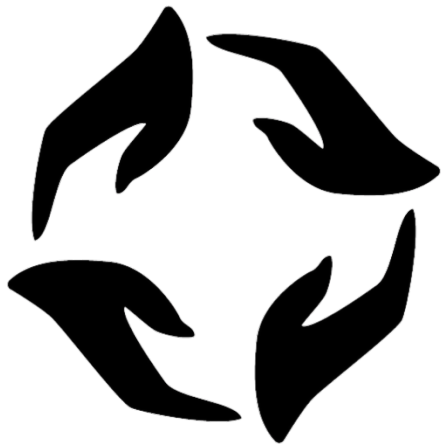


# **Peace Point Initiative**

## **Strategic Plan to Reduce Youth Violence in Pierce County**

**2023**



**PEACE POINT**

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Peace Point's Approach</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Using This Plan</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Understanding the Problem of Youth Violence</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>What is Needed for Youth Safety &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Current Community Strategies to Address Youth Violence</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Priorities for Action</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Recognizing Success</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>32</b>

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## Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings and conclusions of the 2023 Peace Point Initiative (Peace Point), which over a nine month period engaged in an effort to examine, understand, and identify strategies for reducing youth violence in Tacoma and Pierce County. Nearly 200 discrete individuals contributed to this planning process through interviews, surveys, focus groups and community forums.

**Centered voices:** Peace Point centered the voices of youth and those most affected by violence in the membership of its Planning Team, in its outreach, and in developing a bold imagination for the future that recognizes what has been proven to work, and imagines new responses to the challenges facing our youth and communities.

**Work based in root causes:** The planning process recognized the root causes of youth violence, including oppression through racism, discrimination and systemic oppression; poverty; and trauma. The process also recognized other driving factors, such as a crisis in mental health among youth, hopelessness, impact of social media, and access to firearms. This led to Peace Point prioritizing broad structural changes in economic, infrastructure, education, health care, community service and both public and private funding streams as solutions to youth violence.

**Identifying what is needed:** Peace Point's planning takes into account that there is no one solution to youth violence. Youth and community members identified a wide variety of programming needed for youth, including – among others - social emotional learning activities in schools, restorative justice practices, high school to career coaching, family support services, and drivers' education.

Also identified as high priorities were:

- Anti-racist, multicultural services and service providers that reflect the identities and experiences of the young people they aim to serve;
- Support services for youth and families to provide families with the skills, resources and supports they need to thrive;
- Authentic engagement with youth and families through creation of high trust relationships;
- Systems change in the nonprofit funding system, the education system, and the justice re-entry system; and finally,
- A willingness to engage in innovation and risk, to try new things, fail, learn and keep trying.

Peace Point also acknowledged that it is not working alone in the community, that multiple community strategies to address youth violence are present in Pierce County, and that coordination with these efforts is important in moving forward.

**What should be done:** Based on Peace Point's research, engagement and conversations with community members, and reflection on what was learned, the planning process led to

identification of four priority domains for action. These were chosen to have impact on priority populations most affected by violence: young Black men, Indigenous and Native American youth, currently or formerly justice-involved youth, women, and LGBTQ+ youth, especially trans youth.

The four priority domains are:

**1. Improve communication, coordination, and collaboration across service providers** in order to ensure that the right services are reaching the right people at the right time, and to build sustainability and stability for organizations doing this work.

**2. Improve school environments by ending exclusionary practices, and by increasing on-site supports for students.** By engaging young people through an inclusive trauma-informed and resiliency focused lens, and providing on-site supports for students, the environment in which youth spend most of their time and are profoundly shaped can become places where students feel a sense of belonging and are able to build both academic knowledge and social-emotional skills.

**3. Break down access barriers for youth and families** by implementing “no wrong door” service models, providing free driver’s education courses to students, and expanding public transportation. By breaking down these access barriers, youth and families in need will be better able to access the benefits, programs and services for which they are eligible, in both urban and rural areas, and to do so safely.

**4. Provide more activities for youth, with a focus on safe, free, and unstructured spaces that do not include curriculum or registration.** These spaces should incorporate Positive Youth Development practices, and options that are open and welcoming to currently and formerly justice-involved youth without barriers or stigma. A particular focus should be on meeting young people where they are at in both physical and digital spaces, and on including youth in planning and decision making.

