

SOUTH BRONX COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO DIVERTING YOUTH FROM JUVENILE JUSTICE
INVOLVEMENT USING A POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK BUILT ON
THE STRENGTHS OF GRASSROOTS FAITH AND NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS



CCFY'S COMPANION GUIDE TO THE TECHNICAL REPORT
OCTOBER 2014

ABOUT COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS FOR YOUTH

Community Connections for Youth (CCFY) is a Bronx-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations to develop effective community-driven alternatives to incarceration for youth. CCFY believes that increasing local community capacity to work with youth in the juvenile justice system is the key to reducing youth crime and delinquency and improving long-term life outcomes for youth.

ABOUT SOUTH BRONX COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

South Bronx Community Connections (SBCC) is a research demonstration project funded by a JJDPA Formula Grant from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The JJDPA Formula Grant commissioned CCFY to develop an innovative strategy for juvenile justice reform built on the strength of grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations. The South Bronx Community Connections project was independently evaluated by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

About the Companion Guide to the Technical Report

CCFY produced this Companion Guide to the Technical Report to summarize the most important findings of the South Bronx Community Connections evaluation for a general audience. The Companion Guide presents both the evidence-based findings from the John Jay evaluation, along with promising developments for which there are not yet sufficient data for inclusion in the technical evaluation. CCFY references the John Jay technical report throughout this Companion Guide. However, the information presented in this document, along with the policy recommendations we put forth, is ours alone. Those interested in reading the full technical evaluation can download the report by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice from our website at <http://cc-fy.org/sbcc-download>

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SOUTH BRONX COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

**An innovative approach
to diverting youth from
juvenile justice involvement
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A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

South Bronx Community Connections is a three-year pilot project implemented by Community Connections for Youth (CCFY), a Bronx-based non-profit organization dedicated to building community capacity for juvenile justice reform. Through the SBCC project, CCFY demonstrated that a collaborative grassroots approach could successfully divert neighborhood youth from further juvenile justice system involvement by engaging them in positive youth development programming built on the strengths of local grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations.

South Bronx Community Connections (SBCC) was funded with a federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) formula grant from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). The grant was awarded to CCFY under the category of “Breakthrough Research-Based Strategies.” The funder was seeking an innovative approach to the problem of youth crime and delinquency that had the potential to be a “game changer” in the field of juvenile justice. DCJS awarded a \$1.1 million grant to CCFY to create a new model under one condition: that the project be developed under rigorous evaluation from an independent research entity. The John Jay College of Criminal Justice was selected to serve as the independent evaluator for the SBCC project.

Before beginning to serve youth, CCFY spent a planning year working with an evaluation team from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice

South Bronx Community Connections (SBCC) is an innovative approach to diverting youth from juvenile justice system involvement using a positive youth development framework built on the strengths of grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations

to develop the tools necessary for a rigorous evaluation. Under the guidance of the evaluation team, CCFY developed a Theory of Change, a Logic Model, and an online database. These tools allowed CCFY to capture the data needed for the process evaluation, and to measure SBCC’s target population against a borough-wide comparison group. The planning year was also used to review local juvenile delinquency data, cultivate relationships with juvenile justice agencies, and engage local grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations as partners for the initiative.

The SBCC project initially focused on the South Bronx neighborhood of Mott Haven (Figure 1), a community in the heart of the nation’s poorest Congressional District. CCFY chose Mott Haven for three reasons:

1. the neighborhood had historically high rates of youth crime and delinquency and supplied a disproportionate number of youth to the juvenile justice system;
2. working within a single neighborhood allowed SBCC to develop meaningful partnerships with the local police precinct, neighborhood schools, and other system personnel; and
3. CCFY was — and is — headquartered in Mott Haven and was already deeply connected to numerous grassroots faith and community organizations in the neighborhood.

Furthermore, the SBCC project focuses on youth deemed likely to remain chronically involved in the juvenile justice system absent early intervention. SBCC serves youth who have already been arrested on charges that are normally processed through the system (i.e. assault, theft), providing a community intervention as an alternative to formal processing in through the juvenile justice system. If youth complete 60 days with SBCC without getting into further trouble, their cases are closed and their records sealed with no further justice system supervision. While the short-term mandate lasts for only 60 days, CCFY is committed to keeping youth engaged in a network of community support for an indefinite period of time.

