



Positive Youth Justice Initiative Organizing for a Healthy Justice System Interim Evaluation Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction/Goal of PYJI

The Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI)¹ seeks to transform the juvenile justice system through a broad-based, multi-year effort grounded in the principles of positive youth development and focused on aligning policy and practice with young people’s developmental stages. PYJI entered its third phase in early 2017, with community-based organizations (CBOs) in 11 counties across California receiving funding to advance positive juvenile justice, working in collaboration with a local coalition to develop and implement reform activities. The goal of PYJI’s third phase is to help communities across the state transform juvenile justice practice and policy into a more just, effective system aligned with young people’s developmental needs.

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) was selected to evaluate this third phase of PYJI, focusing on changes in the local advocacy environment, changes in community power to advocate for a healthy justice system, and lessons learned during the grant period. Through the evaluation, NCCD seeks to glean key lessons that Sierra Health Foundation and its philanthropic partners can use to support communities in strengthening local infrastructure for organizing and advocacy.

¹ PYJI is funded by Sierra Health Foundation, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation; it is managed by The Center at Sierra Health Foundation.

B. PYJI Overview

PYJI is based on the following core elements of juvenile justice, described briefly below, that support young people's well-being.

- Shifting the juvenile justice field toward a positive-youth-development frame. Positive youth development is a strengths-based approach to working with young people that emphasizes youth's assets, development of pro-social skills, and connections with supportive, positive peers and adults.
- Developing and implementing trauma-informed practices and policies across the juvenile justice system in order to acknowledge the deeply rooted trauma that system-involved young people have likely experienced, facilitate healing, and avoid re-traumatization.
- Delivering wraparound services in a strengths-based, culturally responsive, and supportive manner, in the least-restrictive environment.
- Improving operational capacity to assess and meet young people's developmental, physical, and mental health needs; and reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

The first phase of PYJI launched in 2012 with planning grants provided to six public agencies in California (five probation departments and one school district) to create plans for reform focusing on



Photo courtesy of Sierra Health Foundation

“crossover youth”—youth who had been formally involved in the child welfare system; had experienced documented neglect, abuse, and/or trauma; and were currently engaged in the juvenile justice system. The second phase of PYJI, which began in 2014, provided

implementation grants to four jurisdictions (three probation departments and one school district) to test a series of reforms designed to transform the county juvenile justice system.

The third phase, which launched in early 2017, shifts the emphasis in funding from systems to nonprofit CBOs. In this phase, grassroots organizations in 11 counties across California received funding to collaborate with a local coalition to accelerate a statewide movement toward a more youth development–focused juvenile justice system. These organizations represent communities of color that are overrepresented in and inequitably treated by the juvenile justice system. Despite having limited resources compared to the systems they work to change, these organizations and their community partners have led the call against mass incarceration and in support of disruption of the school-to-prison pipeline and elimination of the racial disparities found throughout the system. This phase of PYJI looks to support the communities most affected by the juvenile justice system in using their collective expertise and passion to bring about change.



Photo courtesy of Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ)

PYJI coalitions have identified several policy themes to address through their work, including but not limited to participatory defense for youth potentially facing adult court, justice reinvestment, district attorney accountability, intersections of immigration and juvenile and criminal justice systems, probation transformation, and other issues identified by the young people with whom these organizations work. These collaboratives are engaged in peer-to-peer learning exchanges, participatory action research, and various base-building activities. All PYJI coalitions are focusing on developing youth leadership in policy change, identifying the support they need to make an impact, and taking inventory of the assets and expertise within their coalitions. The following organizations are grantee partners.

- Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ) (Alameda County)
- Fathers & Families of San Joaquin
- Fresno Barrios Unidos
- Resilience Orange County
- RYSE Youth Center (Contra Costa County)
- Sacramento Area Congregations Together
- San Diego Organizing Project
- Sigma Beta Xi, Inc. (Riverside County)
- Silicon Valley De-Bug (Santa Clara County)
- Young Women's Freedom Center (San Francisco County)
- Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) (Los Angeles County)

This evaluation seeks to identify key themes and trends, successes, challenges, and lessons learned during the grant period with the goal of developing an understanding of how to effectively support a community-led effort to transform the youth justice system. This interim report presents evaluation findings for January 1 – December 31, 2017.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions and Advisory Committee

Three primary research questions developed by The Center at Sierra Health Foundation guide the evaluation.

- How (if at all) does the advocacy environment/infrastructure in the counties with funded community partners change over the grant period?
- To what extent and in what ways (if any) does community power to advocate for a healthy justice system in the counties with funded community partners change over the grant period?
- What lessons are learned by the Center at Sierra Health Foundation and community partners about organizing for a healthy justice system?

An evaluation advisory committee, composed of several representatives of PYJI-funded partners and coalition members, provides guidance on developing and implementing data collection methods and tools and interpreting findings.

B. Data Sources

The evaluation draws on multiple sources of primary and secondary data and considers both quantitative and qualitative information. Data sources include surveys and focus groups with partner organizations and coalition members, learning exchange/progress reports for each funded site, meetings and conversations with PYJI partners, and observation of events that PYJI coalitions led or participated in. The evaluation design sought to minimize the data collection burden on evaluation participants and relied mainly on existing data and on using scheduled

PYJI activities (and other events such as the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color convening) as data-gathering opportunities.

NCCD facilitated two focus groups at the November 2017 PYJI Learning Community in Sacramento (a two-day gathering for all funded partners and coalition members) to gather information about alliance-building efforts, progress in organizing efforts, collaboration with PYJI partners, youth engagement, challenges experienced, and what participants would like funders and policymakers to know about their efforts to organize for a healthy justice system. NCCD also designed and administered a survey to collect quantitative and qualitative data about the local advocacy environment, participation in coalition building and organizing activities, engagement of system-involved youth and other stakeholders, capacity-building efforts, and progress in and challenges of organizing activities. The survey was provided at the November 2017 Learning Community and was available online from November to December 2017. The survey analysis is based on 30 surveys (15 from staff of lead agencies and 15 from coalition members).²



Photo courtesy of Sierra Health Foundation

² In all, 45 surveys were received. However, 15 of those were not included in the analysis due to having a very limited number of responses.

III. FINDINGS

PYJI’s community partners, in collaboration with their coalitions, are engaged in a wide range of advocacy, organizing, and youth-development activities to promote a healthy justice system. Collectively, partners in the 11 counties have engaged 598 young people and 332 family members (not shown) in their PYJI coalitions during the grant period. About half (44%) of engaged youth have current or previous juvenile justice system involvement (not shown). The most common type of participation in PYJI-related activities is in organizing and advocacy (Table 1).

Table 1	
PYJI Participation (2017)	
Type of PYJI Activity	n
Number of Youth Engaged In:	
Organizing/advocacy	444
Leadership development	150
Research	95
Number of Family Members Engaged In:	
Organizing/advocacy	280
Leadership development	273
Research	49

Source: 2017 PYJI progress reports from funded partners

The following sections highlight some of the activities and accomplishments of funded partners and their PYJI coalition members. Please note that PYJI partners are doing more than can be adequately captured in this report to build the capacity of their communities and impact the local advocacy environment in their efforts toward system transformation. Just as important, due to the ongoing, long-term nature of advocacy, the findings reported here acknowledge

steps on the journey toward policy wins as well as policy victories themselves. This section is organized by information addressing the evaluation’s three primary research questions, followed by other key data that have emerged during the grant period to date.

A. Changes in the Local Advocacy Environment/Infrastructure

The evaluation examines if and how the advocacy environment in counties with funded community partners is changing over the grant period. A variety of data help inform this research question.

Survey data from partners and coalition members indicate that PYJI coalitions are devoting time to building and strengthening their internal infrastructures for advocacy, such as focusing the work; conducting research; and meeting with key stakeholders, including developing relationships with law enforcement, other CBOs, and local elected officials (tables 2 and 3).



