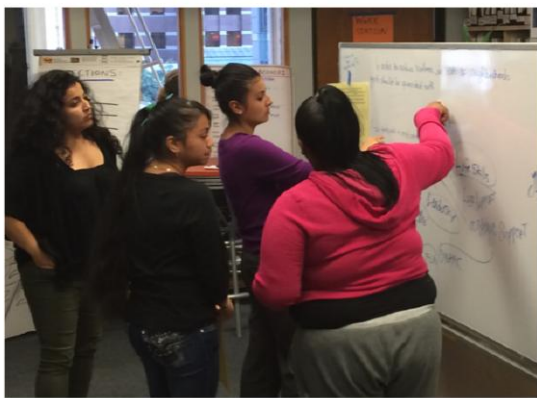


The Health and Well-Being of Youth Living in HOPE SF Communities



*A Community Based Participatory Assessment
Elevating the Voices of Youth
in HOPE SF Communities*

July 2014

PREPARED BY

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Leadership at each of the HOPE SF sites –Kathy Perry and Karina Hall (Huntersview); David Fernandez, Larry Jones and Emily Claassen (Sunnydale); Isaac Dozier and Victoria Vandercourt (Alice Griffith); and, Emily Weinstein and Uzuri Pease-Greene (Potrero) provided essential feedback about getting the input of HOPE SF community members and guided this work by sharing their own experiences and thoughts about the health and well-being of children and youth at their sites.

Advisors provided input and advice about many essential aspects of the assessment. In particular, Tomiquia Moss, Helen Hale, Maria X. Martinez, Ken Epstein, Anne Griffith, Ellie Rossiter, Laura Moye, Bryant Tan and Prishni Murillo provided guidance that ensured the relevance and focus of the assessment. In addition, support and guidance from Mary Beth Love, Sally Geiss and Cynthia Gomez at San Francisco State University was also essential to the success of this work.

Community organizations in each of the HOPE SF communities also played an instrumental role in the data collection process and provided support in elevating youth and adult resident voices including the Samoan Community Development Center, TURF, Hunters Point Family; Peacekeepers, Potrero Hill Neighborhood House and the Bayview YMCA. We so appreciate their work to make this assessment a success.

Finally, our deepest gratitude and respect for the people we had the honor to interview and meet with in the focus groups – adult and youth community members, program staff and key stakeholders - who spent their time and provided the knowledge, opinions and experiences that inform the findings and recommendations. Thank you so much.

ASSESSMENT PARTNERS



HOPE SF Mayor's Office SF, Enterprise Community Partners & The San Francisco Foundation

HOPE SF is the nation's first large-scale public housing revitalization project to invest in high-quality, sustainable housing and broad scale community development *without* displacing current residents. There are four active HOPE SF sites – **Alice Griffith, Huntersview, Potrero Terrace & Annex and Sunnydale**. HOPE SF is led by the San Francisco Mayor's Office with dozens of public and private sector partners including The San Francisco Foundation and Enterprise Community Partners.



San Francisco State University Health Equity Institute & Department of Health Education

The Health Equity Institute (HEI) is a trans-disciplinary research institute at SF State University that links science to community practice in the pursuit of health equity and justice. HEI is conducts original research and partners with communities to understand and address critical health equity issues. The Department of Health Education currently offers a BS degree in health education with emphases in community-based health, holistic health, and school health. At the graduate level, the Department offers a Master's of Public Health (MPH) degree in community health education.

Youth Leadership Institute

The Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) has been a leader in the field of youth development for over 20 years, working to build communities that invest in youth. YLI serves youth and communities through training, consulting services and community-based programs. Through decades of youth leadership development, YLI provides ways for youth to channel their passion into effective community change.



SF Department of Children Youth & Their Families

The mission of the Department of Children, Youth & Their Families (DCYF)



is to ensure that families with children are a prominent and valued segment of San Francisco's social fabric by supporting programs and activities in every San

Francisco neighborhood. DCYF takes a multi-faceted approach to accomplishing its mission, which includes strategic funding, program partnerships, policy innovation, and informing and engaging the public.



SF Department of Public Health

The mission of the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) is to protect and promote the health of all San Franciscans. SFDPH realizes its mission through the provision and funding of medical services, Community Health Programs and through the oversight and implementation of Population Health and Prevention activities and programs.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this assessment was to develop a deeper understanding of the opportunities and barriers to supporting the health and well-being of young people living in the HOPE SF communities. Of particular focus were youth age 12-24 who live in the four HOPE SF sites of Alice Griffith, Huntersview, Potrero Terrace and Annex and Sunnydale. This assessment employed a Community Based Participatory Research approach and included young people from HOPE SF communities in all stages of its development and implementation. Nine young people were hired by the Youth Leadership Institute, with support from the San Francisco Foundation, Department of Children, Youth & Their Families and the San Francisco Department of Public Health. In addition, this assessment was a practice-based learning experience for 20 Master of Public Health students from San Francisco State University. Together, the young people and graduate students talked with 180 adult and youth residents, program staff and key informants. Through interviews and focus groups, the assessment team gathered experiences and perspectives that inform findings and recommendations put forward in this report. Findings and recommendations focus on the following themes:

- Violence & Law Enforcement,
- Mental Health & Substance Use,
- Environment,
- Supports, Programs & Staff,
- Workforce & Education,
- Youth Leadership, and
- Policy & Funding.

This assessment was designed to bring forward the perspectives of those who have the greatest stake in issues that affect youth age 12-24 living in public housing – young people themselves; the adults in their lives; and, the program staff, educators and others who connect with them on a daily basis. It is our hope that what they have to say will be prioritized and will motivate action to strengthen the supports for young people living in HOPE SF communities.

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BACKGROUND

In November 2011, HOPE SF, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and San Francisco State University's Department of Health Education and Health Equity Institute came together in a partnership to further the development of strategies to address health issues facing HOPE SF communities.

From its inception, this partnership has been guided by recommendations developed by the HOPE SF Health Taskforce and has a focus on gathering additional information and best-practice examples for effective implementation of the Taskforce's recommendations. The collaboration builds on the many community efforts already underway to improve the health of San Francisco communities, including HOPE SF sites, as well as the significant research endeavors that have already and continue to take place with HOPE SF communities.

Current HOPE SF Communities

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Alice Griffith | Potrero Terrace and Annex |
| Huntersview | Sunnydale |

Goals

The partnership's work seeks to illuminate how the City of San Francisco, private partners and other stakeholders can best support the development and implementation of health strategies at all of the HOPE SF sites in a manner that honors the uniqueness of each community and recognizes commonalities to ensure a coordinated and thoughtful approach.

Commitment to Health Equity & Meeting Immediate Urgent Health Needs

This partnership and the related projects stem from a commitment to health equity and the urgent need to address the health issues facing the HOPE SF communities today. Actions at all levels – the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels – are needed to address health inequities in the HOPE SF communities. This work seeks to balance a commitment to both long term changes in social determinants and the more immediate individual, interpersonal and community changes that have an impact on health.

Collaborative Projects

1. Peer Health Leadership

Assessment (completed): In 2012, the partnership conducted an assessment of the opportunities and barriers to supporting peer health leadership strategies in HOPE SF communities. The project examined what is needed to leverage resources within the community and foster health promoting activities led by residents themselves that draw from their strengths and interests while fostering social connections and community leadership. The assessment included a comprehensive review of the literature and 50 interviews with community residents, program staff, stakeholders and national experts.

Implementation of Peer Health Leadership Programs (underway): The assessment led to a funding strategy through private partners and the San Francisco Foundation, that supported the development of peer health leadership activities at all of the HOPE SF sites. A peer health leadership program has now been implemented at each HOPE SF site and funding has been secured for the next three years. Today, 17 residents are working as peer leaders at the HOPE SF sites. The Department of Public Health has committed staff to support these programs. An evaluation of the impact of the program on the residents serving as peer leaders was completed in May 2014. Further program evaluation will continue to inform ongoing program development and describe impact.

2. Children and Families Affected by Mental Health Issues

Assessment (completed): In January 2013, the partnership launched an effort to examine and address the critical issue of mental health of children and their families in HOPE SF communities. The assessment included a comprehensive review of the literature and over 80 interviews with community residents, program staff, stakeholders.

