Research Report

CATHERINE H. AUGUSTINE, ANDREA PHILLIPS, SUSANNAH FAXON-MILLS, ABIGAIL KESSLER

Restorative Practices in Educational Settings and a Youth Diversion Program

What We Can Learn from One Organization's Partnerships with the Community to Stem the School-to-Prison Pipeline

This publication has completed RAND's research quality-assurance process but was not professionally copyedited.

For more information on this publication, visit **www.rand.org/t/RRA3440-1**.

About RAND

RAND is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest. To learn more about RAND, visit www.rand.org.

Research Integrity

Our mission to help improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis is enabled through our core values of quality and objectivity and our unwavering commitment to the highest level of integrity and ethical behavior. To help ensure our research and analysis are rigorous, objective, and nonpartisan, we subject our research publications to a robust and exacting quality-assurance process; avoid both the appearance and reality of financial and other conflicts of interest through staff training, project screening, and a policy of mandatory disclosure; and pursue transparency in our research engagements through our commitment to the open publication of our research findings and recommendations, disclosure of the source of funding of published research, and policies to ensure intellectual independence. For more information, visit www.rand.org/about/research-integrity.

RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

Published by the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.
© 2024 RAND Corporation
RAND® is a registered trademark.

Limited Print and Electronic Distribution Rights

This publication and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law. This representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited; linking directly to its webpage on rand.org is encouraged. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of its research products for commercial purposes. For information on reprint and reuse permissions, please visit www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.

About This Report

This report is based on interview data on how the National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC) serves as an intermediary addressing the school-to-prison pipeline throughout San Diego County. We examine two strategies NCRC has implemented to address this pipeline: Training educators to use restorative practices and running a program to divert youth from the justice system before charges are filed (i.e., a pre-file youth diversion program). We hope that this report is useful for adults working to stem the school-to-prison pipeline, whether through restorative practices in school settings or diversion programs.

This study was undertaken by two divisions of the RAND Corporation: RAND Social and Economic Well-Being and RAND Education and Labor. RAND Social and Economic Well-Being is a division of RAND that seeks to actively improve the health and social and economic well-being of populations and communities throughout the world. This research was conducted in the Justice Policy Program within RAND Social and Economic Well-Being. The program focuses on such topics as access to justice, policing, corrections, drug policy, and court system reform, as well as other policy concerns pertaining to public safety and criminal and civil justice. For more information, email justicepolicy@rand.org. RAND Education and Labor conducts research on early childhood through postsecondary education programs, workforce development, and programs and policies affecting workers, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy and decision making. Questions about RAND Education and Labor should be directed to educationandlabor@rand.org.

This report would not have been possible without the generosity of the National Conflict Resolution Center, which dedicated hours of interview time, spaces for interviews, and coordination throughout the data collection phase. We thank all the interviewees throughout San Diego County for their candid impressions and insightful recommendations. Feedback from Maya Buenaventura and Michael Applegarth improved this work, as did support from Kelcy Luczak. This report was funded internally by RAND. More information about RAND can be found at www.rand.org. Questions about this report should be directed to Catherine Augustine at cataug@rand.org.

Contents

About This Report iii
Contents iv
Abbreviations v
Introduction 1
  Approach 2
  National Conflict Resolution Center 2
NCRC Adult and Youth Support Programs 7
  Restorative Practices in San Diego County Schools 7
  The Juvenile Diversion Initiative 17
Learnings and Opportunities 28
  Lessons Learned 28
  Opportunities for Future Research 31
  Policy Considerations 33
References 34

Abbreviations

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ARCC	Applied Research Center for Civility
CA	California
CBO	Community-based Organization
DA	District Attorney
DEI	Diversity Equity and Inclusion
EUHSD	Escondido Union High School District
FFT	Functional family therapy
JDI	Juvenile Diversion Initiative
LA	Los Angeles
MST	Multisystemic therapy
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Support
NCRC	National Conflict Resolution Center
PBIS	Positive Behavior Intervention Supports
RCC	Restorative Community Conferences
RJ	Restorative Justice
RP	Restorative Practices
SANDAG	San Diego Association of Governments
SDCOE	San Diego County Office of Education
SDRRC-II	San Diego Risk and Resiliency Checkup-II
SDUSD	San Diego Unified School District
UCLA	University of California Los Angeles
UCSD	University of San Diego
WCRG	West Coast Resolution Group
WWC	What Works Clearinghouse
YDD	Youth Diversion Development

Introduction

In the mid 2000s, researchers and practitioners began discussing a "school-to-prison pipeline," defined as the process of pushing students out of the classroom through exclusionary practices (e.g., suspension and expulsion) and into the juvenile and criminal court systems (e.g., by being arrested in the community while disengaged from school). About 15 years ago, leaders of the National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC) – a large, non-profit institution that has performed mediation and conflict resolution work in San Diego County since 1983 – grew concerned about their local school-to-prison pipeline. This prompted NCRC to build on their offerings for adults, adding in programs for youth. Since then, NCRC has grown into playing an intermediary role among organizations in the county working to support youth at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. As an intermediary, NCRC has taken on efforts to build infrastructure, fundraise, collect data, advocate, and coordinate stakeholders around particular topics. For this report, we describe how NCRC became an intermediary focused on supporting at-risk youth in San Diego County, its implementation in practice, and its resulting challenges and successes.

As the second most populous county in California, with about a quarter of its population under the age of 18, San Diego's school-to-prison pipeline indicators have improved since NCRC began its youth-focused work (alongside those of the state). School suspension rates declined in the county and the state from 2012 to 2020 – in the county, rates went from about 45 students per 1,000 to about 20 (KidsData(a), 2023). Juvenile felony arrest rates also declined both in San Diego County and throughout the state from 1980 to 2020, from about 30 per 1,000 youth in the county to about three (KidsData(b), 2023).

However, as overall trends have improved, racial disparities in both suspensions and arrests persist, with suspension gaps showing especially little change. In San Diego County in 2020, Black and Hispanic youth experienced significantly higher rates of suspensions than white youth: 57.3 per 1,000 Black youth, 29.1 per 1,000 Hispanic youth, and 17.2 per 1,000 white youth received suspensions (KidsData(c), 2023). Black and Hispanic youth were also eight and two times as likely to be arrested for a felony than white youth, respectively; there were 9.9 per 1,000 Black youth, 2.5 Hispanic youth per 1,000, and 1.2 white youth per 1,000 arrested for felonies in 2020 (KidsData(d), 2023). State- and county-wide improvements are promising, but there is still more work to be done to increase racial equity and further reduce suspensions and juvenile arrests.

We describe our approach to studying such efforts next, and then describe NCRC as an organization supporting youth in San Diego County. We then describe two strategies NCRC engages in to stem the school-to-prison pipeline: Building school and district capacity to implement restorative practices with students and managing a youth diversion program. When

describing each strategy, we highlight successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. We end by presenting lessons learned for other communities and suggestions for additional research and policy. We hope this report is useful for organizations elsewhere that either want to take on such a coordinating role or otherwise improve ongoing work to serve youth at risk for justice system involvement.

Approach

To learn about NCRC's work as an intermediary in San Diego County, we conducted 49 individual and group interviews with more than 50 people. We interviewed representatives from NCRC; retirees with a history of working with NCRC; community organizations providing youth services; local universities; county government officials from the District Attorney's (DA) office, the Public Defender's office, the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE), and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG); school districts within the county; philanthropic foundations; and individual donors. The interview protocol was semi-structured, with questions for each interviewee allowing for follow-up probing. Topics covered in the interviews included organizational history and current details; funding and budgets; details on the current work to support youth, primarily focused on restorative practices and diversion; success and challenges; and advice for other intermediaries. We coded interview notes in Excel using a coding scheme we developed to organize interviewee responses around key elements of NCRC's programs (e.g., restorative specialists' work with school staff) as well as interviewee perceptions about implementation and impact. We then analyzed these codes to identify the common themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1994) and findings we present in this report, which are not intended to represent the perception of each individual interviewed.

National Conflict Resolution Center

Here, we discuss the origins of NCRC's work to stem the school-to-prison pipeline, its leadership and organizational structure, its current work with youth, and some of the facilitators of its success to date.

Countywide Collaboration: The Origins of NCRC's Youth Support in San Diego

Interviewees reported that historically, there had been a very strong sense of community and cooperation among San Diego criminal justice stakeholders. These included the DA's office, the Public Defender's office, the court system, the Probation Department, the Sheriff's office, law enforcement agencies, SDCOE, community-based organizations, and several school districts in the county. Together, subsets of these stakeholders set up systems to support adults through programming and diversion, including a homeless court, a mental health court, a military diversion court, and a dependency drug court. NCRC interacted with these agencies in its

training and mediation work with adults and was part of this ecosystem in the early 2000s as conversations turned toward youth.

In 2009, The California Endowment funded an initiative to improve community health in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego. Through this work, the community hoped to keep youth out of juvenile hall and improve relationships between the community and the police. According to interviewees who were involved with this work, citizens participated in informal house meetings and strategic "momentum" teams to develop a program focus, eventually settling on "peace promotion" through restorative community conferences (RCCs). RCCs were face-to-face meetings between a person who had harmed the community and a person in the community who was harmed by the action. Meetings were facilitated by a neutral party with the goal of repairing harm and restoring community well-being (CA Community Justice, 2006). NCRC's role was to serve as the third-party facilitator of the RCCs, which entailed communicating with the youth who caused the harm in the City Heights neighborhood, the victim, and multiple advocates for each. If youth participated in the RCC, they could potentially have their arrest record sealed. NCRC worked with a multitude of public stakeholders to set up this local youth diversion program, including the Public Defender, the District Attorney (DA), the Sheriff, local law enforcement, and the Probation Department. NCRC won a bid to administer the RCCs for five years. They received referrals for diversion both pre- and post-filing, from the Public Defender, law enforcement, community partners, school police, and the Probation Department. Once youth participated in an RCC with their victim and completed tasks identified in the RCC to restore community well-being, the RCC was considered successful and the youth were eligible to have their record sealed when they turned 18, meaning destruction of the record of arrest. In its role, NCRC documented the RCC and youth completion of the agreed-upon restorations.