Photo courtesy of Fresno Barrios Unidos

Table 2			
PYJI Coalition Building and Engagement Activities (2017)			
<i>(Funded partners)</i>			
Activity	N	%	“Yes” Responses
Add partners to our existing advocacy coalition	15	100%	15
Conduct research, information gathering, or other data collection activities to inform our advocacy and organizing efforts	12	100%	12
Meet to determine the focus of our work related to this PYJI grant	8	88%	7
Form or formalize advocacy coalition	15	87%	13
Meet with individuals or groups we hope to influence	7	86%	6
Participate in PYJI technical assistance (TA), webinars, or other information-sharing activities	7	86%	6
Develop governance or decision-making structure and process for our coalition	15	73%	11
Leverage PYJI funding to obtain additional funding/resources for our advocacy and organizing	15	60%	9
Develop formal or informal agreements with coalition members	15	60%	9

Table 3			
Who is your coalition building relationships with? (2017)			
<i>(Funded partners)</i>			
Type of Stakeholder	N	%	“Yes” Responses
System stakeholders related to law enforcement	13	100%	13
Other CBOs engaged in these issues	14	93%	13
Local elected officials	13	85%	11
System stakeholders related to education	13	85%	11

1. Activities and Accomplishments

PYJI partners described leading and participating in a range of advocacy activities with their PYJI coalition, which had various outcomes—including approval of local policy changes in school and probation systems and informing state legislative processes.

a. *Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline*

At the local level, PYJI coalition partners and members in multiple counties (RYSE, San Diego’s Mid-City CAN, and Fathers & Families of San Joaquin) played key roles in advocating for substantial change in local schools. This included drafting or supporting district-wide resolutions adopted in 2017 that will implement alternative, restorative practices to school discipline (Positive School Climate Policy resolution in West Contra Costa Unified School District; School Climate Bill of Rights in San Diego Unified School District [SDUSD]). The West Contra Costa resolution also involves clarifying the role of law enforcement (school resource officers) on campus. Both resolutions were passed unanimously by the respective school boards.

Youth organizers with Fathers & Families of San Joaquin helped develop a report card about Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funding allocations in the



Photo courtesy of Fathers & Families of San Joaquin

Stockton Unified School District (SUSD) and present recommendations about funding to the school board. Fathers & Families states in their July–December 2017 progress report, “As of July

2017, SUSD did not designate any LCFF funds towards on-school police which was a victory for our agency and coalition." For each of these policy wins, youth and other community members participated in critical activities including conducting research, attending school board meetings, meeting with local officials, making public comment, and partnering with other CBOs to advocate for reform.

b. Ending "Voluntary Probation"

In Los Angeles County, the Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) and its partners obtained a commitment from the probation chief and county supervisors in 2017 to end the practice of "voluntary probation," in which youth report to probation officers and/or the district attorney despite not having been referred to court or to the probation department. YJC and partners conducted numerous advocacy activities to secure this win, including publishing a detailed report. "The youth under voluntary probation have no history of court or system contact, but are labeled 'at risk' by the probation department . . . [this practice impacts] over 100 schools in 85 neighborhoods labelled as the 'most crime affected neighborhoods,'" states *WIC 236: "Pre-Probation" Supervision of Youth of Color With No Prior Court or Probation Involvement* (May 2017), a report by the Children's Defense Fund, YJC, Urban Peace Institute, and Anti-Recidivism Coalition. YJC and its partners also advocated for creation of an independent probation oversight commission.

c. *Planning Diversion Strategies*

In addition, YJC and its partners actively participated, as part of a larger workgroup, in developing a plan to divert up to 15,000 youth annually from arrest and further justice system involvement and link them with community-based services. Youth from YJC were the only system-impacted youth with consistent involvement in the workgroup. This plan was approved in November 2017 by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. YJC advocated for establishment of a Youth Diversion and Development division, which is part of the plan approved by the board.