Beyond the what should be done, Peace Point identified the importance to the community of how the work is done. In this realm, Peace Point identified a number of important approaches, including:

- **Root cause accountability** to examine how actions will address the root causes of youth violence.
- **Anti-racism and anti-oppression accountability**, including organizations committing to examining the demographics and lived experience of their staff and leadership; how they incorporate consent culture; how they share and distribute leadership both internally and externally with youth and families; and how they build transformative relationships, among other practices.

- **Funder practices accountability** including a focus on sustaining consistent services, learning about and implementing trust-based philanthropy practices; and prioritizing partnerships both in their own operations and in their funding.
- **Trauma informed accountability** to ensure that high quality and ongoing training and coaching for those doing the work support effective trauma-informed approaches beyond the individual level, to also address community, collective, and intergenerational trauma.

Finally, the planning process identified **key partners who should be involved in doing the work** of addressing youth violence in Pierce County.

To continue moving forward, Peace Point intends to continue to move forward with members of the Planning Team reconvened as the Peace Point Collaborative, an open forum for youth and young adults, community members, and organization and institutional representatives to come together to address youth violence. The focus of the group will be to stay informed, build connection, and direct the work of Peace Point.

In addition, key partners in affecting action across multiple domains and services must be invited to the table to envision how this work can and will affect their systems, and how they will be involved in building healthier communities for our youth, young adults, and families.

These partners were identified as:

- School districts across the county;
- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department;
- Pierce County Juvenile Court;
- City of Tacoma and Pierce County as both funders and policy makers;
- Metro Parks Tacoma;
- Tacoma Police Department and Pierce County Sheriff's Office;
- Pierce County Transit; and
- Community-based organizations whose work touches the lives of youth and families.

Most significantly, Peace Point identified that partnership with youth and families on an ongoing basis in shaping the work to bring the recommendations of this plan to life is critical. The authentic voices of youth and families – especially those in communities most impacted by violence – has been the driver in identifying the needs of youth and establishing the priority areas for action. Their continued input and guidance is what will make the action plan effective in meeting community needs.

**Next steps** identified by Peace Point in moving forward include: Identifying strategies for highest risk intervention, particularly for youth already involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems; and extending and deepening community outreach to support engagement in continued conversations as venues for community members to listen and/or be heard about on youth violence and the Peace Point plan.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the findings and conclusions of the 2023 Peace Point Initiative (Peace Point). Peace Point engaged in a nine-month effort to examine, understand, and identify strategies for reducing youth violence in Tacoma and Pierce County. The recommendations offered here rely upon data collected through a variety of methods, including a comprehensive community assessment, direct input from the Peace Point Planning Team, and wisdom derived from the lived experience of youth and families directly impacted by gun violence. Nearly 200 discrete individuals contributed to the Peace Point planning process through personal interviews, written surveys, online and live focus groups, and facilitated community forums.

Peace Point has centered collaboration and community engagement from its inception. Its lead facilitators represent three youth-facing organizations: The Imagine Justice Project, The Big Homie Program, and Tacoma Boat Builders. These lead facilitators subsequently recruited a highly diverse multi-disciplinary team of community members to serve as the PPI Planning Team.

Peace Point's planning process has uplifted the voices of those closest to violence and identified gaps in services in the Tacoma/Pierce County local community. It has outlined the needs of youth and families affected by violence, and offered strategies to address the root causes of youth violence and heal the resulting trauma to impacted youth and their families.

## II. PEACE POINT'S APPROACH

### **Centering the voices of youth and those most affected by violence**

In doing this planning, Peace Point and our partners sought to center the voices of two primary constituencies whose voices have only been heard on a limited basis, if at all, in many planning processes focused on youth violence. These constituencies are youth and communities most impacted by violence, and their voices have been – and continue to be – centered in the planning in several ways.

### **PLANNING TEAM**

**First**, the Planning Team's membership reflects youth and communities most impacted by violence. The planning team membership includes representatives from diverse stakeholder groups, including youth and young adults, Black/African American community, Hispanic/Latinx Community, Tribal/Native American community, Asian/Pacific Islander community, LGBTQ+ community, parents and caregivers of youth affected by violence, persons with lived experience of violence, and service providers – including providers in public health, health care, behavioral health services, child welfare, and education.