Leadership and Structure

NCRC's work for adults and for youth is organized into six program areas, overseen by 25 board members (and 14 advisors to the board) with backgrounds in business, law, mediation, education, Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI), or health care. Among their senior staff reporting to the president, NCRC employs program directors, including the directors of NCRC's Training Institute and their West Coast Resolution Group (WCRG), associate directors, and program managers. The rest of their staff fall under six main umbrellas: mediation (for free and for a fee), training (for free and for a fee), restorative practices, and juvenile diversion. NCRC offers free mediation services to the community for landlord/tenant, parent/teen, and other local disagreements as well as services for a fee to external clients through the WCRG; their mediators all have legal backgrounds. Similarly, they offer free training to the community on communication and conflict resolution as well as training for a fee to clients; their trainers come from a wider variety of backgrounds, with experience in DEI, education, the arts, and program management. Restorative practices and JDI staff implement NCRC's youth-focused work aimed at stemming the school-to-prison pipeline. The six programs are largely distinct in terms of

responsibilities, leadership, and communication, and some interviewees have expressed interest in increasing collaboration, especially between the restorative justice and juvenile diversion programs. NCRC has four offices throughout the county: their main office downtown, their Center for Community Cohesion in Southeast San Diego, an office in City Heights, and an office in North County. They also maintain a permanent presence as a partner at University of California's San Diego's Park & Market community space (NCRC About Us).

Current Approaches to Addressing the School to Prison Pipeline

At the time of this writing, NCRC was supporting youth through the following four programs. This report focuses on the first and third programs.

1. **School-based implementation of restorative practices (RP)**. NCRC's restorative practices program focuses on providing school and district staff with restorative tools, training, and coaching. The goal of this work was to help schools build positive relationships among adults and students, with every student able to identify at least one caring adult in their school. Having positive relationships should then improve student behavior (both minor misbehavior such as disrespect, but also more major incidents like physical fighting) and adult responses. A second goal of restorative practices is to provide an alternative to exclusionary discipline, or to accompany a suspension with a restorative conference that allows victims to have a voice in the process.
2. **Stop the Hate.** "Stop the Hate," takes NCRC's restorative practices work to youth themselves (rather than just to adults) to address othering, bullying, microaggressions, and other hate-based activities that isolate youth (which can lead, according to interviewees, to criminal behavior). The program teaches youth to be upstanders (meaning that they would "stand up" for a student who was being bullied), to stop othering, and to create a sense of belonging within a peer group. The goal is to empower youth to have a stake in the outcomes of their peers. We do not describe this program in this report.
3. **Juvenile Diversion Initiative (JDI).** NCRC administers a juvenile diversion program, JDI, to connect youth with community supports and prevent involvement with the juvenile justice system. This program focuses on wellness and pro-social activities in addition to restorative justice, working with youth who have been arrested for misdemeanors or non-violent felonies before they are formally charged.
4. **Thrive**. Thrive is a voluntary post-diversion program. This program is designed to continue to serve youth in JDI after they complete the two-to-six-month diversion program. We do not describe this program in this report.

Facilitators of Success

NCRC has intentionally implemented strategies to sustain its youth focused work. Here we describe how they coordinate stakeholders, build capacity internally, monitor and improve quality, and raise funds.

Coordinating Stakeholders

NCRC plays a key role in ensuring that county stakeholders collaborate to support those at risk for, as well as current, justice-involved youth. For example, the NCRC team working on diversion meets with the DA's office every week to check in, raise concerns, and correct course as needed. Similarly, the NCRC team working on restorative practices meets weekly with staff from SDCOE and the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) to brainstorm and problem solve with each other. These organizations also directly interact with each other. For example, the DA sends parents who are hesitant about JDI to the Public Defender's office, who explains the pros and cons of fighting the case instead, nudging them toward diversion in the interest of minimizing system involvement. As the fiscal agent for JDI, NCRC funds many community organizations to provide pro-social and other services to youth in JDI. It provides spaces in its offices for youth programming, strategically located in under-resourced neighborhoods.

Internal Capacity Building

Throughout the past three years, NCRC has hired more than 30 new people to support their youth-focused work. According to an NCRC leader, this has, "Transformed our organization." Other interviewees echoed this enthusiasm, saying, for example, "We have hired people with heart and passion," and we have "super high-quality people ... A big reason why we make it work is the quality of people: [Their] experience, lived experience, and commitment to the work." Most of their new hires are from historically marginalized communities; this is intentional, to match youth with case workers and other staff from similar backgrounds. As an intermediary, NCRC networks with a wide range of organizations and individuals locally and nationally, increasing awareness of NCRC's role and reputation in youth-focused work and facilitating recruitment for restorative practices and JDI positions. Many of the staff hired to youth-focused work are funded through time-limited grants or contracts, such as JDI, but that has not deterred offer acceptance rates.

Continuous Quality Improvement

NCRC is also intentional in regularly collecting feedback from outside partners and making concomitant changes. For example, they have added staff to fill new roles, based on feedback and requests from weekly meetings with the DA's Office. They also act quickly, hiring new staff within months of realizing that they need to better address a challenge, such as parent involvement or community representation. NCRC has also restructured its contract with the DA's office in response to mutually agreed upon improvements. For their restorative practices work, they are investigating how to explain the integration of RP into other school-wide behavior approaches in professional development sessions to improve support for this approach among school stakeholders.

Fundraising

NCRC leaders have increased their budget for youth work using a specific strategy. Since the early 1990s, NCRC's budget has grown by more than 300%. The budget for youth work grew as NCRC followed a consistent strategy: Start with small amounts of foundation funding, develop evidence of effectiveness, and use that evidence to garner public funding and private donations. For example, NCRC's diversion work began in the mid 2000s in the City Heights neighborhood with support by a grant from The California Endowments. After leading this diversion work for five years, NCRC bid on, and won, a contract with the DA's office to administer a much larger (countywide) youth diversion program (JDI). As the fiscal agent for JDI, NCRC now funds many community organizations to provide pro-social and other services to youth. NCRC is starting Thrive with foundation funding but is hoping that a government agency will eventually fund it, following their model of starting with philanthropic funding and moving to government support.

NCRC Adult and Youth Support Programs

In this report, we focus on two of NCRC's strategies to stem the school-to-prison pipeline: building capacity for restorative practices in districts and school and managing a juvenile diversion program. We start by describing the restorative practices work.

Restorative Practices in San Diego County Schools

What are restorative practices and why are they used in schools?

In recent years, schools and districts throughout the country have been increasingly adopting a restorative justice (RJ) approach to building safe and positive school communities and to establishing strong and healthy relationships within those communities. Broadly, the restorative justice approach seeks to repair harm by providing an opportunity for the person causing harm and the individual(s) or community harmed to communicate about a conflict or crime and create an agreed-upon outcome to repair relationships within the community. A nationally representative survey of school principals found that almost two-thirds (62 percent) of schools were using restorative justice practices in the 2021-22 school year (Perera and Diliberti, 2023). This has been part of a growing effort to shift away from punitive and exclusionary discipline practices (i.e., zero-tolerance approaches leading to suspensions and expulsions), which some research has found to be ineffective and discriminatory, and to shift towards more equitable outcomes for all students (Fronius et al., 2018; Gregory and Fergus, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Within this broad frame as a non-punitive approach to conflict and a relationship-based approach to community, the exact definition of restorative justice varies, as do the practices it encompasses (Fronius et al., 2018; Zakszeski and Rutherford, 2021). Generally, RJ focuses on restoring relationships in a community after harm occurs.

Restorative practices (RP) is the term used to describe actions taken within the education system that reflect a restorative justice approach. RP can consist of both practices that *respond* to conflict or harm as well as practices that proactively *prevent* conflict or harm (Augustine et al., 2018; Gonzalez, 2012; Kline, 2016). Augustine et al (2018) summarized five commonly implemented categories of RP by school administrators, counselors, social workers, and teachers, all of which NCRC trains people on:

- affective statements (explanations of how others' behavior affected oneself, used in prevention and response situations),
- proactive circles (circle discussions involving shared feelings, experiences, and ideas intended to build trust; prevention practice),
- responsive circles (circle discussions about moderately serious conflicts or tensions intended to repair harm and restore relationships; responsive practice),

- small impromptu conferences (similar to responsive circles but involving more direct questioning of the wrongdoer to challenge negative behavior and also of the harmed party to engage them in reparations, often involving fewer people; responsive practice),
- restorative conferences (meetings among the youth who caused serious harm and the harmed, including parents and other supportive adults for both parties, held to discuss the incident, understand its impacts, and make a plan for restitution; responsive practice).

What is the evidence base for restorative practices and what are resulting best practices?

Rigorous evaluations of RP indicate that the five commonly implemented practices described above can decrease suspension rates and racial disparities within suspension rates and improve school climate and peer relationships, but impacts on academic outcomes are mixed and implementation is challenging. In a randomized controlled trial by Augustine and co-authors (2018), teachers in the schools assigned to implement RP reported frequent use of affective statements and proactive, responsive, and small impromptu circles. The researchers found that overall suspension rates and racial suspension rate disparities decreased more in RP schools than non-RP schools, and that teachers rated climate in RP schools higher. Another study found a decrease in suspension rates (but not in race-based disparities in the rates) after schools had implemented restorative justice training (Hashim, Strunk, and Dhaliwal, 2018). In a second randomized control trial, Acosta and co-authors (2019) did not find significant effects of RP on school climate-, peer relationship-, or student development-focused measures in schools assigned to implement RP. Though the comparison schools were not assigned to implement RP school-wide, there were teachers with prior exposure to RP and whose practices were similar to the five components of RP (e.g., use of affective statements). Student reports of their teachers' use of RP techniques (regardless of experimental RP assignment) were significantly positively correlated with the school climate, peer relationship, and student development measures, and significantly negatively correlated with physical and online bullying. This indicated that while RP was implemented inconsistently–student reports of RP prevalence were similar between treated and untreated schools–the practices still demonstrated important ties to student well-being. However, there is still some uncertainty about RP's academic effects: in Augustine et al., there were not clear positive effects on state assessment scores, and even some negative impacts for middle schoolers.

The mixed evidence on RP implies that using such practices can affect suspension rates and disparities within them, but will not always do so, and might detract from academic instruction. Perhaps RP can be woven into the school day in a way that does not displace academics. For example, teachers might reduce the number of proactive restorative circles they hold during class time by instead greeting students as they enter a classroom one-on-one. That said, researchers have been unable to document the effect of precise restorative practices – for example, we do not know if greeting students one-by-one is as effective as a proactive circle, how many proactive

circles are needed to build strong relationships, or how many restorative practice coaches per school are ideal.

How has state policy influenced the adoption of RP in San Diego County?