Strategies to Address the Mental Health of HOPE SF Families (underway): Building on this assessment and other work that has been done to examine mental health in these communities, HOPE SF is moving forward a strategy to strengthen the current investment in strategies to address this pressing health issue. Activities currently underway include a pilot of the SFDPH Sunnyside Wellness Center which brings both an RN and mental health services on-site to community residents. Evaluation of its impact is underway to determine viability as an option for all HOPE SF sites. In addition, all HOPE SF sites have received Trauma Informed Services training and support through the Center for Youth Wellness to strengthen trauma informed practices in all of their work.

3. Youth (age 12-24) Health and Wellness

Assessment (completed): In January 2014, the partnership launched this effort to examine and address the health and wellness issues for youth age 12-24 living in HOPE SF communities. The assessment included a comprehensive review of the literature and 180 interviews with community residents, program staff, and stakeholders.

Strategies to support the health and wellness of HOPE SF youth (age 12-24) (underway): HOPE SF is building on this assessment and other work that has been done to examine youth health and wellness in these communities by moving forward a strategy to strengthen the investment in youth programming and strategies. The findings and recommendations from this assessment will be incorporated into the Department of Children Youth and Families community needs assessment that forms the basis of the Children Fund Allocation Plan.

Key Partnership Components

Resident and Community Engagement

Residents and community representatives of HOPE SF sites play a critical role in partnership activities. Resident leaders and site based HOPE SF staff and community organizations provide guidance for assessment activities (including development of data collection tools, outreach, and data collection), and participate in the design and lead implementation of new service and community-building strategies. In the Youth Health and Wellness Assessment resident engagement was even more intensive. Embracing a Community Based Participatory Research approach, the assessment involved youth from all HOPE SF sites in the design and implementation of data collection, analysis and presentation.

MPH Students Practice Based Learning

A key aspect of these projects is that they are designed to result in meaningful products for the community and City partners as well as serve as a practice-based learning opportunity for San Francisco State University (SFSU) MPH Students. Students and faculty conduct the assessment activities as part of the Community Assessment for Change and Professional Public Health practice courses in the SFSU MPH program, which take place over a 7 month period.

YOUTH HEALTH AND WELLNESS ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

This assessment, a unique collaboration between SFSU, HOPE SF, and the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI), took place over the course of the 7 month period, January through July 2014. As a Community Based Participatory Research project, this assessment actively engaged young people from all four HOPE SF communities in the design, implementation, analysis and presentation phases of this work. In addition, this assessment was a practice based learning opportunity for Master of Public Health students at SFSU. The project and partnership was guided and managed by Jessica Wolin, MPH, MCRP and Sarah Wongking, MPH, faculty at SFSU and Patricia Barahona, M.Ed and Erika Cespedes, staff of YLI.

Youth Leaders and YLI

Nine Youth Assessment Leaders were hired to participate in all phases of this assessment. The Youth Leadership Institute (YLI), a community based organization, paid each youth \$13 an hour to work approximately 4 hours a week and provided ongoing training and support for these youth. YLI staff, SFSU faculty and community site leaders worked together closely to recruit and hire the 9 Youth Assessment Leaders who represented all 4 HOPE SF sites. Youth trainings led by YLI staff included Youth-led Action Research, structural barriers to health and other topics. The following youth served as the Youth Assessment Leaders for this project,

| Youth Assessment Leaders | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Potrero Terrace & Annex | Huntersview | Alice Griffith | Sunnydale |
| Shatonya Amerson | Alize Hackett | Sene Malepeai | Amonae Murphy |
| Briana Guerrero | Anteris Hicks | Maxine Robinson | Koreena Ortiz |
| Lamecka Phipps | | | |

MPH Students

SF State MPH students conducted this assessment as part of their work in the Health Education class Community Assessment for Change and the related practicum. San Francisco State faculty provided ongoing guidance and support throughout the assessment process. The following students conducted this assessment,

| MPH Students | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Angelica Cardenas | Devayani Kunjir | Maritza Pulido | David Stuppelbeen |
| Nancy Carmona | Heidi Lucas | Eloycsia Ratliff | Lana Tilley |
| Corey Drew | Gina Malan | Malia Schlaefer | Sahana Vasanth |
| Monique Hosein | Carlos Martinez | Christopher Schouest | Jasmine Vassar |
| Cameron Kephart | Amy Preut | Sophia Simon-Ortiz | Filmer Yu |

Site Leadership

Site leadership of the 4 participating HOPE SF sites played a critical role in the assessment and collaborative tasks. Resident leaders and site-based HOPE SF staff and community organizations provided guidance for many of the assessment activities including the recruitment of youth leaders, development of the purpose, key questions, protocol and interview recruitment.

| Name | Organization |
|----------------------|--|
| Kathy Perry | Program Manager, YMCA SF Bayview Hunters Point |
| Karina Hall | Peer Leadership Program Coordinator, YMCA SF Bayview Hunters Point |
| Isaac Dozier | Senior Project Manager, Urban Strategies |
| Victoria Vandercourt | Workforce Outreach Coordinator, Urban Strategies |
| Emily Weinstein | Director of Community Development, Rebuild Potrero, Bridge Housing |
| Uzuri Pease-Green | Community Builder, Rebuild Potrero Bridge Housing |
| David Fernandez | Sunnydale Transformation Project Director, Mercy Housing |
| Larry Jones | Community Liaison, Mercy Housing |
| Emily Claassen | Peer Leadership Program Coordinator, Mercy Housing |

Advisors

| Name | Organization |
|-------------------|--|
| Ken Epstein | CBHS Children, Youth & Families Systems of Care, SFDPH |
| Anne Griffith | Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. |
| Helen Hale | Mayors Office of Housing |
| Maria X. Martinez | Office of the Director, SFDPH |
| Tomiquia Moss | HOPE SF, Mayor's Office |
| Laura Moye | Department of Children Youth & Families |
| Prishni Murillo | Department of Children Youth & Families |
| Ellie Rossiter | San Francisco Foundation |
| Bryant Tan | Department of Children Youth & Families |

Assessment Timeline

- Assessment Planning (November 2013 – January 2014)
- Literature Review (February –April 2014)
- Youth Leader Program (March – present)
- Data Collection (April – June 2014)
- Data Analysis (July 2014)
- Presentation of Findings and Recommendations (July 2014)

PURPOSE AND KEY QUESTIONS

Purpose

To examine opportunities and barriers to supporting the health and well-being of youth aged 12-24 living in HOPE SF communities.

Key Assessment Questions

Services

- What services and programs do young people living in HOPE SF communities currently access and need to support their health and well-being?
- What are the characteristics of services and programs that effectively serve young people living in HOPE SF communities?
- What is needed for young people living in HOPE SF communities to effectively access programs and services?

Support

- What issues undermine the health and well-being of youth living in HOPE SF communities?
- What do young people living in HOPE SF communities currently do to protect and promote their own health and well-being?
- What environmental and community factors promote the health and well-being of young people living in HOPE SF communities and what else is needed?
- Who do young people living in HOPE SF communities turn to for support?

Community Building and Leadership Development

- In what ways are young people currently or could they be engaged in community building activities in HOPE SF communities?
- How could the leadership capacity of young people in HOPE SF communities be fostered?

Policy and System

- What policy change is needed to support the health and wellbeing of young people in HOPE SF communities?

ASSESSMENT METHODS

This assessment took place over the 7 month period January through July 2014. A CBPR approach was used and young people from HOPE SF sites were hired as Youth Assessment Leaders and were instrumental in all phases of this work. Advisors who represented key stakeholders in this work provided guidance throughout the assessment. Twenty MPH students were divided into three data collection. The *Resident Assessment Team* included both MPH students and the Youth Assessment Leaders and gathered the voices of adult and youth residents; The *Program Staff Assessment Team* spoke with program staff who work with HOPE SF youth; and, the *Key Informant Assessment Team* talked with key policy makers, agency staff and other stakeholders. Assessment methods included a literature review that was conducted to lay groundwork for the primary data collection. Then interviews and focus groups were conducted with adult and youth residents, program staff and key informants. **In total the experiences and views of 180 people were captured in this assessment.**

| Methods | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Voices Gathered | Method | Conducted by | # |
| | Literature Review | All MPH students | 125 articles |
| Youth Assessment Leaders | In-depth, semi-structured interviews | 6 MPH students on <i>Resident Assessment Team</i> | 8 interviews |
| Youth Residents | Structured interviews | 4 Youth Assessment Leaders with support of MPH students on <i>Resident Assessment Team</i> | 109 interviews |
| Adult Residents | Focus Groups | 6 MPH students on <i>Resident Assessment Team</i> | 6 focus groups with 16 adults |
| Program Staff | In-depth, semi-structured interviews | 8 MPH students on <i>Program Staff Assessment Team</i> | 20 interviews |
| Key Informants | In-depth, semi-structured interviews | 6 MPH students on <i>Key Informants Assessment Team</i> | 22 interviews |

I. Literature Review

An essential element of this assessment was a comprehensive review of the literature regarding the implementation of youth programs in public housing settings. Prior to making contact with assessment participants, the class of 20 MPH students read over 200 articles and reports with the purpose of better understanding the causes and impact of the current health status of young people living in public housing as well as strategies for supporting their health and well-being. Students aimed to limit their searches to studies in the U.S. published between the years 2000 and 2014 with a majority of subjects being children and youth ages 12-24 residing in public housing. Ultimately, 125 articles were determined to be relevant and were reviewed for lessons learned. In some areas where there was a limited amount of literature specific to public housing, articles about

communities with similar demographics (e.g. low-income, poverty, impoverished urban communities, minority women and children) were reviewed. However, a full review of this larger body of work was outside the scope of this literature review.

