

## **“Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color: A Framing Paper of the Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color (BMOC) in California”**

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### **Vision for Change**

Our state’s future prosperity and health depends on all Californians having a fair chance to thrive and succeed. To this end, one of the best investments that we can make is to be certain that we are doing everything possible to help young people become healthy, productive adults. As California becomes increasingly diverse, it will be especially critical to nurture and harness the talent, skills and hope of young people of color – and boys and young men of color in particular.

As the proportion of Californians over the age of 65 grows, and fertility rates decline, a growing proportion of the California population will depend on fewer working adults.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the young population in California has changed. Once mostly non-Hispanic white, California’s population is now a majority of people of color. Over 60 percent of residents younger than 25 are other than non-Hispanic white: 45 percent are Latinos, 10.3 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander and 6.8 percent are African American (U.S. Census 2007).

In the face of these demographic realities, understanding and improving opportunities for all of California’s young adults, particularly Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans and Southeast Asians, becomes a state imperative. Most adolescents succeed in their transition to adulthood: They graduate from high school, go to college and/or get a job that enables them to avoid poverty. But some young people, a disproportionate number of whom are African-American, Latino, Native American and Southeast Asian males, are trapped in a cycle of prison, poverty and disadvantage. For these young Californians, deteriorated schools and neighborhoods, poor health care access, dysfunctional social support and limited employment opportunities increasingly hamper their progress. This dynamic not only puts them at risk for long-term disconnection, but puts the state at-risk of missing a promising, far-reaching public policy opportunity, ultimately jeopardizing California’s future.

The California State Assembly’s Select Committee on the “Status of Boys and Men of Color in California” hearings will provide a public opportunity to continue our efforts to improve the outcomes for the health and well-being of boys and young men of color.

The goal of the hearings is to examine and develop consensus on policies that will help California:

- (1) achieve 100 percent graduation rates and reduce school push out in part by shifting away from punitive disciplinary policies;
- (2) improve access to and use of needed health supports and services for all Californians;
- (3) increase young men of color’s access to meaningful employment;
- (4) promote healthy youth development; and
- (5) reduce the level of violence in our communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Passel, Jeffrey S., and D’Vera Cohn. 2008. U.S. Population Projections: 2005 – 2050, Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center.

## **A Unique and Crucial Moment for California**

If California were a business, it would be awash in red ink. Young people are one of our greatest assets and the best indicator of our state's future prosperity and health. Yet too many of our assets are growing up without a fair shot to be healthy and to succeed. This is especially true for boys and young men of color who are more likely to confront significant barriers on the road to adulthood.

We have just a few short years to take advantage of what demographics and political circumstance have begun. *Right now* there is an opportunity to, in a meaningful way, transform people's lives through better policy and practice. The decisions made at this time will set the framework for how state and local policy will support young males in California for a generation or more. Realizing this opportunity in California's challenging budget environment, however, will require expanding public support for policy changes, transforming public agencies and creating new and innovative public policies that will ensure success.

California can lead the way in making these changes by pursuing new directions in the arenas of health, education, employment and public safety that can "change the game." These new policies must incorporate preventive strategies, widely expand the number of young people who realize educational success, reform the financing and delivery of services and promote community empowerment that gives all Californians the opportunity to make good choices for ourselves and our families.

What must be done to guarantee that California seizes this opportunity to lead the way in helping all of its youth reach their potential? Improving the health and well-being of its young males of color must become a top priority for all policymakers at every level of government.

California has risen to the occasion before. California has a demonstrated history of being the first in the nation to tackle tough policy issues and create the model for others. To lead in this area, we must be determined to follow this pattern of leadership. We must be determined to help California seize the opportunity that presents itself, and use this moment in time to fundamentally strengthen and improve our state.

## Why Boys and Men of Color?

The focus is on young men and boys of color for two fundamental reasons: first, health outcomes for boys and young men of all races and ethnicities are generally worse than for girls and young women. Second, demographics have become destiny and the growing population of young men of color faces poor health and well-being outcomes at a disproportionately higher rate than their white counterparts.

Let's start with the health outcomes of boys and young men. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, from 1993 to 2003, boys, aged 12 to 17, were 50 percent more likely than girls to be victims of nonfatal violent crimes; in 2004, boys, aged 15 to 19, were five times more likely to die from homicide and seven times more likely to die from a firearm-related incident than girls; and death rates in 2006 were higher for adolescent boys than adolescent girls and increased as boys moved through adolescence.

Boys also face a differing set of development challenges as they grow which may lead them to encounter more problems as a result.<sup>2</sup> For example, a recent Council of the Great City Schools report that compares Grade 4 reading scores between Black males/females and Latino males/females found that the females are performing at a significantly higher level than males in the year 2009. Looking at 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores over a 6-year period (from 2003 to 2009), the disparity in school performance between males and females has grown even larger than 4 years prior.<sup>3</sup>

Demographics have become destiny for young men of color. Currently, there is a failure to acknowledge that far too many young African-American, Southeast Asian, Native American and Latino males are cut off from California's civic, educational and economic life. As this group grows in size and forms a larger part of our population, the continued marginalization of this group of Californians will usher in a detrimental future for our nation and state.

Young men of color are more likely to grow up in neighborhoods where they confront challenges to their safety and well-being. In their neighborhoods, they are five times more likely to be murdered than girls and young women and seven times more likely to die from gun violence. They are more likely to go to schools where they don't have the tools and help they need to learn, including experienced and qualified teachers. For instance, during the 2008-2009 school-year, the California middle schools that served more than 90 percent Latino, African-American and Native American students were almost 10 times more likely than majority white and Asian schools to experience severe shortages of qualified teachers.

The proliferation of severe school disciplinary measures disproportionately pushes boys and young men of color out of our public education system. For instance, even though African-American students represented eight percent of the state's public school enrollment, they represented 19 percent of out-of-school suspensions in the 2002-2003 school-year.

As a result of these barriers, young men of color are more likely to start their adult life without a high school diploma. African-American Californians over age 25 are nearly twice as likely to be without a high

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<sup>2</sup> J.L. Cook and G. Cook, "Similarities and Differences Between Boys and Girls," Excerpt from *Child Development Principles and Perspectives*, by J.L. Cook, G. Cook, 2009 edition.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, Sharon, et. al., "A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools," The Council of the Great City Schools. October 2010.

school diploma as whites, while Latinos in California are almost seven times as likely to be without a high school degree. And those young men of color who do graduate from high school are less likely to be prepared for college. Only 14 percent of Latino high school graduates and 15 percent of African-American high school graduates have completed the courses that are required to seek admission to California's four-year colleges and universities.

Young men of color are a burgeoning part of the state's and the counties' youth population, representing 46 percent of male children under 5 and 42 percent of children 6-17 years old.<sup>4</sup> What's more, the 2010 Census reports that 72.2 percent of California's youth (under the age of 19) identify as people of color. This transformation is equally dramatic from a regional standpoint. For example, youth of color are 76.8 percent of all youth in Alameda County, 79.6 percent of youth in Fresno County and 82.7 percent of youth in Los Angeles. Boys and young men of color now represent 39.2 percent of all youth in Alameda, 40.8 percent in Fresno and 42.2 percent in Los Angeles.<sup>5</sup> These numbers make it clear that realizing any of our state and local objectives in regard to the economy, health, education and civic participation must include a targeted strategy to improve the health and well-being of boys and men of color.

Certainly girls and young women of color face their own set of barriers and are deserving of help. This work is not in opposition to, or at the exclusion of, girls and women. We are deeply aware that often, the most significant barriers to young women's success are healthy and supportive boys and men.

Improving the health and well-being outcomes for boys and young men of color is part and parcel of the work to support girls and women. However, the numbers in California and the nation tell the story of an especially harsh reality for many boys and young men of color as they attempt to move from childhood to adulthood. In particular, America's growing preoccupation with crime means that actions that for other young men would be treated as youthful mistakes, are judged more severely and are more likely to result in lasting punishment for young men of color. We are at risk of losing an entire generation of productive men, which will cost all of us, especially girls and young women of color.

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<sup>4</sup> Ruggles et al. 2010, IPUMS American Community Census (ACS) pooled 2006 –2008 data.

<sup>5</sup> PolicyLink Analysis.

## **Great Challenges, Immeasurable Opportunities**

Make no mistake; our budget crisis and weak economy are real challenges. Now in our 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of record-shattering deficits, we have mistakenly adopted a myopic approach to the state's problems rather than crafting a real vision for the future. Even when matching federal dollars have been at risk, the state has been willing to forego federal funding for short-term general fund savings.

While budget deficits have become the norm in California, we cannot continue to offer it as an excuse for doing nothing. It is a disgrace to do so. But the disgrace is not in the failure to have a magic bullet for addressing our chronic deficits, but rather in our low aim in dealing with them. With tens of billions of dollars flowing into the state through health reform, education reform and public safety reform there is an opportunity to extend its benefits to every Californian. Yes, California's challenges are great, but this makes our opportunities immeasurable.

## **California State Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color**

The California State Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color in California is determined to help our state seize the opportunity that this moment presents by using the legislative process to create a policy approach that will fundamentally change the way education, health care, employment and public safety is delivered, financed and imagined for California's boys and men of color.

The Assembly Select Committee will push health, education, employment and public safety stakeholders around the state to change the way they work together. To take advantage of opportunities that exist in the face of California's challenges requires far more collaboration in pursuit of common objectives than is typically seen. As important as preserving individual programs, services and funding streams may be to specific stakeholders, success will require a new direction for a healthier and brighter future for all Californians.

The Assembly Select Committee is committed to fostering the health and success of boys and men of color in California. Toward this end, we will pursue strategic opportunities to align existing public and private resources to ensure more boys and men of color are:

- Physically and mentally healthy;
- Succeed in school and work; and
- Possess the knowledge, skills and leadership capacity to contribute to their families, communities and the state's social and economic well-being.

