



# CHILDREN & YOUTH COMMUNITY PLAN (CYCP) REPORT CARD



ALEXANDRIA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS ENSURING EVERY CHILD  
SUCCEEDS TODAY AND TOMORROW

## VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

This issue reports the progress made on preventing youth violence between April 2021 - December 2024

## CYCP GOAL

All Children, Youth, and Families  
are Physically Safe & Healthy

## ALEXANDRIA SPOTLIGHT



This issue celebrates the **Alexandria Youth Ambassadors (AYA)**, **Carolyn Renee Miller, Micah King, Natalia Grace Holbeck, Phoebe Booker, Mikaela Tregaskis Gordon, Kamoore Marshall, Mohammad Elyas Noorzai, Jewel Harris, Madeline Barrientos Recinos, Mohammad Elyas Noorzai, Olivia Basingthwaite, and Aliana Harris!**

The AYA program is a year-round educational employment program where Alexandria high school students support the City's community engagement efforts. The program is part of the **City's Youth Safety and Resilience Initiative**, and the goal of the program is to enhance youth safety and resilience, addressing the root causes of violence while fostering a supportive environment for Alexandria's youth. These youth leaders are encouraged to use their lived experiences to impact change in their community. The AYA meet 6 to 8 hours each week.

AYA program's first cohort of ten youth were hired in June 2023. Together, they planned and facilitated a Youth and Caring Adult Summit which was attended by over 60 youth and adults in October that same year. The Summit focused on: anti-violence, trauma healing, and social emotional learning. The information gathered there was then used by the AYAs to advocate for their peers at a City Council meeting in January 2024.

The AYA's developed and delivered recommendations for increasing youth safety and resilience to Council that included strategies for improving communication with youth so they are more aware of the programs and resources available to them, creating a Teen Center that would serve as a safe and supportive environment for youth to gather, engage in activities, and access resources, tailoring transportation services to better meet the needs of youth, and providing a diverse array of programming that would cater to the varied interests and needs of the youth in their community.

The City Council approved the Youth Ambassadors' recommendations, with a strong emphasis on improving communication about community resources and programs. This approval marked a significant milestone for the program, validating the hard work and dedication of the Youth Ambassadors and setting the stage for future initiatives.

Following the City Council's approval, the Youth Ambassadors, which has since grown to a group of 12 youth, spent the next several months brainstorming and developing a proposal for an innovative event communication app specifically designed for local teens. This app aims to promote and advertise local community events, job opportunities, and volunteer opportunities for teens, while also encouraging social engagement.

## RESULT

All young people live healthy lives and violence-free

## WHY THIS MATTERS

"Slow community violence," also known as Adverse Community Environments, such as living in impoverished neighborhoods, experiencing food insecurity or housing instability, experiencing discrimination, lack of opportunities and economic mobility, limited access to support and medical services, community disruption due to natural disaster or global pandemic, and other forms of adverse community environments, can result in kids experiencing toxic stress, or stress that is prolonged and repeated. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention (2020), "toxic stress can negatively change the brain development of children and youth."

Slow community violence can also create the conditions for ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), which in turn increases the likelihood for poor behavioral health outcomes or "fast violence" - fighting, bullying, assault, threats with weapons, gang-related violence, homicides, as well as smoking, high-risk sexual behavior, depression, academic difficulties, school dropout, and suicide. While youth violence affects thousands of young people each day, it disproportionately impacts communities of color due to systemic health and social inequities.

It is important for prevention efforts to consider these root causes that limit opportunities for all youth to grow up in healthy, violence-free environments. To prevent youth violence, we must address slow community violence and prevent youth from exposure to toxic stress.

We can all help to ensure that Alexandria is a safe and caring place for youth to live, learn, work, play, and grow. Preventing youth violence requires multiple, complementary strategies, including (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2021):

- promoting family environments that support healthy development;
- providing quality education early in life;
- strengthening youth's skills;
- connecting youth to caring adults and activities;
- creating protective community environments; and
- intervening to lessen harms and prevent future risk.

Youth violence is preventable. Studies have consistently shown that young people who experience more of the Developmental Assets® engage in fewer risk-taking behaviors and are more likely to thrive indicators (The Search Institute, 2021). In other words, the more assets a young person has, the more likely they will make healthy choices.