To review the literature of youth health and well-being in public housing settings, the MPH students worked in two teams –Causes and Impact (10 students) and Strategies (10 students). The Causes and Impact team further divided into sub groups to examine particular health indicators including mental health, substance abuse, infectious diseases and sexual health, physical activity and nutrition, the built environment, chronic conditions, and violence and safety. The Solutions team divided into sub-groups to examine specific literature addressing interventions including case management, supportive housing, family interventions, mixed income housing, youth development and medical/clinical services. Each literature review team used a variety of databases available through the San Francisco State University Library server including: PubMed, ERIC, Web of Science, Academic Search Complete as well as Google Scholar.

II. Data Collection

Twenty MPH students and 9 Youth Assessment Leaders talked to a total of 180 participants over the course of 3 months. Focus groups and interviews were used to gather the perspectives of program staff, key informants and both adult and youth residents. All interviews and focus groups were recorded if consent was given and hand written notes were taken as well. Both professional transcription and transcription by students were employed.

Resident Voices

Six MPH students joined with the 9 Youth Assessment Leaders to form the *Resident Assessment Team*. The team conducted focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and youth-led interviews to gather the voices of adult and youth residents about the opportunities and barriers to supporting the health and well-being of youth ages 12-24 who living HOPE SF public housing communities.

Youth Assessment Leader In-Depth Interviews

Pairs of SF State students conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 8 of the Youth Assessment Leaders in order to establish key issues to be explored in the adult resident focus groups and youth interviews. The Youth Assessment Leaders represent all 4 Hope SF sites, range in age from 16 to 24 years old and identify as African American, Samoan, Mexican-American or bi-racial. The themes from the Youth Assessment Leader interviews not only informed the questions asked in the focus groups and youth interviews but also were incorporated into the findings and recommendations in this report.

Youth Resident Interviews

Five of the Youth Assessment Leaders conducted 109 interviews with youth residents between the ages of 12 and 24 from four of the HOPE SF sites, Alice Griffith (30), Huntersview (18), Potrero (30) and Sunnydale (31). Of the 109 and 43% self-identified as

male, 48% self identified as female while some did not report. 53% of youth interviewed were African American, followed by 23% Samoan, while other participants identified themselves as biracial, white, Latino/a, and Filipino/a. Youth Assessment Leaders and community partners worked together to recruit youth interviewees through street, door to door, event, and organization outreach in the communities. Interview groups were comprised of a youth leader, graduate student and YLI staff or SFSU faculty. In each case, the youth leader conducted the interview, while the graduate student took written notes and recorded the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes. At the end of each interview, youth were given a movie ticket voucher in appreciation for their time. Participants were invited to the final presentation of research findings and told they would be given a copy of the final report when completed.

Adult Focus Groups

Peer leader Focus Groups

SF State MPH Students conducted 4 focus groups with 16 HOPE SF adult resident Peer Leaders. All Peer Leaders are adults who work in HOPE SF Peer Leadership Programs and are caregivers, parents and/or other residents with ties to youth in their community. Participants identified themselves as African American, Chinese, Samoan, and Latino/a. Participants averaged 39 years of age and have lived an average of seventeen years in a HOPE SF community. Thirteen of those interviewed were female and 3 were male. Faculty or staff from SFSU or a community partner attended each meeting to support the group facilitation process.

Spanish Language Adult Focus Groups

SF State MPH students conducted 2 focus groups in Spanish with 5 adult residents. All participants were mono-lingual Spanish speaking females, either parents or caregivers, and residents of the Potrero HOPE SF site. Bridge housing staff recruited these participants.

Program Staff Voices

Eight other SFSU MPH students comprised the *Program Staff Assessment Team* and gathered the views of program staff who serve HOPE SF youth. The team conducted 20 interviews with program staff who serve youth in HOPE SF communities. Program staff interviewed, had varying levels of interaction with young residents ranging from front line programmatic work and mixed responsibilities to program leadership and supervision. Length of service at organization ranged from under 1 year to 29 years, with an average of 7 years. The assessment Advisors identified program staff to interview. Pairs of MPH students contacted and interviewed program staff and provided interviewees with a \$5 gift card to Starbucks. The following organizations were represented in interviews:

| Program Staff Interviews | | |
|--|---|--|
| African American Art & Culture Complex | Community Youth Center | SFDPH; System of Care |
| Bay Area Community Resources | Edgewood Center For Children and Families | SFDPH; Comprehensive Child Crisis Services |
| Bayview Hunters Point Foundation | Juma Ventures | SFDPH; STD Prevention |
| Bayview Hunters Point YMCA | Mercy Housing | Third Street Youth Center & Clinic |
| Bridge Housing | Northridge Community Garden | TURF |
| Collective Impact Magic Zone | Potrero Hill Neighborhood House | Young Community Developers Inc. |

Key Informant Voices

Another group of 6 SFSU students comprised the *Key Informant Assessment Team* and conducted interviews with 22 key informants, including individuals in leadership roles in organizations and city agencies that are involved in HOPE SF. Advisors identified key informants to be interviewed. Interviews were done by students in teams of two and included representatives from the following organizations:

| Key Informant Interviews | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Bayview Hunters Point Foundation | Bridge Housing | Chinese Youth Center |
| Mercy Housing | Potrero Hill Neighborhood House | Samoan Community Development Center |
| San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families | San Francisco Department of Public Health | San Francisco Housing Authority |
| San Francisco Department of Public Works | San Francisco Police Department | San Francisco Unified School District |
| San Francisco Mayor's Office | San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development | Tenant Associations |
| United Way of the Bay Area | YMCA | Young Community Developers |

III. Data Analysis & Recommendation Development

Over a 6 week period, SFSU students, Youth Assessment Leaders, YLI staff and SFSU faculty participated in a collaborative process to compile, organize and analyze focus group and interview data gathered from youth and adult residents, program staff and key informants. Each Assessment Team transcribed and then analyzed data for key themes. The teams developed their own findings which were then combined into one overarching set of findings that are presented in this report.

The three Assessment Teams developed separate recommendations for how the health and wellness of youth age 12-24 in HOPE SF communities can be supported. As part of the Resident Voices Team process, Youth Assessment Leaders also developed their own recommendations for action. In this report, these separate recommendations have been combined into a single set which both the SFSU MPH students and Youth Assessment Leaders support.

IV. Limitations

There are several limitations related to this assessment's methods that should be acknowledged. Due to capacity, time, and resource constraints, the sample of this data collection is relatively small and not randomized as with most descriptive qualitative data. Focus groups and short youth-led interviews may not have provided ideal environments for participants to discuss sensitive but pressing health topics. With the exception of __ Spanish language focus groups with 5 residents, all interviews were conducted in English. No data was collected from residents who speak other primary languages. Lastly, the assessment captured the experiences of young people age 12-24 living in the HOPE SF communities in San Francisco and cannot be generalized to groups of young people living in public housing sites in other parts of the country. However, it is clear from the review of the literature that the experiences of youth living in HOPE SF communities share many similarities to those in other public housing communities in the United States.

FINDINGS

The following findings were developed by the MPH students and Youth Assessment Leaders in collaboration with the course instructors and Youth Leadership Institute staff who guided the data analysis process. The findings reflect themes that were found in the interviews and focus groups with residents -both adults and youth, key informants, and program staff.

