# Close to Home

## Community Mobilization Project Brief:
## Preventing Domestic Violence, Teen Dating Violence & Sexual Violence

California Department of PublicHealth

# What is Close to Home?

Close to Home (C2H) is a promising strategy that engages community members to design solutions and lead social change for domestic violence (DV), teen dating violence (TDV), and sexual violence (SV) prevention. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) sponsored four-year projects (2014-2018) to shift organizations toward community-driven prevention strategies leading to community-level change. These projects focused on youth leaders to mobilize their communities by creating dialogue and action to promote healthy relationships. CDPH adapted the C2H model to center around school-based youth leadership teams building a network of community members across the phases.



Photo Credit: Close to Home

## Phases of Close to Home

The C2H community mobilization process consists of four phases:

1. Assess the community;
2. Talk (community conversations);
3. Build skills; and
4. Act.

## Close to Home Sites

- Center for the Pacific Asian Family
- Haven Women's Center Stanislaus
- Human Response Network
- Peace Over Violence
- Strength United
- Tahoe Safe Alliance
- YWCA Monterey County

# Engaging Youth as Leaders

*I started with the Teen Peace Project at the very beginning. At first the Close to Home Talk Phase seemed hard, but then I realized talking to community members about my passion is something I've been doing for a while now, and with the help of C2H I get to now invite them into a network with a shared vision of making Truckee a place where intimate partner violence is not tolerated.*

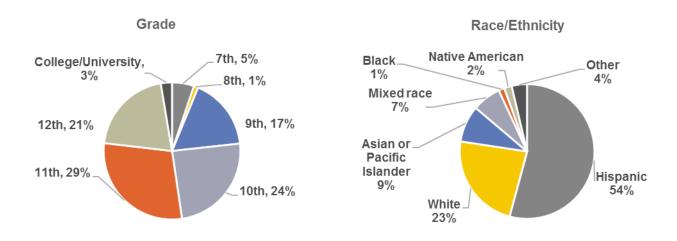**– Jessenia Urena, Youth Leader, Tahoe Safe Alliance**

## Engaging Youth as Leaders

Youth build skills as a core group of leaders to engage their communities in critical conversations about complex issues such as social norms that support violence. A total of 476 youth leaders were trained in DV/TDV/SV, root causes and intersections of violence, healthy relationships, upstander guidance, media literacy/technology, gender equity, community engagement, and leadership styles. Through participatory action research, youth leadership teams conduct community assessments and surveys to create locally tailored strategies. By partnering with adult allies, youth facilitate community engagement to form intergenerational teams who implement specific actions in their communities.



Photo Credit: Human Response Network's Youth Leadership Team

# Youth Leader Demographics and Outcomes

**Grade**

College/University, 3%
7th, 5%
8th, 1%
9th, 17%
12th, 21%
11th, 29%
10th, 24%

**Race/Ethnicity**

Black 1%
Native American 2%
Other 4%
Mixed race 7%
Asian or Pacific Islander 9%
White 23%
Hispanic 54%

Youth Leader Demographics

Positive improvements were found among the C2H youth leaders. Matched pre-test and post-test surveys from 2014-18 data (N=234) showed statistically significant changes on individual outcomes of C2H youth leaders in their knowledge, attitudes, and leadership skills in engaging their communities.

Youth leaders **gained knowledge about healthy relationships, DV/TDV/SV, and positive gender norms.** These positive increases in knowledge were crucial because they formed the basis from which the youth leaders conducted their one-on-one and community conversations, and developed their actions in the community. Ultimately, the youth leaders gained a **greater understanding of how DV/TDV/SV is preventable.**

**Youth engagement and leadership development** was a successful focus of the C2H projects. In particular, several youth shared that the project and skills gained during the project allowed them to engage in public speaking, design and run workshops for other youth, and feel like the experts when talking with community members, including civic leaders in their community. This **increase in community organizing skills** also had the result of **increased connections with adults and other youth** in their community. Youth were more willing to talk about these issues and **more likely to take upstander actions** (intervene when they see someone being bullied or harassed).

