

BHC YOUTH PROGRAM INVENTORY SURVEY

KEY FINDINGS



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Initiated in 2010 by The California Endowment (TCE), the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative has sought to increase access to resources that promote health and well-being in 14 low-income communities across the state. A key component of this 10-year initiative has been to support youth leadership and youth organizing efforts so that young people can play a role in advancing community health. In line with this objective, TCE has funded organizations that take a broad range of approaches to engaging youth in the goals of the BHC initiative.

This report inventories youth programming at the BHC initiative's five-year midpoint. Drawing on web-survey data collected from the staff of 132 youth-serving organizations across the state, this report describes the characteristics of youth organizations and their participants. It also lists key community issues that youth organizations are seeking to address and describes youths' roles in grassroots efforts. Overall, this report illustrates the breadth of the BHC youth programming and takes stock of the initiative's investments in developing the capacity of young people to care for their own well-being and that of their communities. The findings presented here build on earlier evidence that demonstrated how BHC-affiliated youth programs have contributed to the healthy development of participants, fostered a collective commitment to community well-being, and produced tangible campaign victories that seek to reduce health-related disparities.¹

Table 1 | Youth Programs

BHC Site	Number
Boyle Heights	16
Santa Ana	5
City Heights	10
Coachella Valley	13
Del Norte	6
East Oakland	11
East Salinas	6
Fresno	12
Long Beach	12
Merced	15
Richmond	12
Sacramento	11
South Kern	11
South LA	11
Total number	151

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR PARTICIPANTS

The number of BHC-affiliated youth-serving organizations has grown since the initiative's inception. This report draws on data from 132 separate organizations that run a total of 151 programs operating within the 14 BHC sites (See Table 1).² The number of organizations represented in this report is much higher than the 68 TCE-funded youth organizations that participated in a similar 2013 BHC youth program inventory.

The breadth and depth of programming varies widely across these BHC organizations. While a

tenth of organizations concentrate their efforts on an average of 1 – 10 youth each month, just over a fifth report reaching over 200. Figure 1 shows the average number of youth participants who are involved in organizations' activities on a monthly basis.

BHC organizations primarily involve high school-aged adolescent youth, but many also involve young adults. As Figure 2 shows, 67% of organizations engage both age groups, and 30% work exclusively with adolescents. It is worth noting that 36% of organizations started working with adolescents since the inception of the BHC initiative in 2010. Moreover, at two BHC sites that have historically lacked the infrastructure—Salinas and Del Norte/ Adjacent Tribal Lands—over half of BHC-affiliated programs targeting adolescents have emerged since 2010. As such, TCE has made investments in a number of organizations fairly new to working with adolescents.

To address the acute health and educational crises facing young men of color, TCE has also devoted additional resources to ensuring that young men are being served through the BHC initiative. In line with this investment, over half of organizations—58%—claim that young men are the majority of participants. Meanwhile, 20% report serving mostly young women, and 22% percent report a gender balance (see Figure 3). While men may be well represented in the general programming of the BHC initiative, it is likely that young women comprise much of the leadership of these organizations. Our earlier 2014 survey indicated that 54% of regular youth program participants were young women.

Figure 1 | Monthly Average Number of Youth Participants



Figure 2 | Age Groups Involved

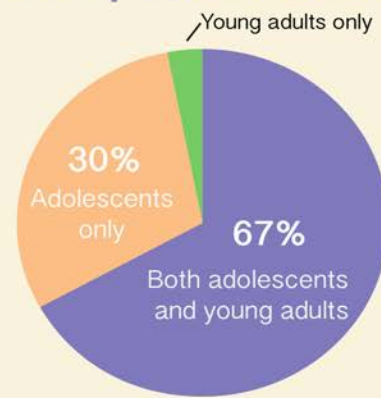
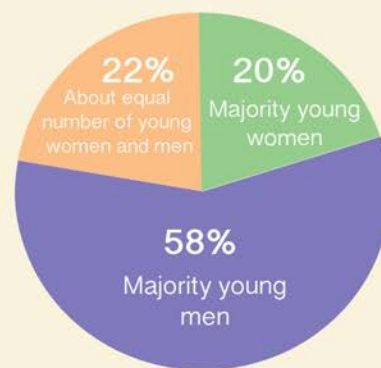