### ADVERSE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTS



Lack of Opportunity,  
Economic Mobility, &  
Social Capital



Poor Housing Quality  
& Affordability



Neighborhood  
Violence



Poverty



Discrimination



Community Disruption

Create the conditions for...

### ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

#### ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

#### NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

#### HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING



Mental Health  
Problems



Incarcerated  
Relative



Intimate Partner  
Violence



Substance  
Misuse



Divorce/Parental  
Separation

which increase the likelihood for...

### POOR BEHAVIOR OUTCOMES



Binge Drinking



Fighting



Smoking



Alcoholism



Drug Use



Lack of Physical  
Activity



Eating Disorder



Getting into  
Trouble with the  
Police



Risky Sexual  
Behaviors



Missed  
School/Work

### POOR PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES



Severe Obesity



Diabetes



Depression



Suicide attempts



STDs



Heart Disease



Cancer



Stroke



COPD



Broken Bones

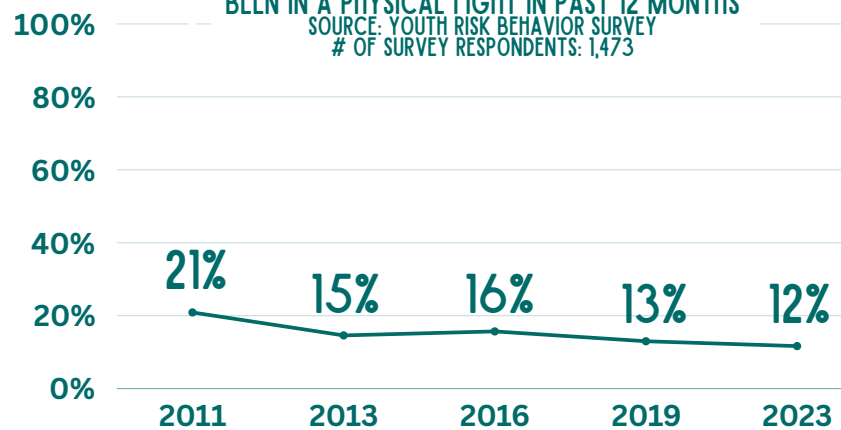
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## HOW ARE WE DOING? THE MOST CURRENT DATA AVAILABLE TELL US THAT:

### YOUTH VIOLENCE

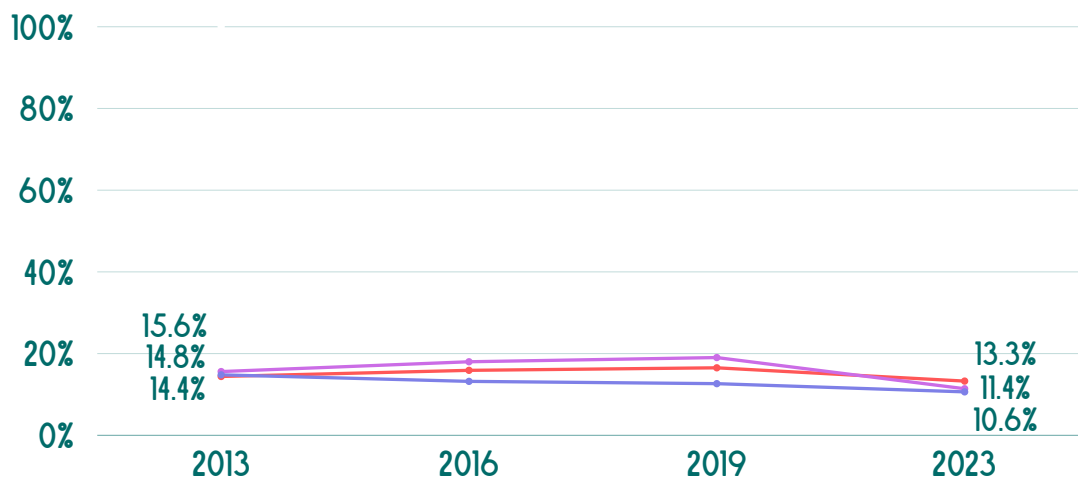
BEEN IN A PHYSICAL FIGHT IN PAST 12 MONTHS  
SOURCE: YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY  
# OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS: 1,473

**Trend:** The percentage of youth who reported being in a physical fight in the past year has decreased by **55%** since 2011.