Accordingly, this introductory paper and the issue briefs that complement it are designed to frame and lift up the strategic challenges and high impact opportunities that policymakers can engage even as the Legislature and state government tackle California's most urgent public health and economic challenges in this time of fiscal crisis. Key policy opportunities exist in the areas of health, education, employment and wealth, safety and youth development.

To further define these policies and make a case for action, the remainder of this framing document provides the economic and fiscal context for state action, spotlights the role of race and place, adds detail on each key policy area and concludes with recommendations for policy change.

## Economic & Fiscal Context for State Action

Addressing racial disparities and the systemic barriers that limit the success of Californians is not merely a matter of fairness and equality. We have reached a turning point, as these long standing challenges now act as a drag on our state's economic competitiveness. California's boys and men of color are at the center of a *perfect storm* that we will fail to navigate if their talents and assets are not nurtured and harnessed.

If California were a business, it would be awash in red ink, with too many unhealthy and underutilized assets. According to national statistics on violence among ten- to twenty-four-year-old males, homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans, and the second-leading cause of death for Latinos.

The state's alarmingly high school-suspension and dropout rates for boys of color, and high rates of unemployment, incarceration and mortality for California's males of color affect the economic bottom line. In California, Latino unemployment is 14.7 percent while African-American unemployment in the state is a staggering 19.5 percent compared to 11.9 percent for white Californians.<sup>6</sup> Among sixteen- to twenty-four-year-old males of color not enrolled in school, fewer than half have jobs and about a third are incarcerated, on probation or parole.<sup>7</sup>

The costs of incarcerating or supervising young men of color act like an onerous tax borne by every man, woman and child in our state. California spends an average of around \$9,800 annually per public school student, but more than \$224,712 per juvenile system detainee (2010-2011)<sup>8</sup> and \$47,000 to incarcerate an adult in state prison for one year. If California managed to increase the graduation rate just 10 percent for African-American and Latino male students, according to one study, the higher graduation rates would result in \$7.39 billion in additional income, tax revenue, social service savings and economic productivity — over the course of the students' adult life.<sup>9</sup> Another study, conducted by a team of researchers at Columbia University's Teachers College, found that for each youth added to the graduation rolls, taxpayers saved \$127,000 in the form of additional tax revenues paid by the graduates and in lower public health, welfare, and criminal justice costs.<sup>10</sup> In addition, per a 2007 study, African-American and Latino men graduating high school generate \$681,130 and \$451,360, respectively, in additional dollars for the state of California.<sup>11</sup>

The loss of economic contributions by young men of color is akin to valuable plant equipment idled by disrepair and a lack of investment. Maintaining the world's largest and costliest prison and jail system prevents our state from meeting many of the essential services all Californians have come to count on.

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<sup>6</sup> PolicyLink Analysis; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarter 2, 2011 data.

<sup>7</sup> Edelman, Peter, Harry J. Holzer, and Paul Offner. *Reconnecting Disadvantaged Young Men*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, *The Cost of the State's Division of Juvenile Facilities*, April 2011, [http://www.cjci.org/files/The\\_Cost\\_of\\_the\\_States\\_Division\\_of\\_Juvenile\\_Facilities.pdf](http://www.cjci.org/files/The_Cost_of_the_States_Division_of_Juvenile_Facilities.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Belfield, Clive and Levin, Henry. "The Economic Losses from High School Dropouts in California." California Dropout Research Project. August 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Levin, Henry, Clive Belfield, Peter Muennig, and Cecilia Rouse. 2007. "The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children." Teachers College, Columbia University. New York.

<sup>11</sup> Belfield, Clive and Levin, Henry. "The Economic Losses from High School Dropouts in California." California Dropout Research Project. August 2007.

In spite of these daunting challenges, there is good reason to be optimistic. Promising programmatic strategies and system reforms are underway across the state. Led by youth, community and institutional leaders, these efforts are succeeding in reducing harms and dramatically improving social and economic outcomes among even our most vulnerable boys and men of color. The fact that opportunity-enhancing strategies and institutional practices are dramatically more inexpensive than the cost of maintaining punitive opportunity-limiting systems makes a convincing argument for pursuing an ambitious package of policy and system reforms that will save precious public resources and make California more economically competitive and prosperous.

## Place & Race Matter

Leading researchers' analyses of the disparate outcomes impacting boys and men of color underscore two key findings. First, place matters in the lives of boys and young men of color. Where you live, to a large extent, determines whether you are exposed to hazardous pollutants and unhealthy food; whether you attend a good school or land a decent job with a livable wage; or whether you are likely to go to jail or die relatively young. Second, the challenges boys and young men of color experience in their neighborhoods stem from broader inequities driven by race, class and gender.

According to ground breaking research by Dolores Acevedo-Garcia examining the relationship of geography to early childhood development, 76 percent of Black and 69 percent of Latino children lived in poorer neighborhoods than the neighborhoods of the 25 percent worst-off white children. The research found that 62 percent of all Black children (born 1955-1970), compared to 4 percent for white children, grew up in high poverty neighborhoods; while 49 percent of Black children (born 1955-1970) born into middle class families compared to less than 1 percent of middle class white children grew up in high poverty neighborhoods.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the data demonstrated that neighborhood environments suppress cognitive development in children and youth. For instance, according to the research, living in a neighborhood of concentrated disadvantage has the same effect on the development of a child's verbal cognitive ability as missing one or two entire years of school.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps even more alarming is the conclusion that these impacts linger on even if a child moves out of a severely disadvantaged neighborhood.

In many poor neighborhoods, public schools, health systems and community institutions are working hard to build resilience and efficacy among boys and young of color. But their performance in turning around outcomes among young people is falling short. In education, the pattern of lower achievement starts early. Schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods put their focus on students that are deemed to have potential, while simultaneously trying to manage those that are viewed as disruptive. As public schools increasingly adopt harsh and extreme disciplinary policies and practices, greater numbers of boys and young men of color fill the ranks of suspended and ultimately expelled students.

Once suspended and/or expelled, many boys seem to vanish into thin air and don't show up on anybody's radar screen again until they resurface, all too often, in the criminal justice system, branded as predators and sent to adult jails. Between 2002 and 2004, African Americans accounted for 16 percent of the U.S. youth population under the age of 18, yet represented 28 percent of all arrests for that age group, 37 percent of those detained in juvenile jails and 58 percent of all juveniles sent to adult prison.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these challenges and the resulting disparities, there are very few targeted interventions and even fewer institutional supports designed with the explicit goal of ensuring that boys and young men of color succeed. Lack of understanding of the systemic nature of the problem has prevented policymakers and other stakeholders from developing comprehensive solutions to the challenges impacting the health, economic and educational outcomes of boys and young men of color. Singular, discrete

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<sup>12</sup> Acevedo-Garcia, Dolores, et. al., "The Geography of Opportunity: A Framework of Child Development." *Changing Places*. 2010

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). 2007. *And Justice for Some: Differential Treatment of Youth of Color in the Justice System*. Oakland, Calif.: NCCD.

innovations will not succeed, nor will systemic reforms that do not target the inequities that lead to disparities for boys and young men of color. If we truly want to improve the health of California's boys and young men of color, we must commit ourselves to changing the neighborhoods in which they grow up. Moreover, we must commit ourselves to changing the underlying system of inequities that shape these conditions. In short, we must abandon piecemeal approaches and trickle-down initiatives in favor of targeted initiatives and comprehensive systemic reforms.

## Strategic Challenges and Policy Opportunities

Over the next year we will undoubtedly review and analyze many important reports and hear from a diverse cross-section of California’s most dedicated community, public and private sector leaders. Sorting through myriad perspectives will be challenging. The section that follows is intended to provide a preliminary snapshot of the challenges and opportunities at hand in the areas of: health, education, employment and wealth, safety and youth development. Each begins with a vision of what is possible, a better handle on how boys and men of color are currently faring and an initial focus for further leadership and action. The section concludes with a summary of policy recommendations. These introductory overviews are complemented by a set of issue briefs that contain more specific discussion of strategic intervention points and recommendations for policy and system change.

### Health

Good health is not only the foundation of a productive society and a thriving California. It is also an essential prerequisite for young men of color to achieve social and economic success. We use the term “health” globally to capture indicators of physical and mental health status as well as indicators of high-risk behavior. Healthy minds and bodies enable youth to learn, to embark on positive developmental trajectories and to become active and productive citizens. Healthy child and adolescent development is shaped by multiple layers of social factors — from the family and neighborhood settings to local, state and federal policies.<sup>15</sup> National health statistics reveal striking disparities in health by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status among males, beginning early in life and continuing throughout adolescence and adulthood.<sup>16</sup>

Health disparities by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status are rooted in social and contextual disadvantage, shaped by a history of unequal opportunities and discriminatory practices. Although there have been considerable improvements in the life chances of African-American and Latino men over the past several decades<sup>17</sup>, young men and boys of color continue to encounter powerful inequities that contribute to poorer life chances regarding education, employment, housing, residential environments, nutrition and health care — all of which affect health.

Consider that in California, African-American children are 2.5 times and Latino children 1.3 times more likely to suffer from abuse than white children. Studies have shown that maltreated children are more likely to be incarcerated in the California Youth Authority.<sup>18</sup> In California, African-American children are disproportionately represented in the foster care system by four times. Nationally, African-American and Latino children are three and two times more likely, respectively, than white children to have been exposed to shootings, bombings or riots. And both African-American and Latino children are more than seven times more likely to have someone close to them murdered.<sup>19</sup> This chronic adversity creates deep

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<sup>15</sup> Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Mulye, T. P., M. J. Park, C. D. Nelson, S. H. Adams, C. E. Irwin, and C. D. Brindis. 2009. “Trends in Adolescent and Young Adult Health in the United States.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45, no. 1: 8 – 24.; Williams, D. R. 2003. “The Health of Men: Structured Inequalities and Opportunities.” *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 5: 724 – 31.