Violence & Law Enforcement

Finding #1: There is a strained relationship between youth in HOPE SF communities and law enforcement highlighted by young people’s significant distrust of police and perceived harassment. However, some residents do want a greater police presence in HOPE SF communities.

Many HOPE SF residents reported that youth in their communities, especially young African American men, feel unfairly targeted and harassed by police. A number of youth shared feelings of discomfort and being excessively scrutinized by police while simply walking in their neighborhoods. The overwhelming feeling of distrust, lack of respect, and lack of support, weakens relationships with law enforcement, resulting in a negative perception of law enforcement: *“Youth do not see police as someone that will keep them safe, they see them as the enemy.”*

At the same time, adult residents feel that issues requiring police response are not answered in a timely manner. The resulting sense of insecurity leaves some residents desiring more effective presence of law enforcement or security officers. At the same time, some key informants felt that law enforcement is making strides to repair broken relationships with youth through efforts to increase community engagement and police-led programs designed specifically to support youth. Some in this group would like to see more community-law enforcement partnership and collaboration. However, law enforcement faces significant challenges in fostering positive relationships with youth in HOPE SF communities. One challenge is staff rotations, which lead to a cycle of having to constantly rebuild trust with new officers. A key informant stated that some newer officers may lack sufficient training on how to effectively work with young people.

Finding #2: Some young people in HOPE SF communities are caught up in cycles of violence perpetuated by a lack of positive activities and jobs, social norms, availability of guns and ongoing conflicts between neighborhoods.

According to both youth and adults, most youth-involved violence in HOPE SF communities comes about from conflicts between neighborhoods, including between rival gangs. A chronic lack of positive activities and jobs for youth is a major contributing factor of youth involvement in violence, especially for young men. Youth stated that a desire for retaliation to protect one’s family or community, as well as the glorification of guns and violence by

some older youth and adults, continues the cycle of harm. However, many older youth are choosing to break that cycle by being positive role models to younger youth. *"You get way more respect listening to others than picking up a gun. We tell people now that picking up a gun don't make you 'real'. The youngsters, they're growing up hearin' that so now they be like 'we don't really need to pick up a gun'. But back in the day, that's what people thought – you got a gun, you real, you gon' get respect."*

Years of youth-involved violence has also led adult resident leaders to press for a change to this cycle, such as the Huntersview group, Mothers Against Guns. One youth interviewed commented, *"They saw so many of their children die, and just saw a lot of negativity to where they don't want the same thing to happen again, so they strive hard for us to do better."* Still, strong social pressures to be involved in violence persist for many HOPE SF youth, particularly for young men. According to some residents, violent behaviors are equated with popularity among some youth, *"It's cool to be violent, not soft, so nobody messes with that person. It's about having guns and be a gangster. Boys get popular based on how much they're actively engaging in something violent."*

Mental Health & Substance Use

Finding #3: Ever-present violence in HOPE SF communities results in trauma and isolation of youth age 12-24 who live in these neighborhoods.

Exposure to violence on a regular basis is traumatic, stressful, and a primary barrier to health for youth in HOPE SF communities. Hearing or witnessing gun violence can be a daily occurrence for many youth residents. *"Almost every night I hear shooting,"* shared one youth. Many youth perceive violence as an inescapable and normal condition in the public housing environment and that everyone is on constant guard for her or his safety.

The ceaseless violence undermines youth sense of safety, forces them to stay indoors or avoid leaving home, and contributes to feelings of isolation. Some youth fear taking the bus to school due to shootings on certain routes. One adult resident put it starkly, *"Kids don't go to school because they risk never coming home again."* Even the fenced-in design of playgrounds in and around these communities poses threats to perceived safety because youth feel trapped within the space and visibility from outside is limited. One adult resident shared, *"Kids are afraid of the playgrounds, because they are fenced in, and kids from other gangs get in there"*. However, staying indoors and restricting socializing outdoors negatively effects youth. A parent of an early teen and younger children shared, *"My kids are always depressed about having to stay indoors. The other day there was a shooting while they were playing soccer, the shooters ran right past the kids and their toys. Later, the police came around looking for shell casings, that's all very sad and frustrating for [the kids]."*

Program staff who work with youth from HOPE SF communities are also witness to the ongoing impact of violence on young people. *"Violence happens every day ALL day...you never get chances to reboot your system in between traumas because you are always in that heightened alert stage...the traumas from the violence in the whole community, which affects*

a lot of the kids because basically it's passed down to generation to generation." Some program staff reported that they hear youth talk about places to hide to be safe, like in a kitchen cabinet or the bathtub, not knowing where the bullets are going to land. "A lot of them are stuck where they are. They can't come out of public housing especially that age group; they are scared they might be killed going from one area to another."

Finding #4: Substance use may be a coping mechanism for stress and trauma experienced by youth living in HOPE SF communities. The widespread availability of marijuana, tobacco and alcohol further promotes high levels of use.

Youth view widespread substance use in the context of stress, mental health problems, and the lack of other activities available where they live. One youth explained, *"I feel like a lot of young people have, like, mental health issues and that's why they go and do drugs."* Youth see a high use of marijuana as a stress coping mechanism. *"Everybody be puffin on weed. That's how people relate to their stress."* They reported that alcohol and drugs are also readily available in the four communities, although marijuana was the only drug specifically named. *"It's very easy to get drugs. If you choose to want it you can get it any time you want to. This affects all youth."*

Substance use by older youth, parents and adult figures not only expands the availability of substances but also contributes to use by young teens and even younger children. A young person explained, *"drugs [are] all they know, because that's basically all they ever see."* Many young people specifically identified tobacco smoking by adults as influencing many youth to smoke. *"Smoking is everywhere and kids are seeing that and a lot of them develop the habit of smoking."*

Finding #5: There is a strong desire for accessible mental health services for youth in HOPE SF communities but the stigma around seeking care prevents young people from receiving mental health services.

Given the numerous stressors in their lives, there is a strong desire among young residents and the adults in their families for more mental health support and services. In addition, numerous program staff described a need for mental health services but stated that youth and their families were reluctant to seek them out or to have diagnoses made because of the stigma attached to seeking mental health services. One program staff stated plainly, *"People don't want to be seen accessing mental health services,"* another staff reported, *"Families say, 'We are not crazy!'"* Youth interviewed speculated that other young people in the community may avoid accessing mental health support so as not to be associated with disability benefit programs, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), due to their perceptions of its overuse by adults. *"I know a lot of adults that get SSI checks...I guess they convinced somebody that they're crazy."*

Locating mental health services on-site was suggested as a way to increase access and utilization as well as reduce stigma by normalizing mental health care. Others suggested that in light of the stigma such services should offer as much privacy as possible in the physical access provided. One provider and several youth residents added that the

availability of on-site mental health services at two of the HOPE SF sites has had a beneficial effect from people just knowing it was there.

Finding #6: A negative public perception of young people from HOPE SF sites is recognized by youth living in these communities and is destructive to their health and well-being.

According to adults and youth living in HOPE SF neighborhoods there are significant negative misconceptions about young people in these communities. Young people commonly stated that they deal with stereotypes like, *“There are all bad teenagers up there,”* and questions like, *“Aren’t they all crazy?”* Some parents report that the general public’s opinion of public housing sites and residents keeps young people from making friends, leading to frustrated and depressed feelings in their children. A mother of a young teenager stated, *“My kids invite their school friends to the house, but their friends don’t visit because they’re told people get killed in our neighborhoods.”* As a result, youth living in these communities experience the constant stressors of having to prove others wrong about the stereotypes assigned to them. One adult resident stated, *“People say kids here are loud and ghetto. When they walk into the classroom, they’ve already been labeled. Their lives are about proving people wrong.”* Others feel that the assumption of youth involvement in illegal activities actually plays a role in encouraging this behavior. One adult resident shared, *“I’ve met kids who go the idea to start selling drugs because they were asked for them so often. They got the idea that if so many people were asking for it, they should be selling it.”*

However, young people express a desire to let people know that many young people defy these stereotypes. *“What you see is not always what you get, young people here are keeping things clean, working, taking care of business and their kids”* and, *“We’re not all bad, some of us really want to make a change, help, and do something about what’s going on in our neighborhood.”*

Environment

Finding #7: Youth living in HOPE SF communities are continually exposed to a dilapidated environment that undermines their physical and mental health and have limited access to healthy food and places to engage in physical activity.