As the Planning Team came together, we worked together to be intentional about the ways we

gather and share space. As a co-equal group, we developed guidelines on how to have dialogues and interactions in ways that honor the members' shared humanity, diversity, positionalities, and places of trauma. We acknowledged how necessary it would be to be willing to have challenging conversations about history, power & privilege, culture, oppression, pain, injustice, and healing, leaning into discomfort, and centering lived experience individuals and those most impacted by violence.

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

**Second**, we conducted fifty (50) structured one-on-one interviews, forty-three (43) conversational style interviews and thirteen (13) focus groups with individuals identified by the Planning Team as having important perspectives to share on youth violence. These interviews were structured so that there was consistency in the topics covered, but also offered room so the people being interviewed could share their own ideas and take detours from the structured questions to share their own experiences.

We also distributed over 125 surveys to community members, service providers, and community leaders to capture input from varied perspectives. Finally, we attended 29 agency-coordinated youth and community engagement and education events as listening/learning sessions to obtain information from participants where they were already engaged and comfortable providing feedback.

As a result of these interviews, focus groups, and surveys, we were able to engage in an **emergent process** of exploring the root causes and driving factors in youth violence, what is needed for youth safety and wellbeing, and to develop recommended actions to overcome youth violence and set the community on a path to wellbeing. As themes emerged from these discussions, and as additional contacts were suggested, these were added to the planning process.

In the planning process, we **learned from the past** by having conversations with community leaders who have lived in Pierce County long enough to see the cycles of violence and who understand the landscape of the systems within Pierce County and how they impact youth and families. We interviewed Native American and Indigenous community members to learn about the types of violence that impact them the most and what events occurred throughout Pierce County that displaced their people, removed their resources, and targeted their community.

We also learned what positive movements and events in organizations have contributed to the reduction of violence, poverty, and racism in Pierce County. Those we interviewed were able to speak about moments of unity and what approaches to this work they have seen as most effective across the many systems in communities in Pierce County and with young people. We took this information into account in considering strategies to recommend as part of this plan.



Building on what was learned, we developed a **bold imagination for the future**, one that recognizes what's been proven to work, and imagined new responses to the challenges facing our youth and communities. Every step was examined to test our understanding and to qualify our recommendations ensuring they remained aligned with the priorities expressed by youth and people with lived experience of violence in the community.

## **CHALLENGES**

As in any planning process, despite our best intentions and best efforts, we and our partners encountered challenges.

**Building trust** was a challenge for our diverse planning team internally and in our outreach to community members and community partners. Because the Planning Committee itself was diverse, it included members who did not have previous direct experience with each other. They worked together to identify solutions to community conditions that included trauma, poverty and oppression – all conditions with significant charge for those involved, often from different perspectives. In addition, some members represented stakeholder systems that themselves have proven traumatizing to other members of the Planning Team such as the justice system and mental health system. The Community Agreements developed by the Planning Team provided a framework for working through these challenges.

Building trust with both youth and adults participating in interviews and focus groups was also essential to the planning process. In this, we were helped both by the Project Director, who has deep roots in Tacoma's African American community and in communities with lived experience of violence, and by the composition of the Planning Team, which increased the confidence of some community members in the planning process.

Finally, **funding for the project created constraints on the planning process.**

The **scope** of the project has been very broad. This project was funded by a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce's Office of Firearm Safety. As stated in the funding Request for Proposal, "the overall goal of the YVIP (Healthy Youth Violence Intervention and Prevention Planning) is to prevent and reduce youth violence in communities experiencing high or emerging rates of youth violence, including community firearm violence." The specific plans called for were described as having "a comprehensive, culturally specific approach to addressing youth violence with the goal of enhancing public safety through the development of a data driven Strategic Action Plan."

The funding source envisioned a county-wide Strategic Plan, which within Pierce County means a plan that is responsive to a very diverse set of specific cultural and geographic communities, with youth violence affected by these different contexts. Additionally, the funding source calls for a plan that addresses both preventing potential violence and reducing current violence –

which calls for a variety of strategies.

This planning also took place during a time when there were numerous instances of youth violence, and communities and organizations throughout the county and state were organizing and launching other youth initiatives with similar focus. Many people were being asked to participate in focus groups, surveys and data collection, and expressed fatigue with having to respond to a lack of coordinated planning activities across the county, reducing willingness to respond to Peace Point's outreach.