<sup>17</sup> Satcher, D. 2003. “Overlooked and Underserved: Improving the Health of Men of Color.” *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 5: 707 – 9.

<sup>18</sup> RAND, “Reparable Harm.”

<sup>19</sup> Reyes, Belinda and Nakagawa, Monique, “Young Latino and African American Males: Their Characteristics, Outcomes and Social Conditions” *Changing Places*. 2010.

emotional pain and distress, and overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. This is particularly intense for boys and young men of color.

These disparities are even more dire once race is compounded with sexuality. The National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC) assessed the health and well-being of a sample of the nation's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth at a critical transitional phase of their personal and social development—during adolescence and young adulthood, between ages 12 and 24. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that in the six months prior to completing this survey, they have felt depressed or contemplated suicide. Participants were asked if in the six months prior to completing the survey they had been verbally and/or physically abused. Overall, 39 percent of participants had experienced verbal and/or physical abuse during this time frame. Of the youth who have experienced abuse in the past 6 months, 30 percent indicated being abused in more than 1 category.<sup>20</sup>

While eliminating disparities in health by race and ethnicity is important in its own right, the health of youth of color will have large implications for the overall health of California. Policymakers, community activists and government officials must view the health of a community not in individual parts, but as an unbroken whole, made up of individual but virtually inseparable parts.

## **Education**

Any child can learn. The outcomes from traditional public schools across California prove that we can work within public schools and provide all students an opportunity to learn. Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone, the model for the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, proves that we can create community systems where all students have the supports needed to have a substantive opportunity to learn. Yet, the harsh reality is that systemically most schools and too many districts don't provide the necessary, targeted resources or supports for all students' educational success. Too often we find ourselves focused on the exceptional schools that have exceptional leaders who are doing a remarkable job saving hundreds of children while not aggressively moving to systemically institutionalize, for all students, the resources and supports which make those schools successful. We cannot become so affixed on these stars that we consistently ignore the larger crisis facing our state by the hundreds of thousands of children we are losing each year who do not make it through to graduation.

As K-12, community college and college and university leaders grapple with the state of education in California, it will be vitally important that the state Legislature and the Governor challenge them to identify institutional practices that act as barriers to the educational success of boys and young men of color along our Pre-Kindergarten to University pipeline.

Consider this, just over 50 percent of African-American males and less than 50 percent of Latino males graduate from high school, less than 15 percent of young males of color go to college —far short of the educational credentials needed for our state to be globally competitive. It indicates that systemic disparities evident by race, social class or zip code are influenced more by the social policies and practices that we put in place to distribute educational opportunities and resources and less by the abilities of young males of color. Currently, the rate at which Black males are being pushed out of school and into the pipeline to prison far exceeds the rate at which they are graduating and reaching high levels

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<sup>20</sup> National Youth Advocacy Coalition. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth: National Health Survey Summary Report."

of academic achievement. A deliberate, intense focus is needed to disrupt and redirect the current educational trajectory for males of color.

A look inside schools in the state's most distressed communities reveals an embarrassingly vast distance between the opportunity that education can provide and the reality. The racially segregated, high-poverty schools that the majority of students of color in California attend do not equalize chances for social mobility and for fulfilling one's potential. Quite often, such schools intensify inequality.<sup>21</sup>

The best example of this phenomenon is not test-score gap. Rather, it is harsh and severe discipline policies and practices. The term "zero tolerance" is shorthand for mandatory, uniform punishments and practices that suspend, expel or push out students of all races at now-record rates and students of color at highly disproportionate rates. Harsh discipline is merely one negative force among many that deprives boys and young men of color of opportunities to learn and stay in school.

California schools suspend and expel students at an annual rate of 12.75 percent, resulting in nearly 800,000 suspensions and expulsions. And more than half of suspensions and expulsions don't stem from more serious offenses like violence or bringing a gun to school, but from misbehavior like shoving in the hallway, talking back to teachers or missing school.<sup>22</sup> National studies have called the effectiveness of harsh discipline policies into question, demonstrating the loss of instruction time faced by young people who are subject to these practices. School districts from Georgia to Maryland that have reoriented school discipline policies away from this type of extreme and severe disciplinary approach are beginning to see results including increased graduation rates.<sup>23</sup>

Harsh discipline leads to poor life chances. Reducing suspension and expulsion rates will not alone solve the multidimensional crisis facing so many young men and boys of color. However, drawing attention to the harmful impact of harsh discipline policies coupled with putting forth alternative approaches offers a concrete, manageable way for educators and the communities they serve to begin to untangle — and perhaps dismantle — the more complex, often obscured opportunity-limiting structures of which school discipline is but one small part. Developing new discipline practices and policies that are explicitly designed to "equalize" and "educate" and "develop members and citizens" is essential to reversing the negative effects of exclusionary policies.

Because of a research consensus about how harmful harsh disciplinary policies are, as well as an abundance of proven common sense alternatives, eliminating harsh discipline and replacing it with practices and policies that are congruous with the goal of education is at least one practical way for schools — and by extension, their larger communities — to shine a light on inequalities both in and outside of classrooms and become healthier, more opportunity-rich places.

As detailed above, neighborhoods can expand or limit the opportunities of boys and young men of color, and this extends to schools. Attendance at most public elementary schools in the United States is neighborhood-based, and the level of neighborhood segregation is high.<sup>24</sup> As a consequence, vast racial

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<sup>21</sup> Rothstein, Richard. *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black – White Achievement Gap*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> "Common sense discipline needed in school," by Barbara Raymond, *Sacramento Bee*, July 23, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Blackwell/Pastor, "Let's Hear It For the Boys," P.18, Chapter 1, *Changing Places*. 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Iceland, John, Daniel H. Weinberg, and Erica Steinmetz. 2002. *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States: 1980 – 2000*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Government Printing Office.

and ethnic gaps in neighborhood poverty match vast racial and ethnic gaps in school poverty, underscoring a strong structural link between neighborhood and school context.<sup>25</sup> This means that African-American and Latino children are more likely to experience “triple jeopardy”: to face challenging issues in their families, their neighborhoods and their schools, all at the same time. These challenges at multiple levels may compromise the resilience of African-American and Latino children.<sup>26</sup>

As public education, community college and college and university leaders grapple with the state of education in California, it will be vitally important that the state Legislature and the Governor challenge them to identify institutional practices that act as barriers to the educational success of boys and young men of color along our Pre-Kindergarten to University pipeline. We can no longer afford to accept high school graduation rates of approximately 50 percent and lower and college going rates of 10-12 percent among our young men of color.

### **Employment and Wealth**

For many young men of color, particularly those residing in high-poverty communities, finding and retaining work is a significant challenge. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in January 2010 only 28 percent of African-American men between the ages of 16 and 24 were working, compared with 43 percent of Latino men and 44 percent of white men in the same age category.<sup>27</sup> The percentage of young men working across all racial groups has declined dramatically in less than a decade. In 2002, 41 percent of African-American young men, 78 percent of Latinos and 60 percent of white young men ages 16 to 24 were working.<sup>28</sup>

High incarceration rates are one contributing factor to the lack of young men of color remaining engaged in either the education system or the workforce. In California, 30.5 percent of 15- to 24-year-old males in juvenile facilities were African-American even though African Americans comprise only 7 percent of those age groups in the state. Latinos are also over-represented in juvenile facilities: while Latinos account for 45 percent of the state’s 15- to 24-year-olds, they make up 53.6 percent of youth in juvenile facilities.<sup>29</sup>

While the expectation isn’t that all youth should be employed, the precipitous decline in youth employment in general, the dramatic decline in employment rates for young Latinos and the persistently high level of joblessness for young African-American men are causes for concern and reasons for action. Although male joblessness in communities of color has been an issue for decades, the recent economic recession has had a calamitous impact on the labor-market prospects for youth of color. The slow jobless recovery combined with historical barriers present a crisis for young men of color, the communities in which they live and the families they will not be able to support.

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<sup>25</sup> Logan, John R. 2002b. *Separate and Unequal: The Neighborhood Gap for Blacks and Hispanics in Metropolitan America*. Albany, N.Y.: Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research.

<sup>26</sup> Acevedo-Garcia, Dolores, et. al., “The Geography of Opportunity: A Framework of Child Development” *Changing Places*. 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2010b. “Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population Sixteen to Twenty-four Years of Age by School Enrollment, Educational Attainment, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity,” January 2010. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2002. “Table PCT048B. Sex by Age by Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over (Black or African American Alone).”

<sup>29</sup> The separate employment and wealth issue brief provides additional detail and conversation about the “disconnection” of young men of color.

In *Losing Our Future*, the Harvard Civil Rights Project showed that school districts with the highest percentage participation in the free and reduced lunch program were also districts with predominantly African-American and Latino student populations; most had graduation rates below 60 percent. These also tend to be the communities with high unemployment rates, much higher rates of crime and violence and substantially diminished resources for communities and families. In these communities far too many young men are caught in a perpetual cycle of low expectations, low achievement, limited labor-market prospects, increased exposure to the criminal justice system and an inability to provide economic stability for their families. Priority attention must be given to implementing strategies to impact the labor-market situation for young men of color in these communities.

Another reason for urgency in improving the labor-market status of young men of color is the census projections that have been mentioned throughout this document. Given the growing demographic importance of this population, investing in building the skills and credentials of the state's young males of color is essential to assuring economic stability for these children and a sufficiently skilled labor pool to sustain California's economic growth.

The ages from 16 to 24 represent the formative years for developing labor-market skills. Through early work experiences, part-time and summer jobs, internships and other vocational and career awareness experiences, youth are exposed to the expectations of the workplace, learn workplace skills, develop a work portfolio and have the opportunity to explore their interests. Studies have demonstrated that early work experience positively correlates with future labor-market success and earnings. Consequently, the lack of access to jobs during this critical developmental period has an impact on the earnings capacity of young men of color well into their adulthood as they take on family, civic and personal responsibilities.