Youth in public housing are growing up in physical and social conditions that impede healthy behaviors and compromise wellness. Both youth and adult residents of HOPE SF communities frequently identified common environmental hazards that have been present for decades such as mold, broken heaters, roaches, gas leaks, and overall unkempt conditions of community spaces. Other concerns include the health risks associated with living near decommissioned power plants and increasing rates of cancer. However, the most common health concerns for youth stemming from living in poor conditions are asthma and other respiratory conditions. *“A lot of people have asthma, babies too,”* declared one young person. Exposure to neighbors’ cigarette smoke is also of concern. *“Smoking is all over the place, and we’re breathing that air, you can’t go anywhere without someone smoking around you.”* Program staff also reported that the stress of living in a degraded

environment directly affects mental health and self-esteem. *“The youth live in a very stressful environment; things seem broken. The world seems like a dirty place.”*

In addition to a hazardous physical environment, lack of access to healthy foods and safe outdoor spaces, combined with the easy access to fast food and corner stores, makes it difficult for young people living in HOPE SF communities to make optimal health decisions for their bodies. Program staff consistently identified a lack of open space for recreation and exercise. One interviewee explained that, *“Kids come (here) and run around the theater – and as staff we try to stop them – but I realized that if they are not running around here – there is nowhere to run.”* The lack of physical space perpetuates further inactivity; *“I have not met one kid in my program that is signed up for sports. It’s not ‘normal’ to be active. It’s normal to take the bus up the hill one block, rather than walk.”* An absence of physical exercise and healthy foods can lead to health complications such as diabetes, and obesity, and mental and behavioral issues for young people in HOPE SF sites.

In addition, some residents believe construction of new housing at a HOPE SF site poses environmental hazards to community members. A central concern is the respiratory health of young people due to dust and dirt from construction and the perceived lack of attention being paid to this issue. *“Kids have to walk over this construction site every day...When the wind blows, we have a whirlwind of dust here. Last night I had a nosebleed, and everybody’s talking about how much they are coughing. I blame the city. They have to put in some sprinkler systems to keep the dust down.”*

Supports

Finding #8: Young people living in HOPE SF communities need emotional support, information and access to health services to foster healthy relationships and sexual decision making. Young parents living in HOPE SF communities need comprehensive support programs to promote positive parenting.

A program staff who grew up at a HOPE SF site stated, *“Young men and women do not have enough support or examples of what healthy relationships should look like – not even just romantically.”* One provider commented about youth *“...they are normalized to violence and aggression towards women - it’s acceptable and normal.”* Staff explained that witnessing gender-based violence modeled in public housing further perpetuates harassment of girls and women by boys and men and low self-esteem for young people. According to one program staff person, the link between healthy relations and self-esteem is clear: *“A lot of young people are seeking affirmation in a sexual way and it is resulting in unhealthy interactions and relationships, and low self-esteem. It slows things down for the youth. Sometimes it can be a really negative environment,”* and *“Nobody is comfortable unless they have somebody, that’s what is acceptable it just is I got somebody that’s loving on me... having somebody.”*

Residents also reported that teenage and young parents, especially those without stable families, have trouble navigating challenges like preventing pregnancy, having a healthy

pregnancy, and learning about care for newborn and young children. Key informants explained that there is a lack of consistent sexual health education for youth living in HOPE SF communities, as well as a high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Youth interviewed did recognize the need for health care services that address their specific needs in HOPE SF communities, yet also noted that existing services are not being used. In discussing access to clinical services, one young person noted, *“There’s a clinic up the hill, but youth don’t go there or I’m not sure if they get used.”* Many youth identified San Francisco General Hospital as their only option to access health services. In particular, residents highlighted the low participation of men in physical and sexual health services.

In addition, young parents struggle with completing school, keeping a job, and paying rent. Youth feel that more information and support is needed, *“[Let] people know that if you have a baby at a young age you ain’t gonna be able to do anything. I mean people know that, but show a video or something. The parents don’t be around a lot, they ain’t really ready. That kid grow up stranded.”* As a result, young parents spoke of informal support networks they have created to help their peers with children. Youth also shared how starting a family can bring security and structure to the lives of some young parents. However, a lack of affordable, accessible childcare services prevents residents from pursuing and maintaining jobs essential to caring for their families. A similar lack of comprehensive support programs for young parents leaves them without vital and empowering information about pregnancy and early developmental needs of their children.

Finding #9: Youth living in HOPE SF communities often turn to their peers for emotional support, practical assistance and a sense of safety in the absence of consistent adult support. Adult role models are critical to the health and wellness of youth but parental and adult support can be strained by poverty, stress and social isolation.

Like for all young people, adult role models are key figures in helping HOPE SF youth navigate common developmental challenges and stay healthy. Youth with positive adult role models shared that these adults are important for emotional and academic support, and for helping connect them with jobs and resources. However, many adults living in HOPE SF communities face significant stressors including multiple jobs or unemployment, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, incarceration, being the only adult in the home, being the only earner in the home, trauma from community violence and other safety concerns. A program staff member reported *“I would say (the greatest challenge to youth health is) safety, and stress of families living on the edge financially. That creates a lot of stress in the family of where the next money is going to come from, even for food. Some families in this community are really on the edge too.”* Being the support for extended family often stretches parents and many people interviewed felt that many parents are not actively present for young people in the community. As a result, many youth interviewed feel that it is difficult to seek out positive adult figures for support. One youth noticed *“I guess a lot of young people don’t really know a lot of people they can turn to. There’s not really people out there saying, ‘Hey, you can come talk to me if you want to, anytime you want’.”* Youth are also attuned to how schedule demands limit their interactions with working parents, *“If you have a mom,...say you get up, you go to school, right? Then you get out of school, you go to*

after school program. Your mom, she's not getting home until like nine." Key informants also spoke to the challenges of engaging parents, commenting that *"We always get the same small percentage of families that do come, but the majority of parents don't participate."*

At the same time adult residents talked about the strains felt by parents that result in less engagement in supporting young people they also expressed concern about negative adult role modeling. Program staff noted that some youth turn to gangs and older youth or adults for surrogate family support. Sometimes adult support presents an unhealthy influence that in its more benign form says, *"don't do what I did,"* and at its worst leads youth to criminal endeavors. One staff member said, *"If I'm a little boy my role models are men on the street corner."* On the other hand, some see significant potential in the relationships between young men and older males in the community and recognize the impact on the adults. *"Male to male mentorship is needed. I see the older males getting a lot out of this. The way they talk to these young guys – even if they have messed things up – they know how to give advice."*

Other adults who provide support to young people living in HOPE SF communities are program staff and teachers who often connect youth to resources and services. However, young people, adult residents, program staff and key informants all acknowledged that an overwhelming number of youth living in HOPE SF communities rely on their peers for emotional support, practical assistance and a sense of safety. For many youth, other young people are a critical source of information about opportunities and resources. Young people regularly support each other by passing on information about jobs or positions offering incentives or stipends. Key informants recognized that for many youth, their friends are a key conduit into programs.

Young people interviewed recognized that families struggle to make ends meet so friends often share food and resources with each other. One youth shared, *"My grandfather, he will bring me and my mom food...so, we go out and I give it to my friends. Aware of adults' many obligations and tight resources, youth feel responsible to help their friends and siblings stay motivated in school and often take care-giving roles for younger siblings and family members. "We support each other all kinds of ways...music, basketball, talking about females and their problems, we get together about a whole lot of things. Definitely more positive than negative. We talk about jobs so much it ain't even funny."*

Young people help each other create a much-needed sense of safety. *"Sometimes it can be a really negative environment. And they pretty much stick together."* Youth also seek and give social support to each other: *"You can just see it in their interactions with [each other]. They'll go grab each other, because they know they're pulling them [away] from some sort of bad thing. They protect each other."* Youth may also support each other implicitly: *"We do have people who snitch each other out because they are worried about each other."*

The threat of constant violence makes youth feel unsafe, leading them to seek out sources of social support that are often negative. A key informant reported that *"youth join gangs to protect themselves....being in gangs has helped youth survive."* Negative social support also influences health behaviors. Youth look to social support to escape the challenges to their safety, by seeking friends who can provide relief through sex, drugs, alcohol, and

protection. *“They are using substance abuse and engaging in risky sexual behavior to shield themselves.”*

At the same time, some youth mainly stick to themselves to avoid violence or bullying, and focus on school or jobs. Many youth interviewed made comments like *“Nobody mess with me. I don’t mess with them. I’ll be in the house, out the house, work. That’s it.”* Some adult residents linked the erosion of peer support networks to the stress of poverty and trauma and feel that some youth are isolated and have few constructive social outlets. They felt that when peer interactions are strained tensions and mistrust only escalate.