Photo courtesy of Youth Justice Coalition

d. *Informing State Legislation*

At the state level, De-Bug and its PYJI coalition members in Santa Clara County were instrumental in informing the legislative process and mobilizing families to engage in the process. Advocacy efforts conducted by local youth and families in support of SB 395 (Custodial Interrogation: Juveniles), SB 394 (Youth Offender Parole Hearings), and AB 1308 (Extending

Youth Offender Parole Hearings to Age 25) included meeting with elected officials, attending hearings in Sacramento, making phone calls and writing letters, and creating media pieces reflecting personal experience with the issues highlighted in the bills. In addition, De-Bug was part of the working group that designed the bills and coordinated statewide advocacy efforts. These three bills were approved by the governor in 2017.

e. *Advocating for Other Local Reforms*

Multiple partners described advocacy work that represents positive steps toward advancing local reform efforts. For example, the San Diego Organizing Project is collaborating with local leaders and clergy to develop a plan to direct the majority of tax revenue from recreational marijuana sales to youth programs rather than public safety efforts, both at the city and county levels. The Young Women's Freedom Center received written documentation from the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department about policies and practices relating to decision making and case planning for youth; this information is helping inform continued advocacy efforts. Fresno Barrios Unidos coalition members, including youth, met with a Board of Supervisors member to advocate for the elimination of juvenile fees and fines in the county. A staff member from Fathers & Families of San Joaquin, who spent 26 years in prison after being sentenced as an adult, is participating in the San Joaquin County Probation Department's Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities executive steering committee.

f. *Building Capacity for Advocacy*

Some partners discussed conducting and participating in activities that are strengthening their capacity for advocacy. This includes:

- Developing relationships with decision makers including the probation department (Sacramento Area Congregations Together);
- Meeting with system stakeholders, including probation and police, to obtain more information about budgeting and contracting, which will strengthen efforts to advocate for increased funds for alternatives to detention, restorative justice, and a redesign of juvenile hall (San Diego Organizing Project); and
- Attending training on the issue of juvenile fines and fees (Fresno Barrios Unidos).

2. Changes

Funded partners highlighted various changes to the advocacy environment in their respective counties since the beginning of the grant. Significant policy wins during the grant period that were led or supported by multiple PYJI partners are helping to reshape local and state advocacy environments. These policy victories were accomplished through a variety of strategies, including engaging substantial support and participation by affected youth and families; conducting and publishing detailed, timely research; and forging partnerships with unlikely allies (such as the county probation department or school board). These activities can provide examples for future advocacy efforts undertaken by other organizations.

In addition to these changes to law and policy, progress also occurred in many counties that should positively affect ongoing and new advocacy work. This includes developing and strengthening relationships within PYJI coalitions and with other community organizations and

building or strengthening relationships with system stakeholders. These are all examples of incremental steps that can contribute to influencing and facilitating opportunities for reform.

B. Changes in Community Power

One of the goals of this phase of PYJI is to build community power to advocate for a healthy justice system across California. This evaluation seeks to understand to what extent and in what ways, if any, this power changes over the grant period in grantee-partner counties.

1. Activities and Accomplishments

In their efforts to build community power to advocate for system transformation, PYJI coalitions throughout the state have prioritized youth engagement and building the capacity of youth to lead the coalitions’ advocacy and organizing work. Table 4 draws on survey data to show how PYJI lead organizations are engaging youth to participate in and/or lead their work.