Figure 3 | Gender Composition



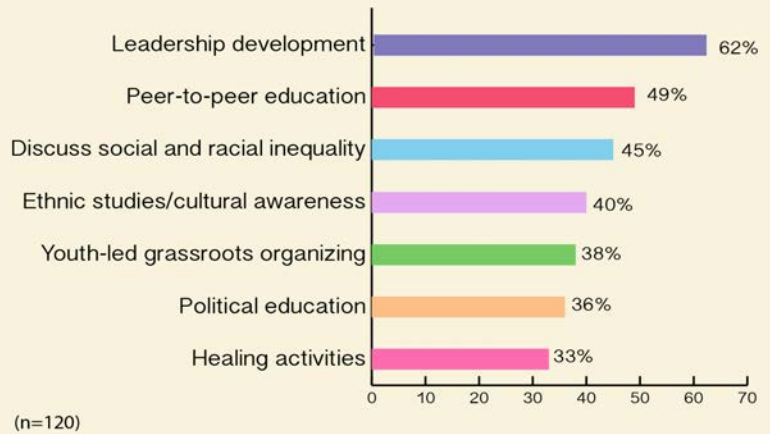
(N=132)

WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES DO BHC YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS OFFER?

Out of the 132 organizations that participated in this survey, 120 reported regularly involving a core group of youth leaders. This subsample of organizations were asked about the types and frequency of programming offered to their young leaders. While these 120 organizations vary widely in their foci, most (62%) offer their regular participants some type of leadership development at least once a week. As shown in Figure 4, other common weekly activities include peer-to-peer education (49%), discussions of social and racial inequalities

(45%), and ethnic studies and cultural awareness (40%). Because many organizations engage their regular participants in campaigns to promote well-being, many also involve their members in grassroots organizing efforts (38%) and in some sort of political education (36%) on a weekly basis. A third of organizations report involving their members in activities that can help members heal from trauma and emotional hardships. Activities that seek to enhance emotional well-being include healing circles, meditation, mindfulness activities, and culturally-informed spiritual rituals.

Figure 4 | Common Weekly Activities



PROMOTING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Table 2 | Common Campaign Issues

School climate/ school discipline		35%
Violence prevention, safety and anti-bullying		32%
Improving relations between the police and the community		26%
Improve access to recreational facilities or green space		24%
Food access/ food justice		20%

Many BHC-affiliated organizations involve their youth participants in campaigns and other collective efforts to improve community well-being, broadly defined. As shown in Table 2, the most common issues—addressed by 35% of groups—are concerns around school climate or school discipline. For example, a number of groups across the state have fought for and won commitments from school districts to change school disciplinary policies with the goals of reducing punitive approaches (such as suspension and expulsion) and increasing the use of restorative justice to address conflict and be-

havioral issues. At the same time, a significant proportion of organizations—32%—have also sought to prevent violence, improve safety, and/or reduce bullying in schools or in the community. Meanwhile, another 26% report involvement in some kind of effort to improve relations between the police and the community. A similar percentage are working to improve access to recreational facilities or green space, while a fifth of organizations are addressing food access or food justice issues.

Youth have played an active role in these campaign efforts, as suggested in Figure 5 on the next page. Nearly a quarter of organizations— 74% —indicate that youth members attend meetings with other stakeholder groups. A similar percentage also report that youth have been involved in identifying the change that needs to occur. Meanwhile, in 66% of organizations, youth members are responsible for recruiting others to become involved, and in 64% of organizations, young people are participating

in meetings with public officials. Some groups devote significant time to the arts, social media training, and journalism. Accordingly, 60% of groups report producing media or art to raise awareness of local campaign efforts. Young people are also involved in researching campaign issues or policy options, and also play a role in planning their organization's advocacy strategy. It is worth noting that youth leadership in campaign efforts is bolstered by TCE-supported statewide retreats, trainings, and events. More than half of organizations, 58%, report some kind of involvement in statewide youth development activities (results not shown).

Figure 5 | Youths' Roles in Campaign Efforts



DEVELOPING YOUTHS' LASTING COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY HEALTH

TCE's expanded investments in youth leadership and youth organizing over the past five years have increased the number of youth the BHC Initiative reaches. As earlier findings from this evaluation have shown, this investment has the potential to develop young people's capacities to care for their own well-being and advance policy changes that address health disparities in their communities.³ The next phases of this BHC youth program evaluation will seek to measure how and to what extent organizational involvement is promoting the healthy development of participants both in the short term and in more lasting ways. Additionally, as part of ongoing research to document TCE's efforts to support a youth movement for health justice, this evaluation will continue to take inventory of youth-led campaigns to promote community health and well-being.

¹ Terriquez, Veronica and Gabriela Dominguez. 2014. *Building Healthy Communities Through Youth Leadership*. Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Available at: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/per/BHC-youth-leadership/>; Bloemraad, Irene and Veronica Terriquez. 2016. "The Organizational Foundations of Advancing Health in Immigrant and Low-Income Communities of Color." *Social Science and Medicine*. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.02.003>

² A total of eight organizations surveyed operate programs in multiple BHC sites.

³ Terriquez and Dominguez, 2014; Bloemraad and Terriquez, 2016.