The SBCC project employs four intertwined strategies to further CCFY’s vision of building community capacity for juvenile justice reform:

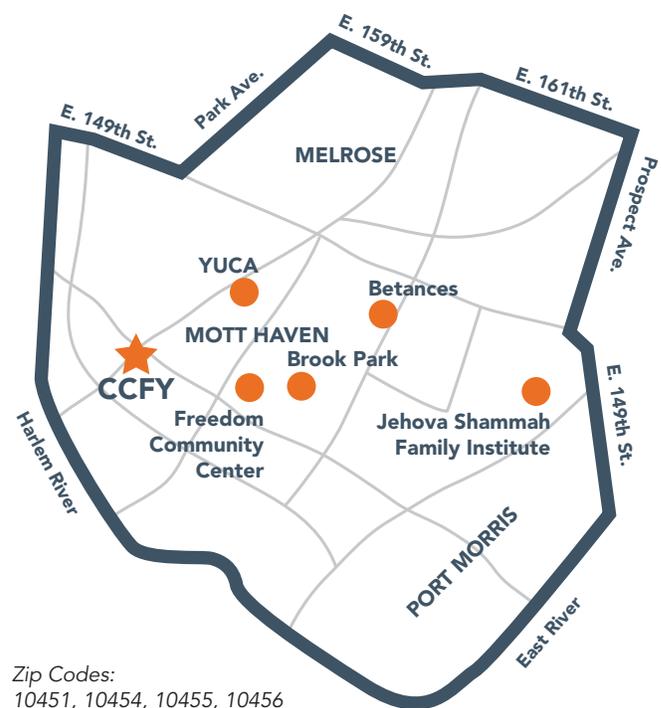
System Partnerships: developing collaborative relationships with local juvenile system stakeholders (probation, prosecutors, police) to divert youth who would otherwise be advanced deeper into the juvenile justice system.

Positive Youth Development: facilitating adolescent development by involving youth in neighborhood improvement projects with pro-social peers, facilitated by positive adult mentors from within the community (i.e. “credible messengers”)

Family Strengthening: involving the family members of system-involved youth in supportive social networks to decrease isolation and increase social support.

Community Capacity Building: identifying pre-existing faith and neighborhood organizations already involved in serving youth in the community, and further developing their capacity to partner with the juvenile justice system through the provision of sub-grants, training, and technical assistance.

Figure 1.
Map of Community Board 1, 40th Police Precinct





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SBCC'S CORE VALUES

SBCC's theory of change reflects the deeply held values on which CCFY was founded. The project intentionally departs from the deficit-based approach that relies on professionalized resources external to "deprived" communities to "fix" the problems of "at-risk youth" from "dysfunctional families." Instead, CCFY uses an asset-based approach that recognizes the inherent strengths in young people, families and communities, and seeks to build on existing resources in their own neighborhoods. This strengths-based approach manifests itself through the following core commitments:

Youth Leadership: a commitment to treat young people as assets and to build their leadership skills through strengths-based programming.

Family Engagement: a commitment to engage family members as the most important assets in a young person's life and to build the leadership skills of parents through peer coaching and support.

Community Engagement: a commitment to engage other local grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations as collaborative partners, and to build their capacity through sharing financial resources, knowledge, and decision-making power.

SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS

The SBCC project was successful in diverting neighborhood youth, who would otherwise have been formally processed the juvenile justice system, into community-driven alternatives.

CCFY was able to secure referrals of 149 juveniles facing juvenile justice system involvement from a variety of stakeholders, gaining the trust of system partners who previously would not have diverted youth away from deeper system involvement.

Figure 2 The vast majority of youth were referred post-arrest by the NYC Department of Probation as a diversion from formal court processing, or by Family Court Prosecutors as a pre-court diversion. Towards the latter half of the demonstration, police officers began using the SBCC program for arrest diversion. Neighborhood schools also used SBCC as an alternative to involving the police for school-based offenses.

Figure 3 CCFY was successful in convincing juvenile justice system stakeholders to divert youth whose charges were usually advanced deeper through the system. The majority of youth referred to the SBCC program were arrested for offenses that in previous years were unlikely to be diverted (assault, robbery, weapons charges, and larceny).