Over the past decade, California legislators and administrators have changed the education code to reduce punitive school discipline, in part as an effort to narrow racial disparities in suspension and expulsion rates. In 2013, the California Assembly passed Assembly Bill 420, (AB 420, 2014) which eliminated suspensions for students in grades K-3 as well as expulsions for students in all grades for "willful defiance" (e.g., talking back to a teacher or dress code violations). According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) at the time, willful defiance was the category of suspension offenses with the greatest racial disparities (ACLU, 2014). Assembly Bill 420 made California the first state in the country to eliminate suspensions for K-3 students, and the ban was made permanent through a 2018-2019 trailer bill. Then, in 2019, California Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill 419 (SB 419, 2019), which expanded the ban on willful defiance suspensions to students in grades 4-8, followed by Bill 274, which took effect on July 1, 2024, and bars willful defiance suspensions in grades 6-12 until July 2029. A press release from the sponsoring senator described willful defiance as "a highly subjective category of suspensions… disproportionately used to discipline students of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities" (Skinner, 2019). In addition to language about prohibiting willful defiance suspensions for K-8 students, California Education Code 48900 also states that supports such as restorative practices (along with others like trauma-informed practices and schoolwide positive behavior support interventions),

> May be used to help pupils gain critical social and emotional skills, receive support to help transform trauma-related responses, understand the impact of their actions, and develop meaningful methods for repairing harm to the school community (SB419, 2019).

Some California districts have taken additional steps to advance this shift away from exclusionary discipline methods. SDUSD, for example, replaced its discipline plan with a Restorative Discipline Policy in 2020, with the explicit intention of building "anti-racist and restorative school communities" (BP 5144, 2020). In our interviews with NCRC staff and NCRC's partner organizations, we heard that while some educators had been proponents of RP for many years, these state and district shifts in policy precipitated escalating interest in restorative discipline and in NCRC's services. Districts and schools that had been routinely suspending students for willful defiance, for example, began to search for interventions that would prevent misbehavior and effectively address it without a suspension.

How is NCRC implementing restorative practices in partnership with others in San Diego County?

NCRC acknowledges that RP are "deeply rooted in ancient traditions from around the world." In their 2018 research review, Fronius et al., (2018) note that literature consistently indicates that the origin of restorative justice comes from pre-modern native cultures of the South Pacific and the Americas. These cultures approached conflict or social concerns by emphasizing accountability for those that cause harm, in tandem with "a plan for repairing the hurt and restoring the offender to acceptance. The emphasis on the harm done rather than the act is a widely recognized principle across the RJ (or RP) literature" (p. 5). A few interviewees noted the indigenous roots of RP and voiced a sense of dissonance around promoting RP as a *new* education strategy, arguing that educators should know that there is a history of implementing a restorative approach to justice in communities across the world.

NCRC began supporting school-based RP largely in response to conversations coming out of their work in City Heights about how the school-to-prison pipeline could be interrupted earlier in its cycle through restorative work in schools. NCRC first contracted with SDUSD to provide schools with restorative tools, training, and support. Since then, NCRC's work has expanded to seven additional school districts in the county. School districts have paid for NCRC's services, and the SDCOE has contributed funds to some of these efforts. SDCOE, which has been committed to RP in schools for over a decade, also provides training and coaching support directly to districts and is a key collaborator in NCRC's work in schools. Interviewees noted that the NCRC RP team meets weekly with staff from SDCOE and SDUSD to brainstorm and problem solve with each other.

In each of the eight districts with which NCRC holds a contract, NCRC's overarching goal is to "cultivate relationships that help build and sustain a culture that is positive and welcoming for all students, staff, and families" (NCRC website, 2023). In theory, having such a culture would thwart inter-personal conflicts and violence, and also provide a foundation for addressing such when they do occur. To this end, NCRC assigns staff (called restorative specialists) to contracted districts. Restorative specialists generally spent about one day a week at the NCRC office, and the remaining four days in the field working with schools and districts. When they were in a school, they were typically training and coaching educators to implement RP with students. Less often, restorative specialists provided direct support to students and families, sometimes facilitating restorative circles or conferences in response to a specific conflict or incident.

Within this general model, the specifics of NCRC's contract with each school district varied. Most districts had two restorative specialists from NCRC assigned to support restorative practices, but this varied from one to four specialists depending on district needs. Each restorative specialist had a district point person with whom they worked, but the role of that point person (e.g., an Integrated Student Services Director or a Director of DEI) differed depending on the district. The number of schools in which restorative specialists worked varied

from district to district as well: in one district two specialists were responsible for working across 28 schools, in another two specialists were responsible for eight schools in total, and in one case a restorative specialist was "embedded" in a single school. In addition to these structural differences, interviewees also shared that the specific topics and types of support that restorative specialists provided differed between school districts. Specialists developed and facilitated a range of tailored trainings for schools or districts. As one NCRC lead explained, "We don't come in with our own agenda. We have a [needs assessment] and then meet the priorities of the district." Specialists developed a RP implementation plan based on outcomes of the needs assessment process and school priorities.

NCRC was increasingly defining their work as aligned to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) tiers to help educators understand how NCRC's RP work complemented districts' pre-existing frameworks for improving school culture and climate, as well as student behavior. Interviewees reported that many of NCRC RP school districts have implemented (PBIS). According to the Center on PBIS (2023), PBIS is "is an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health." Through PBIS, educators provide a continuum of support, matched to student needs, and categorized by three tiers. Tier 1 provides universal, positive, and proactive support for *all* students and educators. Tier 2 provides, for *some* students, an added layer of support targeting specific needs. Tier 3 provides intensive and individualized support for the *few* students who need it. According to interview participants, explaining alignment could improve buy-in for RP at schools, particularly with educators perceiving the adoption of RP as "one more thing" for teachers to do, or an additional burden on time.

Interviewees categorized the majority of NCRC's RP work in schools as falling under Tier 1, supporting educators in building relationships and belonging for all students and staff through training staff on activities like using affective statements and community circles and agreements, setting a positive school-wide climate and culture. A smaller proportion (roughly 20 percent, according to one interviewee) of NCRC's work fell under Tier 2, supporting educators in responding to misbehavior in classrooms and facilitating restorative conversations. Only a small percentage (roughly 5 percent) of NCRC's focus fell under Tier 3, in which a restorative specialist might facilitate a restorative conference in response to an offense (e.g., vandalism), with a school staff member observing for training purposes. A conference could also be used alongside a suspension. A school's code of conduct might call for an automatic suspension for bringing a weapon to school, for example. A conference could be held after the suspension, both to allow people to express the gravity of bringing a weapon to school and to acknowledge that the harm doer is nonetheless welcome back into the school community.

Signs of success

Through our analysis of interview data, we identified three signs of success related to NCRC's restorative practices work in schools.

Building and benefiting from positive relationships

Restorative specialists knew they had to have a strong working relationship with the leaders and educators in their assigned schools. According to a superintendent from a partner district, this was one of NCRC's strengths: "NCRC and dedicated staff were true partners with principals... they were trusted." Trusting relationships were viewed by restorative specialists as a key factor enabling their work, with one noting that "if there's no relationship there [with teachers] then they're not going listen to what I have to say. Any things I advise, or I suggest they're going be like, 'who are you?'… If we have a more collaborative relationship, then they're more likely to listen to me." Another specialist described being "embedded in the culture of the school. Even though I was an employee of NCRC, I was treated like an employee of the school." This facilitated consistent communication between the restorative specialist and key school staff about students. The specialists also benefited from support from district leaders and school board members. In one district, according to a specialist, "[The school] board was advocating for us. They were communicating to their principals at sites [encouraging them to work with us]."

Improving school climate

According to interviewees, findings from an evaluation of RP across five high schools in the Escondido Union High School District (EUHSD) support the value of RP in the school district, where NCRC had been working for two years. Interviewees noted that teachers and staff who implemented RP had more positive perceptions of their school climate on surveys. The same was reportedly true for students who were exposed to RP at school.

Expanding to new districts

NCRC's expansion from collaborating with one school district at the outset of its school-based RP work to its current slate of eight different school districts in San Diego County is a signal of their success. Interviewees reported a variety of reasons for districts asking NCRC for RP support. Some districts were seeking support for reducing suspensions or absenteeism, some already championed RP and wanted to deepen the work, others were looking to incorporate RP in response to state or district policy. Regardless of what brought a district to the RP table, NCRC has established itself as "the biggest restorative practices partner in [San Diego County]" according to an interviewee from a partner organization.

What challenges has this work encountered?

NCRC has encountered challenges as well as successes. This section focuses on three challenges that emerged in our analysis of NCRC's RP work: Getting buy-in, implementing RP without a supportive policy infrastructure, and NCRC internal staff burnout.

Buy-in

Despite being able to build trust with many adults in districts and schools, a majority of the restorative specialists we interviewed described some level of pushback to adopting RP as well. One interviewee named this as the biggest challenge that NCRC's RP work had faced in the previous year. Reasons for lack of buy-in ranged from perceiving RP as too permissive to teachers believing that they are already restorative and do not need more training to teachers and school leaders alike not wanting to take on something "new."

Interviewees explained that some educators and community members perceived that RP did not hold young people to sufficient account or sufficiently punish them to impact future behavior. Interviewees described some school leaders as unwilling to depart from a "tough love" approach. One person explained that even when school leaders are theoretically on board with restorative practices, they sometimes revert to traditional discipline responses in practice, especially when faced with external pressure to do so (and this could happen in places without policies aligned to restorative practices, which we discuss in the next section):

> [T]here are [principals and assistant principals who] theoretically believe in the approach. But, then when you're in the moment and you have pressures coming from security, from parents, from teachers to like 'make them bleed' or 'make them suffer,' then all of that training or what they theoretically believe in kind of just goes out the window.

These reports align with what we heard from NCRC partner organizations. Roughly half of the partner interviewees highlighted resistance from school staff and board members, parents, community members, police, and even unions as a challenge in their restorative practice work. For example, according to one interviewee, when one district moved to revise their district policy in response to new CA education code, school board members pushed back because they wanted a zero-tolerance policy to continue. Even once the board approved the new policy, "Not everyone was happy. The union rose up, community members were upset, school police were upset. Restorative practice was misunderstood as just focused on black kids or just slapping kids on the wrist."

About half of the RP staff told us that they had experienced challenges gaining buy-in from teachers, especially veteran teachers who either did not agree with the restorative practice approach or teachers who felt like they did not need any extra training to learn about implementing RP in their classroom. As one specialist explained,

> Teachers feel like they already know all of it, have other things to do, they said, 'this is just common sense.' Teachers don't even want to be teaching, let alone going through our training. They were not paying attention. Busy on phone. Eye rolling. Saying, 'I don't need this.'

Teachers also hesitated to add RP as one more thing on their plate, when they felt they were already at capacity in terms of their existing workload.

Similarly, other interviewees noted that school leaders could be reluctant to take on the additional work of restorative justice. One specialist described how working in a district that had not been focusing on RP was challenging, relaying that district leaders who had already been spearheading restorative practice work allowed NCRC to hit the ground running in a way that they could not in a district where RP was unknown.