Table 4			
How are system-involved youth engaged in your coalition? (2017)			
<i>(Funded partners)</i>			
Activity	N	%	“Yes” Responses
Receive training, coaching, and/or mentoring in youth leadership, research, etc.	14	100%	14
Provide input and feedback on our organizing and advocacy work	14	100%	14
Lead or help to lead our organizing and advocacy work	15	93%	14

a. *Sharing and Implementing the Participatory Defense Organizing Model*

Looking at activities by specific partners, De-Bug in Santa Clara County has built its capacity to spread its “participatory defense” model to youth and families throughout the state. Participatory defense is De-Bug’s organizing model for families and communities to affect the outcome of cases in the court system as well as transform the landscape of power in the criminal justice system. Although De-Bug was conducting participatory defense trainings prior to PYJI, participation in this phase of PYJI helped De-Bug work with ally organization Community Agency for Resources, Advocacy, and Services (CARAS) to launch the Gilroy participatory



Photo courtesy of Silicon Valley De-Bug

defense hub. PYJI resources helped CARAS hire a part-time organizer to focus on participatory defense and increase the network of resources for participatory defense in Santa Clara County.

Santa Clara County’s PYJI collaborative reports 397 years of time saved, meaning its participatory defense work has shaved 397 years from criminal sentences for “loved ones” in their network. Outside of Santa Clara County, De-Bug provided coaching to Starting Over, Inc./All of Us or None in Riverside County; Resilience OC in Orange County; Fathers & Families of San Joaquin (which reports 121 years of time saved through its participatory defense work); and

Young Women’s Freedom Center in San Francisco to launch participatory defense hubs in their respective cities/counties.

In Orange County, PYJI partner Resilience OC was able to successfully implement strategies they learned from De-Bug’s participatory defense training to advocate for youth in Orange County Juvenile Hall. Through its partnership with the Orange County Department of Education and the Orange County Probation Department, Resilience OC provides youth in juvenile hall with social-emotional support and informal case management. When one of the youth they were working with was facing a transfer hearing to determine if his case would be tried in adult court, Resilience OC used its participatory defense training to support the young man and his family in assembling a social biography packet that was presented to the judge in the transfer hearing. As a result of their work and the strong community support they were able to galvanize behind the young man, he was not transferred to adult court. This was a tremendous victory for Resilience

OC, De-Bug, and PYJI, as it was a small, yet impactful, example of how community capacity for advocacy can be strengthened when resources and infrastructure are in place to facilitate the exchange of expertise between communities navigating the justice system.



Photo courtesy of Resilience OC

b. *Building Youth Capacity for Leadership, Advocacy, and Research*

In Alameda County, the PYJI coalition is building the leadership and advocacy capacity of a fellowship cohort of formerly incarcerated young adults, the Dream Beyond Bars fellows. They are conducting participatory research, advocating for policy change, organizing and hosting community town halls (with attendance and participation from elected officials and key criminal justice system stakeholders), and building the foundation of what will be the Youth Justice Task Force. As CURYJ mentions in their July–December 2017 progress report, “Placing formerly incarcerated young people as experts affirms their lived experience as valuable and as a testament to youth resiliency.” The Youth Justice Task Force, which will consist of formerly incarcerated young adults, adults who were incarcerated as youth, and their allies, intends to be a body that will influence and have decision-making power in how youth are treated in the criminal justice system.

The Young Women’s Freedom Center is also developing the organizing and research capacity of young people. A group of young women at this organization has completed training in participatory action research and are now implementing a research project that includes in-depth life-mapping interviews with system-impacted young women.

As noted above, Contra Costa County’s PYJI coalition, led by RYSE, has been focused on building youth and community power for advocacy through the Contra Costa Youth Justice



Photo courtesy of RYSE

Coalition (CCYJC). CCYJC youth participated in West Contra Costa Unified School District Board meetings and workgroups to advocate for positive school climate and the removal of law enforcement from schools, through adoption of a Positive School Climate Policy resolution. Youth gave public comment and met directly with elected officials to present recommendations for school climate reform such as replacing law enforcement in schools with restorative practice coordinators and counselors.

2. Changes

Funded partners describe several changes to community power to advocate for a healthy justice system. From engaging in base-building activities to grow the local network of allies and champions, to building the leadership capacity of young people to lead the movement to transform youth justice, community partners recognize momentum across the state to push for more progressive and community-based alternatives to the criminal justice system. However, the toxic and regressive national rhetoric on issues of race, gender, public safety, and immigration, among others, has elevated the importance of these organizations and coalitions to provide leadership, support, and healing to their communities.