Figure 2.
Referral Totals

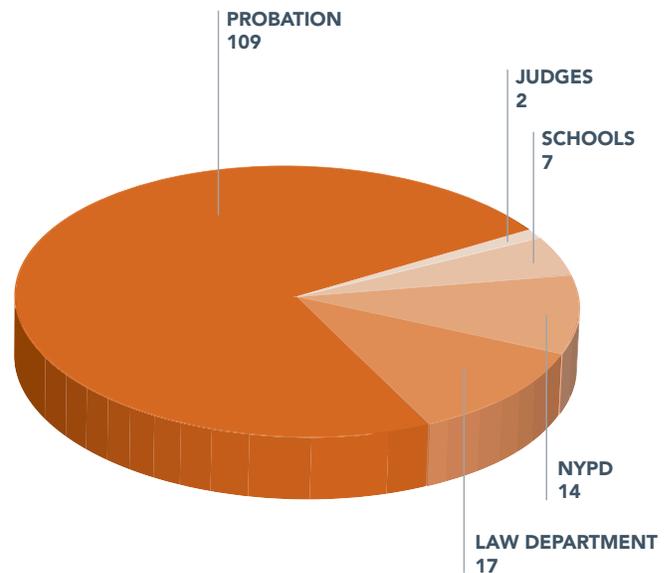
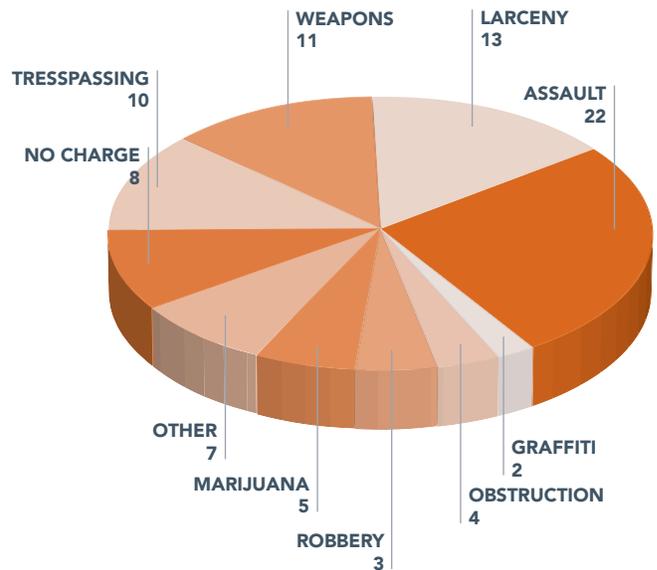


Figure 4 The SBCC project served a functional purpose for Family Court Stakeholders seeking to divert youth from formal court involvement. Nearly all youth (97%) mandated to short-term involvement with SBCC successfully completed their mandated activity and had their cases closed and sealed. Only 2 youth had their referrals withdrawn by system stakeholders due to new arrests on more serious charges during program participation.

Halfway through the SBCC initiative, CCFY expanded into an adjacent neighborhood precinct (the 44th) at the request of Family Court stakeholders, particularly in response to the high rate of arrests for school-based offenses.

Figure 3.
Arrest Charges at Intake
n=85



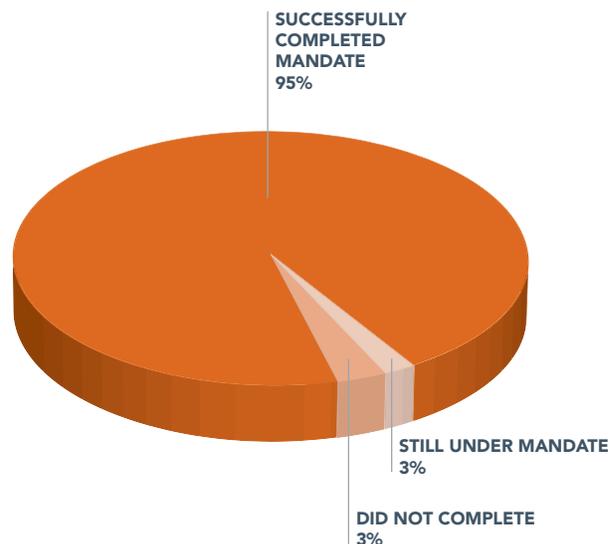
Top arrest charge of all referrals who successfully completed intake. The 8 youth with "No Charge" includes youth who were referred by schools/police and were not formally charged with a crime. The 7 "Other" charges include Menacing (1), Harassment (1), Promoting Gambling (1), Unlawful Assembly (1), Theft of Services (1), Criminal Mischief (1), and Endangering the Welfare of a Child (1).





Despite buy-in from juvenile justice agency heads, securing appropriate referrals required overcoming bureaucratic inertia and changing the behavior of individual actors within each juvenile justice agency. This process required sustained system-community partnership facilitation by CCFY staff. While Probation referrals started out sluggishly, they quickly became the largest source of referrals as policies changed and line staff built trust with SBCC staff. While school-based police officers became progressively more comfortable using SBCC for arrest diversion, not all Department of Education leaders were comfortable using community solutions for school-based offenses.