Additional constraints were a fairly short time-frame (9 months from start of work to final project), a relatively limited budget, especially taking into account an intention in our plan to provide stipends to Planning Team members and incentives to participants in interviews, focus groups, and public forums so that they would not be asked to provide thought labor for free. Finally, a detailed list of interim deliverables required substantial investment of time in the project beyond the actual work of planning.

### **III. USING THIS PLAN**

This plan is intended to be used as a reference point for community needs, wants, ideas and priorities. While much more could be done with more time and resources, the extensive outreach and listening sessions the Peace Point project conducted have lifted the voices of many people in the community who have not typically been represented in planning processes to address youth violence. This plan brings those voices to bear in shaping a widely agreed-upon campaign that lays out a specific plan for change.

This plan is not intended to be a report which sits on a shelf, but rather the foundation for action and change, carried out by a wide range of stakeholders working together in collaboration on coordinated change-making.

This plan is also not intended to be a one-time event, but rather a blueprint for a process of change that will incorporate a continuous improvement process, on an ongoing basis, examining how as a community we are working together, the effect of our collective actions on improving the lives of youth and young adults, and our progress in reducing violence in our lives.

### **IV. UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM OF YOUTH VIOLENCE**

Peace Point's approach to examining youth violence and developing a strategic plan to reduce youth violence began with a comprehensive review of the root causes of youth violence, an analysis of the gaps in services and resources needed in the community, and identification of evidence-based youth violence prevention strategies and programs. The planning process then built on that review by bringing the findings of the initial research to the community so that

they could examine those, critique them, and build on them with community-based insights, understanding, and direction.

The initial analysis of the causes, service gaps and strategies to address youth violence was conducted by Geo Education & Research under contract to Peace Point, and their report *Disrupting and Healing Trauma Associated with Youth Violence: Root Causes, Service Gaps and Proven Strategies* (Power et al., 2023) is available on the Peace Point website:

[peacepointpc.org](http://peacepointpc.org).

## **ROOT CAUSES OF YOUTH VIOLENCE**

As described in Geo Education's report, a closely knit group of root causes have been identified in numerous scholarly and lived experience publications as underlying youth violence. These are: oppression through racism, discrimination, and systemic oppression; poverty (closely linked to systemic systems of oppression); and trauma (closely linked both to racism and oppression and to poverty).

This triad of root causes means that ultimately solutions to youth violence must go beyond individual interventions with so-called “youth at risk,” to encompass broad structural changes in economic, infrastructure, education, health care, community service, and both public and private funding streams.

## **OTHER DRIVING FACTORS**

The impact of trauma – both current trauma and historical trauma affecting members of communities that have been subjected to racism, discrimination, and oppression for generations – is evident in a number of the other driving factors in youth violence.

**Mental Health Needs:** It is a common misperception that severe mental illness is always involved in violence. While there is a slightly higher risk of violent acts when severe mental illness is present, only about 4% of violent acts are attributable to severe mental illness. However, among youth, mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, which are much more broadly distributed in the population, are often associated with substance use, which is associated with risk for youth violence. Our community is experiencing a high degree of unmet mental health needs, especially among youth and young adults. At the same time, both BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals are often mis-labeled as mentally ill when their adjustment disorders are really about living in a culture that doesn't value them in the way it values straight white people. The impact of this can be significant and create adaptive reactions. It is important to distinguish between true needs for mental health services and needs for community inclusion and safe spaces.

**Hopelessness:** Lack of opportunities experienced by those who are also most impacted by racism, trauma, and poverty contributes to perceptions of hopelessness. Hopelessness in turn

contributes to youth feeling unseen and unheard. As a participant in one Youth Violence Focus Group meeting said “youth have lost the ability to hope and anticipate for future plans because things keep getting pulled away from them.” A youth participant in a high school focus group responded to a prompt on what would make them feel safer as young people, “the opportunity to prove ourselves because we aren’t given a chance most of the time.” A number of youth in focus groups directly tied lack of opportunity to violence, as in one youth who stated “Kids want to make money ...so they learn how to make money on the streets and over the years it creates a lot of opportunities for violence.” These statements were echoed by other youth, and by those working with youth directly, in references to youth becoming involved with robberies, selling drugs and other activities on the streets and becoming gang involved. For youth in rural communities, hopelessness is amplified by a sense of invisibility. A number of rural youth reported feeling that their needs are not considered at all, and that they have even less access to opportunities for healthy activities than do peers in urban areas. As a result, they participate in similar violence.