Interviewees shared that to gain buy-in, they were working to dispel myths about RP (e.g., RP means no discipline), and that they were being mindful of how they were framing RP for stakeholders. For example, one restorative specialist shared that they framed their presence in schools as being there to learn from teachers and that this had helped teachers warm to the idea of RP. In some cases, specialists even disguised the name of their training to stave off knee-jerk negative reactions to the notion of restorative justice. Interviewees also shared that resistance receded as stakeholders gained a better understanding of RP and saw the practices in action.

Misaligned district policies

Interviewees relayed that the impact and uptake of RP was limited when they were not backed up by restorative policies. One specialist explained that the "bottom up" work of supporting RP in schools (e.g., NCRC Specialists training teachers) needed to be met by "top down" policies and procedures:

> There's a gap because we are doing restorative practices, but a lot of policy is just still punitive. That's the bigger challenge - having policies and procedures on campuses in the district that are restorative so that we can truly have a wrap around. So, when stuff comes up, not only are we teaching and training and coaching, it's what the policy says is what we need to do.

The misalignment of district discipline policies that supported or elevated punitive practices over RP created challenges with consistency in responding to behavioral infractions. From the perspective of interviewees, reverting to punitive practices was easier when administrators were overwhelmed or overburdened when policies permitted those practices. Similarly, these punitive instead of restorative policies meant educators with differing perspectives could inconsistently respond to a similar behavioral infraction (e.g., one student might be required to participate in a restorative circle while another, for a similar offense, receives an in-school suspension).

Staff burnout

Some interviewees brought up concerns about the workload and potential burnout of NCRC's RP staff, citing the high number of schools to which they were assigned, the amount of travel required to visit schools and districts, or the stressful nature of the work. One restorative specialist said, "…it's like we hit the ground running in August and then learn as we go... We are super busy right throughout the entire school year." Another specialist who primarily worked with students at threat of suspension told us that they were not sure they could do this work much longer: "The work is personally stressful. I need time to regroup, to take care of my spirit and

wellbeing; this takes a lot of emotional and physical energy; working with negative emotions is draining."

Opportunities for Improvement

Here, we present some of the unresolved tensions and unanswered questions surrounding RP that might represent opportunities for improvement. These come from questions posed by our interviewees and our own analysis of how the RP program aligned to recommended practices.

What is the relationship between RP and other schoolwide initiatives?

California's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is described as, "a comprehensive framework that aligns academic, behavioral, social-emotional learning, and mental health in a fully integrated system of support for the benefit of all students" (SDCOE, undated). The CA MTSS framework includes five domains (e.g., the Family and Community Engagement domain) that have a total of eleven key features (e.g., Trusting Family Partnerships). RP can be found under the Integrated Supports Domain and the Strong and Positive School Culture Feature, but only in the supporting descriptions (i.e., not in the primary framework graphic). Likewise, the SDCOE website has information about MTSS, PBIS, and RP but very little information about how these different frameworks fit together. In practice, interviewees spoke to the ways that RP connected to PBIS and MTSS. For example, restorative specialists told us they collaborated with individuals and groups who were responsible for PBIS or equity and inclusion efforts at the schools in which they worked. Some also reported that they had aligned the trainings they had developed to PBIS, or that they had facilitated a training specifically on the connection between PBIS and RP. One interviewee explained,

> Our district in particular during our trainings - we have… the PBIS wheel and RP wheel right next to each other. Whoever is doing the training says, 'look at these – how do you think that they align or misalign?'...it's describing it in a way where it isn't something you have to do, this is just another tool in your toolbox… This is the research on how it does work. I think particularly with PBIS and with restorative practice, there are a lot of overlaps.

Still, some of NCRC's partners encouraged NCRC to be more proactive in learning about, and aligning with, other frameworks. Clearly articulating the alignment could improve buy-in and support for implementation of NCRC's RP, perhaps overcoming some teachers' perceptions that RP is "just one more thing." NCRC was doing just this in aligning their RP work with the PBIS tiers.

To what extent should intermediaries providing RP support in schools and districts customize or standardize support for schools and districts?

Interviewees spoke to the tension between consistency in the supports NCRC restorative specialists were providing across schools and districts and being responsive to the local context in which they were working. NCRC restorative practice staff and NCRC's local partners agreed

that schools and districts varied widely in terms of how they operated, what they needed, and what they wanted. Therefore, some interviewees explained, NCRC's flexibility and willingness to customize restorative supports and trainings was an asset. As one partner explained,

> No one NCRC team is doing the exact same training. I questioned this at first. But now I think this is good because it fits the culture of a district. They are really taking the culture and climate of a district and developing something that best suits where people are coming from.

However, some yearned for more consistency for two reasons. If there were go-to training materials, this might allow the specialists to spend more time training, coaching, and supporting adults in the school, rather than developing new materials. Furthermore, specialists wondered what others were doing and if there were aspects of others' training that might improve their own. At the time of our interviews, NCRC was taking steps towards increased consistency by developing a shared drive of trainings and other resources that restorative specialists could use so that they were not reinventing the wheel, though the use of these trainings and resources was to be optional.

How should intermediaries balance a focus on Tier 1 supports with requests from educators for Tier 3 supports?

NCRC RP staff acknowledged that although they viewed the bulk of their work as falling under the MTSS / PBIS Tier 1 category of building relationships among all students and staff, they sometimes bumped up against educators who viewed RP primarily through the lens of discipline. One staff member explained,

> It's really hard… to change that mindset…[but] we can't even address discipline unless we address Tier 1 and Tier 2 of restorative practices... [if a] student doesn't feel like they belong here… why would they care about hurting people. If they don't feel a sense of belonging or sense of community here, it means much less to them to hurt you. They don't have a relationship with you.

Another staff member told us that they had been seeing an increased demand for Tier 2 and Tier 3 support. This might signal a need for further clarity around where RP fits within school districts' broader MTSS or PBIS framework.

Should restorative practice intermediaries fill gaps in capacity, or should they build capacity?

As described above, school and district staff might not have time, resources, and/or the bandwidth to add RP on top of the existing demands of their work as educators. As one restorative specialist explained, educators are already "filled to the brim" in terms of their capacity to take on "another thing." This may be especially true for "another thing" like RP which, one partner interviewee explained, is not a magic silver bullet but "a way of being" that requires significant time and investment. A qualitative study by Lustick (2020) found that restorative practices were only constructive when students were addressed by peers or adults who were prepared for the discussion; when the adult leading the discussion or making a

decision was ill-prepared to listen to students or manage difficult topics, the time spent was considered counterproductive by observing researchers. These challenges align to some partner interviewees' statements that a benefit of working with an organization like NCRC is that it can lift some of a school's burden by filling in capacity gaps for schools and districts. One superintendent shared that,

> [It was] so reassuring for principals that they didn't have to put the time in to do restorative work. School leaders are putting out fires all day. NCRC could put the time necessary to do the restorative work.

However, according to interviews with NCRC staff, NCRC's mission is not to *be* the capacity but to *build* that capacity in the districts and schools with which they work. Interviewees explained that ultimately, NCRC's model is that restorative specialist staff, "work [them]selves out of a job" over the course of several years by training and coaching school staff so that they have the capacity to implement RP without NCRC support. This model surfaces other questions, though. For example, how long should NCRC intend to contract with a district to build capacity that will be sustainable after they leave? And what does it mean for NCRC staff morale to know that their role in a district is intentionally temporary? And is this approach feasible given opposition, time constraints, and typical turnover rates? Over time, NCRC might build an experience-based model in which the initial involvement with the district is more concentrated upfront and, over time, decreases, while NCRC maintains some "tune up" presence. This would allow the schools to take greater ownership and utilize their built capacity, maintain a source of expertise/resource for the school district, and allow NCRC to monitor the fidelity of practices.

The Juvenile Diversion Initiative

We now turn to the second NCRC strategy we describe in this report: The Juvenile Diversion Initiative. While NCRC worked directly with districts to implement restorative practices as a protective measure and alternative to exclusionary discipline, they also worked with the county District Attorney's office to divert arrested youth into programming before they would be formally charged of a crime. We describe this effort next, starting with a general overview of diversion programs.

What are youth diversion programs?

Youth diversion programs steer youth away from formal involvement with the justice system and might also provide them with resources to address the root causes of their misconduct. These resources can include mentorship, health care, pro-social activities, or job training, and some programs include a restorative component involving victims. Youth diversion programs aim to reduce recidivism (e.g., re-arrests) and might improve community well-being while still recognizing and addressing the harm caused by youths' actions (ARCC, 2023).

What are the best practices for youth diversion programs based on rigorous evidence?

Youth diversion programs have been found to reduce recidivism (e.g., re-arrest) rates and lower justice-related costs (Applegarth et al., 2023; Kethineni and Grubb, 2020), but there is still more to learn about which program components are important and why. To answer these questions, the Applied Research Center for Civility (ARCC) at UC San Diego published a report describing best practices for youth diversion programs, based partly on rigorous evaluations and partly on expert guidance.

They considered who should be eligible for diversion and recommended that programs divert youth who would otherwise face more severe consequences. In other words, if the offense is very minor and unlikely to lead to incarceration, entering a formal diversion program might not be worth the resources spent. But policymakers should prioritize diversion if the experience in a diversion program would be less severe (e.g., less disruptive, onerous, traumatizing, stigmatizing) than the likely alternative (e.g., prison time, a criminal record, prolonged probation).

Among those who are then eligible, diversion program leaders should select participants randomly when program space is limited and use structured decision-making tools, such as dispositional matrices, to determine program admission as well as the requirements in each youth's case plan. If youth are monitored during the diversion program, they also recommended limiting the program duration to reduce chances of program violations leading to subsequent system involvement.

During a diversion program, ARCC recommends individualized case management, drawing on the strengths and needs of both the youth in question and their community. Indeed, they strongly recommend involving the community in diversion programs, both to establish trust with youth and caregivers and to maximize impact by working with the people and in the places that most influence youths' lives. Programs can share responsibility with community members by, for example, publishing and communicating program information and establishing community-led advisory boards to provide oversight. Also, the authors recommend that any supports or programs be offered in the youths' communities by local organizations. This promotes lasting relationships, culturally competent providers, and a heightened awareness for youth of one's role and impact within one's community. If there is funding for programming, this could lead to longer term improvements in community infrastructure as well.

The youth's family is an important community stakeholder. When initially communicating with youth and families, diversion programs managers should be prepared to reach out early and often to increase program uptake. During the intake process, program leaders typically construct written diversion agreements specifying "program objectives, expectations, and conditions" and set concrete action plans so the youth and their parents are well-prepared to comply. Some diversion programs offer food/housing/employment assistance to youths' families, acknowledging that these supports can help the youth in the long run.

Lastly, ARCC highlights the importance of continually collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data about program processes and impacts. Community-based youth diversion programs are unique to their partners and youth populations, so they must be continually adapted and improved to meet each set's circumstances.