Figure 4.
Successful Completions
n=62



INDIVIDUAL YOUTH

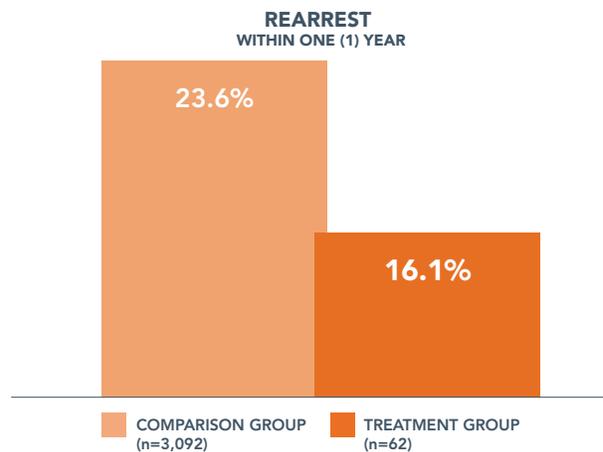
Youth who participated in the SBCC program were one third less likely to be re-arrested than similarly situated peers.

Figure 5 Youth who were meaningfully engaged in the SBCC program were significantly more likely to avoid further contact with the juvenile justice system than was a borough-wide comparison group. Only 10 of the youth served (16%) were re-arrested, 9 youth (15%) had cases filed in Family Court¹, and only 3 youth (5%) had a case filed on a new arrest post-program involvement.

“Juveniles who were meaningfully engaged... for at least 60 days were significantly more likely to remain uninvolved in the justice system during the following year than was a borough-wide comparison group. Further, juveniles who remained active for at least 90 days were the most likely to remain uninvolved in the justice system.” (Curtis et al, p. 4)

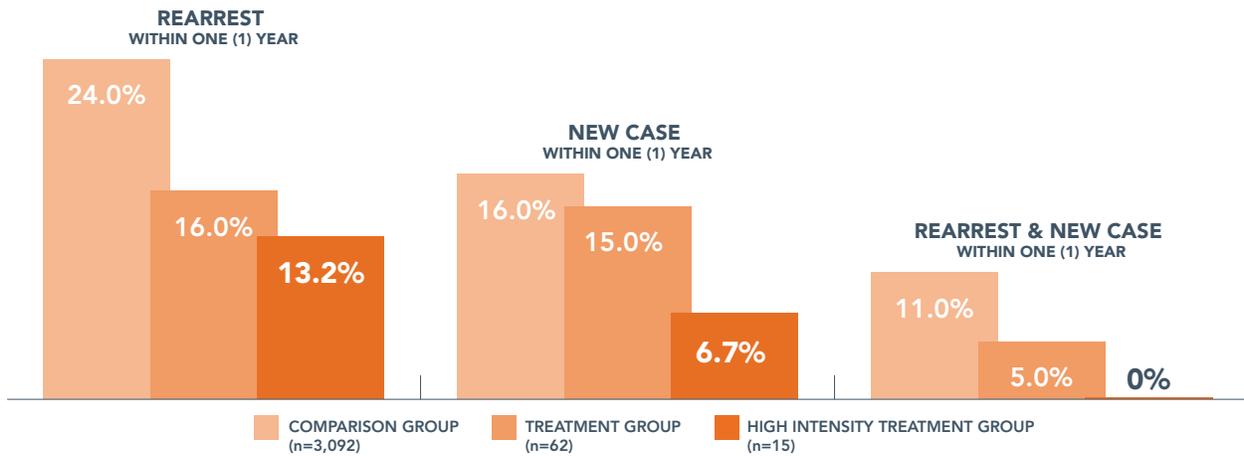
Figure 6 Youth who were engaged quickly and intensively following arrest, with multiple contacts during the first month of engagement, were the most likely to remain uninvolved in the juvenile justice system. While the number of youth in this

Figure 5. Recidivism Analysis of Tx Group and Comparison Group (Balanced Sample)



Any Re-arrest within One (1) Year	
Balanced Sample	
Ct	23.6%
Tx	16.1%
Diff	-1.37%
z-test	-1.37%
Tx!=Ct	0.17
Tx<Ct	0.09

Figure 6.
Recidivism Analysis: Comparison Group and High Intensity Tx Group



“High Intensity Treatment Group” (n=15) was too small during the evaluation period to make this finding statistically significant, further evaluation may demonstrate that the intensity of early program involvement correlates with reduced re-offending.

“Given a timely referral (within a week of arrest), those with a 75% attendance rate within the generally imposed 60-day Probation mandate continued participation post-mandate, suggesting that juveniles can bond quickly and remain engaged for considerable time.” (Curtis et al, p. 4)

Figure 7 The SBCC project was successful in keeping youth positively engaged in pro-social community activities well beyond the duration of their initial system mandate. While youth were typically mandated to attend the program for 60 days, the average young person stayed in the program for 209 days – more than 3 times the length of their initial mandate. Similar to the correlation between intensity of initial engagement, the “low” intensity group (n=26) stayed active an average of only 119 days, whereas the “medium” dosage intensity (n=17) stayed active for an average of 236 days, and the “high” dosage youth (n=15) stayed active for an average of 361 days.