In San Joaquin County, the All-Star Youth Justice Alliance is helping build the power of the San Joaquin County community to provide advocacy on behalf of and an array of supports to system-involved young people. The coalition consists of five CBOs (Fathers & Families of San Joaquin, San Joaquin Pride Center, Reinvent South Stockton Coalition, Little Manila Rising, and Sow-a-Seed) working collaboratively to serve various disadvantaged communities in San Joaquin County. Collectively, these CBOs provide case management, trauma-informed care,

support services, and programming for youth, both while they are incarcerated and upon release. This strategic partnership represents an effort to better coordinate community resources to mitigate the harm inflicted by the juvenile justice system.

Riverside County's PYJI coalition, led by Sigma Beta Xi, Inc., described how PYJI has provided resources, incentives, and opportunities to build relationships with key local stakeholders, a critical step in laying the foundation for future reform work. By expanding membership of the Riverside County Alliance and engaging in more direct-action activities, the coalition has built a relationship with the county Board of Supervisors and has identified a champion of youth justice reform on the Board of Supervisors. For Riverside County, this may signal a changing landscape and a potential opportunity to advance a positive youth justice agenda where little to none appeared to exist before.



Photo courtesy of Sigma Beta Xi, Inc.

As noted previously, in San Diego County, Mid-City CAN and the PYJI coalition worked with youth, community members, and educators, conducting research and engaging students and school district leadership to advocate for SDUSD to adopt a School Climate Bill of Rights. SDUSD's board president acknowledged the critical role that youth from the PYJI coalition played in providing the leadership and vision necessary for winning the board's approval of this policy.

C. Lessons Learned About Organizing for a Healthy Justice System

Funded partners were asked to describe, in their July–December 2017 progress report, their major reflections and learnings from their agency and partners' involvement in PYJI. Several key themes emerged from these data.

1. Learning and Collaboration

Multiple partners stated that they have learned and benefited from peer-to-peer learning and collaboration opportunities, with other PYJI partners and in the larger advocacy arena. For example, De-Bug and Resilience OC worked closely together to implement participatory defense strategies in Orange County, an



Photo courtesy of Sierra Health Foundation

experience that was valuable for both organizations not only as a learning experience but also in showing participatory defense successfully applied in an emerging context.

Other respondents stated that learning from and engaging with other partners at the PYJI learning community events—or knowing they could do so in the future—has been helpful. The Young Women’s Freedom Center stated the utility of bringing together a range of grassroots organizations in San Francisco that collaborate yet often still operate in silos.

2. Supporting Youth and Staff

Providing support to youth and staff that is responsive to their needs emerged as a key theme. Some partners stated the importance of meeting youth where there are, which includes providing spaces for youth to do personal healing work and have opportunities to be fully engaged in their advocacy work. “One of the biggest takeaways so far has been the need to always do the healing work as we do the day to day organizing and systems change work,” stated one partner in their progress report.

Supporting staff also came to the surface, with multiple sites expressing the need to provide healing time and self-care opportunities for the staff who work closely with youth affected by trauma. “We have learned that self-care is not just something that we should talk about, but actually infuse into our work . . . We’ve learned our staff is, at times, not prepared for the realities of the work that we do and that we need to train them up and provide opportunities to heal themselves in order to grow and become the leaders they want to be,” one partner stated in their progress report.

3. Developing and Strengthening Capacity for Organizing

Lessons about strategies for approaching the work, including processes, also surfaced. One site described the importance of organizers of being savvy about media and messaging. Another site stated the importance of working closely with their PYJI coalition members prior to talking with policy makers in order to strengthen these conversations. One site stated that considerable time is needed to build a base for doing work with youth.