What does the NCRC JDI program look like?

Prior to introducing its JDI program in November 2021, the San Diego County District Attorney's Office (referred to here as the DA) sent out a request for proposals from organizations seeking to administer the program who could help identify youths' needs and connect them with appropriate community resources; NCRC's proposal was selected. Subject to program capacity constraints and eligibility requirements (JDI youth must be aged 12-18 and charged with a misdemeanor or non-violent felony), the DA's office refers youth to NCRC for diversion. Diversion occurs after review of the case and before any charges are filed for the offense.

NCRC proceeds to contact the youth and their families, consistent with the recommendation to include families as important stakeholders, as well as victims involved in the crime. If both the youth and their legal guardians consent to participating in the program, they attend an intake meeting with an NCRC case manager. In this meeting, the case manager administers the San Diego Risk and Resiliency Checkup-II (SDRRC-II) assessment–an example of the structured decision-making tools discussed as a best practice–to determine the youth's risk level for recidivism and inform their individualized case plan. The plan will have a mandatory wellness component, which can take the form of therapy, decision-making courses, and/or substance abuse treatment, and requires that the youth participate in pro-social activities (which they call "events"), e.g., mentoring, outdoor recreation, boxing, ceramics, or something else relevant to the youth's interests. NCRC has hired community outreach specialists and was working with about 40 community organizations across the county as subcontractors to provide the pro-social, mental health, mentoring, and other services the youth engage with during JDI, in alignment with the recommendation to involve and invest in community-based organizations. A small proportion of youth engage an education advocate to work with school district leaders to address specific academic barriers. If the victim consents, they will join the youth at the end of the program in a restorative conference. The conferences seek to repair harm by providing an opportunity for the person causing harm and the individual(s) or community harmed to communicate about the crime and create a just outcome to repair relationships within the community. In these conferences, the person harmed is able to express how the crime affected them, the youth also has opportunities to speak, as do others affected by the crime (e.g., family of the person harmed). The goal of the conference is to come to an agreement on a reparation. For example, someone who shoplifted might spend time in that store organizing a stockroom. If the victim does not consent (or if there is not a victim), the case manager hosts a JDI plan update meeting with the youth and their family at the end of the program. If youth successfully complete all the programming stipulated in their plan during the JDI's two- to six-month period, they will

graduate, and the DA will dismiss their case and have their arrest record sealed. NCRC administers post-program surveys to youth, caregivers, and victims, gathering information on program strengths and weaknesses in accordance with the best practice of data collection (SANDAG, 2022).

Signs of success

Through our analysis of interviews and focus groups, we identified four signs of the success of JDI.

Overall participant satisfaction

To date, the majority of youth who have consented to JDI have successfully completed it (79%), a rate similar to a program in LA County (Taylor et al., 2022) and higher by about 15% than one in Illinois (Kethineni and Grubb, 2020). JDI participants and their caregivers have a very positive impression of the program: No parents and no more than five percent of youth rated any of nine program resources (e.g., restorative practices, substance abuse treatment) as unhelpful. On this same survey, parents reported the strongest program impacts on their connection with community resources ('I feel more connected to services available in my community,' 'I know where to go in my community if my child or family need(s) services in the future') (SANDAG, 2023).

Case manager-youth relationships

Multiple sources touted the case managers, specifically, as invaluable. During intake, the case managers devoted time and energy to creating individualized case plans, asking nuanced questions beyond the risk assessment tool's indicators to get to the root of youths' challenges and interests. Later, when overseeing the case plan, they spent time building relationships with the youth. One case manager emphasized,

> All aspects of the program are important . . . but the most important one is the one-on-one connections made with the case managers. We build trust, speak human to human, and show our vulnerabilities. These outings to get nails done and conversations [with the youth] make a huge difference.

Program participants seemed to agree; in the post-program satisfaction survey, youth and their parents both identified case management as the most helpful JDI resource of the nine options provided. When asked about their program satisfaction, youth most strongly supported statements about their positive relationships with staff members ('staff respected my cultural background,' 'staff understood my needs,' and 'there was someone I could talk to when needed') (SANDAG, 2023).

Mental health resources

Providing mental health resources and referring youth to outside services can reduce criminal outcomes (Applegarth et al., 2023). For those who did receive mental health services, case managers, youth, and their parents reported that they were critical. As noted above, JDI includes a mandatory "wellness" activity –mental health support services can fill this requirement. However, the needs and risk assessment tool did not usually identify a need for individual therapy (although the case manager could still suggest it). Of youth who had completed the program by October 2022, 73% had participated in a decision-making course, 15% had participated in individual therapy, and 0.5% had participated in family therapy or substance abuse treatment (SANDAG, 2023). Although 15% is a small percentage, not only did the risk assessment results not typically support individual therapy, but when considering individual counseling, case managers reviewed youths' insurance coverage to determine if they could continue mental health counseling beyond their time in JDI. The decision-making course was much more common, and reportedly helpful— one case manager described it and its instructor as "great and super engaging," making it a good option for low-risk youth. But the 15% who received the individual counseling benefited from it, according to them as well as their parents and case managers.

Collaboration with the District Attorney's Office

Lastly, NCRC employees consistently reported feeling supported by the DA and her office. Representatives from both organizations met weekly. NCRC appreciated that the DA and her staff were open to questions and cooperation, and that the DA was willing to make mid-course corrections (e.g., approving funding requests for victim participation in events).

What challenges has this work encountered?

This section identifies challenges NCRC's JDI work encountered based on our interview data.

Caregiver consent

There have been higher than anticipated rates of caregivers declining to participate in JDI or withdrawing their consent partway through. Half of all unacquired cases were lost due to caregiver rejections, in comparison with only 13% in Los Angeles (LA) County's diversion program (Taylor et al., 2022). When asked about their reasons for declining to participate, caregivers cited (1) believing that they would win in court, (2) that they preferred the youth be punished for their actions, or (3) that their child was not ready/mature enough to invest in and benefit from the program (SANDAG, 2023).

To address (1), caregivers wanting to take the case to court, caregivers were directed to the Public Defender's Office to explain the court proceedings and encourage them to consider JDI. To address (2), caregivers' misgivings about JDI not being sufficiently punitive, NCRC is

working to increase victim participation, so more youth participate in the restorative conference aspect of the program. NCRC has not yet made concrete plans to address (3), caregivers' reservations about youths' readiness to put effort into JDI but could share with caregivers the ways in which the program and its partners actively target youth engagement, reflection, and growth. More generally, NCRC plans to provide additional training to case managers about how to explain the JDI program to caregivers (SANDAG, 2023), and the District Attorney plans to create a peer program for caregivers of graduated JDI youth to act as ambassadors to other caregivers in the community.

Case manager workloads

Case managers reported caseloads of 30 to 40 youth as well as ample workloads per case, often driven by receiving what they described as high-risk, high-needs youth. Other youth diversion programs, such as LA County's, have also noted high caseloads as a challenge (Taylor et al., 2022). NCRC has addressed caseload and workload burden by hiring case plan coordinators. These staff members help case managers with a slew of tasks, including logging communications with youth in an online database, filing intake and graduation paperwork, hiring translators to communicate with parents, helping youth register for events, and driving youth to events. In this way, they lessen the scope of case managers' work. However, many case managers still reported being overbooked. It is unclear exactly what NCRC's next step will be to address this, but they are aware of case managers' ongoing needs for relief and support.

Victim engagement

Of the 77 percent of graduates whose case had involved a victim, 64 percent of their victims declined to participate in JDI, despite all being invited to do so (SANDAG, 2023). Reasons for declining included feeling negatively about participating, being unavailable, and feeling uninvested because time had passed. Case managers also shared examples of victims only interested in punishment, rather than in interacting with the youth or in determining reparations toward them. In an attempt to overcome these barriers, NCRC hired a victim engagement coordinator whose explicit responsibilities included reaching out to victims, ascertaining what they wanted from the JDI process, inviting them to program events (if they were minors), and encouraging them to be part of the restorative conference at the end of the program.

Program Persistence

About 20 percent of youth do not complete JDI, a rate like that of other youth juvenile diversion programs, indicative of a common challenge (Taylor et al., 2022; Kethineni and Grubb, 2020). Those who do not complete the program will have their arrest filed and proceed through the court system for the offense. The two most common reasons for failing to complete JDI, representative of more than half of unsuccessful participants, were youth failing to attend events and youth more broadly losing contact with NCRC. LA County's juvenile diversion program

also reported these as top reasons for program failure. Though this is likely due to a combination of factors, there is evidence that transportation barriers play a role. In the post-program survey, youth most strongly disagreed with ‘The location(s) of the services were convenient’ of nine statements about their program (SANDAG, 2023). To address this and encourage persistence more broadly, NCRC has hired two new case plan coordinators whose duties not only include driving youth to events but also conducting home visits for youth who have become disengaged. NCRC has also contracted with Hop, Skip, and Drive—a rideshare service for kids.

Support for Graduated Youth

NCRC partners expressed misgivings about youths’ abilities to absorb JDI’s lessons in six months, comparing this length to drug court’s eighteen months. Case managers felt similarly, saying, “JDI is structured for lower needs kids . . . [the higher needs kids] finish the program but still need services,” and, “Kids say–all the time–that they will have nothing to do after the program ends.” Case managers mentioned difficulties with continuing access to therapy, because after JDI’s maximum of six months of sessions, many providers would not accept youths’ insurance. Despite JDI’s aim to produce enduring benefits by connecting youth to community resources, it is likely that many could benefit from ongoing assistance. To this end, NCRC has received foundation funding to design their Thrive program. Thrive will allow youth to maintain relationships with their case managers; participate in ongoing events and services, like mentoring; and join a network of JDI alumni. Its new director hopes to structure it around youths' self-defined goals to give them ownership over their extended case management. Youth will identify not only what they want to accomplish but also the external and internal resources they possess to achieve their goals, to develop organizational and executive functioning skills.

Opportunities for Improvement

Here, we present some of the unresolved tensions and unanswered questions surrounding JDI that might lead to opportunities for improvement. These come from questions posed by our interviewees and our own analysis of how the JDI program aligned to recommended practices.

Which youth should be included in a diversion program?

Although the DA’s office spent considerable time developing objective criteria for referral, some interviewees thought that JDI constituted net-widening, meaning that many referred youth had likely committed one-off crimes, in which they used poor judgement but had little need for a months-long program. One interviewee lamented that, “it’s really hard to know who are the ones who need something that’s more high intensity . . . and who are the ones who just need the opportunity to stay out of the court system and get their charges dropped.” JDI attempts to allow for flexibility in this regard: Case managers can waive the wellness component for youth already in therapy and the pro-social component for those already involved in extracurricular activities. Still, diversion can be a disruptive process for youth and a costly expense to taxpayers if many of

those participating are unlikely to reoffend. According to Kazemian (2021), most individuals stop engaging in criminal activities when they are aged 18-24. She argues that in many cases, criminal justice processing during this period might delay the process of desistance from crime that would otherwise occur naturally.