CCFY facilitated youth engagement and developed youth leadership through stipends awarded for exercising personal leadership in community improvement activities. CCFY awarded 194 stipends to 51 youth totaling \$13,328 over the demonstration period. Stipends were not awarded for basic participation in the SBCC program, but for supplemental, non-mandated activities that required youth to take on a leadership role.

Figure 7.
Length of Engagement for Treatment Group (n=62)





“The system seemed like it was set up to catch me doing wrong. SBCC showed me my leadership potential and gave me opportunities to do right by my community. Because of this program, I’m in college today, not in jail.”

– SBCC Program Graduate

FAMILIES

Engaging family members was an effective means of keeping youth meaningfully engaged in the program, and facilitated the development of ongoing parent peer support.

“Family engagement enhances the probability that juveniles will continue program participation beyond an official mandate.” (Curtis et al, p. 5)

Balancing a commitment to research-based practices and organic community leadership, SBCC organized parent peer support groups led by parents who were themselves impacted by the

juveniles justice system. Under the guidance of the evaluator, CCFY selected the evidence-based Strengthening Families Program (SFP) curriculum for the SBCC project as a strategy for restoring family bonds. While SFP was effective for some, not all family members were equally ready to participate in the highly structured curriculum. Adapting to the contextual realities, SBCC staff developed complementary strategies to engage families including family support groups, advocacy training, and parent peer coaching.

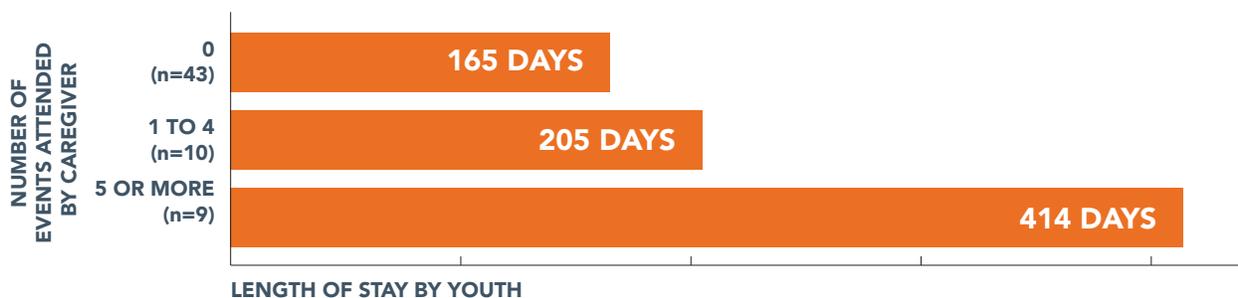
Figure 8 The extent to which family members participated in CCFY’s family strengthening activities affected the duration of youth involvement in the program. Youth whose parents never participated in any family activities stayed involved for an average of 165 days, while those



“Once I tell them that I’m a parent of a child in the system, they know I’m not judging them and then they’re not afraid to open up.”

**– Jeannette Bocanegra,
CCFY Family Organizer**

Figure 8.
Length of Engagement by Parent Participation



whose parents participated in up to 4 activities stayed for an average of 205 days. Youth whose parents participated 5 or more family activities stayed active in the program for an average of 414 days. Further evaluation may reveal a statistically significant correlation between the level of family engagement and long-term youth success in the program.

CCFY’s Family and Community Organizer engaged parents in stipended volunteer activities (outreach, event support, public speaking) as a strategy to build the leadership skills of family members. Over 2 years, CCFY issued 51 stipends totaling \$2,995 to 16 parents.

A concerted effort to develop the leadership skills of directly affected family members led to ongoing policy discussions with senior leadership in the NYC Department of Probation (DOP) about the needs of family members with youth in the system. These discussions resulted in DOP allocating funding to create a Parent Peer Support Program in response to the needs identified by CCFY’s parents. CCFY was awarded the contract for the Bronx, which resulted in four family members from CCFY’s network being hired as Parent Peer Coaches. The Parent Peer Coaches, two of whom are SBCC parents, are now stationed daily at the Bronx Family Court and provide direct support to family members currently going through the juvenile justice system.



GRASSROOTS FAITH & NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

The SBCC project successfully coordinated a network of grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations that collaborated to engage youth diverted from the juvenile justice system in local neighborhood-based positive youth development programming.

