impact on both individual participants and the broader community.

VPF's work is a testament to the power of grassroots efforts, and the positive outcomes seen thus far provide a promising foundation for future growth and impact.

As noted, this evaluation sought to assess if VPF-funded programs were:

1. Achieving their stated goals
2. Producing measurable outcomes across consistent measures
3. Meeting the needs of community members and participants

In terms of Objective 1, nearly all programs funded in the VPF deliver services aligned with reducing violence in Kansas City.

Neighborhood associations and street-outreach teams are strengthening trust and developing healthier communities (i.e., Group 1: Community-Wide Strategies). Adult and youth intervention programs are building resolution and life-skills, and peer support programs are helping individuals build a life of stability and hope (i.e., Group 2: Targeted Prevention Programs). Reentry programs are connecting individuals to services needed upon reintegrating back into Kansas City, such as housing, employment, and basic needs (i.e., Group 3: Direct Intervention Programs).

Across all the funded programs, outcomes were assessed and showed promising results, meeting Objective 2. Many programs assessed demonstrated low recidivism levels.

Among those who did have police contact, the offenses were often for low-level crimes such as minor violations, trespass, and warrants.

This pattern suggests that even though participants re-encounter the legal system, they are not returning to violence. Program participants also showed improved resilience, reduced criminal thinking patterns, and decreased impulsivity, which are all factors that have been linked to reduced violence and successful community reintegration.

The great strides in data collection made in Year 2 required intensive TA assistance from JSP and the Health Department. However, this assistance helped programs meet funding data requirements.

To maintain the progress made, there needs to be continued investment in the capacity of these grassroots organizations to capture outcome metrics. It is vital to their success to continue to document the extent to which they can positively impact Kansas City.

Finally, the last objective shows that programs are meeting the needs of community members. Through surveys and qualitative interviews, it became clear that programs were filling critical gaps in participants' lives and offering needed support.

Beyond material support, staff described something harder to measure but equally important: restoring hope and self-confidence.

> **"There's a moment when you're first meeting a participant, and you can tell they're just a little bit kind of maybe beaten down by the immensity of all the things that they need to do.**
>
> **And, their belief in themselves, and the belief that they actually have an option at something better, is pretty small.**
>
> **And so, when you can help grow that in somebody, and you see that little spark of hope... it's so awesome.**

The VPF represents a critical investment in the residents of Kansas City and public safety. It is an investment that is grounded in community, connection, and addressing root causes of violence.

The evidence is clear: the VPF is producing measurable reductions in violence.

At the same time, this evaluation reveals change by grassroots organizations requires patience, partnership, and resources. We urge continued investment to strengthen this evidence, expand program capacity, and move Kansas City closer to a violence-free city.

Endnotes

1 John Jay College Research Advisory Group on Preventing and Reducing Community Violence. (2020). Reducing violence without police: A review of research evidence. Research and Evaluation Center, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. [Retrieved here].

2 Comparing recidivism rates across programs without accounting for the populations these programs serve can produce misleading conclusions. A program working with individuals who have extensive histories of violent offenses might reduce recidivism from 50% to 25%, but when compared to a program serving lower-risk youth that maintains a 10% rate, the first program looks worse on paper, even though it may be producing greater impact with a harder-to-reach population. These reasons support our reorganization of VPF-funded programs.

3 Biderman, A. D., & Reiss, A. J. (1967). On exploring the "dark figure" of crime. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 374(1), 1–15. [Retrieved here].

4 Matsueda, R. L., Drakulich, K., & Kubrin, C. E. (2006). Race and neighborhood codes of violence. In R. D. Peterson, L. J. Krivo, & J. Hagan (Eds.), The many colors of crime: Inequalities of race, ethnicity, and crime in America (pp. 334-356). NYU Press.

5 A critical note on interpretation: Programs should only be compared to other programs serving similar populations (i.e., within evaluation intervention categories). A direct intervention program with a 25% rearrest rate is not underperforming compared to a deflection program with a 12% rate, since they operate with different populations in fundamentally different contexts with different baseline expectations. Valid comparisons require accounting for participant risk levels, intervention timing, and program goals. Our team at JSP is hopeful this evaluation contributes to a growing body of evidence that communities can develop effective, humane approaches to reducing violence.

6 FSI data is currently available through October 2025. JSP is in the process of establishing a new MOU with KCPD to facilitate more frequent data access, and this section will be updated once additional data is received.

7 Sampson, R. J. (1987). Urban Black violence: The effect of male joblessness and family disruption. American Journal of Sociology, 93(2), 348–382. [Retrived here].

endnotes continued

8 Sampson, R. J., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1994). Violent victimization and offending: Individual-, situational-, and community-level risk factors. In A. J. Reiss & J. A. Roth (Eds.), Understanding and preventing violence: Vol. 3. Social influences (pp. 1–114). National Academies Press.