4. Applying Organizing Strategies in New Contexts

While only articulated by De-Bug, another lesson learned focused on opportunities to apply and adapt existing organizing strategies in new contexts. Participatory defense provides a strategy for implementing Proposition 57. By building on their years of experience developing and honing this strategy, De-Bug is able to work closely with families during transfer hearings and also apply the participatory defense approach, with Resilience OC, in another county.

D. Other Key Findings

1. Learning Opportunities

As noted previously, learning opportunities—including their availability, how they are facilitated, and what content is included—emerged as a critical issue for many sites. The type of learning opportunity that the largest number of survey respondents (about two thirds, 63%) reported participating in was peer-to-peer learning. One third (33%) of respondents stated that they had participated in PYJI TA (Table 5), and slightly more than one third (37%) stated they were not sure if they had (not shown).

Table 5			
Participation in PYJI Learning Opportunities (2017)			
<i>(Funded partners and coalition members)</i>			
Participated In	N	%	“Yes” Responses
Other types of formal or informal learning/information exchange with other PYJI partners or coalition members	27	63%	17
One or more PYJI webinars presented by PYJI TA providers	27	56%	15
One or more monthly calls for PYJI partners and coalition members	27	56%	15
TA with a PYJI TA provider	30	33%	10

Of survey respondents who participated in PYJI TA and answered satisfaction questions about this participation, all nine agreed that the TA was useful to their organization or coalition and that their organization or coalition developed or enhanced knowledge and skills from the TA. For organizations that have not participated in PYJI TA, the survey yielded very limited information as to why. Respondents also reported that the PYJI webinars were useful and helped them gain or enhance knowledge and skills. For the monthly calls, multiple respondents stated that the calls helped them learn about activities of other PYJI partners and coalitions, gain motivation to continue organizing and advocacy efforts, and develop or enhance relationships with other PYJI partners and coalitions.

2. Continued Funding to Sustain Movement

Data from a variety of sources (progress reports, survey, focus groups) prioritized the need for sustained funding of community-based organizing efforts. Multiple respondents expressed the need for continued funding beyond the current 18-month PYJI grant cycle to, as

one respondent stated, “continue to invest in long-term community driven efforts for systems transformation across the state.”

Some respondents highlighted specific areas needing funding. For example, types of support included resources to help youth address immediate and longer-term needs such as mental health and healing, family and child support, and housing (including moving from unsafe situations). Other suggestions included stipends for youth to tell their own stories, assistance with transportation, and resources for graphic design for PYJI organizations. In addition, funding to sustain and continue to develop organizations, including capacity-building for staff and capital improvements such as office space/buildings, were mentioned as needs.

3. Shifting Culture of Funding Organizations

Some respondents described frustration with some funding organizations’ resource-allocation strategies. For example, this included funders investing in systems to lead their own reform work without providing the same or greater funding to CBOs; it also included provision of disparate levels of support to organizations working on the same issue. In addition, due to lack of local infrastructure and support, community partners may have difficulty meeting eligibility requirements for county government procurement processes.

Respondents also discussed the urgent need for some foundations to shift their approach to funding, part of which could involve an overhaul in organizational culture and values. These data emphasized prioritizing, respecting, and uplifting community voice and expertise as the driving force in organizing and advocacy; comments also included supporting peer-to-peer TA and training. “We need to be funded to grow without being told how to grow,”

stated one survey respondent. “Funders don’t lead campaigns or movements; they are led by the ground,” said a focus group participant.

4. Challenges

Despite the tremendous work of PYJI partners throughout the state, several challenges have presented along the way. From public systems and agencies that continue to resist meaningful collaboration with community to the challenge of recruiting and sustaining youth and family participation in advocacy and organizing activities, the work of building community power to advocate and organize for a healthy justice system is littered with obstacles.