“‘Teaming’ and the concomitant familiarity among youth, parents, CCFY staff, coaches, and mentors facilitated the ‘bundling’ of support provided to juveniles and their families during critical junctures of pro-social development.” (Curtis et al, p. 5)

CCFY awarded sub-grants to a total of 7 grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations as “Sites” to incentivize collaboration on the SBCC project. Sub-grants were used to employ a dedicated Site Coordinator, hire “Community Coaches” (mentors from the neighborhood) and support youth involvement in pro-social activities. Each year, CCFY entered into sub-contracts valued at \$10,000 per Site, covering deliverables including the provision of weekly positive youth development groups, recruitment and/or payment of Coaches, and participation in site capacity building activities. Further, CCFY granted an average of \$3,500 per year per Site to fund youth-led Neighborhood Improvement Projects and reimbursed an average of \$1,750 per Site per year for trips and special events.

During the course of the pilot, two of the originally-chosen sites ceased to exist as organizations, revealing the fragile infrastructure of grassroots faith and community organizations. However, the other sites were able to absorb the youth placed at the defunct sites.

CCFY provided sustained training and technical assistance for local neighborhood organizations to facilitate the development of effective programming for youth, including:

Weekly Site Coordinator Team Meetings to discuss Program Activities & Individual Youth Progress

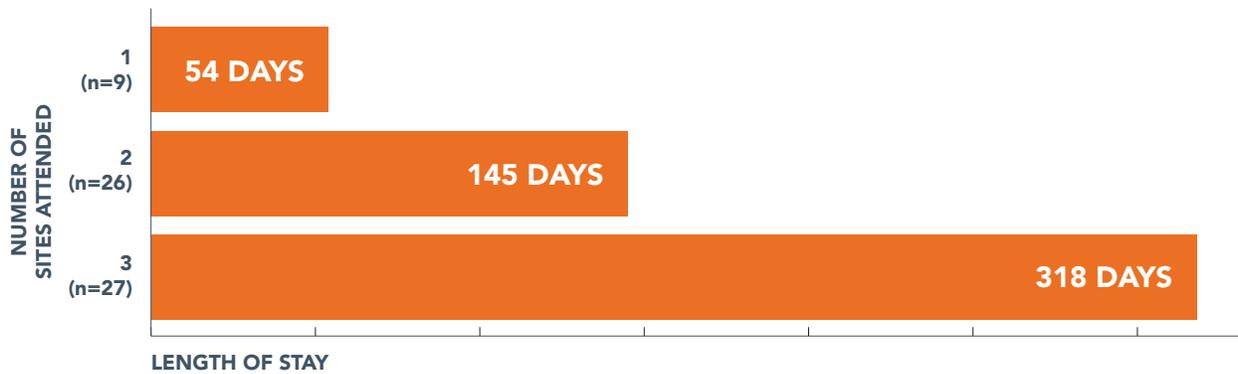
One-on-One Support for Site Coordinators on Program Planning & Implementation

Crisis Response Support from CCFY Staff

Training for Community Coaches on Positive Youth Development



Figure 9.
Youth Length of Engagement by Site Participation



Moreover, it was necessary for CCFY to provide operational capacity building support for grassroots faith and neighborhood partners seeking to develop their organizational infrastructure in areas such as grant management, governance, fundraising, strategic planning, and human resources.

“Reliance on neighborhood residents for support facilitates a shift from a deficit- to a strength-based focus” (Curtis et al, p. 5)

By the second year of the project all 5 providers engaged as a team: in addition to site-specific youth participation, all sites welcomed intra-site participation and collaborated on neighborhood-wide events.

By the end of the pilot, four of the five sites had successfully implemented at least one neighborhood improvement project, in which youth and mentors worked together on a youth-led plan to improve the quality of life in the local neighborhood. Neighborhood Improvement Projects included:

- Cultivating an Urban Youth Farm
- Painting a Mural to Honor a Community Activist
- Hosting a Youth Talent Show
- Organizing Safe Parties for Teens at a Local Community Center

Figure 9 The more neighborhood organizations with which a young person became involved, the longer they stayed in the program. Youth who participated at only one site stayed for an average duration of 54 days. Youth who participated at two sites stayed active for an average of 145 days. Youth who participated at 3 or more sites stayed active for an average of 318 days.



URBAN YOUTH FARM

Raymond Figueroa runs the Urban Youth Farm at Brook Park, a community garden in Mott Haven. At first glance, farming and gardening might not seem to be a naturally attractive activity for urban youth, but young people have quickly find themselves at home in Brook Park. “The garden is a sanctuary in the midst of a very hostile environment,” says Ray. “It’s a place where they can let their guard down and experience the restorative power of nature.”

Youth often stay involved at Brook Park well beyond their court mandate. Ray believes there are three reasons why this happens. The first is Brook Park’s location. “We’re right in the middle of the neighborhood,” says Ray, “so we see our young people all the time, even when they don’t want to be seen. If someone stops coming for a couple weeks, odds are that we’ll bump into them on the street, or we just walk around the corner to where they live and find out what’s going on with them.”