**Social Media:** A number of participants in focus groups during the planning process mentioned negative effects of social media as contributors to youth violence. These comments fell largely into three categories. The first was normalization of violence and lifestyles that lead to violence, such as drug and gang involvement, in social media in general and especially on videos on TikTok and Twitter. The second was the impact of bullying and conflicts carried out on social media that then escalates into in-real-life fights. The third was the role of social media – which became even more prevalent in the lives of youth as a result of physical isolation during COVID – in creating unrealistic expectations as well as lack of connection and coping skills, which in the words of one focus group participant “has created a lot of anxiety, depression, created a lot of anger”.

**Access to Firearms:** In Peace Point’s community assessment, the significance of access to firearms was clearly highlighted. The assessment reports that: *“From 2016 to September 2022, there were 1,148 firearm-related homicide victims in the State of Washington. In the same period, there were 214 firearms related homicides in Pierce County including the City of Tacoma (105), equaling approximately 18.6% of total statewide homicides. By comparison, Tacoma’s population is only 3% of the State and Pierce County is 12%. In Tacoma almost one-quarter (24%) of the suspects were under the age of 20, compared to Pierce County (16.8%) and Washington State (15.5%). In the City of Tacoma, people under age 30 die from assault at a rate of 6.1 per 100,000. This is higher than the overall Pierce County rate of 4.8 per 100,000. It accounts for 11% of all deaths from injury, including accidents and self-inflicted injuries”* (Power, et al., 2023). Access to weapons was also reported in interviews and in focus groups. As one youth participant said in reflecting on why kids are participating in violence: “I feel like if there was a big movement of guns down and gloves up then things will be smooth.”

It is important to recognize that policies aimed at reducing access to guns sometimes include policies which increase criminal charges and sentencing related to firearm possession. Such policies disproportionately impact communities of color, especially Black men, who have historically been subject to racial profiling and over-policing. While access to guns is a central contributing factor to youth violence, any policy solution should carefully consider how it will impact youth and families, especially youth and families of color.

## **V. WHAT IS NEEDED FOR YOUTH SAFETY & WELLBEING**

This section is a high-level overview of what is needed to build a community where children, youth, and young adults are safe. It is not a list of recommended actions or strategies. Rather, it is a list of what has been identified through the planning process as essential characteristics needed for quality youth violence reduction. As the Pierce County community develops strategies and programs, these concepts should be kept central in design and decision-making.

### **MANY DIFFERENT SERVICES OFFERED BY MANY DIFFERENT PROVIDERS**

There is no one solution to youth violence. The youth of Tacoma and Pierce County come from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, as individuals developing into young adulthood, they have a wide variety of interests and attitudes. Sometimes there is a desire to centralize programming within a small number of organizations in order to streamline processes and communication. However, to best reflect the diversity of youth, we must lift up a diversity of programs offered by a diversity of organizations. By supporting a wide variety of programming, efforts will be more conducive to specialization, customization, opportunities for meaningful relationships, innovation, and adaptability. While this is a more complex ecosystem, it is more apt to meet the various needs and interests of young people in our community. A number of different programs/services were mentioned in focus groups, including among others:

- Social emotional learning activities in schools which are tailored to the specific needs of different geographic (urban, suburban, rural) and cultural communities
- Restorative justice practices such as healing circles
- Mentoring programs
- Social-emotional coaching
- Safe gathering spaces that do not require youth to spend money, including in rural communities, where investment in infrastructure to create spaces may be required
- Supports within the home
- Drivers' education
- Extra support services for youth in foster care and youth with incarcerated parents
- High school to career coaching – including programs in the trades

- Mental health services for both youth and families
- Community cultural events
- Educating young people for parenting
- Supports for families that are at risk, including home visitation
- Training resources for parents to resolve trauma
- Non-traditional modes of therapy
- Expanded cultural curriculum in the schools
- Virtual opportunities for youth engagement for youth living in unincorporated areas which have a lack of resources compared to bigger cities