Improving labor-market opportunities for young men of color is about more than just jobs. It is about dramatically increasing the number of young men of color who are equipped with the postsecondary skills and credentials they will need to obtain opportunities in the labor market. It is also about improving their access to jobs that will provide them with stable employment at decent wages and opportunities for advancement. The solutions must be at a scale to close the gaps between young white men and men of color in terms of educational attainment, labor-market penetration and earnings. The situation is complex. The solutions to address employment disparities require making the labor-market situation of young men of color the central focus for strategic action and assembling the talent, resources and innovation to address the multiplicity of barriers that have historically impeded their stable employment at decent wages.

As business, public education leaders and state government officials work to turn California's economy around, it will be critically important that the needs and the assets of boys and young men of color are taken into account. Policy and system solutions that ensure young men of color acquire the education and workforce training needed to succeed in our hyper competitive and globalized labor market is key.

## **Safety**

Recent research confirms what we intuitively know; children and adolescents need parenting until they are fully mature.<sup>30</sup> Many children, however, most obviously children in the foster care or juvenile justice

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<sup>30</sup> See E.R. Devore and K.R. Ginsburg, *The Protective Effects of a Good Parenting on Adolescents*, Current Opinion in Pediatrics, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Aug 2005) for a review of relevant literature.

systems, have been removed from the people who would most naturally parent them. Unfortunately neither of these systems approaches care for custody of these children from a developmentally- or trauma-informed parenting perspective. This is especially true for boys and young men of color. These children receive inadequate or no effective parenting at critical developmental points and are influenced more by peers than caring adults. The result is an increase in violent behavior, school failure, inability to connect with others and unaddressed health and mental health needs. Without addressing the parenting of children in these systems generally, and boys and young men of color specifically, California will never effectively stem the epidemic of youth violence.

Examples of inadequate parenting in the foster care and juvenile justices systems abound. Children and youth in both systems are placed in group homes with staff who are ill-informed about both the impact of trauma and developmental stages. As a substitute for effective parenting, staff use unsophisticated, untargeted and ultimately ineffectual “behavior modification systems” which are little more than a complex system of punishments and restrictions. Youth who have been involved in criminal activity are housed in juvenile facilities with staff whose main, if not exclusive, focus is on immediate behavior control and security rather than on uncovering the roots of this behavior and making a long-term change.<sup>31</sup>

To make matters worse, in his 2007 book, *Punishment and Inequality in America*, Harvard sociologist Bruce Western writes that harsher juvenile justice policies do not protect communities, but rather deepen the damage in the very communities the strategies are designed to protect by putting more children on a dropout track. This further widens inequality because dropouts are more likely to appear in the criminal justice system down the road.<sup>32</sup> As illuminated by the Pew Center’s Report ‘Collateral Costs,’ more young (20 to 34-year-old) African-American men without a high school diploma or GED are currently behind bars (37 percent) than employed (26 percent).<sup>33</sup>

Some researchers like Pedro Noguera have posited that harsh school discipline policies emerged in tandem with get-tough criminal justice policies that were in fact not rooted in reality but based on unfounded fears of violence spiraling out-of-control.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, the impact on young people of color has been huge. One study found that Latino youth are 40 percent more likely than white youth to serve time in an adult correctional facility; in fact, one of every four Latino youths who are locked up are incarcerated in adult institutions.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, another study found that African-American juveniles are nine times more likely than whites to do time in adult detention facilities.<sup>36</sup> Studies have

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<sup>31</sup> The separate safety issue brief provides additional detail and conversation about the connection between safety, parenting and juvenile justice.

<sup>32</sup> Western, Bruce. 2007. *Punishment and Inequality in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>33</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010. *Collateral Costs: Incarceration’s Effect on Economic Mobility*. Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts.

<sup>34</sup> Noguera, Pedro A. 1995. “Preventing and Producing Violence: A Critical Analysis of Responses to School Violence.” *Harvard Educational Review* 65: 189 – 212.

<sup>35</sup> Arya, Neelum, Francisco Villarruel, Cassandra Villanueva, and Ian Augarten. 2009. “America’s Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice.” Campaign for Youth Justice and National Council of La Raza. Policy Brief, Race and Ethnicity Series, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Arya, Neelum, and Ian Augarten. 2008. “Critical Condition: African-American Youth in the Justice System.” Campaign for Youth Justice. Policy Brief, Race and Ethnicity Series, 2.

demonstrated that prosecuting youths as adults contributes to higher rates of recidivism and that teenage boys serving time alongside grown men are at increased risk for sexual assault and suicide.<sup>37</sup>

Between 1987 and 2007, as harsher criminal justice policies took hold, the nation's prison population nearly tripled,<sup>38</sup> far outdistancing the country's overall population growth of 24 percent, from 242 to 302 million, over that same period. From 1974 to 2001, the percentage of African-American adults who have ever been incarcerated jumped from 8.7 percent to 16.6 percent; for Latinos, the rate increased from 2.3 percent to 7.7 percent. Both groups are overrepresented in prison, when compared to whites. And it affects the young as well as adults: In California, in 2003, 25 percent of incarcerated juveniles were African American in a state where 8 percent of the youth population was African American. Overall, the number of youth being held in adult prisons has grown by 208 percent since the 1990s.<sup>39</sup>

As recent studies about other vulnerable populations, like Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth, indicate, finding solutions to the challenges we face in the juvenile justice system will require that we dig deeper to unpack other challenges that relate to gender and gender orientation. According to a recent article by Angela Irvine, LGBT kids and adults face harsher punishment than straight people for the same crimes. LGBT youth are more often expelled from school, arrested and convicted of a juvenile offense compared to their straight counterparts. At least 15 percent of the population in juvenile detention is LGBT. Irvine's study also found that LGBT youth in juvenile detention were twice as likely to have a history of home removal by a social worker, placement in a group or foster home or homelessness when compared with their straight peers. LGBT youth are also twice as likely to face detention in the juvenile justice system for running away, prostitution, sex with someone of the same gender and minor offenses like loitering and truancy. Lesbian, gay and bisexual (but not gender non-conforming) youth are also more likely than their straight peers to face detention for a violent offense.<sup>40</sup>

As California grapples with the challenge of a budgetary crisis, it is clear that we will need to ensure our law enforcement and incarceration policy and practices are aligned with the goal of ensuring our long-term economic and social well-being. We will need to identify and implement strategies that ensure dramatically lower numbers of boys and young men of color find themselves languishing in our local jails and state prisons at an expense to taxpayers that far exceeds the costs of sending them to the most expensive private universities in the nation and world. We urgently need to identify and strengthen the programs that can ensure young men who are incarcerated receive the counseling and education needed to become productive citizens upon their release.

## Youth Development

Youth development is a process for preparing young people to be successful in meeting the challenges of adolescence and adulthood by helping them develop socially, emotionally, physically and

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<sup>37</sup> Campaign for Youth Justice. 2007. *Jailing Juveniles: The Dangers of Incarcerating Youth in Adult Jails in America*. Washington, D.C.: Campaign for Youth Justice.

<sup>38</sup> The Pew Center on the States (Pew). 2008. *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Charitable Trusts.

<sup>39</sup> Chura, David. 2010. *I Don't Wish Nobody to Have a Life Like Mine: Tales of Kids in Adult Lockup*. Boston: Beacon Press.

<sup>40</sup> Irvine, Angela. 2011. "LGBT kids in the prison pipeline." The Public Intellectual.

<http://thepublicintellectual.org/2011/05/02/lgbt-kids-in-the-school-to-prison-pipeline/>.

cognitively.<sup>41</sup> For boys and young men of color who are struggling within failing systems, or have fallen off the pathway to success altogether, effective youth development opportunities through local programs and state policy are indispensable for assuring their successful transition into adulthood.

In California, far too many young men of color will reach age 25 without having successfully transitioned to independent adulthood. At an age when most young adults are benefiting from full-time work and close interpersonal relationships, these youth will not have connected to the labor force; most will lack social support systems. An overwhelming majority will be males of color; of these, over half will be in prison, while the remaining young men will be mired in protracted spells of long-term unemployment. Almost all of these youth will have spent their childhoods in families at the lowest level of the income distribution and will likely spend much of their own adult lives in poverty, unemployed or marginally employed. From an educational, economic and social perspective, these young people will be "disconnected."<sup>42</sup>

Virtually all youth who find themselves outside of the labor force and not connected to educational institutions by their twenties begin the process of disconnection much earlier, most often in adolescence. In our society, almost all youth require support until they have connected successfully with the labor force, which generally does not occur until their mid-twenties. Most young adults experience detours on the road to independence which include periods of unemployment and periodic interruptions in their education. The majority of youth are embedded in networks—families, friends, and communities—that provide guidance, support and help, both financial and otherwise, when they face the crises that are an inevitable part of this transition.

Quite the opposite is true for most disconnected youth, particularly if they are male. These youth have extremely limited support systems, including family support, to help them through the difficult transition to adulthood. Society provides them little in the way of resources to help them reconnect.

There is a compelling need to create a system of support and opportunity for those youth least likely to make a successful transition by age 25 and to provide incentives for youth to access these opportunities. Those less likely to connect have lower basic literacy and fewer years of formal schooling. Many have a history of behavioral problems that result in suspension, expulsion and arrest. They are more likely to suffer from untreated mental illness, substance abuse or other disabilities, more likely to reside in neighborhoods where many other residents are unemployed, and, more likely to have experienced child abuse or neglect. Youth Development programs and policies designed to serve the general population of adolescents or unemployed young adults are not likely to adequately serve the needs of those at highest risk of long-term disconnection.

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<sup>41</sup> Lisa K. Foster et al. (2005). *Involving Youth in Policymaking and Coordinating Youth Policy: State-Level Structures in California and Other States*. California Research Bureau.