The second reason, says Ray, is their commitment to restore trust between youth and adults. “So many young people are used to being treated as a problem by adults,” says Figueroa. “We have to work overtime to show them that we are *for* them no matter what.” Ray is an aggressive advocate for young people, showing up at schools when youth get in trouble, attending their court dates, and stepping into neighborhood conflicts. As a result he has built many long-term mentoring relationships with youth that last for years.

Finally, Ray has a remarkable ability to build young people’s skills and coach them into leadership roles. “We show them the power of giving back to their own communities,” says Ray, who involves young people in neighborhood improvement projects. “When we have them restoring community gardens, or harvesting vegetables to sell at the local farmers markets, they stop thinking of themselves as the problem, and start seeing themselves as part of the solution.”

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING LESSONS

Changing the Lens from Risks to Strengths

A change of lens, from risk to strengths, is necessary to engage system-involved youth in pro-social development.

Partnering with grassroots community organizations helps cultivate a strengths-based approach.

There are nascent strengths in neighborhoods of chronic disadvantage, but a concerted effort to organize these strengths is required, as is technical assistance and training.

Local Neighborhood Focus

To ensure responsiveness to the local neighborhood context, partnerships between juvenile justice agencies and community organizations must be negotiated with grassroots leaders.

Working at the neighborhood level allows for innovations in system-community partnerships that are difficult to implement on a citywide level.

Evidence-based practices, when used, need to be adapted to the realities of participating youth and family members to maintain grassroots integrity.





Positive Youth Development

Given the persistent and historical focus on risks, needs, and deficits, a concerted effort must be made to retain a strengths-based approach to working with youth in the juvenile justice system.

Involving youth in the leadership of neighborhood improvement projects helps youth develop positive identities and build networks of positive peer support.

Matching youth with young adult mentors, including those just slightly older, from the same neighborhoods, and who have overcome system involvement themselves (“credible messengers”), is a promising strategy for developing youth leadership among system-involved youth.

Family Engagement

Family members are hesitant to engage when they are treated as if they are the problem. They are far more likely to engage when approached from a strengths-based perspective and offered a leadership role.

Family engagement greatly increases the likelihood that youth will remain involved in pro-social neighborhood programming beyond official court mandates.

Parent Peer Support is an effective intervention to relieve stress and isolation and facilitate the development of social capital.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Connections for Youth (CCFY) puts forth the following policy and practice recommendations for juvenile justice systems that are serious about building community capacity for juvenile justice reform:

1. Juvenile Justice Systems should identify pre-existing grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations in overrepresented communities, invest in building their capacity via training and technical assistance, and develop collaborative partnerships in which they share information, resources and power.

2. Juvenile Justice Systems should form “Learning Communities” with community stakeholders, including directly affected youth and family members, where they come together in a structured, facilitated process to plan programmatic interventions together.

3. Juvenile Justice Systems should prioritize a strengths-based approach by partnering with grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations that engage youth using the principles of positive youth development.

4. Juvenile Justice Systems should engage youth and families using “credible messengers” through training and employing formerly incarcerated individuals to serve as Youth Mentors, and training and employing parents who have experienced a child’s involvement in the juvenile justice system as Parent Peer Coaches.

5. Juvenile Justice Systems should set aside funding for grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations headquartered in neighborhoods with high rates of juvenile arrests, and identify qualified intermediary organizations capable of managing government contracts and distributing sub-contracts among smaller grassroots groups.

CCFY'S TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

CCFY is a nationally recognized expert on building community capacity for juvenile justice reform and a leading provider of training and technical assistance to facilitate system-community partnership. CCFY's training and technical assistance services include:

Readiness Assessment: Conducting diagnostic assessments for juvenile justice systems to evaluate their readiness for community capacity building;

Strategic Planning: Assisting juvenile justice system stakeholders in designing community engagement strategies and preparing for authentic community partnerships;

Partnership Facilitation: Facilitating system-community partnerships around the development of community-driven alternatives to incarceration.

CCFY also provides training for grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations to help them understand and successfully engage with the juvenile justice system. CCFY provides training and technical assistance for community collaboratives to help grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations design, implement, and evaluate effective community based alternatives to incarceration for youth. Specific program areas include:

Positive Youth Development: Youth-led neighborhood improvement projects;

Credible Messenger Mentoring: Using formerly-incarcerated mentors;

Parent Peer Coaching: Supporting family members of youth in the juvenile justice system using Parent Peer Coaches;

School-Based Restorative Practices: Student support & alternatives to arrest using a Restorative Justice framework.

To learn more about CCFY's Training & Technical Assistance Services, visit our website at: <http://cc-fy.org/training-and-technical-assistance/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SBCC Project and this Companion Guide were made possible by the hard work and unwavering support of many individuals and organizations.