Should diversion programs require caregiver consent?

One obstacle to JDI uptake has been a lack of caregiver consent, and JDI is taking steps to address reluctance. However, there is debate about diversion programs' consent policies and whether parental consent should be required at all. A toolkit published by the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) addresses its pros and cons, acknowledging the legal role that caregivers play in consenting to health care and counseling (as well as their more-developed decision-making skills), while also emphasizing inequities in youths' access to supportive, present caregivers (UCLA School of Law, 2018). Its authors cite a report published for Los Angeles County's Office of Youth Diversion and Development (YDD), based on interviews with system-involved youth, community-based organization (CBO) employees, and juvenile defense lawyers, in which UCLA researchers recommended that YDD not require caregiver consent. Instead, they suggest obtaining consent from a trusted adult recommended by the youth and allowing the youth to consent for themselves if that fails. In this way, youth with foster parents who prefer to stay uninvolved, or undocumented, punitive, or otherwise absent/antagonistic caregivers are not denied the opportunity to participate in diversion, and programs still try to involve youths' support networks in the process (Baik et al., 2019). That said, it might be risky to accept youth into a diversion program if parents/caregivers are actively antagonistic and have opportunities to undermine participation.

How should the community be involved in diversion programs?

It is commonly stated that diversion programs that involve the community are stronger than those that do not. ARCC asserts that community collaboration provides more contextual knowledge and subsequent credibility to program leaders, inspiring more trust from program participants (ARCC, 2023). One interviewee relayed that activities offered within a youth's community tend to be ones that youth want to participate in instead of feeling forced to visit. And, if services and activities are provided within one's community, it is more likely that participation can be sustained, given transportation challenges. Community organizations might also provide jobs for youth, which might stem criminal behavior.

However, NCRC has faced some challenges identifying and partnering with community resources. One NCRC interviewee reported that they partnered with 70 organizations in their first year, but that the number is now down to 40. It can be difficult to find organizations that meet all JDI's requirements and are also located in youths' communities. There are a number of logistical reasons for this: According to an interviewee, "Some grassroots ones can't meet the bar for reasons related to liability insurance, background checking, etc.," while others are not set up

to adhere to all JDI requirements (e.g., providing attendance data). Interviewees also noted that CBOs tend to rely on "dynamic personalities," making their high turnover rates especially detrimental. Some CBOs were reportedly excited to be part of JDI, but only received a handful of youth referrals, which did not make up for the costs of instituting an attendance system. Others shared having to pull from their endowments or write grants to cover the full costs of serving JDI youth, asking if they could receive more dollars per youth served.

How important is it for youth to acknowledge their crime and express regrets?

How important is it for a diversion program to lead youth to understand and acknowledge the impact they have had on others? Multiple interviewees acknowledged that some youth say they do not regret their crime, only that they were caught. Many are reportedly simply anxious to have their charges sealed. A partner recounted, "I will observe youth and note when they're deflecting/not taking responsibility. We try to change this by telling them our story: Here are the consequences and this is what it cost me." Although this step—acknowledging what they did was "wrong" and expressing regret—seems important, research has not yet demonstrated that this disposition prevents re-offending. It might also be that many youth are unable to acknowledge culpability or understand the harm caused by their behavior given their age and developmental stage.

How can diversion programs provide education support?

Only a small proportion of youth, less than 10%, took advantage of JDI's education advocate resources (SANDAG, 2023). Those youth who did make use of this educational service found the support to be very helpful, second only to case management (SANDAG, 2023). Case managers agreed, attesting that the education advocates successfully moderated conversations between parents and schools, overturned expulsions and suspensions, and generally were "thorough, detailed, responsive, and passionate."

The low take-up rate for an advocate is in part because advocating within an education system takes time and can exceed the duration of JDI. Moreover, these advocates are to be used only when there is a barrier in the youth's school district to providing a quality education. For example, an advocate might argue that a youth's 529 plan is not being implemented. But education advocates do not provide tutoring or other academic support. This does not mean that youth do not need that sort of education support. Notably, of a list of five program impacts on a post-program survey, youth rated their performance and relationships in school to have improved the least, and out of a list of eight, parents rated their child's performance and attendance in school to have improved the least. Ideally, diversion services would include tutoring or educational supervisors who check in with youth regularly about grades and attendance.

How important is restorative justice to diversion?

Some diversion programs include a restorative aspect; others do not (Anwar et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2022; Applegarth et al., 2023). JDI includes an optional restorative conference at the end of the program among the youth and the victims of the crime. Interviewees noted three reasons why this is important. First, victim interaction may have significant impacts on youth and their future behavior: Hearing how a victim was harmed could affect future decision-making. Second, having a restorative conference can counter the opinion that diversion programs do not hold the youth accountable: Facing a victim, apologizing, and creating a plan for restitution is a form of accountability. Third, if a victim feels healed by the process, there might be less antagonism between the youth and the victim going forward. In some cases, the victim is a classmate or otherwise resides in the same community and ongoing tensions or fighting could lead to additional crimes. An interviewee stressed that restorative conferences can be a process for "making sure all the parties involved leave a situation whole, or at least less broken."

Other diversion programs include more flexible restorative components, recognizing that this aspect is important but that engaging victims can be difficult and even counterproductive if the victim or perpetrator are not ready to make amends. These include indirect mediation (a negotiation through a neutral third party involving no face-to-face contact between the victim and the youth) and community panels (to discuss the crime and some sort of public restitution even when there is no single victim). These were found to be equally effective at reducing recidivism in a study of youth in the Midwest, and more effective than the traditional justice system (Bouffard et al., 2016). Participants in Manhattan's Project Reset can discuss conflict resolution and restorative justice in their group sessions, but do not engage in any direct conferences with victims (Anwar et al., 2023).

How should a diversion program support caregivers?

Case managers relayed concerns about caregivers and their ability to support success in JDI. Many parents lacked resources. For example, case managers observed that, "Parents can't drive them [the youth] to events." Case managers also worried about parents' perceptions of therapy and special education services. One suggested, "We should be helping parents understand what therapy is or what a mental disability is and how it relates to education." Other interviewees were simply worried in general that post JDI, youth would lose the stability and infrastructure provided by the program, noting that, "Parents can't manage time well." They wondered if some youth would be better able to realize JDI's benefits if they could return to more stable homes, suggesting that JDI provide more direct support for caregivers. Although NCRC provides some gift cards for grocery and gasoline purchases, they, of course, cannot provide cars or sufficient resources or more time to families, so case managers brainstormed on how to help parents manage their time well, or better understand mental health needs, perhaps by offering classes to parents.

How to determine if a diversion program is effective?

What measures best capture a diversion program's efficacy? Experts typically study some form of recidivism–e.g., rearrest, new charges, delinquent adjudications, future probations–on various timelines. As noted above, some diversion programs have been found to be effective in terms of reducing recidivism rates (Applegarth et al., 2023; Kethineni and Grubb, 2020). Why would one expect recidivism rates to be better if a youth participates in a diversion program rather than proceeds through the juvenile justice system? Perhaps because youth do not experience negative peer effects they might encounter in jail, traumatic court experiences associated with the juvenile justice system, or the stigma of a conviction. Another reason could be that diversion programs like JDI focus specifically on helping the youth understand the harm they caused, which might change their future behavior. Or youth might receive support during a diversion program that improves their resiliency to risk. SANDAG examined impacts on resiliency using youths' strength index scores on pre- and post-JDI program risk assessments. Youth exhibited higher strength scores after completing JDI, indicating higher levels of dynamic protective factors, like family support and positive peer relations, and lower levels of dynamic risk factors, like anger management issues and substance abuse (SANDAG, 2023). However, although only 66 youth had graduated from JDI early enough to be included in their analysis, SANDAG did not find significantly different recidivism rates (referrals were 12% for JDI youth and 11% for the comparison, bookings were both 5%, sustained petitions were 6% for JDI youth and 5% for the comparison group, or institutionalizations six months post-program) between JDI graduates and a matched group of youth from 2019, prior to JDI (SANDAG, 2023). Of course, there might be differences in recidivism rates in the longer term. Also, observing similar recidivism rates when comparing a diversion program to a traditional juvenile justice path might be good enough. Diversion programs might be less expensive than more traditional punitive processes. More importantly, juvenile justice researchers and practitioners tend to advocate for the least restrictive option when holding youth accountable, knowing that most youth offenders will not become criminal adults.

Learnings and Opportunities

This report chronicles NCRC's work as an intermediary organization supporting youth in San Diego County. We focused on two of their strategies: Providing restorative practice training and coaching in districts and schools and leading a youth diversion program. We observed the activities NCRC undertook to cement partnerships and grow as an organization and in terms of the number of adults and youth served. These included internal capacity building, continuous quality improvement, and adherence to a fundraising model that sequenced private and public dollars.

We also learned about what youth, their case managers, their parents, and other adults thought was working, in terms of helping them develop and desist from crime. What worked during the diversion program would likely work in the prevention space as well. Through both restorative and other diversion practices, NCRC staff endeavored to build positive relationships among youth and adults, provide spaces where youth felt welcome, give youth voice and choice, facilitate mental health support, build cognitive decision-making skills, connect youth to peers in pro-social activities, provide mentoring, and offer education advocates. All youth could benefit from some or all these activities, and it is likely that organizations and individuals outside of school districts will continue to be involved in delivering them.

Here, we describe some discrete lessons drawn from our analyses of the interview data that might be useful for intermediaries in other communities providing such youth services. We close with suggestions for further research and policy considerations on supporting youth who disengage from school or engage with the juvenile justice system.

Lessons Learned

Successful intermediaries are strategic about funding and quality improvement

NCRC has expanded its services and increased its budget over time. Leaders have been able to divert resources to new lines of work as they learn of needs, a luxury not all can afford. They have had this luxury, in part, because of their funding model. They have been able to persuade philanthropic individuals and foundations to support early design efforts, turning to more stable government funding to sustain ongoing implementation. NCRC leaders also assiduously focus on quality improvement. They communicate regularly with their funders and other stakeholders and act quickly to improve. For example, in the past year, they have hired a victim engagement specialist, case manager coordinators, and parent outreach specialists – all in response to needs expressed by the DA or learned of through ongoing formative data collection. This willingness to

solicit feedback and make improvements builds trust, facilitating funding from both foundations and government sponsors.