Workforce Development & Education

Finding #10: There is a deep desire from residents for more youth job training and assistance with workforce placement in close proximity to HOPE SF communities. Some youth may be vulnerable to participation in illegal and dangerous activities to ensure financial support.

For adult and youth residents, job training and employment opportunities are of significant priority to support the health and wellness of HOPE SF young people. Resident desire for accessible and on-site employment was brought up in many ways. Youth and adult residents have a desire for opportunities for work that also improve their communities, such as Department of Public Works litter removal and clean-up programs. The redevelopment of the HOPE SF sites was viewed by some as an opportunity to engage youth in a job and community improvement. *“Why not let these kids do some summer job when they do redevelopment? You know what I’m saying? Why not let the kids help you all or else these kids are going to tear these [expletive] new buildings up when they start building it.”* Early adolescence was repeatedly noted as an appropriate age to begin community based employment to build self-efficacy and leadership. As one resident noted, youth are, *“trying to get a job and stay out of trouble and play sports and stay occupied. That’s the best that they can do.”* However, assessment participants acknowledged that some youth in HOPE SF communities view illegal businesses/street businesses as secure and substantial income sources in the face of limited job opportunities.

Furthermore, workforce development was repeatedly identified as a violence prevention strategy as described by one interviewee *“... give them job training to get them into the work world and it helps to reduce violence and crime also death because it is filling up their time because a lot time young people get into violence and crime and drug use because they are not working.”* One program staff reported that some gun possession by youth is attributable to a perceived need to provide for and protect themselves and their families, *“What’s missing is guaranteed... income, decent wages, and full employment. I really think if families had access to good paying jobs, and if the jobs they did now paid good wages, there wouldn’t be all this stress.”*

However, there are significant barriers to finding and maintaining employment, especially for young men living in HOPE SF communities. The threat of violence can limit their mobility making jobs outside of the community unreachable. For other youth lack of

knowledge about how to move forward in a career presents a challenge. A youth resident observed, "*[there aren't] enough job opportunities and not enough guidance on how to make a career for yourself or to become adults, you know, just to make it through the adult world.*" Some Key Informants felt that currently available workforce development services are small-scale, short-span services that are inconsistently funded and are therefore inadequate to cover the widespread need for job training.

Finding #11: Lack of engagement in school is a critical issue facing many youth and has a major impact on future opportunities. Trauma experienced by youth and their families is a significant challenge to educational engagement and success.

Chronic absence and disconnection from school is a critical issue facing youth living in HOPE SF communities and it hampers their opportunities in the future. Both residents and key stakeholders discussed barriers to school engagement, attendance and educational achievement. Residents report that the primary issues that undermine connections to school include lack of support for students and their families to guide them through the education system, lack of after-school and summer programs, perceptions of poor school administration, and school closures. In addition, lack of transportation, along with the threat of violence, are additional barriers to HOPE SF youth accessing school and support programs. Compounding barriers to accessing school, the trauma youth in HOPE SF communities experience early on has an impact on youth's ability to engage in school. Key informants report that "*I see many children and adults who are incapable of sitting and learning and it's not because they don't want to do well, it's because they are so negatively impacted by trauma and poverty so their brains aren't composed in a way that allows for learning. It's a vicious circle.*" Trauma can lead to acting out or threatening violence in the classroom, leading to a cycle of suspensions.

Key informants also recognized that both parents and the educational system itself play critical roles in fostering school engagement. They argued that it is critical to investigate the family and community factors behind chronic absence of youth. "*I would like to see...an approach to school truancy...that recognizes the barriers that families face to getting their kids to school*". They also expressed concerns that the way youth from the HOPE SF communities are treated in the education system may result in disconnection. One key informant noted "*Because of the educational system being lacking on the East side of the city, [youth] are either dropping out of school or partially attending school and you know, so their education, they are so far behind, they can't keep up, they can't catch up and they give up*". Nonetheless, for many youth school represents a hopeful path, with many reporting that they strive to "*staying positive. Going to school.*" Key informants emphasized that success in early education was the key to success throughout a young person's academic experiences. Lack of engagement in school has an ongoing impact on youth as they move into adulthood. As stated by a key informant "*lack of education and the subsequent lack of jobs, contributes to participation in violence.*" Key informants believed that, besides college-track education, if schools were to offer more practical-skills education, it could prepare youth for being part of the workforce "*We used to have a very strong trade school here in San Francisco.... The school district changed their policies and went on [a] 'everyone's going to college' policy. And not everyone is going to college and that's something that should not be expected.*"

Programs

Finding #12: There is a lack of stable and ongoing programs for youth in HOPE SF communities including a significant gap for “transitional age youth” (16-24 years old).

Although youth and adult residents who participated in the assessment acknowledged the presence of some community programs, they still reported a general absence of programming for older youth that is easily accessible to HOPE SF sites. Furthermore both youth and adult residents have experienced closing of programs and yearn for more consistency. *“We want programs that are really here and stay here...years ago we had computer classes up here, we had jobs right here... we had childcare, lunch programs, you just can’t take everything away from us. This is our roots, this is where we come from.”* Of particular significance is the lack of programs and support available for Transitional Age Youth. Limitations on public funding that is geared towards youth 18 and under leaves out transitional aged youth. One key informant summed up the situation *“It’s much harder to serve people who are one foot into the youth world and one foot into the adult world. On paper they may be adults, but in life they have no way to take care of themselves or to pay their own way in the world.”* The cost of housing in San Francisco is particularly challenging for transitional age youth. Other key informants acknowledged a lack of programs focused on LGBTQQI youth.

Underlying some of these programming challenges are restrictive grant requirements and funding allocation mechanisms that discourage partnerships between agencies. Short funding cycles and restrictions on how funding can be used affect program success. One key informant said, *“Programs don’t have an impact in just one summer.”* So, in an effort to retain consistent funding, one key informant described “creaming,” a practice of not reaching the most vulnerable youth in order to maintain success: *“Creaming’ is another problem, it means to allow people into your services that you already know are going to succeed so you can have a good report.”* Finally, most key informants indicated a need for collaboration between themselves, with the community, and youth.

Finding #13: Lack of safety and limited transportation are significant barriers limiting HOPE SF youth access to programs and services.

The threat of violence in HOPE SF communities discourages young people from leaving their homes and accessing services and programs. “Turf” rivalries surrounding HOPE SF communities present major barriers to youth utilizing existing support programs outside of their housing community. One key informant stated *“Sunnydale residents would not go down the hill to 1099 because of a turf issue”* and another said *“your brother can’t go down the block, so your whole family can’t go down the block.”*

Lack of reliable public transportation only exacerbates the inaccessibility of programs due to the threat of violence. Long trips may be needed to reach service locations and bus lines may intersect or cross through gang disputed areas. One key informant explained *“Violence creates isolation out of fear: Isolation from programs, activities, parks, school and jobs.”* While after school programs are generally considered to be accessible, transportation and

safety concerns prevents HOPE SF youth from attending them. *“Parents don’t want to let them stay in the after school programs, because then they would have to travel alone on the bus, at night back home and its not safe...”* Community violence and fear for safety limit the ability of program staffs to connect to the community through outreach and is a formidable barrier to youth attendance. As noted by one program, *“Girls don’t like coming to the program because they are harassed by gang members.”* Also, street activities and health fairs arranged by agencies often experience limited response or limited involvement by community youth.

Finding #14: Essential to program success is relatable staff who build trust with youth living in HOPE SF communities. Stable, youth driven and culturally relevant programs are necessary to effectively support youth.

Program staff and key informants agreed that it is critical for programs to be run by trained staff who share the lived experiences of the youth they serve and are from HOPE SF communities. Stable staffing is essential to program effectiveness. *“(Youth need) somebody on-site, a person who youth trust to be with them from beginning to end so they can TRUST.”* In fact, relatable staff that can build trusting relationships can determine whether or not youth attend programs. One program staff reported *“Many of our kids take the bus two hours to come here because they feel loved and have connections with staff who know them and their situation and will help them out and have built relationships with them.”*

Program staff also emphasized that effective programs are youth-driven and youth have decision-making roles. Youth friendly and culturally relevant programs effectively engage young people and support who they are and their interests. *“Kids need to not be made to feel bad about listening to rap music, or cussing – they need to feel like people are NOT angry at them for something sometimes.”* As with many youth programs across the city, essential qualities of effective programs for youth living in HOPE SF communities include food, stipends or incentives, safety, having goals and increasing responsibility for youth participants, leadership opportunities and skills development through the interests identified by youth, support for homework, and access to behavioral health services.