### **ANTI-RACIST, MULTICULTURAL SERVICES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Young people of color have disproportionately poor outcomes across many domains, from education to incarceration. People of color are more likely to be impacted by gun violence. As stated in the Pierce County community assessment prepared as part of this planning process, “More than half of assault deaths are Black (even though only 10.7% of the population of the city is Black). Furthermore, approximately twice as many Black youth die from assault annually compared to either Hispanic or White youth.” We must do a better job of engaging and meeting the needs of young people of color. It is essential for service providers to be antiracist, multicultural organizations that reflect the identities and experiences of the young people they aim to serve. “We need more people that look like us providing services/at a higher capacity” was a frequent refrain in both focus groups and interviews. The importance of building diverse staff, uplifting organizations led by and staffed by people with lived experience in common with diverse youth populations in Tacoma and Pierce County, and the ongoing training and checking of staff delivering services was a consistent theme across all Peace Point outreach.

Particularly in rural communities, there is a need to have more conversations about racism, and for communities and organizations coordinating efforts to end youth violence to plan for communication strategies to address racism and disparities in their specific communities.

### **SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES**

In considering a service landscape to reduce youth violence, services should include those targeted toward both youth and families. Overall, there was agreement across the focus groups that there is insufficient investment in family supports and services currently, and that redirection of resources to programs in schools and in communities to reach youth and their families is needed. The family environment plays an instrumental role in a young person’s development and subsequently their choices. Families who are struggling to secure enough food or housing, coping with a substance use disorder, or processing trauma have a hard time providing the supports and guidance young people need to be safe and healthy. Disconnected families were specifically mentioned in several focus groups as being among the root causes of

youth violence. As one participant in a focus group noted, there is a need for “support within the home earlier than school age...for marginalized families to support the social emotional health not only with the youth but also in guiding the parents as well.” In another group, a participant responded that we need to “dramatically increase the supports for families that are at risk. A long-term reduction in youth violence will only materialize when families also have the resources and support they need. As discussed more in the priority domains for action below, as much as possible services to youth and families should be low to no barrier.

### **AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUTH & FAMILIES**

It is essential that those of us involved in efforts to reduce youth violence prioritize authentic engagement with youth and families. “Nothing About Us Without Us” is a popular mantra for youth and community members to hold service providers, funders, and decision-makers accountable to this foundational strategy. Although a simple concept, it can prove difficult to do this effectively. There is risk of tokenization and exploitation, especially for organizations who rush into this aspect of the work without having existing high trust relationships with the communities they serve. A significant amount of concern, funding, and energy should go into building a long-term strategy for authentic engagement with youth and families.

### **SYSTEMS CHANGE**

Youth violence is a complex problem. Complex problems are best addressed through a systems change approach. As identified in *The Waters of System Change (Kania, Kramer & Senge, 2018)*, this approach focuses on shifting the conditions which hold the problem in place. The conditions of systems change include explicit structural change (policies, practices, resource flows), semi-explicit relational change (power dynamics, relationships and connections), and implicit transformative change (mental models). The sense of urgency we rightfully feel to prevent even one more young person from becoming victims of violence can lead us to narrow our sights on strategies of direct intervention. This is important and necessary. However, the root causes of violence are intergenerational and interconnected cycles of trauma, oppression, and poverty. Therefore, to make meaningful long-term change it is essential we also focus on systems change. Our many systems are interconnected. Some systems that surfaced in our research as priorities for systems change include the nonprofit funding system, the education system, and the justice system re-entry system. Other systems are also important and should not be excluded.

### **INNOVATION AND RISK**

A long-term, meaningful reduction in youth violence will also be characterized by innovation and risk. It should be expected for us to try new things, fail, learn, and keep trying. This means not requiring all programs and services to have an established evidence base, but to make room for innovative work that is at the beginning or hasn't yet begun to establish an evidence base.

Although innovation is needed, it is also important that we don't lose sight of building on and sustaining existing work, which is also very important.