9 Moore, M. H., & Tonry, M. (Eds.). (1998). Youth violence: Vol. 24. Crime and justice: A review of research. University of Chicago Press.

10 Attendance numbers were obtained from these events: Night Out Against Crime, Neighborhood Block Parties (including Block Party in the Park and Block Party in the Park with a Purpose), Family Fun Days, Neighborhood Day in the Park, Ice Cream Socials, Health & Wellness Fairs, Community Resource Fairs, Tenant Resource Fairs, Home Repair Assistance Fairs, Beautification Challenges, Morning Mingles, Neighborhood Meetings and Community Council Meetings, youth programming and youth life skills workshops, bike installations, cleanup and trash removal events, cooking and cultural social gatherings, and hands-on youth and family workshops (e.g., basic car maintenance instruction).

11 Sampson, R. J. (1987). Urban Black violence: The effect of male joblessness and family disruption. American Journal of Sociology, 93(2), 348–382. [Retrived here].

12 Sampson, R. J., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1994). Violent victimization and offending: Individual-, situational-, and community-level risk factors. In A. J. Reiss & J. A. Roth (Eds.), Understanding and preventing violence: Vol. 3. Social influences (pp. 1–114). National Academies Press.

13 Moore, M. H., & Tonry, M. (Eds.). (1998). Youth violence: Vol. 24. Crime and justice: A review of research. University of Chicago Press.

14 Unfortunately, JSP did not receive notice that ArtsTech received VPF funding for TNT until the fall due to the contract lapse, by which time the program had concluded and data collection options were very limited. They did not complete pre-survey for that reason.

15 Douchette, J., Veeh, C. A., Mello, S., & Webster, D. W. (2023). Association between the repeal of Missouri's permit-to-purchase handgun law and homicides and suicides. Criminology & Public Policy, 22(2), 243–278. [Retrieved here].

16 Sampson, R. J. (1987). Urban Black violence: The effect of male joblessness and family disruption. American Journal of Sociology, 93(2), 348–382. [Retrived here].

17 Sampson, R. J., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1994). Violent victimization and offending: Individual-, situational-, and community-level risk factors. In A. J. Reiss & J. A. Roth (Eds.), Understanding and preventing violence: Vol. 3. Social influences (pp. 1–114). National Academies Press.

18 United States Census Bureau. (2023). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. [Retrieved here].

Appendix (A)
Survey Instruments

Reentry Programs
Self-Control (Impulsivity & Risk Seeking, Grasmick)
Assessment (DOC)
Resiliency (RS-14)
Social Isolation (UCLA- 3 item)
Anxiety & Depression (Beck's- BAI & BDI-II)
Perceptions of Program
Future System Involvement (FSI) (Y2-Y5)

Youth Programs
Self-Control (EATQ-R)
Youth Self-Report Aggressive Behavior Scale (Kendall, 2020)
Food Insecurity (Connell et al., 2004)
Resiliency (RS-14)
Social Isolation (UCLA- 3 item)
Anxiety (Beck's- BAI)
Depression (CESD)
Future System Involvement (FSI)(Y2-Y5)
Trauma Exposure (CATS)
PTSD Symptoms (CATS)
Psychosocial Functioning (CATS)
Depression (PHQ-A)
Social Anxiety Subscale of the SCARED
General Anxiety subscale of the SCARED
Children's Hope Scale
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
Holistic Student Assessment (PEAR-HSA)

Neighborhood (Community Capitol Fund)
Collective Efficacy (Sampson, 2006a; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997).
Social Disorder (PHDCN)
Procedural Justice (e.g. Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Fagan, 2008; Tyler & Folger, 1980; Tyler & Huo, 2002)
Resiliency (RS-14)
Neighborhood Perceptions (Neighborhood Crime Perception Survey)
Walkability

Mental & Behavioral Health Programs
Physical and Mental Health Status (BRFSS, CDC)
Anxiety (NHIS, CDC) Depression (NHIS, CDC)

Mental Health Self-efficacy (MHSES)
Resiliency (RS-14)
Self-efficacy (NGSE)
Social Determinants and Health Equity (BRFSS, CDC)
Social Captial (PSCS-8)
Social Relationship (Cyranowski et al., 2013)
Parenting Sense of Competence (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman 1978)
Beliefs about Aggression (CDC)
Use of Nonviolent Strategies (CDC)
Future System Involvement (FSI) (Y2-Y5)

Appendix (B)
Data Dashboards

JSP, along with their technical support team, developed interactive, web-based dashboards to support clear reporting by the programs and longitudinal tracking of program implementation. The overall dashboard, as well as the individual program dashboards provide information to help guide policymaking and demonstrate the overall reach of these VPF-funded programs.