First and foremost, we would like to thank the youth and families who have participated in the SBCC Program. Your outstanding leadership exemplifies CCFY's vision of building community capacity for juvenile justice reform.

Many thanks to the grassroots faith and community partners who served as Sites for the SBCC Project: Bronxworks Betances Community Center, Freedom Community Center, Friends of Brook Park, F.U.S.E.D., Jehovah Shammah, United Playaz of New York, and YUCA Arts. Further thanks to the Site Coordinators at each organization who worked tirelessly to support SBCC's youth: William Acevedo, Cassandra Ayala, Ray Figueroa, Jaime Rivera, Lydia Sierra, and Abdul Malik Talib. This report is presented in memory of Joe Perez, a tireless leader and advocate for the South Bronx.

Thanks also to the leadership and staff of the system partners who supported SBCC's efforts to divert youth from deeper system involvement: the Bronx Family Court Unit of the New York City Law Department; the Bronx Juvenile Operations office of the New York City Department of Probation; the 40th Precinct, 44th Precinct, Police Service Area 7, and the School Safety Division of the New York Police Department; and, the Office of Safety and Youth Development of the New York City Department of Education.

We would like to thank all the staff of CCFY for your deep commitment and hard work during the evaluation process: Caitlin Anderson, Jennifer Cepero, Geoff Davenport, Amelia Frank, Shanita Hubbard, and Joyce Placencia. Additional thanks to interns, Amanda Acevedo, Melissa Eng-Wong, Nicolas Montano, Rundayah Williams, and Catherine Wright for your flexibility and expertise. A very special thanks to Rubén Austria, Jeannette Bocanegra, Nanay Gonzalez, Douglas Knepper, and Rosanne Placencia — your tireless efforts during the early planning and implementation of the project got SBCC (and CCFY) off the ground.

The evaluation team from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice provided tremendous guidance during the planning phase of the project, and rigorous analysis during implementation and evaluation. Thanks to Richard Curtis, Anthony Marcus, and especially Nancy Jacobs. Thanks to Maxarth, LLC, for conducting the statistical analysis. Thanks to the Vera Institute of Justice and the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice - especially Michele Svirdof - for helping to obtain comparison group data.

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Special thanks to the co-sponsors of the SBCC Report Release event: The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice; National Youth Justice Awareness Month and the Campaign for Youth Justice; The W. Haywood Burns Institute for Juvenile Justice Fairness and Equity; Nyack College; the New York Juvenile Justice Initiative; the Prospect Hill Foundation; Youth Today; NY CityServe; the Community Justice Network for Youth; and the Stephen & May Cavin Leeman Foundation.

WHY THIS REPORT MATTERS

"I applaud the South Bronx Community Connections project which shows that a collaborative, strengths-based approach can successfully divert young people from further involvement in the justice system, and help them thrive. As Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services, I am so grateful to CCFY's work in pursuit of thoughtful, creative and, most importantly, effective alternatives to incarceration. The work and findings presented in this report will be of great use as we continue our work to reform New York City's juvenile justice system."

—Gladys Carrión, Esq., Commissioner, Administration for Children's Services, New York, NY

"The biggest predictor of whether juvenile justice systems can make headway in reducing persistent racial and ethnic disparities is the extent to which they meaningfully engage directly affected communities. CCFY's work demonstrates not only that communities of color are willing and able to engage system stakeholders, but that they often do a better job at preventing recidivism than the juvenile justice system itself.

—James Bell, Esq., Founder & Executive Director, W. Haywood Burns Institute, Oakland, CA

"The juvenile justice system's biggest sin is that it isolates young people from the supportive relationships most crucial to their development at a critical juncture in their lives. CCFY's work demonstrates why keeping young people involved in a supportive (and supported) network of family members, neighborhood mentors and positive, community-minded peers is far preferable to locking them up."

—Nell Bernstein, Author, *Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison*, Albany, CA

"The fight for young men and women of color requires that faith and neighborhood organizations in every community redouble their efforts to engage and mentor youth. The South Bronx Community Connections project demonstrates an effective blueprint for this type of work."

—Joshua DuBois, Co-founder and President, Values Partnerships,
Former Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-based & Neighborhood Partnerships

"The evaluation of Community Connections for Youth's program demonstrates unequivocally that communities, neighborhoods, and families are the solution to helping our youth grow and thrive. Policymakers need to act on this research by divesting from youth incarceration and instead, investing in community-based approaches such as CCFY."

—Liz Ryan, President & CEO at Youth First! Initiative

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS FOR YOUTH

369 E. 149th Street, 7th Floor
Bronx, NY 10455

T: 347-590-0940

F: 347-438-3125

info@cc-fy.org

www.cc-fy.org