Recurring challenges that PYJI partners experience in advocacy and organizing include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Heavy opposition from law enforcement agencies.
- Funding, capacity, and resource issues (limited staff capacity and program resources, high costs of living and a lack of housing for youth and families, lack of physical space in which to conduct programming where youth feel welcome and safe, lack of organizational infrastructure to be eligible for and able to take advantage of additional funding opportunities, need for new approach by some funding organizations).
- Youth engagement (recruiting and retaining youth who have system involvement, creating trust with youth and families).
- Direct and vicarious trauma.

In addition to these obstacles, these organizations and their youth are confronted with covert, overt, individual, and systemic racism on a regular basis. Despite these challenges, PYJI’s

community partners remain resilient and eager to seize opportunities to transform the youth justice system.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings to date for the third phase of PYJI highlight several key areas that reflect notable progress in PYJI partners' and coalition members' advocacy efforts and merit further exploration. PYJI coalitions across the state are facilitating and supporting numerous advocacy, organizing, and youth-development activities to advocate for a healthy justice system.

The grant period in 2017 saw growth, development, and achievement by PYJI partners and coalitions in several key areas.

- Collectively engaging nearly 600 youth (about half of whom are system impacted) and more than 330 family members to actively collaborate in PYJI coalitions across the state.
- Strengthening organizational and community capacity and power for advocacy, including conducting base-building activities to grow local networks of allies and champions, deepening engagement with system-impacted youth and their families, and engaging in peer-to-peer opportunities to share, collaborate, and learn.
- Advancing progress on the road to local policy reforms, including making important inroads in working with system stakeholders.
- Achieving policy victories at the local and state level, including influencing policy changes in school and probation systems and informing the state legislative process.

Areas for change and improvement also emerged. Community partners and their coalition members pointed to various challenges that affect their advocacy work. These include

heavy opposition from law enforcement agencies; youth engagement; direct and vicarious trauma; and funding, capacity, and resource issues.

The following recommendations for the Center at Sierra Health Foundation to consider emerged from the evaluation data.

- 1. Continue to fund and support community-led advocacy and reform efforts.**
Although PYJI partner organizations have accomplished a lot in a short amount of time, the structural inequities they are working to change are rooted in historical systems of oppression. Thus, long-term investments into the infrastructure of community-led reform efforts are necessary to see a meaningful return.

- 2. Support peer-to-peer training and TA based on the content expertise within PYJI.**
PYJI partners that were able to engage in peer-to-peer learning exchanges with each other found tremendous value in sharing the expertise developed within organizations and communities through lived experience. Many expressed a desire for more time and resources to focus on intentional collaboration and peer-to-peer learning. For example, several PYJI partners specifically reflected on the challenges of recruiting and retaining youth for participation in their programs and activities. With several youth-engagement experts within the PYJI network, many partners and their coalition members would benefit from more opportunities to share best and promising practices of youth engagement with each other.

- 3. Encourage and provide resources for healing and self-care for youth and staff.**
Several PYJI partners discussed the importance of self-care for the youth and adults engaged in community organizing, youth development, and advocacy. Because of their proximity to the pain and trauma in communities most affected by the justice system, resources and opportunities for healing are critical to sustain the movement. Whether framed as capacity building or another type of programmatic cost, resources for self-care and healing should be seen as an essential line item in any budget designed to support community-driven system transformation.

4. Provide resources for strengthening relationships among community organizations to qualify for county contracts.

Some PYJI partners reflected on local funding opportunities from public agencies that they could not take advantage of because of restrictive eligibility criteria or procurement processes. They expressed a need for resources to support grassroots organizations to work together so they can build infrastructure internally or as partners to qualify for funding opportunities as they arise.

5. Encourage and inspire other funding organizations/foundations to shift their practices related to supporting community organizing and advocacy.

In responding to a question about what they would like funders and policymakers to know about their PYJI coalition's efforts to organize for a healthy justice system, multiple PYJI partners described an urgent need for some foundations to shift their approach to funding community organizing and advocacy. Partners discussed a need for funders to prioritize, respect, and uplift community voice and expertise when supporting these efforts.