Finding #15: Violence and trauma in HOPE SF communities have a significant and direct impact on program staff who work with youth. Program staff need support, training and sufficient resources to ensure their wellbeing and effectiveness.

Staff who work with youth in HOPE SF communities face similar violence, safety, and mental health issues as the youth and residents they support. Staff turnover is an ongoing concern for youth serving organizations as staff experience burnout, *“compassion fatigue,”* or face safety issues. Key informants identified a lack of mental health processing time to adequately deal with the traumatic experiences staff are exposed to daily when working with youth and families in Hope SF communities. As one key informant remarked, *“Staff need a way to talk about their experiences and caseloads.”* Program staff also reported that due to unsafe and unpredictable community environments and negative public perceptions of HOPE SF communities, organizations often have difficulty in recruiting and retaining their staff.

Furthermore, lack of training in trauma and case management, and the inability of programs to pay higher wages, impact staff's ability to address vital youth health issues adequately. One program staff stated *"We are working with the bare minimum. We are working off of love and emotion more than anything else."* Staff reported that further personal and professional resources are needed in order to effectively execute their work in public housing. Financial security, professional development, therapy, meditation, and breathing exercises were all cited as necessary tools to prepare workers to deal with the severe workload in a violent and traumatic environment. Program staff also face the challenges of San Francisco's high cost of living, *"I was born and raised here in the city. I cannot afford to live here anymore –that is a constant struggle on my heart every single day."*

Policy

Finding #16: Social and criminal justice policies are seen to underlie some of the significant issues that compromise the health and wellness of youth living in HOPE SF communities. However, lack of awareness, lack of interest or competing priorities prevent engagement in policy change efforts.

Policy issues were acknowledged by both key informants and program staff to be instrumental determinants of the health of youth living in HOPE SF communities. In particular criminal justice and social policies impact youth well-being and have far reaching effects on the lives. Program staff feel that the impact of incarceration for nonviolent crimes on young people is profound. Staff discussed how incarceration of parents leaves youth without role models and supports while youth incarceration results in fewer job prospects and barriers to employment. In addition, program staff believed that policies related to youth transitioning out of foster care impact some young people in HOPE SF communities. Furthermore, staff raised concerns that undocumented youth may have even more limited or restricted access to services and job opportunities than other youth in HOPE SF sites.

Despite the acknowledged importance of policy issues to youth health, some key informants were reluctant to become involved in policy work or felt ill informed about policy issues. One key informant said *"... I don't really care for policy. But I know that those policies are going to make the difference in the community, but I think what we do already in serving them is making the change."* While others comments, *"...the federal law needs to change... I think locally... there needs to be an acknowledgement that we need to do something different, you know I don't know what it is. I just know that at the state and local level, at the city level, we need to do something different, because whatever we been doing is not working."*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed by the MPH students and the Youth Assessment Leaders who conducted this assessment. The recommendations reflect specific suggestions and ideas provided by residents, program staff and key stakeholders as well as the ideas of the students, Youth Assessment Leaders, Youth Leadership Institute staff and SFSU faculty.

Community Peace

Recommendation #1: Preventing violence and improving relationships between the police and youth living in HOPE SF communities should be a priority of HOPE SF community transformation efforts. Key strategies that should be implemented include:

- **Restorative justice principles and practices should be applied in youth settings including schools and criminal justice systems to address pervasive cycles of youth-involved violence.**

Restorative justice principles should be at the center of HOPE SF strategies with an emphasis on repairing harm, including all stakeholders in resolutions and focusing on transformation and healing. Restorative justice training of educational and criminal justice personnel should be introduced or enhanced. As much as possible punitive measures for youth violence and substance should give way to recovery- and prevention-focused approaches.

- **Collaborative events and programs sponsored by CBO's and the police that bring together youth and police in safe, positive spaces should be supported.**

In each HOPE SF community members, community based organizations and law enforcement should collaborate to support efforts to address violence and foster positive connections. To develop positive relationships between police officers and youth, safe spaces where police and community youth come together are needed. Local CBO's and police should partner to put on youth-focused programs and events for the community to build trust, community cohesion and engagement and also provide opportunity for positive interaction between the youth and the police. Furthermore, SF Police Department programs that connect the police with young people should be supported and expanded to include youth who might not meet current program admission requirements.

- **Community Safety Ambassadors should be trained and hired in each HOPE SF community. Ambassadors should be at main entrances and exits to HOPE SF sites in addition to security cameras.**

Community Safety Ambassadors should be residents who are trained and hired to work with community members to resolve conflicts and provide guidance when residents are feeling threatened or unsafe. In addition, because of past complications between residents and police, resident safety ambassadors are needed to mediate between residents and police. Residents need trusted mediators

and people to represent them when communication is hard. Community Safety Ambassadors could be paid directly or be provided with a reduction in their rent. They could also receive food vouchers or gift cards. Security cameras are needed to ensure a safe environment.

- **Implement a youth-led visual media campaign to bring awareness to the effects of violence and strengthen the community commitment to improving circumstances. Highlight positive HOPE SF community stories to strengthen community pride.**

Isolation and prejudice have been historically imposed on public housing communities. Since its inception, public housing has been regarded as a place for people who have “failed,” and defined by violence and crime (Blokland, 2008). Some researchers, however, believe that high rates of violence and crime are a result of the poor physical environment of public housing sites, which only validate stigmas and feelings of inferiority and can increase violence (Vale, 2002; Gilligan, 2000). Youth at HOPE SF sites are fully aware of the rates and effects of violence in their communities, and are committed to change. City officials should harness their momentum to enact changes to break the cycle of violence by allowing youth to bring awareness to the effects of violence. As part of the revitalization process, they should be given the opportunity to showcase the positive aspects of their neighborhood via a youth-led campaign. This kind of campaign can strengthen community pride and social cohesion among all residents. The development of public art can engage youth with positive, creative outlets of expression and interaction with artistic professionals and youth from other communities.

Workforce Development

Recommendation #2: On-site job opportunities that allow for youth to earn income, contribute to community change and develop professional and personal skills should be supported.

Opportunities for young people who live in HOPE SF communities to work on-site is critical to meeting their employment needs. Specifically, young people could be employed in each community to support beautification of HOPE SF sites and serve as trash monitors after compost/recycling bins are provided. In addition, expanded gardening programs can provide young people with employment opportunities while also increasing food access and improving the environment. Youth are concerned about the environment, hazards, waste, odors and overall appearance of these communities and employment opportunities to address these issues are meaningful to them. Furthermore, the construction and transition of the HOPE SF sites is a unique opportunity to employ youth in the physical improvement of their communities. Building on much good work already being done, community based organizations that serve HOPE SF sites should be supported to hire, invest in, and train youth as long-term employees and offer them a living wage. Partnerships between local higher education institutions and HOPE SF communities should be pursued to support college readiness and BA attainment for youth living in these communities. In addition, city agencies and local youth employment programs should be in place throughout the year with a significant investment in creating a pipeline of

opportunities for youth living in HOPE SF communities. Finally, employment programs focused on incarcerated youth should be supported and barriers to employment for these young people need to be addressed.

Job training, skill development and ongoing support is needed for youth living in HOPE SF communities to enter the workforce and maintain steady employment. Training that includes leadership and volunteer experience, resume and interview preparation skills, financial literacy, GED attainment and college education preparation are needed. In addition, workforce development efforts should link to health-promoting programs that increase retention. Specific services like tattoo removal, night activities, on-site GED classes and job training can enhance trust, which youth in public housing and low-income communities need in order to remain engaged (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002; Strunin et al., 2013).

Youth Programming

Recommendation #3: Each HOPE SF site should have an on-site youth center for that is engaging for older youth, a safe space for youth activities, provides access to wellness and support services, and promotes youth development. The centers should be located at all HOPE SF sites and should be coordinated and work together to foster unity across sites.