<sup>42</sup> See Brett Brown, *A Portrait of Well-being in Early Adulthood* (unpublished paper, Child Trends 2003) available at. While the percentage varies from year to year, based on the state of the economy and the impact of various public policies, the percentage of disconnected twenty-five year olds appears to have remained fairly stable over the past twenty years. In an earlier study, Brown examined the outcomes for a cohort of youth surveyed regularly between ages 16 and 24 during the 1980's. He found that approximately 40 percent of the group experienced at least half a year of unemployment at some point between ages 16-24; however, less than six percent of the men and eight percent of the women were unemployed for more than a full calendar year. B. Brown, *Who Are America's Disconnected Youth?* (unpublished paper, Child Trends 1996). Age 25 is an arbitrary line.

Since the transition to independent adulthood rarely occurs at 18, we need to create, at the local, state and national levels, young adult systems of support. While, colleges serve this function for some youth; an equal commitment to those youth who need other services in order to help them become self-sufficient, productive citizens is necessary as well.

## Summary of Preliminary Policy Recommendations

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A number of strategic intervention points coupled with broader policy and system reforms are required to make a real difference in the lives of boys and young men of color. These changes are needed in the key focus areas of health, education, employment and wealth, safety and youth development. Recommendations in each area are outlined below. A full picture of why these intervention points and reforms are necessary is provided by a set of separate issue briefs that contain a more detailed discussion of the strategic intervention points and recommendations for policy and system change.

### Health

#### Strategic Intervention Points

##### *Developing Health Homes*

Research indicates that having a health home and/or usual source of primary care is a stronger predictor of receiving care than insurance alone and is associated with more accurate diagnoses, reduced emergency room use, fewer hospitalizations, lower costs, better prevention and increased patient satisfaction.<sup>43</sup> The health home model involves providers partnering with the patient and family to provide accessible, prevention-oriented care. Boys and young men of color currently have limited access to either health homes or any usual source of care.

This also requires a reorientation of the conventional workforce recruitment, training, and retention model. This will be needed to build and retain a workforce of health service providers that can meet the demands of a shifting patient demographic. This includes the cultivation of a workforce that understands the key role of culture and patient values in the ability to develop an appropriately responsive and effective care delivery system that truly connects to the patients it serves. This would be accomplished by:

- **Creating coordinated care networks that integrate health care providers (hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers) to comprehensive care networks;**
  - Expanding number of school-based health centers linked to an integrated delivery network;
  - Improving the primary health care workforce development system and expanding capacity for these providers to address communities' health needs; and
  - Establishing integrated health care services for juvenile offenders that maximize the use of community clinics, county behavioral health departments and county probation agencies, and existing funding streams.
  
- **Prototyping delivery system reforms targeted to boys and men of color in the public safety net system to model for the private sector; and**

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<sup>43</sup> Starfield, B., & Shi, L. (2004, May). The medical home, access to care, and insurance: A review of evidence. *Pediatrics* 113(5), 1493-1498.

- **Identifying and creating financial incentivize to emphasize prevention within the health systems as well as inclusion of community health approaches aimed at primary prevention.**

### ***Increasing Access to Health and Other Benefits***

The changes being made to the overall health system through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in California will require proper implementation to be effective. Beyond this, additional policy reforms need to be made to ensure that broader benefits extend to boys and young men of color. Enrollment and eligibility in health coverage, social services, and other programs that contribute to health need to be simplified. Transition plans for young adults aging out of coverage through a parent's plan or foster care need to be developed. Large-scale culturally and linguistically appropriate education campaigns about coverage options, targeted to the newly eligible but underserved populations, should be implemented. Investments must be made in technology to expand access and eligibility. Enrollment in job-based coverage should be maximized. Seamless coverage must be there for life transitions. Benefits should be enabled for access to all Californians, regardless of immigration status. Realizing this would be achieved through:

- **Supporting outreach, enrollment, retention, and utilization efforts targeting low-income and low-wealth communities:**
  - Improving the policies, practices and systems that manage enrollment in and utilization of health and other resources (e.g., simplifying the processes, utilizing technology to improve public access, etc);
  - Developing efforts to ensure seamless health coverage that respond to changing life circumstances and transitions; and
  - Implementing large scale education campaigns on coverage options.
- **Crafting local coverage/care programs to cover all California:**
  - Comprehensive coverage programs; and
  - Supporting efforts to provide "Gap" coverage programs.
- **Supporting efforts to connect individuals and families to a bundle of public benefits (nutrition, income security, etc.) and services that families need to thrive economically.**

### ***Developing Trauma-Informed Care and Services***

To address the realities of trauma and chronic adversity experienced by boys and young men of color, community institutions, beginning with health providers, need to incorporate this experience into their approach to these boys and young men. Specific solutions include creation of a professional development institute for education and leadership in trauma-informed principles and practices, support for and expansion of community-based efforts that are consistent with a trauma-informed approach, and support for trauma-informed prevention activities. This can be undertaken by:

- **Incorporating trauma-informed practices into professional development of health and human services system practitioners; and**

- **Prototyping community-based efforts consistent with a trauma-informed approach;**
  - ✓ Creating trauma-informed care in community health centers and medical centers that serve the community; and
  - ✓ Supporting trauma-informed prevention activities that understand the influence of race and gender in health seeking behavior.
- **Intervening early to promote children’s health, supporting early child development and parent skill-building and education programs targeted at children of color in disadvantaged neighborhoods.** Ensuring enriching day care, pre-school, and at-home environments that bolster young children’s cognitive and verbal ability. Teaching the parents of young children how to provide stable attachment and nurturing interactions and how to provide enrichment at home.
- **Filling the gap: transforming the way health care is provided by integrating other key services into health homes that provide consistent care with minimal barriers (i.e. health insurance coverage).** Establishing or expanding health services at schools and in community settings, especially those primarily serving low-income children of color. Alternative services should be provided as needed and/or coordinated through a broader support network. Expand health insurance coverage for low-income people of color. Education and outreach efforts can alert residents to existing low-cost or free clinics, health services, and health insurance they may access.

## Policy and Systems Reforms that Can Make a Difference

**Support and expand early childhood intervention programs that increase access and exposure to enriching, stimulating environments and stable, nurturing relationships—and that improve the health and well-being of the child’s entire family.** Support and expand preschool programs that provide such environments and serve low-income children in disadvantaged neighborhoods.<sup>44</sup> Within the medical care system, support and expand programs<sup>45</sup> that take a holistic care approach that improves health outcomes for low-income mothers and young children by addressing the links between physical, emotional, and financial health and stability.<sup>46</sup> Investment in early childhood intervention programs for disadvantaged children is “a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large.”<sup>47</sup>

**Change the way that systems and institutions (school, juvenile justice, court, health care, mental health, etc.) respond to traumatized males of color by encouraging them to adopt and expand trauma-informed care programs.** One such skill-building intervention program, developed specifically for low-income ethnic minority and immigrant youth in California, teaches children skills for relaxation, challenging detrimental thought patterns, solving conflicts, processing grief, and recovering from trauma. The school-based program, Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS), has significantly reduced PTSD and depression in participants.<sup>48</sup> Health care institutions’ and systems’ have also partnered with social service providers to provide holistic intervention programs that address health and trauma issues while reducing circumstantial and behavioral predictors of those issues. The University of Maryland’s holistic, multi-step Violence Intervention Program, for example, connects social

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<sup>44</sup> (Barnett and Masse 2007).

<sup>45</sup> (NFP) (Olds 2006).

<sup>46</sup> (Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon 2005).

<sup>47</sup> (Heckman 2006: 1,902).

<sup>48</sup> (Source: Ngo et al, 2008).

workers to victims of violence who have formerly been incarcerated. Recovery plans include substance abuse rehabilitation, conflict resolution, workforce training, and more, and result in significantly fewer future arrests and convictions.<sup>1</sup>

Mental illness has been little understood, widely stigmatized, and often untreated in this country. It has been linked with substance abuse, homelessness, and violent behavior. **Preventive care, early diagnosis and intervention, and other mental health programs and services—especially for the presently underserved adolescent population—are sorely needed. The California Mental Health Services Act’s (MHSA) Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs can dramatically improve mental health services for youth and health outcomes for us all.** More than half of PEI funds—over \$156M in 2008-09—must go towards services for young people 25 and under. PEI funds support, among other things, programs that reduce the factors that contribute to mental health disorders.

**Increase access to regular, quality health care for underserved children and youth by increasing the number of school-based health centers (SBHCs) in California and across the nation. Community facing SBHCs** are supported by a wide variety of funding sources and can break down barriers to care that typically face low-income youth of color such as lack of transportation, lack of insurance, and health care provider shortages. Access to SBHCs has been shown to improve academic and well as health outcomes for underserved youth.<sup>49</sup>

**Increasing the numbers of men of color in the health field will improve health outcomes for this population.** Access to and availability of primary care increases chances for early detection of illnesses, saves money, and improves health equity on a large scale. Recruitment of and support for more providers and health professionals of is needed, as well as culturally appropriate training to cultivate leaders of color in the field who can proactively identify and address health issues facing underserved communities.<sup>50</sup>

**California’s efforts to reform federal health care—via implementation of the Medicaid waiver and the Affordable Care Act—could be amplified as well as studied for future improvement.** Grant money from the Act should be channeled to community and home health providers. Data collection and analysis related to this funding should occur, in order to test the success of and improve upon payment reform strategies. In addition, assistance programs should be established and implemented to serve patients who need help navigating the system and those who are moving from pediatric to adult health care.

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<sup>49</sup> (Allison et al. 2007), (Gustafson 2005), (National Assembly on School-Based Health Care 2010), (Walker et al. 2010), (Slopen and Williams).

<sup>50</sup> (Starfield, Shi, and Macinko 2005), (Komaromy et al. 1996), (Schlueter 2006), (Drake 2009), (Manetta et al. 2007).

## Education

### Strategic Intervention Points

We have identified a number of important efforts to improve educational outcomes for boys and men of color through partnership, systems change, and policy reform. These interventions focus on strategic points along the state's (P-16) public education and workforce training systems. Though there are many variations of the following cross-cutting efforts, the work can be organized to focus resources and leadership toward the following broad streams.