# Youth Leader Demographics and Outcomes

In addition to the positive impacts among the youth leaders, these attitude/behavior shifts also **impacted their relationships with friends and family.** Peer mentoring is an example of an important activity that many of the youth engaged in that nurtures a more supportive and healthy community. This resulted in **increased connections with peers.** Further, youth leaders involved in these projects reported making healthier choices for themselves and in their relationships—including having **healthier intimate relationships.** These choices within the individual leaders do not occur in a vacuum; they affect the other youth leaders in their team, their friends and family that are not members of the team, and the larger community, through modeling what healthy relationships look like.

Youth participation and leadership in this project deeply affected the adults that supported them and the community in which they worked. Many sites noticed a **change in how community members responded to youth leadership** during the project, **recognizing the importance of youth voice and leadership in ending domestic and sexual violence.** These observations about the community show a **shift in community norms related to their ability to create space for youth voices** around the issues of TDV/DV/SV. The surveys showed that the youth also **recognized more of the community's strengths and assets** related to preventing violence after participation in the C2H project. This was a crucial part of their learning process, as they built upon these assets in their community to utilize resources, make connections, and mobilize their community around the issue of DV/TDV/SV prevention.

See Appendix 1 for a full list of Youth Leadership Team outcomes.



Photo: Strength United Youth Leaders at 2016 Statewide Convening: Mobilizing Communities for Healthy Relationships

# Organizational Outcomes

Changes within the organizations were a universal experience across the C2H sites. It is anticipated that **organizational change** will have subsequent effects in the communities they serve. It is an **indicator of ongoing, sustainable community change,** as these service providers become more known and central players in their communities. Many organizations revealed substantial changes in how they approach prevention due to the C2H project. They changed how they **incorporate voices from their communities** into their prevention work. Sites also reported greater knowledge and accountability around **integrating prevention throughout their organizations,** instead of treating their prevention programs as separate entities. Staff in the project reflected on a changed view of their work and the impact on their organizations—instead of just providing instruction, the staff felt their role had shifted during the project to **support youth leading and developing the community activities and actions.**

Nearly all the organizations made **substantial practice, policy and protocol changes.** These included **hiring youth as staff, including youth in their prevention practices,** and **supporting staff to engage youth in the community outside of school.**

*Our work is allowing for conversations around TDV/DV/SV to happen in safe, open spaces, recognizing that this is a community issue, and it's something that can be discussed at that level. This project also opens up the issue at a community level, creating an understanding that to make change it's the responsibility of everyone.*

*Most everyone agrees that they want the community to be a safe and thriving place where violence is not tolerated, but this project allows community members to share experiences, stories, thoughts, frustrations, and hope around ending TDV/DV/SV, as well as tie other interests and passions into the cause, in hopes to move closer to our goal.*

**– Tahoe Safe Alliance**

# Community Outcomes

## Community Engagement

Staff reported that **community members engaged in the activities and actions** with increasing involvement by some members. This included key champions or stakeholders that take on the issue of DV/TDV/SV prevention and become community leaders. The **development of champions** is an indicator and strategy for systems and community change through building the "championess" of stakeholders within the community. These champions become agents of change in their community, producing a ripple impact of social norms change.

Community members who participated in C2H projects were better able to put an idea about preventing DV/TDV/SV into action. Results from the Community Impact Survey (CIS) revealed that almost all respondents (N=53) felt **better able to take action** and many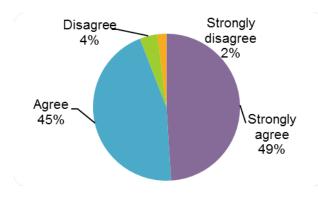 had **already taken action to prevent TDV/DV/SV,** as a direct impact of the C2H project. About 94 percent of CIS respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their work with C2H improved their ability to put TDV/DV/SV prevention into action.



Photo: Tahoe Safe Alliance Youth Leaders at 2018 Convening

## C2H Project Improved Community Members' Ability for Action



Disagree 4%
Strongly disagree 2%
Agree 45%
Strongly agree 49%

# Community Outcomes

About 67 percent of CIS respondents said they had personally taken action to prevent TDV/DV/SV as a result of their C2H participation. Results from the CIS support the signs of recognition and key attitude changes that are likely developing into different behaviors by **community members as they are better prepared to mobilize around TDV/DV/SV.**

## Community Connectedness

The relationships that people have with each other in the community is a well-known protective factor for youth and adults, and is an indicator of greater community support. C2H participants reported in both the CIS and interviews that they built relationships in their communities because of their connection with the C2H project. Community stakeholders noticed an **increase in community connectedness** such as building trust with churches and religious communities, more robust participation in community actions, and better connecting the community to resources for services. In addition, stakeholders noticed **increased online conversations through social media** and the leveraging of the #MeToo moment during the last year of the projects.