Programs should come to youth within HOPE SF neighborhoods and be located at an on-site youth friendly center that is engaging for older youth. The overwhelming safety concerns among residents indicate programs should be located in HOPE SF neighborhoods or provide safe transportation options to nearby programs. Young people are not currently accessing some available resources because they face a variety of challenges in traveling outside of their neighborhoods. As a result accessible and free transportation is key in helping youth avoid public transportation, remain safe, and avoid potential conflicts (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002; Dodington et al., 2012; Jenson, 2010; Sonenstein, 1997; Strunin et al., 2013). During the school year, center hours should be 2 – 6:30pm, and during the summer approximately 10am – 6:30pm because there is a lack of activities at that time of year. It is not helpful to just have programs available in the summertime. If the only option is for a Center to be on the edge or away from community, safe transportation should be provided. An exciting and engaging center should be a safe space for youth in HOPE SF communities where they can participate in activities they enjoy while also serving as a place to reduce stress and escape violent circumstances. Furthermore, centers at each HOPE SF site should be coordinated across sites and can collaborate to bring together youth in common programming. A HOPE SF Youth Center that is aims to serve older youth should include some of these key features

- **Access to physical and mental health services and resources.**

On-site programs should include concrete resources to help young people improve their health and well-being, such as STI testing, healthy relationships workshops, recreational activities and arts. Mental health support should be integrated into programming and include access to services for both youth and their families.

Across the country tying health education and services to recreational sports spaces

have been successful at reaching young men living in public housing (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; CDC, n.d.; Sonenstein, 1997). Building on these learnings, strategies to reduce stigma and increase accessibility for young men should be implemented.

- **Access to parenting support and childcare**

Building on-site services for pregnant and young parents, to provide them with healthcare, pre-natal care, resources for newborn care, early childhood development, child-care, parenting skill-building, and job training is important. Programs that specifically empower youth as parents, such as the Harlem Children's Zone, have made lasting community differences by providing skill-development and resources to young parents. *"There's no one thing that we can say, 'Well, Huntersview needs a teen center.' Yeah, it does, but it also needs teen parenting centers, it also needs early child development, because a lot of our young girls ... are pregnant."* Investing in childcare options for youth with children is essential for young parents' health in HOPE SF neighborhoods. *"Babysitting-type stuff [is a] big issue for my friends, because they have babies now, so it's hard for them to get out and do anything at all without a babysitter."* Childcare centers should build hours around work schedules of young parents, who may be in low-wage positions with non-traditional hours. The city should invest in current informal childcare networks with early childcare training and licensure options for residents.

- **Youth & adult friendly, but youth led**

All HOPE SF neighborhoods should have structured spaces that foster relationships between young people and adults. Programs should support families, actively engage parents when appropriate, and connect adults to services they need. Creating incentives for both youth and parents, shown to be effective in other public housing sites across the country (Bender et al., 2011; Jenson, 2010; Yoder & Lopez, 2013), should be part of a multi-pronged outreach strategy. Spaces and programs should be informed by youth voices to concretely meet their needs and to be consistent for the community. Youth desire a place where they can safely participate in a variety of enriching activities and where they can connect with adult role models. Youth should be supported to be leaders and facilitate activities.

- **Relevant staff**

Residents expressed higher trust for staff that demonstrated investment in youth over the long haul. *"We know our community more than anybody else, and I think it needs to be run by people who know the community and know the kids, you know, intimately."* Programs with adult male facilitators of the same ethnic and community background as young male participants have been highlighted as effective in other public housing sites (Sonenstein, 1997). *"Most of the time... black men, they don't attend nothing. I feel like some people don't know what they going through....if somebody's not feeling safe, they don't need you to judge them."*

Recommendation #4: HOPE SF sites should expand engaging youth activities for young people of all ages and young people often overlooked by programs.

More programs for all youth at HOPE SF sites are needed. In particular, there is a scarcity of services for transitional age youth, and none for LGBTQI-identified youth at HOPE SF sites. Some key programming desired by youth include,

- **Sports**
Youth want recreational opportunities that go beyond basketball and football. These programs should be available all year-round, it is not helpful for them to be accessible only in the summertime. Sports bring a positive energy and keep youth occupied and can involve families and build community support.
- **Mentorship**
Young people want mentorship programs that get teens ready for the “real world” including development of financial and job skills that build their confidence. Older youth set examples in their neighborhoods and provide informal mentoring to their peers. Bolstering these efforts could provide older youth with job skills and community responsibility, increase programs’ connections with hard-to-reach youth, and build role models which is so important for the communities’ younger youth.
- **Volunteering opportunities**
Some older youth need volunteer hours for school and for some, probation requirements. Young people desire volunteering experiences to put on their resume. Young people also feel that when youth from HOPE SF communities engage in volunteer work it promotes a positive image of the neighborhood.
- **Cooking and gardening**
Across the country, it has been demonstrated that youth in public housing can benefit from fun nutrition, gardening and cooking classes to increase their awareness of healthy food options (Reese 2013; Resnicow, 2000). In addition to increasing food access to health education, youth see working in a community garden as an employment opportunity. Current on-site gardening programs should expand to include more youth and in paid positions. Cooking programs can also provide young people with a chance to develop connections with other youth and gain concrete skills valuable both at home and in some career paths.

Recommendation #5: The city should provide funding for year-round field trips specifically for youth ages 12-24 living in HOPE SF neighborhoods. Field trips should expose youth to different opportunities, including cultural and educational experiences, outside of the community.

Funding should be provided to existing neighborhood-based programs to create opportunities to expose youth to experiences and resources in other neighborhoods. Field trips will help youth from HOPE SF communities become comfortable knowing and seeing new things. Getting away from violence in their communities will help reduce trauma experienced by youth. Field trips might

include new educational opportunities and should give youth a chance to experience different places and environments.

Youth Leadership

Recommendation #6: Youth leadership in HOPE SF transformation efforts should be encouraged and supported with meaningful opportunities for young people to connect with their peers, elevate youth voices and participate in strategy development and implementation.

Youth who live in HOPE SF neighborhoods should be given opportunities to develop as leaders in community change efforts. Peer-to-peer strategies that engage youth in leadership roles in the community while also serving youth needs is a priority. Young people from HOPE SF communities should be encouraged to participate in official bodies that bring forward the voices of youth such as the City's Youth Commission and the Citywide TAY Advisory Board. Barriers presented by transportation, lack of familiarity with leadership opportunities, lack of parental involvement and others must be acknowledged and addressed to ensure young people from HOPE SF communities can effectively participate. Youth-to-youth grantmaking is one important vehicle for youth leadership development and youth action in HOPE SF communities. HOPE SF itself needs to create more channels for youth input in strategy development and implementation.

Staff Support

Recommendation #7: Youth service providers, school faculty and staff should have training and support so that they can effectively serve youth who have experienced trauma and maintain their own well-being.

Introduce or expand trauma informed practices training across all schools and programs that work with youth from HOPE SF communities. Ongoing professional development, re-training and training of new staff is needed to ensure that practices are consistent across systems over time. Furthermore, in order to effectively support youth living in HOPE SF communities ongoing support for program staff is vital. Funding for community based organizations and city programs is needed to put in place structures and systems that allow for mental health support, breaks from intense work situations, reduced case loads and adequate pay for staff. Given that short-term funding has been found to result in high staff turnover, stable long term funding sources are needed to ensure consistent staff-youth relationship building.

Policy & Funding

Recommendation #8: Develop and pushed forward a HOPE SF youth policy agenda, including the identification of key policy issues that disproportionately effect youth living in HOPE SF communities and undermine their youth health and well-being.

Over time much may not change for youth in HOPE SF communities unless policy issues that

are a detriment to youth health and well-being are not changed. A HOPE SF youth policy agenda should be developed in collaboration with local, state and federal advocacy organizations. Implementation of advocacy strategies should include agency and cbo staff, community members and young people. Training and capacity building efforts are needed to effectively involve, educate, and organize youth and community so they can be active participants in policy change. Youth leadership in policy advocacy should be supported and organizations that support community organizing and parent advocates need to be promoted in HOPE SF communities. Outreach efforts to register youth in all HOPE SF sites to vote should be supported and include information about voting for passage of the Children's Fund with expansion of funding and services for TAY youth.

Recommendation #9: Agencies serving HOPE SF communities need more funding that is both flexible and long-term.

The long term and stable presence of effective youth programs should be a priority for HOPE SF. Sufficient and long-term funding sources are essential to ensure the long term viability of youth programs in these neighborhoods. Funding also needs to be long term to make a lasting and meaningful impact, as programs of short duration (e.g. summer only) can negatively impact these trauma-impacted communities. In addition, flexible funding that allows for growth and change in response to the needs, ideas, and visions of the youth is needed. The next Children Services Allocation Plan should prioritize youth living in HOPE SF communities and in particular services for transitional age youth.

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