#### Better Health Through Academics

Young boys and men of color need strong and effective schools that are designed to build the skills and capacity needed for healthy academic development.

- **Improving the performance of Early Childhood Programs and Elementary Schools** to ensure boys of color are reading, writing, and doing math at or above grade level by third grade. These efforts have focused on: improving attendance in school, building the capacity of parents to take leadership and serve as their child's first teacher, on reforming curriculum and instruction to improve program, school and teacher performance, and supporting strategies to strengthen community-school partnerships.
- **Improving the performance of Middle and High Schools** to ensure greater numbers of youth of color make a successful transition from middle to high school, graduate in greater numbers, and are better prepared for success in colleges, universities, and their careers.
- **Improving retention and performance in College and University Systems** to ensure that the young men of color that do complete the A-G coursework, gain GEDs or diplomas, and are able to enter into colleges and universities are given the resources and support to continue their academic excellence and development and successfully complete higher education programs.

#### Better Health Through Work

Policy changes are required to enable increased access to economic opportunities for boys and young men of color. Employment is a key focus of such policy concerns. Beyond working to develop new opportunities, it is also important to ensure increased access to existing public resources and benefits.

- **Improving and expanding Workforce Training Programs** to ensure a greater number of young men of color that leave high school without a diploma and men who are re-entering communities from jails and prison are offered *Second Chance* educational pathways to good-paying career ladder-oriented jobs in high-growth sectors.

#### Ensuring Access to School Health

The health status of California's boys and young men of color is directly impacted by school dropout rates, attendance, academic performance and school district revenues. By carefully considering where and how to provide services, schools and policymakers can take immediate and low cost steps to

improve the health of boys and young men of color and increase student academic achievement and graduation rates. Student health must be a key component in the ongoing discussion about school reform. In addition, to address the realities of trauma experienced by boys and young men of color, educational institutions need to incorporate this experience into their approach to these boys and young men.

- **Improve the ability of schools to identify and respond effectively to chronic trauma in young males of color.** Support school staff and school systems in expanding opportunities for services such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, counseling, support groups, mentoring, conflict and anger management training, gender-specific health services and other interventions that mitigate the impact of stress and trauma and help youth of color break the cycle of violence.

### **Creating a Healthy Neighborhood**

Neighborhoods should have the following intended outcomes: residents live in communities with health-promoting land use, transportation and community development; children and their families are safe from violence in their homes and neighborhoods; and neighborhood and school environments support improved health and healthy behaviors.

- **Expand and support community-school-police solutions to make schools and neighborhoods safer and shelter kids from violence and trauma.** Provide enriching after-school programs in safe haven environments for at-risk kids. Curb violent crime and firearm usage and access through legislative, administrative, and community interventions.
- **Work on long-term solutions for desegregating neighborhoods and schools, de-concentrating poverty, and helping people move to opportunity.**<sup>51</sup> Concentrated poverty, disadvantage, and unhealthy environments are profoundly impacting boys and men of color physically, mentally, and emotionally. Some school- and housing-based policy solutions do exist but better, higher-impact policy and system reforms are needed to properly address this disparity.
- **Improving outcomes through use of community programming and resources** - a number of policy advocates and community builders are engaged in important strategies that focus on different stages of male development and different parts of the state's education and workforce training system.

### **Policy and System Reforms that Can Make a Difference**

Beyond strategic intervention points, there are broader policy and system reforms that can make a difference. These reform recommendations take into account the multiple touch points that a boy or young man of color may experience when accessing educational institutions throughout his life. Key legislative and administrative actions are those that will:

- Reduce the use of harsh and extreme school policies and practices that disproportionately "Push Out" boys and young men of color and expand the use of common sense school discipline

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models that increase the participation and efficacy of boys and young men of color in California's public schools.

- Expand the number of California public schools that adopt “full service” school models that engage community and other important partners in providing children and youth with the supports needed for healthy and social development in high need neighborhoods.
- Increase the number and rates of highly qualified teachers in the California public schools that serve the greatest number of boys and young men of color. Similar steps could be taken to expand technical assistance and competitive grants to public schools and communities for professional development and training that increases the capacity of teachers, counselors, other school personnel, and community partners to effectively engage, serve and educate boys and young men of color.
- Accelerate the adoption of school reforms, curriculum, and collaboration/partnerships that have demonstrated success improving academic achievement, graduation, college attendance, and workforce training among boys and young men of color. Such reforms should account for the urgent need to ensure the social science curriculum from Pre School to University includes the content, pedagogy, and leadership/service experience that are required to ensure the healthy development of young men of color into responsible and contributing members of their families, communities and the greater society.
- Strengthen and expand community-school prevention efforts and ensure schools and neighborhoods are safe and free from violence.
- Lead to the adoption of an equity based school finance approach in which allocation of state and federal funds accounts for the scale and diversity of needs boys and young men of color encounter as they move through our public school system. This restructuring of school finance policies would need to account for the actual cost of preparing students for college and careers in high need neighborhoods and would be reflected in basic state reimbursement rates and in allocation of competitive grant programs.

## Employment and Wealth

### Strategic Intervention Points

To respond to these urgent challenges the state should commit to ambitious set of strategic objectives that directly respond to the scale and multi-faceted nature of the job crisis young men of color and state are experiencing. Setting specific goals for increasing employment among young men of color would be the first step in strategy that engages all stakeholders that are essential to removing barriers to harnessing their talent and assets.

**Proposed Goal: Over the next decade the state will significantly increase the numbers of young men (16-24 year olds) and men of color that are prepared for and secure jobs that pay family sustaining wages, provide good benefits, and real career advancement in high growth industry sectors that are critical to California's regional and state economy.** More specifically, the state will marshal public and private leadership and existing resources to increase high school graduation rates of young men of color, marketable skills sets of those who graduate, the number of graduates that are eligible for colleges, universities, and the numbers that are prepared to succeed in post-secondary workforce training programs.

Achieving these objectives will not necessarily require significant increases in public spending, if a consensus can be reached to prioritize young men of color in the existing workforce system. At minimum this will require that the state:

- **Expand supports community colleges provide to young men of color in basic education, workforce pathway programs, and other academic programs that serve as onramps to high demand labor market sectors that offer real career advancement.**
- **Align and strengthen the workforce development programs** (e.g. career technical high schools, pre-apprenticeship, community colleges, and youth workforce programs) that can serve as pathways to careers in high demand sectors at the regional level.
- **Increase or redirect existing public investment to the workforce education and training programs that have been proven to work as pathways for young men of color to middle skills jobs in high growth sectors.** Middle skills jobs are career ladder oriented jobs that can be attained with relatively low educational attainment but that require post secondary training that is less than a Bachelors Degree to advance to higher levels in their careers.
- **Increase the numbers of male high school students of color between the ages of 16-24 that are connected to career pathway programs that have adopted the program practices that yield higher numbers of graduates with high value postsecondary credentials and degree.** Postsecondary pathways are the integrated set of activities, interventions, and supports that lead youth to attain certificates, credentials, licenses, and degrees that have demonstrable value in the labor market. These programs include academically rigorous multiple pathway CTE high schools, community college workforce training programs like Career Advancement Academies, and labor/industry pre apprenticeship programs. Navigating these career pathways can be challenging for local youth and adults, the state should encourage and incentivize the sponsors of these programs to better

coordinate and manage the entry and progress of young men of color through these local and regional pathways.

- **Expand in the numbers of workforce training providers and systems that adopt best practices that have proven to improve outcomes for young men of color.** California is home to some the nation’s best youth development oriented workforce bridge programs, including affiliates of national organizations like YouthBuild, Conservation and Americorps and a great number of locally grown efforts like Oakland’s Green Job Corp; these program models and best practices should be promoted as standard program practices the state and local workforce investment funders require of programs that seek their funding.
- **Remove system barriers young men of color face as they move into the working world.** According to an analysis by researchers at the National Employment Law Project conducted in 2008, nearly one in three adults in the United States (31.7 percent) were estimated to have a criminal record on file with the states that will show up on a routine criminal background check. As is expected, when U.S. incarceration rates continue to increase, so do the number of people with a record of criminal history. And those with a criminal history are impacted by the more frequent use of background checks. Nationally, background checks are one of the foremost systemic barriers limiting people with criminal records from gainfully participating in the regular labor market. The severity of this is amplified by racial, ethnic, and gender disparities both in the criminal justice system and among workers with criminal records. Men of color, particularly African American men, have higher incarceration rates and, as people with criminal records, tend to have a harder time finding work and earning equal pay when compared to their white counterparts. Addressing these inequities requires innovative strategies at all levels of government.<sup>52</sup>
- **Increase the number of public agencies that adopt targeted hire policies and programs that specify goals for hiring of young men of color with multiple barriers to employment.** Large scale publicly funded infrastructure projects and contracts for public services offer important leverage points for state and local government departments and agencies that are engaged in this new state effort that would not require any new expenditures; the state’s implementation of healthcare access system is another such opportunity that could result in greater numbers of men in the health sector.
- **Expand the numbers of effective community economic development programs and social enterprises that serve as first employers to BMOC that have historically faced barriers to employment.** Even as other private and public employers have resisted employing young men of color, community-led social enterprises have demonstrated remarkable success working with young men, particularly those with multiple barriers to employment (including low educational attainment and prior convictions).

## Policy & System Reforms that Can Make a Difference

As noted succeeding in the goal of moving greater numbers of young men of color from unemployment, under employment or employment in low wage occupations will require greater coordination and

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<sup>52</sup> [http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97c6d565-bb43-406d-a6d5-eca3bbf35af0%7D/EMPLOYINGTHEFORMERLYINCARCERATED\\_071210.PDF](http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97c6d565-bb43-406d-a6d5-eca3bbf35af0%7D/EMPLOYINGTHEFORMERLYINCARCERATED_071210.PDF).

effectiveness of existing workforce education and training programs. No one state or local agency can unilaterally ensure success. The following recommendations represent steps that Legislature, Governor and the heads of our public education and workforce systems can take in the short run. In the long run, policy and system reforms to improve the effectiveness of the state's post-secondary system will have to be addressed—and the needs of boys and men of color will need to be at the center of such reforms.