Photo: Strength United created a "Respect Tree Campaign" by engaging community at libraries, schools, and businesses.

## Institutional Change

Changes within instititions become ingrained in the community and are important indicators of a commitment to make lasting change in the community. Many sites **recognized institutional change around the issues of TDV/DV/SV that became policy, protocol or best practice in their communities.** For example, one project received school support to pilot a TDV prevention and response policy, and one youth team became part of the formal youth advisory council for the local City Council. There were noticeable shifts towards **collective community change through a greater openness and awareness around the issues of TDV/DV/SV.** Schools and businesses began to institutionalize a community engagement approach, such as one school continuing classes using the C2H model.

# Lessons Learned

## Organizational Readiness and Support

An important lesson learned centered around **organizational readiness and support for community mobilization and youth leadership.** Successful C2H sites gained buy-in, recognition, and support for community-driven prevention approaches across all levels of leadership, including the Board of Directors. These agencies also **integrated a prevention framework** throughout the organization, including crisis services and prevention staff. Organizations who demonstrated a commitment to community mobilization backed this up with administrative support and agency-wide education about the C2H approach in their agency's work.

## Adult Engagement

A critical lesson learned was in the **necessity to build a project infrastructure that would sufficiently support the work of adult engagement alongside youth leadership.** CDPH's projects were designed to build on current prevention efforts and capacity of local agencies who primarily work in schools. CDPH adapted the C2H model to center around school-based youth leadership teams who would facilitate a process to involve adult community members in the third and fourth years, ultimately developing an intergenerational action team. However, the necessary staffing resources were underestimated to conduct both youth and adult organizing. In addition, time was needed to build capacity of staff to shift current youth education practices to a community participatory decision-making process of the C2H model. By having staff dedicate more time to build relationships with community partners, organizational leaders, and other adult community members, the impact at the community level will be able to extend more fully beyond the reach of the youth organizing team.

Photo Credit: Close to Home

# Lessons Learned

### Intersection of Prevention and Intervention

An ongoing lesson learned that was reinforced in this project is the importance of the **intersection of prevention and intervention services.** Although the focus of this project was prevention, it was impossible to dive deep into authentic dialogue with community members about these issues without acknowledging and providing resources for survivors and their families. Across all C2H sites, staff, youth, and stakeholders reflected on the importance of linking community awareness and mobilization work on TDV/DV/SV issues with community-based services. Many sites could only gain their community buy-in when these issues surfaced as real and happening in the community, and they gained community trust when the sites were able to respond to that need with resources.

### Community Organizing Takes Time

Another key lesson learned was the need to be patient with the mobilizing process, as **it takes time to build relationships and trust with community partners and members** in order to authentically engage them around these issues. Organizations also had "to meet their communities where they are" in discussing these stigmatized topics. Cultural influences and thinking of these issues as a private matter persisted in several communities—making the first goal of community engagement by bringing people together to talk about these issues and start to surface the impacts of domestic and sexual violence in their community. However, once trust and relationships were developed, sites were surprised by the passion the community had to change—even though actually taking action was complex and difficult to measure. Developing a sustainable change within the community is a long-term process, and understanding how to achieve this goal requires time for capacity-building within the organization itself and among community members.

### Define Target Community

Another key lesson learned was the **importance of better defining the targeted community.** Given that most of the C2H projects implemented school-based youth leadership teams, it was challenging for some organizations to extend their work into the larger community and define the targeted community beyond the school setting. Implementation was driven by the realities of organizations who were already positioned to work with youth in school settings. When working outside the school setting, investing more effort to define the community and priority groups will help focus program efforts to reach selected neighborhoods or higher risk populations with limited resources. This aspect of the project proved challenging for certain organizations, as they struggled to narrow their focus to specific community audiences rather than their traditional school partners.