Building these dashboards involved a multi-step process that began with JSP working in partnership with the Health Department to prioritize the metrics that best reflect the impact of these programs. JSP worked with their technical support team to translate these metrics visually onto the dashboard layout.

JSP worked with each program to develop a structured, multi-step data collection and quality-assurance process designed to ensure accuracy, consistency, and transparency. Programs submit monthly data in standardized spreadsheets, along with supporting documentation such as handwritten attendance records, which are reviewed, verified, and reconciled prior to inclusion. Each standardized spreadsheet is unique to the program to report the most relevant information based on the goals of their funded initiative. The program staff are responsible for uploading their spreadsheet and any attendance sheets by the 10th of each month. Once they upload their information, JSP staff review and address any necessary updates before the data becomes available on the dashboard.

To enable this process, the JSP technical support team built the system behind the dashboard to complete the calculation of metrics, code that translate these metrics into visual outputs, and the AI-backed ability to read handwritten attendance sheets into a spreadsheet. This technical set-up process, while a large undertaking, was necessary to support the ability of these community-based programs to be able to supply the needed metric information given their limited staffing resources.

Challenges

The dashboard and procedures developed are intended to address the challenges that the programs faced in the first year with documenting the metrics necessary for receiving these funds. The challenges that arose during the first year for programs are outlined below, followed by the adaptive strategies we've used to attempt to address these challenges in the second year.

Challenge 1: Limited administrative ability.

The VPF-funded programs operate with minimal staffing that focus on direct service delivery leaving very little time for data reporting.

Challenge 2: Inconsistent Data Systems.

Many of these programs use handwritten documentation and spreadsheets which limit their ability to provide information

Challenge 3: Data quality inconsistency.

The format and original purpose of information collection create data outputs that can be limited and contain unclear or missing information.

Challenge 4: Staff turnover and volunteers.

Many of these small organizations rely on volunteers with varying degrees of technology knowledge and who may come and go quickly leading to gaps in providing up-to-date information.

Challenge 5: Privacy and trust considerations.

Grassroots organizations may be cautious about sharing information that could be personal or sensitive.

Adaptive Strategies

These adaptive strategies have come from an iterative process of working with the programs to troubleshoot the first year's challenges. JSP continues to work with each program to ensure that the strategies put into place resolve the challenges and do not create new problems for the program.

Adaptive Strategy 1

Standard tracking spreadsheet created to only collect what is essential. Addresses challenges 1, 2, and 3. Within these spreadsheets, we added an instructions tab to help define and guide this data collection and address challenge 4.

Adaptive Strategy 2

AI-based tool used for "reading" handwritten attendance sheets into a spreadsheet. Addresses challenges 1, 2, and 3.

Adaptive Strategy 3

Setting up a standard reporting timeline and process for each program with regular reminders. Addresses challenge 4 by making the metric reporting part of their day-to-day operations.

Adaptive Strategy 4

Setting up the dashboard so that programs can see their own data reported back. Addresses challenge D and E by summarizing the program data back to them for real time use and creating transparency in how the data is being used.

Data for these dashboards were collected in October, November, and December of 2025. The data collected for these months allowed for feasibility testing of the data collection process with the programs and the usefulness of the metric information presented. Through the first 3 months of data collection, we learned the following:

- The programs are actively delivering services to their identified participants. This is demonstrated through consistently reported program activities (e.g., participant groups/sessions, leadership activities), geographic reach of programs, and participant engagement through attendance.
- The majority of services are relationship-based and directly provided to participants within intentional tracking of who is being served (e.g., zip code, race, gender).
- Gaps in information availability exist for a limited number of programs.

The next steps with the dashboard include continuing to refine the metric data collection process to ensure good quality information reported in a timely manner, uploading survey-based measures and legal system outcomes as they become available for year 2 participants, and make sure that the most essential information is available from each program.

Justice System Partners. (2026). VPF Data Dashboard and monthly metrics collection [Database]. [Retrieved here].

Kansas City Health Department. (2025). Violence Prevention Fund administrative data and program records [Raw data]. Kansas City, MO.

Kansas City Police Department. (2024). Crime and shooting data for Kansas City neighborhoods [Raw data]. Kansas City, MO.

Violence Prevention Fund. (2024). VPF Annual Report Year 1 (FY2023-2024). Kansas City Health Department.

KANSAS CITY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND

Annual Evaluation Report (Year 2)

JSP

JUSTICE SYSTEM PARTNERS