**To increase state and local investment in the career workforce pathway programs:**

- The Governor could use his 15 percent discretionary Workforce Investment Act funds; and direct state workforce department heads to encourage local workforce boards to do the same.
- The Legislature and the Governor could mandate greater support for at risk 16-24 year olds in career technical education high school programs that lead to jobs in high growth and high wage sectors e.g. SB x1x, which Governor Brown signed recently that provided additional monies for Green focused CTE High Schools that work with this population.
- The Community College Chancellor could continue and expand support for Career Advancement Academies that serve this population.

**To increase adoption of the best education and program practices from high school through the state's postsecondary system:**

- The Legislature, the Governor, superintendent of schools, and the heads of the three higher education segments should explicitly commit the state's public education and workforce system to improving access and completion rates for boys and young men of color in state funded career pathway workforce education and training programs.
- These public commitments should be followed up with leadership to ensure boys and young men are accounted for in any existing system reforms to improve efficacy (for example, the Community College Student Success Task Force mandated by the Legislature and Governor). Meanwhile, the Legislature and Governor could mandate tracking and a commitment to improving success rates for young men of color in the state's implementation of all training that is funded by the Workforce Investment Act. This accountability step would encourage local Workforce Investment Boards to examine steps toward the goal.

**To increase the use of local and targeted hiring:**

- The Legislature and Governor could direct all state departments and agencies to improve the expansion of these economic opportunity policies when they are already mandated and/or encouraged by a number of major federal infrastructure programs (e.g., the Department of Transportation's Highway program funds, or HUD's Section 3).
- Consider developing and approving an economic opportunity policy that includes local and targeted hire for all state funded infrastructure projects, like those that have been adopted by local community redevelopment agencies (e.g., Los Angeles), school districts (Oakland), and community colleges (Los Angeles).

## **SAFETY**

### **Strategic Intervention Points**

At every stage of formal processing in the juvenile justice system from arrest to confinement, boys and young men of color, particularly Black males, are more aggressively punished than their White peers. This results in a stark overrepresentation of young males of color in the juvenile and criminal justice systems with significant consequences for their lives. While it is true that young males of color commit serious crimes at a higher rate than their white peers, racially biased punitive policies produce a significant portion of racial disparities in youth incarceration. The following represents strategic points for intervening in the formal processing of youth offenders to help mitigate these disparities and the deleterious effects of exposure to the criminal justice system.

#### **Improve parenting for boys and young men of color**

- Improve intensive parenting for boys and young men of color both outside of and within juvenile and foster care systems

#### **Reduce the amount of boys of color in the criminal justice pipeline**

- Reduce disproportionate minority contact with police agencies and juvenile justice authorities that dramatically increase the likelihood that boys and young men of color will be harassed, arrested and incarcerated, particularly for drug offenses.
- Provide better access to legal representation for boys and young men of color.
- Reduce the number of youth directly filed to adult court and ultimately sentenced to prison.

#### **Better respond to youth needs through community-based and trauma-informed approaches**

- Decrease the number of youth who are incarcerated in youth detention and divert them to community-based programs providing an effective continuum of services.
- Provide mental health assessment and trauma-informed responses at the earliest point of contact for youth in the juvenile justice system to determine whether they have mental health needs and how best to match those needs with available services.

#### **Create more effective pathways for youth reintegration**

- Improve the pathways for reentry following a period of detention in juvenile justice facilities or state prisons for young offenders.

### **Policy and Systems Reforms that Can Make a Difference**

Beyond strategic intervention points, there are broader policy and system reforms that can make a difference. These reform recommendations take into account the multiple touch points that a boy or young man of color may experience when accessing institutions throughout his life.

**Make trauma-informed care a core principle of the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems.**

Amend the current intent statutes of the juvenile justice and child welfare system (Sections 300 and 600 of the Welfare and Institutions Code) to include the provision of trauma informed parenting as one of the goals of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. This would counter the increasingly punitive language passed in the last decade and a half and create a legal “hook” for advocates seeking to develop a parenting orientation to services.

**Provide support for more effective parenting of boys and young men of color.**

In targeted communities, offer technical assistance to modify conditions of confinement or move children to less restrictive settings so they can receive intensive parenting and are not housed with potentially violent wards. Provide technical assistance on the use of Title IV-E funds to subsidize placement and training. Also, there is significant research documenting the importance of fathers in the lives of children. Absence of a father is correlated with increased risk for negative outcomes in adulthood. In the past, efforts to address concerns about absent fathers have taken a sociological approach.<sup>53</sup> Increasing the connection between fathers and their children is one of the most critical steps toward reducing youth involvement with violence as both perpetrators and victims. In addition, the research cited here has shown that as fathers became more involved with their children, their own problematic behaviors were reduced. So it is likely that programs to address teen fathering will not only help the children but also the young fathers.

**Provide training on trauma informed care to juvenile judges, attorneys and systems staff.**

Build off of the experience of community practitioners with saturation efforts to change not only specific policy and practice but the philosophy of public and private systems. By shifting training funding provided by state and local public safety and social services agencies to work with the widely diverse, influential groups like the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the ABA, the Youth Law Center, the Child Welfare League, the California affiliates of APHSA, CASA, on various ways of implementing family preservation to effect a culture shift.

**Create enforceable state standards for county-level alternatives to detention.**

Pursue legislative and administration actions to provide a more effective continuum of juvenile justice services at the county level. California should establish statewide standards and regulations, modeled on successful local models (e.g. the Missouri model as adopted for James Ranch in Santa Clara County), to ensure a consistent level of quality in county juvenile justice services. The state should also ensure adequate time and cost-sharing for counties to effectively implement a comprehensive array of diversion programs and longer-term detention capacities. The staff of juvenile justice agencies should also receive mandatory training in disparity issues as a requirement to receive state and federal juvenile justice funding. To support this requirement, each county should be required to analyze its own issues related to boys and young men of color and submit remedial plans.

**Review and reform laws that impose racially biased gang-related sentencing enhancements** like the Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act (STEP) which applies overwhelmingly to boys and young men of color. These laws result in young males of color receiving significantly longer sentences than White juveniles for the same offense. Law enforcement agencies, particularly gang task forces,

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<sup>53</sup> Cowan, Pruet, Pruet and Wong, *Promoting Fathers' Engagement With Children: Preventive Interventions for Low-Income Families*, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71 (August 2009): 663 – 679.

frequently label many juveniles of color as gang members with no evidence of gang involvement and likewise refuse to label White juvenile groups as gangs even if they clearly meet the provisions of the STEP Act.<sup>54</sup>

**Expand community-based alternatives to detention, especially ones like the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative**, which has substantially reduced disproportionate minority contact in Santa Cruz and Ventura Counties. As of August 2009, 110 local jurisdictions in 27 states have active JDAI programs.<sup>55</sup>

**Counties should provide non-incarceration options to handle warrant and probation failures** to reduce the amount of boys and young men of color unnecessarily held in detention.

**Create an Effective and Reliable System for Responding to Juvenile Mental Health Issues.** A number of state-level and county-level reforms are needed to create an effective and reliable system for assessing the mental health of youth who come in contact with the juvenile and criminal justice system and matching them with high quality mental health services. This entails creating universal practical definitions for mental health disorders that are correlated with DSM-IV diagnoses in order to standardize the application of effective treatment modalities; collecting assessment data in a consistent way across counties; and using validated screening and assessment instruments that are both culturally competent and responsive to gender. Ultimately, county systems should properly assess the mental health needs of youth at the earliest point of contact and then match those youth with the least intrusive and most effective interventions that also maximize public safety. A range of proven community-based intensive therapies includes Functional Family Therapy and Multi-Systemic Therapy among others. California should also support greater cross-agency collaboration and capacity improvement similar to the *Healthy Returns Initiative* launched in 2005 in Los Angeles, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Ventura Counties. HRI led to the improvement in probation and officer recognition of mental disorders and increased the connection between youth and appropriate mental health services.<sup>56</sup>

**Explore the use of Medicaid to support in home/community based mental health treatment.** Working with the Quality Parenting Program, Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the California Health and Human Services Agency, to develop policies to require trauma informed training for all caregivers including foster families, kinship caregivers, group home and institutional staff.

**Revise detention practices to ensure youth of color receive fair and equitable treatment while detained.** Require training for guards and administrators to develop understanding and unique skills to engage youth with a special emphasis on working with those who have been chronically exposed to community and institutional violence. Encourage counties to use a risk-assessment screening tool with a

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<sup>54</sup> Brian W. Ludeke, *Malibu Locals Only: "Boys Will Be Boys," or Dangerous Street Gang? Why the Criminal Justice System's Failure to Properly Identify Suburban Gangs Hurts Efforts to Fight Gangs*, 43 CAL. W. L. REV. 309, 345–46 (2007); Linda S. Beres & Thomas D. Griffith, "Gangs, Schools, and Stereotypes", 37 LOY. L.A. L. REV. 935, 949–50 (2004); Sara Lynn Van Hofwegen, "Unjust and Ineffective: A Critical Look at California's Step Act", Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal, Volume 18, Number 3, Spring 2009, 679.

<sup>55</sup> *Two Decades of JDAI: From Demonstration Project to National Standard* (2009) Annie E. Casey Foundation.

<sup>56</sup> *Healthy Returns Initiative: Strengthening Mental Health Services in the Juvenile Justice System: A Final Evaluation Report by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency* (2010) The National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

racial/ethnic lens for all youth to ensure myriad educational, mental health, and developmental needs are met. Conduct a system-wide evaluation of youth complaints against guards/administrators to analyze patterns of conduct and inform training practices.