### YOUTH VIOLENCE BY RACE/ETHNICITY

HISPANIC BLACK WHITE



DISPARITY RATIO: 1.25

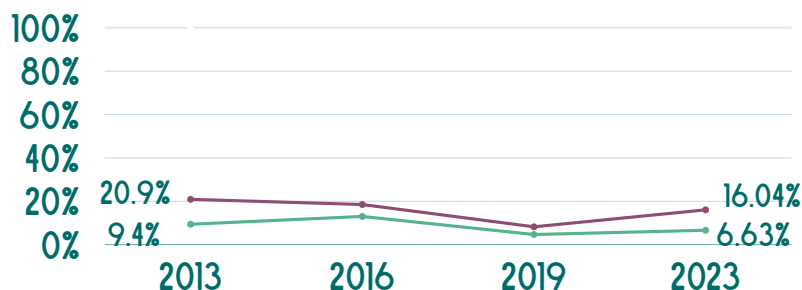
CHANGE FROM BASELINE: WORSENER

RANK: 24

**Trend:** When looking at disaggregated data, we see racial and social disparities. Compared to White youth, Hispanic youth are 1.25 times more likely to be in a physical fight. This gap has increased in the last decade. Youth violence disproportionately impacts communities of color due to systemic health and social inequities.

### YOUTH VIOLENCE BY GENDER

FEMALE MALE



DISPARITY RATIO: 1.89  
CHANGE FROM BASELINE: IMPROVED  
RANK: 10

**Trend:** Male youth are currently 1.89 times more likely to be in a physical fight than female youth. This gap has gotten smaller since 2013.

## STRATEGY

**Strategy #14.**  
Support healthy youth development in communities and groups that are disproportionately affected by youth court involvement and gang/violence

## IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

**Progress with preventing youth violence and court-involvement:**

1 Strategy, 6 Action Steps,  
**100%**  
are in progress or fully implemented



## CHAMPION

**Alexandria Court Service Unit (CSU)**

## PARTNERS

- Gang Intervention/Prevention Unit
- Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
- Transitions
- Alexandria Sheriff's Office
- DCHS - Youth Development Team

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE SINCE 2021?

**The Court Service Unit (CSU) has fully implemented initiatives that:**



Help court-involved youth develop skills to prevent violence, solve conflicts peacefully, and engage in healthy behaviors



Provide case management, counseling, restorative services, education, and evidence-based services that help youth build anger management and life skills



Provide systems-involved youth with therapeutic services that are designed to help them process traumatic events, manage trauma-related distress, and develop effective coping strategies and skills

**And is in the process of:**



Identifying youth at-risk of gang involvement and connect them with quality mentors and programs that foster social interaction and strengthen social connectedness



Developing gang prevention, intervention, and education programs within the region to lessen harms of violence exposure and prevent further involvement in violence

**and the Department of Community and Human Services is in the process of:**



Supporting families by creating and strengthening programs that improve household financial security, increase access to high quality childcare and education, and implement trauma-informed services



Increasing efforts to promote youth safety and resilience

## HOW MUCH HAVE WE DONE SINCE 2021?

### SKILL BUILDING



#### 5 YOUTH ON PROBATION

participated in the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program, where they engaged in intensive life skills training (7 hours per week) and group sessions (1 hour per week) for 15 consecutive weeks