# What's Next?

CDPH will leverage federal and state funding in order to sustain this promising strategy in future programming to prevent TDV/DV/SV. A new C2H cohort will be established in February 2019 through January 2023. Based on lessons learned over the past four years, all new C2H projects will implement the model with both youth and adult organizing teams in order to reach the broader community of youth, adults, and organizations.

## Methods and Additional Resources

This summary covers C2H implementation by seven agencies from 2014-2018. Information was gathered through a combination of agency annual reports, youth leadership team surveys, community stakeholder interviews, community impact surveys, and a youth focus group.

**Close to Home website:** http://www.c2home.org/#the-close-to-home-approach

## Acknowledgements

This update was produced by the Safe and Active Communities Branch, California Department of Public Health. Contact: SAC@cdph.ca.org

Funding sources:

- Domestic Violence Training and Education Program

- Blue Shield of California Foundation

- Rape Prevention and Education Program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

## Suggested Citation

*California Department Public Health (2018). Close to Home Community Mobilization Project Brief: Preventing Domestic Violence, Teen Dating Violence & Sexual Violence: California Department of Public Health.*

# Appendix I

| Mean score on Youth Leadership Team Pre-Test and Post-Test Surveys (where 4=most positive answer and 1=least positive answer), N=234 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-Test Mean | Post-Test Mean | P-value* |
| 1. I know what an unhealthy relationship looks like. | 3.34 | 3.67 | <.0001** |
| 2. Violence between dating partners is a personal matter and people should mind their own business. | 3.30 | 3.54 | <.0001** |
| 3. Hitting, slapping, or pushing to hurt one another is a normal part of a dating relationship. | 3.77 | 3.85 | 0.0395** |
| 4. There are a lot of adults in my community that I could talk to about something important. | 2.94 | 3.13 | 0.0005** |
| 5. I feel comfortable talking about preventing relationship violence and sexual violence with people my age. | 3.08 | 3.30 | 0.0007** |
| 6. I feel comfortable talking about preventing relationship violence and sexual violence with adults. | 2.95 | 3.24 | <.0001** |
| 7. If a friend was being bullied or harassed, I would get help to stop it. | 3.59 | 3.75 | 0.0026** |
| 8. If someone I didn't know was being bullied or harassed, I would get help to stop it. | 3.30 | 3.46 | 0.0029** |
| 9. Relationship violence is always physical (hurting by hitting, slapping, pushing, etc.). | 3.16 | 3.50 | <.0001** |
| 10. I have the ability to influence and motivate my peers (change their minds about something). | 3.12 | 3.19 | 0.1693 |
| 11. Other forms of violence and oppression are connected to relationship and sexual violence. | 2.98 | 3.12 | 0.0189** |
| 12. Sometimes violence is the only way to express your feelings. | 3.60 | 3.71 | 0.0223** |

# Appendix I

| Mean score on Youth Leadership Team Pre-Test and Post-Test Surveys (where 4=most positive answer and 1=least positive answer), N=234 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-Test Mean | Post-Test Mean | P-value* |
| 13. A girl who makes her dating partner jealous on purpose deserves to be hit. | 3.57 | 3.78 | <.0001** |
| 14. Boys are better leaders than girls. | 3.58 | 3.68 | 0.0175** |
| 15. I am confident that I could put an idea about preventing relationship violence and sexual violence into action. | 2.99 | 3.21 | 0.0002** |
| 16. I use social media (like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.) to let other people know about preventing relationship violence and sexual violence. | 2.35 | 2.59 | <.0001** |
| 17. Relationship violence and sexual violence can be prevented. (We can stop it from happening.) | 3.41 | 3.52 | 0.1387 |
| 18. I think it's important for a boy to go after what he wants, even if it means hurting other people's feelings. | 3.55 | 3.69 | 0.0097** |
| 19. I can identify strengths or good things about my community related to preventing relationship violence and sexual violence. | 2.79 | 3.10 | <.0001** |
| 20. I can identify solutions to challenges to preventing relationship violence and sexual violence in my community. | 2.90 | 2.98 | 0.2561 |
| *The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was applied to test whether the difference between the post-test score and the pre-test score was statistically significant. | | | |
| **P-values significant at <0.05 | | | |

# Close to Home
## Community Mobilization Project Brief:
### Preventing Domestic Violence, Teen Dating Violence & Sexual Violence

California Department of
**PublicHealth**

California Department of Public Health
**Safe and Active Communities Branch**