Prioritize education services in diversion programs

Very few youth in JDI made use of an education advocate. Although there are good reasons for that, youth and parents also reported in exit surveys that their educational standing had not improved. It is highly likely that youth who are committing crimes are also struggling in school (paving the school-to-prison pipeline). We recommend that those creating diversion programs include an education support component if the youth has below average test scores, chronic absenteeism, or a history of suspensions. Tutoring, for example, has been shown to be an effective intervention to improve students' academic outcomes when delivered three or more times per week for 30-60 minutes at a time by (the same over time) content experts (Dietrichson et al., 2017; Steenberg-Hu & Cooper, 2014; Cook et al., 2015).

JDI already contracts with a mentoring organization that provides youth with an open space to discuss their challenges and successes with peers and trusted adults. Research has shown that mentoring programs can be effective at increasing school attendance and decreasing school discipline referrals, but that it's important not only to build trust and connection with students and families, but also to monitor student attendance, behavior, and academic performance and to link students to additional staff and resources (Rumberger et al., 2017; Guryan et al., 2020). JDI could consider working with their current subcontractor to expand mentors' responsibilities or subcontracting with new educational supervisors.

Self-regulated learning, value affirmation, and growth mindset lessons are three other evidence-based education interventions that could be administered by tutors or mentors. Self-regulated learning involves setting goals, monitoring one's progress, and adapting along the way. College students who received lectures, examples, and practice prompts to guide their understanding of this skill mastered more math topics than students who simply received additional content-related instruction (Miller and Bernacki, 2019), and the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) found positive effects of this intervention on writing practices for students with disabilities (Graham et al., 2016). Value affirmation prompts students to identify and reflect on their values to cement their senses of self, worth, and ability; it acts as a counter to social identity threat, in which minorities conform to stereotypes more in situations where they feel more marginalized. Studies on middle schoolers have shown that marginalized students who completed value affirmation exercises experienced higher grade point averages and test scores than those who did not (Cohen et al., 2009; Hanselman et al., 2014). Lastly, growth mindset exercises present students with evidence for one's capacity to learn and then ask them to write about their own experiences with developing new skills. A What Works Clearinghouse review of growth mindset interventions on incoming college students found positive effects on academic achievement, though no effects on college enrollment or persistence (WWC, 2022).

Prioritize case managers in diversion programs

NCRC staff, parents, and youth praised the JDI case managers. They were ranked the highest of all forms of JDI support and were described by youth as being culturally competent. They interacted the most frequently with youth in the program and therefore had opportunities to serve as mentors and coaches, as well as monitors of compliance. NCRC made wise investments to protect their time, such as hiring case management coordinators to take on administrative tasks. The case managers were at risk of burning out due to their caseloads and the high needs of the youth. Similar organizations could learn from NCRC's work to hire culturally competent case managers and then support them and protect their time.

Support families through diversion programs

The case managers and others involved in supporting youth in JDI acknowledged that youths' families also needed support, especially if they were to continue the programs and services launched through JDI. They needed logistical support like transportation, but also support in how to best communicate with, help, and even discipline their children. Other diversion programs use multisystemic therapy (MST) or functional family therapy (FFT) frameworks, which seek to address issues across multiple settings (school, home, work) and provide direct family counseling, respectively. Both approaches, focusing on family support, have been shown to effectively reduce recidivism rates (Applegarth et al., 2023; Kethineni and Grubb, 2020). An example of such programs is the *Parenting with Love and Limits* program, which offers meetings centered on different parenting tensions and solutions in a group setting with multiple families (Karam et al., 2015). Another program, *Step Up*, addresses youth-initiated family violence by offering lessons on self-awareness, healthy behavioral habits, setting boundaries, and restorative practices to both youth and caregivers (Gilman & Walker, 2019). Quasi-experimental studies of these programs found them to reduce youth arrest and court referral rates, though the literature is still relatively limited (Applegarth et al., 2023).

When training educators on restorative practices in schools, first build positive relationships with school leaders and educators

Not all adults in schools were open or receptive to implementing restorative practices with students. NCRC restorative specialists struggled to get buy-in from all educators as they attempted to provide training. Educators expressed that they were too busy for RP, or already knew all they needed to know, or didn't think RP would be helpful or hold students to enough account, or that they should not be the ones implementing the practices. The specialists learned that they first needed to build a trusting relationship with those educators. In building these relationships, the specialists strategically employed restorative practices – asking personal questions, carefully listening to the answers, avoiding shaming, and the like. Once the restorative specialists felt accepted, welcomed, and trusted, they could help educators consider the benefits

of restorative practices and learn how to implement them. In this way, they also modeled how restorative practices could improve relationships.

Opportunities for Future Research

How can diversion programs involve the community?

As noted above, it makes intuitive sense that communities should be part of a diversion process. Youth live in communities and likely affect them when they commit a crime. Victims and other community stakeholders should have a say in how those youth are held accountable, which will also increase community buy-in. Also, if diversion programs are hosted in communities, the services provided and activities the youth engage in should be easier to sustain beyond the duration of the program.

However, there are still questions about what it means to center the community in diversion programs. Is the community where the youth lives or where they committed the crime if those are not the same? What is the community boundary? It must be wide enough to capture community organizations providing services. Who are the community actors who should be involved, and how are these people identified, trained, or compensated? And if local community organizations are to provide pro-social opportunities for the youth, how are they compensated if the youth's family cannot afford to pay? Case studies of exactly how a "community" is part, or the lead of, a diversion program would be beneficial.

Should diversion programs include a restorative justice component?

JDI had a restorative component, though it did not always work as intended, particularly given some victims' reluctance to participate. Other diversion programs have encountered similar barriers and have instead offered restorative conversations in group therapy, indirect mediation, or restorative panels to discuss impacts on victims and restitution. Prior research has found that these types of restorative approaches can be as effective as conferences where a victim is present. But how important is a restorative approach, in general, as part of a diversion program? It seems important if a goal of diversion is to understand and accept one's accountability. Future research could compare outcomes from diversion programs with and without a restorative approach.

Which youth should be diverted?

Juvenile diversion programs might have many goals, including reducing youths' formal justice system involvement, encouraging youth to acknowledge (and regret) their actions, and providing needed services, which might include mental health counseling or connecting youth to a mentor or education advocate. While some of these goals can be complementary, others might be opposing. For example, if charges are sealed quickly to reduce system involvement, there

might be a lower priority on encouraging youth to complete programming to acknowledge their actions and/or to receive services. Both goals are valuable–that youth who made a mistake should have the opportunity to remain out of the justice system and that youth should learn that their actions have consequences and develop a stronger conviction for obeying the law. There are risks at play in pursuing each. If just sealing records, programs forgo the possibility of providing support to youth in need, such as mental health services that they might not otherwise receive. However, when delivering programs and services, programs run the risk of incurring unnecessary financial costs by providing services to youth who might not need them or of stigmatizing youth who are not likely to reoffend otherwise. Further research could unpack the trade-offs associated with these risks. Studies such as a randomized control trial in which some youth have their charges sealed immediately while other groups are assigned to different levels of required programing might provide information about the efficacy (and cost efficiencies) of different diversion models.

How are restorative practices best deployed in a school?

Interviewees noted that schools in San Diego County were implementing multi-tiered systems of support and that restorative practices could be embedded within these systems. In such systems, there are typically some supports offered to all students (which could be the proactive elements of RP such as community-building circles), some supports offered to some students (such as circles responsive to misbehavior in a classroom), and some supports offered to a few students (such as a restorative conference to accompany a suspension). However, schools do not have to select RP as part of their systems of support. There are alternative approaches. Furthermore, a school might decide to implement RP only for the proactive components or only for the conferences, and not try to fit RP within a greater system of supports. Current research does not help practitioners make these decisions. The extant research literature on RP is mixed, with studies finding positive impacts on climate and suspension rates, but some negative impacts on academic outcomes. Can RP be implemented to achieve benefits without negative outcomes? And if so, what is the most effective way for a school to implement RP, particularly if it has adopted a multi-tiered system of supports?

If a school or district does decide to adopt restorative practices, how should they best engage with outside experts? NCRC worked with school staff to implement both proactive and reactive practices. On the latter, NCRC was often the go-to for running a restorative conference in response to grave misconduct (e.g., violence, weapon use, drug use). Restorative conferences take time to plan, with multiple conversations with conference participants ahead of time. School leaders argued that they did not have the time to plan for these conferences, nor the skill to lead them. They take skill to run, particularly given that victims participate and often have preconceived notions of what accountability or restitution will be. Is it practical to build conference leadership skills in school personnel, particularly given that these positions turn over frequently? Or should an intermediary invest instead in a stable of experts who can run these

conferences, while building educator capacity for the more proactive activities associated with restorative practices?

Policy Considerations

Although this report is targeted to intermediaries working in communities to improve youth outcomes, some of our findings are relevant for policymakers. Expanding and extending funding for in-school, high dosage tutoring, for example, might reduce risky behaviors by improving school engagement. Two related themes that run through our interviews, and across the two NCRC strategies, are the impacts of both isolation and negative peer effects. Through the JDI intake process, NCRC has learned that most of the youth who were arrested did not have strong ties to positive peers. And when JDI ends, case managers hear variations of youth reporting that they will "now," have nothing to do. Expanding funding for afterschool programs, including opportunities for jobs, could help connect youth with positive peers and adults. There is rigorous evidence supporting summer jobs programs for youth indicating that afterschool job opportunities could have similar benefits, in terms of reducing involvement with crime and increasing school engagement (Leos-Urbel et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2014; Modestino and Paulson, 2023; Heller, 2013, Kessler et al, 2022; Bailey and Merritt, 1997). We encourage the federal government, states, and cities to invest in creating jobs and other positive, pro-social, afterschool programs for youth.

References

ACLU of Southern California, “CA Enacts First-In-The-Nation Law to Eliminate Student Suspensions for Minor Misbehavior”, ACLU of Southern California, September 27, 2014.

Acosta, Joie, Matt Chinman, Patricia Ebener, Patrick Malone, Andrea Phillips, and Asa Wilks, “Evaluation of a Whole-School Change Intervention: Findings from a Two-Year Cluster-Randomized Trial of the Restorative Practices Intervention”, Journal of youth and adolescence, Vol. 48, No. 5, pp. 876-890. May 2019.

Anwar, Shamena, Melissa M. Labriola, Stephanie Brooks Holliday, and Matthew L. Mizel, A Process and Outcome Evaluation of Project Reset, RAND Corporation, RR-A2473-1, 2023. As of December 26, 2023: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2473-1.html

Applegarth, D. Michael, P'trice Jones, and Stephanie Brooks Holliday, Promising Services for Justice-Involved Youth: A Scoping Review with Implications for the Los Angeles County Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2023. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1663-2.html.