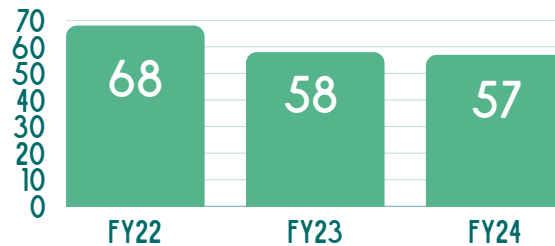
Source: CSU

### PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, & EDUCATION



#### # OF YOUTH ENGAGED IN THE GANG INTERVENTION, PREVENTION AND EDUCATION (IPE) PROGRAM

Source: CSU

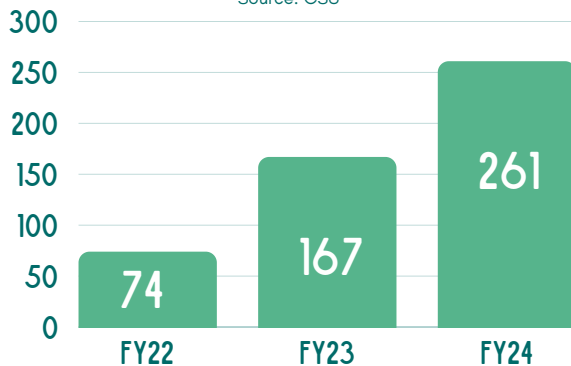


### THERAPEUTIC SERVICES



#### # OF YOUTH AND FAMILIES PROVIDED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BY THE CSU TREATMENT TEAM

Source: CSU



### CONNECTING YOUTH TO MENTORS & PROGRAMS



Source: Alexandria Mentoring Partnership (AMP)

#### 70 RECRUITMENT EVENTS

took place between 2023-2024

#### 10 DIVERSE COURSES

are offered at Mentor University

#### 67 STUDENTS

have been enrolled at Alexandria's Mentor University - a free college for caring adults

#### 13 MENTORING PROGRAMS

and soon 1 more have aligned around five AMP Priorities

### PROMOTING YOUTH SAFETY & RESILIENCE



#### 350+ RESOURCES

were compiled and included in a "Resource Directory for Youth and Young Adults"

#### 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

were delivered in a report on supporting Alexandria's youth and promoting their safety and resiliency

#### 12 YOUTH AMBASSADORS

were hired to support the City's efforts to engage the community in youth safety & resilience

#### 4 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

were delivered to City Council by the Youth Ambassadors on ways to enhance services that meet the needs of youth



Source: DCHS - Youth Development Team

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

### PROVIDE SUPPORTS & SERVICES TO COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH

Source: Court Service Unit (CSU)

**1** PROBATION OFFICER • **26** CASES



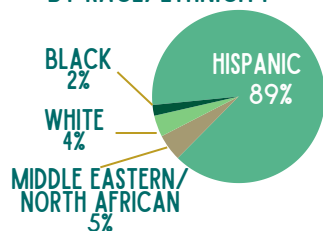
**16 YOUTH**  
IPE AVERAGE  
WAITLIST OVER  
LAST YEAR

YOUTH VISITED A  
MINIMUM OF  
**ONCE A  
MONTH**  
FOR LOWER RISK CASES

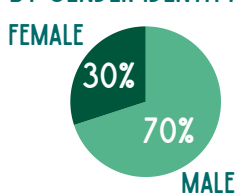
YOUTH VISITED A  
MAXIMUM OF  
**ONCE A  
WEEK**  
FOR HIGHER RISK CASES

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF IPE YOUTH

#### BY RACE/ETHNICITY



#### BY GENDER IDENTITY



Source: Court Service Unit

**100% OF CSU STAFF**  
ARE TRAINED IN EFFECTIVE CASE  
MANAGEMENT, MOTIVATIONAL  
INTERVIEWING, AND EVIDENCE  
BASED PRACTICES