**Create effective aftercare approaches for successful youth reentry following confinement.** Cost savings generated from the realignment of the juvenile justice system, as well as the broader criminal justice system, should be reallocated to support, among other things, effective aftercare programs for youth released from juvenile detention. California should support the testing and application of successful models for juvenile justice aftercare at the local level in the areas of assessment, step-down placements, pre-release planning, probation, and court supervision. This could entail approaches such as creating a best practices clearinghouse, offering incentive grants and implementing supportive regulations. The state and localities should also support effective programs for reintegrating young adults who have been incarcerated back into the labor force. One such program, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) based in New York City, is a transitional jobs program designed to help former prisoners increase longer-term employment and reduce recidivism. A recent random-assignment impact evaluation of CEO conducted by MDRC found that the program significantly reduced re-arrest and reconviction for participants and, in particular, had its strongest reductions in recidivism for former prisoners who were at highest risk of recidivism.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Janine Zweig et al., (2010) Recidivism Effects of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Program Vary by Former Prisoners' Risk of Reoffending <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/574/full.pdf>

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### Strategic Intervention Points

Youth development programs and policies designed to serve the general population of adolescents or unemployed young adults are not likely to adequately serve the needs of those at highest risk of long-term disconnection. In response, there is a compelling need to create a system of support and opportunity for those youth who are least likely to make a successful transition by age 25. There are a handful of strategic points of intervention that California policymakers should prioritize to both reduce the likelihood of disconnection for young males of color as well recovering youth who have become disconnected. High-leverage points of intervention to consider are to:

#### ***Prevent Disconnection***

- Provide a rich array of targeted afterschool and out-of-school time programs to keep boys of color developmentally on the pathway to success
- Provide mental health services for boys and young men of color, particularly those who suffer chronic trauma and its associated effects on psychosocial development

#### ***Re-Connect Youth Who have Become Disconnected***

- Re-connect disconnected youth who have fallen off the pathway to success as a result of dropping out of school or being incarcerated

### Policy and Systems Reforms that Can Make a Difference

Beyond strategic intervention points, there are broader policy and system reforms that can make a difference. These reform recommendations take into account the multiple touch points that a boy or young man of color may experience when accessing institutions throughout his life.

**Crate a coordinating body for youth programs and services across state agencies that effectively targets programs and services to boys and young men of color:** California, unlike other states, does not have a formal state-level coordinating mechanism for programs and services across departments that target youth. The absence of comprehensive coordination across state agencies makes it extremely difficult to target youth programs and services to more effectively serve boys and young men of color in a targeted way. California should create a coordinating body within the Governor’s Office to coordinate its youth-serving programs and services across several agencies, similar to the voluntary interagency coordination around violence prevention known as the “Shifting the Focus” effort begun in 2000.<sup>58</sup>

**Reform of school level accountability system to reverse the incentive for schools and services providers to shed / “push out” their lowest performing, most troubled – and most unhealthy - kids** in an effort to increase their test scores/outcomes: Much of the initial legislative work has been completed but has yet to be implemented. In the California context, this involves supporting and

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<sup>58</sup> Shailushi Baxi and Rachel Davis (June 2001) *Shifting the Focus: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Advancing Violence Prevention in California*, Prevention Institute. Available at [http://thrive.preventioninstitute.org/pdf/STF\\_Hearings\\_Report.pdf](http://thrive.preventioninstitute.org/pdf/STF_Hearings_Report.pdf).

monitoring implementation of recently enacted legislation (SB 219 and SB 651) that alters California's school level accountability system to include graduation rates as opposed to simply test scores in the state's annual assessment of schools. Because of the correlation between health indicators – and in particular behavioral health indicators – and school failure, this will also prevent schools from pushing out those students most in need of health services and instead encourage them to identify these students early and deliver primary and secondary prevention services to help them succeed.

Creation of incentives, data systems, and best practices to identify young people who are at highest risk for facing serious health, social, and academic problems: Applying the latest research on predictors of dropping out, districts and schools should be able to identify as early as fourth or fifth grade and definitely upon entry into high school, those students that face a very high risk of not graduating. Again, these are also the students most likely to go on to struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, and obesity. Once identified, these students should receive support to address their social and health needs, accelerate their learning, and get them back on track while remaining in the traditional (versus alternative) middle school and high school setting. The state education agency must provide the mandate as well as the technical and capacity building support to districts to allow them to systematically use the state's longitudinal student information system to identify these students and match them to services. And the education system, the social service, and the public health system must find innovative ways to share data and link resources in an effort to identify, as early as possible, those students at highest risk. Again, this work can build on recently enacted legislation in California that mandates annual reporting of the prevalence of early indicators of dropout and the state's recently implemented longitudinal student data system.

**Expand the adoption of a Community-based, Integrated Student Services Model in California public schools** in order to meet the service and developmental needs of at-risk students identified: It is not enough that schools simply have the capacity to identify at-risk students. They also must be connected to those resources in the community that can help these students to be healthy and stay connected. School systems cannot do this alone; they must find ways to leverage the resources of their community and other public systems through partnerships. In order to ensure 1) that appropriate prevention services are being provided for all students throughout their educational career and 2) that the highest risk students are matched with appropriate, high quality secondary prevention and treatment resources we recommend supporting the expansion of the "community school" model. A community school is a public school that acts as the hub of its community by engaging community resources to offer a range of on-site programs and services focused on health, social services, academics, and youth development. Through the efforts of a community coordinator who acts as a single point of contact, individual student needs are assessed, and connections are made between students and targeted community resources. This model is based on public health and youth development principles and has been empirically demonstrated to reduce the number of high school dropouts at a reasonable per-student cost.<sup>1</sup> The Community School model can play a central role in building the infrastructure for this model of youth services to take hold in and around California's schools.

**Reform of Alternative School Accountability System and improvement of practice in California's continuation high school system targeting young people ages 16-18 off-track to graduate from high school:** California is unique among states in providing a legislatively mandated system of alternative education for student sixteen years and older who have fallen behind academically and face multiple challenges. State law requires that any school district with a high school that enrolls over one hundred students must establish a continuation high school. These schools are crucial to ensure that those

neediest students who despite early intervention, are still behind by age 16 get the specialized and service intensive help they need to graduate. They are also a key to reintegrating those young people who have already left high school and are now interested in reconnecting. In order to improve the quality of instruction and health and social services, the weak accountability system under which these schools functioned must be reformed. In addition, funding formulas and district oversight must shift so these schools can truly provide the connections to services and education required to ensure the success of these students. Finally, there are islands of excellence in this system; a small number of alternative schools are making real progress. We must elevate these best practices from these model schools and from other state's efforts and push to replicate their success throughout the state.

**Leverage California's \$550 million After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program to serve high-need boys of color and recover disconnected older youth:** The After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program in California is the result of a 2002 voter-approved initiative (Proposition 49) that increased state funding for afterschool programs from \$121 million to the current funding level of \$550 million. ASES is one of the first, and currently the largest, state-sponsored program in the nation to provide funding for local after school education and enrichment programs. At this level, California invests over three times more in afterschool programs than the rest of the country combined.<sup>59</sup> These programs are created through partnerships between school districts, community based-organizations, and government agencies to provide literacy, academic enrichment and safe constructive alternatives for children and youth in kindergarten through ninth grade (K-9). California should expand the coverage of the ASES program to include high-school youth and explore leveraging ASES funding in concert with funding from other systems (e.g. education, child welfare, workforce, health) for recovering disconnected older youth who drop out of high school. The state should develop and implement quality standards to ensure boys of color benefit from high-quality afterschool programs like LA's BEST in Los Angeles which has proven particularly effective at reducing the likelihood of committing a crime or dropping out of school among low-income children of color.<sup>60</sup>

**Reduce the school dropout rate among boys and young men of color:** Perhaps the most high-leverage strategy for improving developmental outcomes for boys and young men of color is to reduce the crisis-level rates at which they drop out of school. The state of California should adopt a number of early strategies to reduce the ballooning dropout population in California, including: Including dropouts in the state accountability system to prevent schools who are focused on improving test scores from pushing low-performing youth, particularly Black and Latino males, into alternative schools where the overwhelming majority ultimately drops out; create a data system which collects and reports more useful data on California's dropout problem; focus early reform efforts on districts and schools with a disproportionate share of dropouts.

**Build supported pathways to postsecondary success for youth of color:** California should help young men of color to make successful transitions to the labor market by assembling resources from multiple systems including the workforce and adult education systems to support pathways for postsecondary

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<sup>59</sup> Fight Crime Invest in Kids California, (2010) *California's After-School Commitment: Keeping Kids on Track and Out of Trouble*,

[http://www.fightcrime.org/sites/default/files/reports/CA\\_AS\\_Commitment\\_1.pdf](http://www.fightcrime.org/sites/default/files/reports/CA_AS_Commitment_1.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> Goldschmidt, P., D. Huang, and M. Chinen (2007) *The Long-Term Effects of Afterschool Programming on Educational Adjustment and Juvenile Crime: A Study of the LA's BEST After-school Program*. Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles and CRESST (National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing).

success. This should include a “multiple pathways” approach to education with multiple entry and exit points along with a comprehensive “career pathways” to labor market transitions. Career pathways are programs that tie education, training and support programs together to expand both their education and employment opportunities simultaneously. Washington State, for example, offers more than 130 Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs in a variety of professional fields that allow adult education and ESL students to more quickly advance along career pathways. Using the Governor’s discretionary 15 percent of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds, should continue to support and expand projects like the California Teacher Pathway Program funded out of the California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (CalGRIP) Initiative created in 2007.

**Allow flexible state funding across systems to support the recovery of disconnected youth.** California should allow flexibility in funding streams across education, child welfare, health, justice, housing, economic development and workforce systems so that local agencies can create a seamless pathway for re-engaging disconnected youth of color and supporting their successful transition to employment or higher education.