Augustine, Catherine H., John Engberg, Geoffrey E. Grimm, Emma Lee, Elaine Lin Wang, Karen Christianson, and Andrea A. Joseph, Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? An Evaluation of the Impact of Restorative Practices in a Mid-Sized Urban School District. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2840.html.

Augustine, Catherine H., Jennifer Sloan McCombs, and Garrett Baker, Summer for All: Building Coordinated Networks to Promote Access to Quality Summer Learning and Enrichment Opportunities Across a Community. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA205-1.html. Also available in print form.

Baik, Susan, Oceana R. Gilliam, Lindsay Graef, Nicollette Lewis, and Erica Webster, *Establishing a Consent Policy for Youth Diversion in Los Angeles County,* Los Angeles: 2019.

Bailey, Thomas and Donne Merritt, *School-to-Work for the College Bound,* Berkeley: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California at Berkeley, 1997.

Bodilly, Susan J., Catherine H. Augustine, and Laura Zakaras, Revitalizing Arts Education Through Community-Wide Coordination. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008. https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG702.html. Also available in print form.

Bouffard, Jeff, Maisha Cooper, and Kathleen Bergseth, "The Effectiveness of Various Restorative Justice Interventions on Recidivism Outcomes Among Juvenile Offenders," Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 465-480, 2017.

California Assembly, Pupil Discipline: Suspensions and Expulsions: Willful Defiance, Bill 420, September 2014.

California Community Justice Project, "Restorative Conferencing," California Courts, September, 2006.

California State Senate, Pupil discipline:suspensions: Willful defiance, SB-419, September 2019.

Cohen, G. L., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., & Master, A. (2009). Recursive Processes in Self-Affirmation: Intervening to Close the Minority Achievement Gap. Science, 324(5925), 400-403. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1170769

Cook, Philip, Kenneth Dodge, George Farkas, Roland G. Fryer, Jonathan Guryan, Jens Ludwig, Susan Mayer, Harold Pollack, and Laurence Steinberg. (2015). "Not Too Late: Improving Academic Outcomes for Disadvantaged Youth (WP-15-01)," *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Np. 28531.* March 2021.

Darling-Hammond, S., Fronius, T.A., Sutherland, H. et al. Effectiveness of Restorative Justice in US K-12 Schools: a Review of Quantitative Research. *Contemp School Psychol* 24, 295–308 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-020-00290-0

Dietrichson, Jens, Martin Bøg, Trine Filges, and Anne-Marie Klint Jørgensen. "Academic Interventions for Elementary and Middle School Students With Low Socioeconomic Status: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 87m No. 2, pp. 243-282. 2017.

Fronius, Trevor, Sean Darling-Hammond, Hannah Persson, Sarah Guckenburg, Nancy Hurley, and Anthony Petrosino. "Restorative Justice in US Schools: An Updated Research Review." *WestEd* (2019).

Gilman, Amanda and Sarah C. Walker, "Evaluating the Effects of an Adolescent Family Violence Intervention Program on Recidivism among Court-Involved Youth", *Journal of Family Medicine,* Vol 35, pp. 95–106, May 2019.

González, Thalia, "Keeping Kids in Schools: Restorative Justice, Punitive Discipline, and the School to Prison Pipeline," *Journal of Law & Education*, Vol. 41, No. 2, April 2012, pp. 281–335.

Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Santangelo, T. (2016). Self-regulated strategy development for students with writing difficulties. What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_srsd_111417.pdf

Gregory, Anne and Edward Fergus, "Social and Emotional Learning and Equity in School Discipline," *The Future of Children,* Vol 27 No 1, Spring 2017.

Guryan, Jonathan, Sandra L. Christenson, Ashley E. Cureton, Ijun Lai, Jens Ludwig, Catherine Schwarz, Emma Shirey and Mary Clair Turner. "The Effect of Mentoring on School Attendance and Academic Outcomes: A Randomized Evaluation of the Check & Connect Program." *NBER Working Paper Series* (2020): n. pag.

Hanselman, P., Bruch, S. K., Gamoran, A., & Borman, G. D. (2014). Threat in Context: School Moderation of the Impact of Social Identity Threat on Racial/Ethnic Achievement Gaps. Sociology of Education, 87(2), 106-124. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040714525970

Hashim, Ayesha K., Katharine O. Strunk, and Tasminda K. Dhaliwal. "Justice for All? Suspension Bans and Restorative Justice Programs in the Los Angeles Unified School District", *Peabody Journal of Education,* Vol. 93, No. 2, pp. 174-89.

Heldman, Jessica, and Melanie Delgado, *The Evolution of Juvenile Justice and Probation Practices in California,* Children's Advocacy Institute, University of San Diego School of Law, 2022.

Hellar, Sara B., *Experimental Evidence on Improving the Human Capital of Disadvantaged Youth,* dissertation, Ann Arbor, Michigan, University of Chicago, 2013.

Karam, Eli, Emma M. Sterrett, and Lynn Kiaer. "The Integration of Family and Group Therapy as an Alternative to Juvenile Incarceration: A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation Using Parenting with Love and Limits,"*Family Process*, Vol. 56, pp. 331-347, June 2017.

Kazemian, Lila, "Pathways to Desistance from Crime Among Juveniles and Adults: Applications to Criminal Justice Policy and Practice," NCJ 301503, in *Desistance From Crime: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice,* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 301497, 2021.

Kessler, Judd B., Sarah Tahamont, Alexander Gelber, and Adam Isen, "The Effects of Youth Employment on Crime: Evidence from New York City Lotteries," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management,* Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 710-730, 2022.

Kethineni, Sesha and Jonathan A. Grubb, "An Evaluation of Redeploy Illinois on Juvenile Reoffending", *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, Vol. 65, No. 10-11, pp. 1192-1223, 2021.

KidsData(a), "Students Suspended from School," webpage, 2023. As of December 14, 2023: Students Suspended from School - Kidsdata.org

KidsData(b), "Juvenile Felony Arrest Rate", webpage, 2023. As of December 14, 2023: Juvenile Felony Arrest Rate - Kidsdata.org

KidsData(c), “Students Suspended from School, by Race/Ethnicity”, webpage, 2023. As of December 14, 2023: Students Suspended from School, by Race/Ethnicity - Kidsdata.org

KidsData(d), “Juvenile Felony Arrest Rate, by Race/Ethnicity”, webpage, 2023. As of December 14, 2023: Juvenile Felony Arrest Rate, by Race/Ethnicity - Kidsdata.org

Kline, Dana M. Stewart, “Can Restorative Practices Help to Reduce Disparities in School Discipline Data? A Review of the Literature,” *Multicultural Perspectives*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2016, pp. 97–102.

Legislative Analyst’s Office, “How much does it cost to incarcerate an inmate?”, webpage, 2022. As of December 14, 2023: Legislative Analyst's Office (ca.gov)

Leos-Urbel, Jacob, Amy Ellen Schwartz, Meryle Weinstein, and Beth C. Weitzman, *More Than a Paycheck? The Impact of Summer Youth Employment on Students’ Educational Engagement and Success*, New York: New York University, Institute for Education and Social Policy, Vol. 02-12, June 2012.

Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development, *Process and Implementation Evaluation of the Los Angeles County Department of Youth Development*, 2023.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage.

Miller, C. J., & Bernacki, M. L. (2019). Training preparatory mathematics students to be high ability self-regulators: Comparative and case-study analyses of impact on learning behavior and achievement. High Ability Studies, 30(1-2), 167-197. https://doi.org/10.1080/13598139.2019.1568829

Modestino, Alicia Sasser and Richard Paulsen, “School’s Out: How Summer Youth Employment Programs Impact Academic Outcomes,” *Education Finance and Policy,* Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 97-126, 2023.

National Conflict Resolution Center, “About NCRC”, webpage, 2023. As of December 14, 2023: About Us | National Conflict Resolution Center (ncrconline.com)

Nickow, Andre, Philip Oreopoulos, and Vincent Quan. “The Impressive Effects of Tutoring on PreK-12 Learning: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence,” *NBER Working Paper No. 27476*. 2020.

Perera, Rachel and Melissa Diliberti. “Survey: Understanding how U.S. public schools approach school discipline.” The Brookings Institution website. 2023.

Public Safety Canada, “Risk-need-responsivity model for offender assessment and rehabilitation 2007-06”, webpage, 2022. As of December 14, 2023: Risk-need-responsivity model for offender assessment and rehabilitation 2007-06 (publicsafety.gc.ca)

Robinson, Carly, Matt Kraft, Susanna Loeb, and Beth Schueler. “Accelerating Student Learning with High-Dosage Tutoring,” *EdResearch for Recovery Project*. 2021.

Rumberger, Russell W., Howard Addis, Elaine Allensworth, Robert W. Balfanz, Julie Bruch, Erin Dillon, Debra Duardo, Mark Dynarski, Joshua R. Furgeson, Madhavi V. S. Jayanthi,

Rebecca Newman-Gonchar, Kate Place and Christina Clark Tuttle. “Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools. Educator's Practice Guide. What Works Clearinghouse. NCEE 2017-4028.” 2017.

SANDAG, “San Diego County District Attorney Juvenile Diversion Initiative Annual Report 2022”, Criminal Justice Research Division, SANDAG, March 2023.

San Diego County Office of Education, “What Do We Mean By MTSS?”, webpage, undated. As of December 14, 2023: SDCOE - What do we mean by MTSS.pptx - Google Slides

Schwartz, Amy Ellen, Jacob Leos-Urbel, Megan Silander, and Matt Wiswall, *Making Summer Matter: The Impact of Youth Employment on Academic Performance,* working paper 03-14, New York; New York University, Institute for Education and Social Policy, November 2014.

Skinner, Nancy. "Gov. Newsom Signs SB 419 Ending Willful Defiance Suspensions." Press release, California State Senate District 13, 9 September 2019, https://sd09.senate.ca.gov/news/20190909-gov-newsom-signs-sb-419-ending-willful-defiance-suspensions.

Steenbergen-Hu, Saiying and Harris Cooper. “A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of intelligent tutoring systems on college students’ academic learning,” *Journal of educational psychology*, Vol. 106, No. 2, pp. 331. 2014.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology: An overview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 273–285). Sage Publications, Inc.

UCLA School of Law Criminal Justice Program. Addressing Legal Issues in Youth Diversion: A Toolkit for Prosecutors. UCLA School of Law, 2018, https://law.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/PDFs/Criminal_Justice_Program/Addressing_Legal_Isues_in_Youth_Diversion.pdf.

What Works Clearinghouse, Growth Mindset Interventions for Postsecondary Students. Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. January 2022. https://whatworks.ed.gov.

Zakszeski, Brittany, and Laura Rutherford. "Mind the gap: A systematic review of research on restorative practices in schools." *School Psychology Review* 50, no. 2-3 (2021): 371-387.