**1 OUT OF 5 CSU  
PROBATION  
OFFICERS ARE  
BILINGUAL**

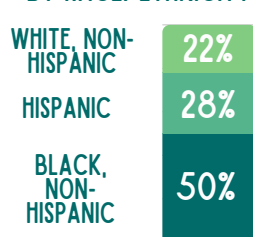


### PROMOTING YOUTH SAFETY & RESILIENCE

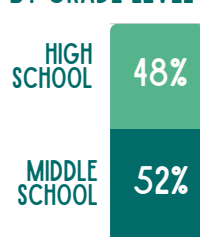
Source: DCHS - Youth  
Development Team

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

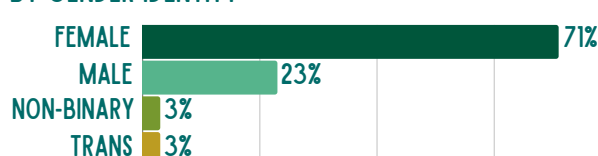
#### BY RACE/ETHNICITY



#### BY GRADE LEVEL



#### BY GENDER IDENTITY



## IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

### PROVIDE SUPPORTS & SERVICES TO COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH



**75% OF YOUTH  
RELEASED FROM  
PROBATION**

did not reenter the  
juvenile justice system

Source: CSU

### SKILL BUILDING

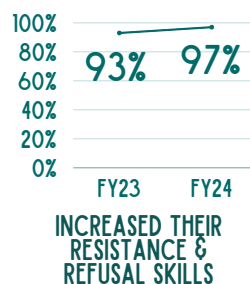


Source: CSU

**3 OUT OF 5 YOUTH**

participating in the GREAT  
cohort graduated from the  
pilot program

### AMONG THE GANG IPE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



### CONNECTING YOUTH TO MENTORS & PROGRAMS



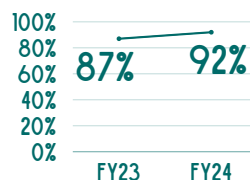
Source: AMP

**1,392 MENTORING  
RELATIONSHIPS**  
formed



### PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, & EDUCATION (IPE)

#### AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS



DEMONSTRATED A REDUCTION  
OR ELIMINATION OF GANG  
PARTICIPATION AS A RESULT  
OF BEING IN IPE



OF THOSE WHO WERE AT-RISK,  
BUT NOT YET INVOLVED,  
REMAINED NON-GANG  
INVOLVED WHILE IN IPE



PARTICIPANTS IMPROVED  
THEIR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE



IMPROVED FAMILY  
RELATIONSHIPS AND/OR  
FAMILY FUNCTIONING

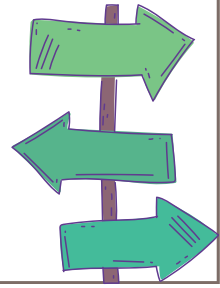
Source: CSU



## WHERE WE ARE HEADED

### Over the course of 2025, we will:

- Strive for the 2025 Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) cohort to have nine youth start and complete the program successfully.
- Continue to work with App developers to create a communication app specifically designed for Alexandria teens. This app aims to promote and advertise local community events, job opportunities, and volunteer opportunities for teens, while also encouraging social engagement.



## RESOURCES

### EVERYONE CAN HELP SUPPORT TEENS AND PREVENT VIOLENCE

#### PARENTS AND FAMILIES CAN:

- [Learn](#) about links between teens' experiences with violence and their health.
- Talk with teens about violence and ask how you can support them.
- Reach out to [local programs](#) to learn effective parenting practices.

#### CITY STAFF AND CARING ADULTS CAN:

- [Become a mentor.](#)
- Build supportive relationships with youth. Attend or request a [free training](#).
- [Use the Youth Resource Directory](#) to connect youth to programs that teach youth skills in navigating social and emotional challenges.

#### CITY OF ALEXANDRIA AND ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAN:

- Work together to create safe and supportive environments for youth outside of school hours.
- Connect students to health and mental health services.
- Highlight, develop, expand, and support programs designed to [build assets](#), such as one-on-one mentoring, peer helping, service learning, and parent education.
- Develop employee policies that encourage asset building in youth.
- Directly engage with youth and empower them to be part of the solution.

#### BASED ON THE FEEDBACK THAT WAS COLLECTED FROM THE YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE PROVIDED FOR FUTURE ACTION:

- Offer creative, inclusive, and flexible youth programs that foster social connection and a sense of belonging and promote their behavioral health.
- Promote youth safety and resilience by supporting the city-wide adoption of the developmental assets framework, establishing strong support systems at school, and co-creating solutions with youth.
- Use a variety of methods and partnerships to creatively engage young people and ensure that they are aware of the [resources and programs available to them](#).
- Build effective Youth-Adult Partnerships by providing adults with ongoing trainings and technical assistance to promote positive youth development, and by providing youth with a strong foundation and opportunities to participate in decision and policy making with adults.
- When asking youth for their input and feedback, adults must listen to them, take their ideas seriously, and hold themselves accountable.