## **VI. CURRENT COMMUNITY STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS YOUTH VIOLENCE**

It is important to acknowledge that Peace Point is not working in a vacuum in its work to understand and identify solutions for youth violence. Tacoma and Pierce County have multiple community strategies to address youth violence – both directly and by addressing its root causes. Peace Point Planning Team members are involved in a number of these efforts, and Peace Point staff are coordinating with these efforts as well. While the following list is not exhaustive, these are efforts that are most closely related to the work Peace Point has undertaken, and this list will be updated on Peace Point's website on an ongoing basis for reference.

### ***Tacoma Police Co-Responder Program (City of Tacoma)***

The City of Tacoma recently announced it is contracting with Tacoma Cease Fire to launch a "community trauma response team" (CTRT). This is an effort to provide more comprehensive and community-based opportunities for people impacted by violence to connect with resources, support, and healing. The CTRT will respond to crises after traumatic incidents to assist the community in healing and to provide a safe space for the community to express their opinions and concerns. They will support and give referrals that can offer immediate, compassionate and practical resources for those affected by trauma, and will focus on the community's emotional needs while the Tacoma Police Department and Tacoma Fire Department focus on incident response.

### ***Universal Basic Income (United Way, City of Tacoma)***

The City of Tacoma and United Way of Pierce County received a grant to pilot a universal basic income. The program is called Growing Resiliency in Tacoma (GRIT). Select households who met certain criteria have received \$500 per month with no strings attached. It is hoped that this model, which has been implemented in dozens of communities nationwide, can help bridge gaps created by growing economic disparities.

### ***Whole Child (Tacoma Public Schools)***

Tacoma Public Schools partnered with the University of Washington to launch Whole Child, supported by a large investment from the Wallace Foundation. Whole Child is a community-wide initiative that focuses on building social-emotional learning, positive behavioral intervention supports, and inclusion and equity. The approach also integrates trauma-sensitive practices, restorative practices, physical and mental wellness, and tiered layers of support to meet individual student needs. The Whole Child initiative serves students grades K-12



throughout not only the Tacoma Public Schools, but also in surrounding communities and districts in both Pierce and south King County. It is a whole-school, whole-community initiative targeting all students.

### ***Strengthening Community Safety (Safe Streets)***

A new initiative from Safe Streets within the last few years - Strengthening Community Safety - focuses on helping to build relationships between community and law enforcement, with a focus on communities of color. The initiative is recruiting and convening community partners with significant connections to BIPOC communities, engaging businesses to help prevent crimes, creating a Youth Advisory Committee to help youth develop and build their knowledge and skills as leaders, and identifying changes that law enforcement, organizations, and communities can make to improve safety and build community cohesion.

### ***Probation Transformation & Detention Alternatives (PCJC)***

Pierce County Juvenile Court has been participating in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. They have been nationally recognized for their success and leadership in probation transformation. As part of this transformation, Pierce County has created community partnerships for positive youth development, intensifying their focus on families through a Family Council to advise the probation department and through parent advocates to support families of court-involved youth, and has developed alternative diversion paths to reduce referrals of youth for prosecution.

### ***Youth-Serving Agencies Network (Imagine Justice Project)***

The Youth Serving Agencies Network (YSAN) formed in 2018 as a systems change initiative for juvenile justice to build coordination and collaboration across organizations to maximize their shared impact on court-connected youth and the larger community. The network cultivates a peer learning community, strengthens relationships, and leverages resources. The Imagine Justice Project convenes and facilitates the YSAN collaborative and also administers an AmeriCorps team that accomplishes two goals: providing a career pathway for individuals with lived experience; and providing support to typically under-funded community-based organizations serving Pierce County youth who have significant needs in the realm of basic needs, positive youth development, and education.

### ***Graduate Tacoma (Foundation for Tacoma Students)***

The Foundation for Tacoma Students is the backbone organization behind the collective impact initiative Graduate Tacoma. It works to drive long-term, systems-level change that improves outcomes for Tacoma Public School students. Initially focused on graduation rates, they have recently refocused on creating pathways for college and careers.

### ***Centralized Diversion Fund of the Anchor Communities Initiative (A Way Home Washington)***

Pierce County is one of 10 Washington state counties participating in A Way Home Washington's Anchor Communities Initiative to end youth homelessness. A promising aspect of this work has been the Centralized Diversion Fund (CDF). This is a pool of dollars that providers across agencies can access to make payments on behalf of a young person for costs that will prevent a young person from entering into the homelessness system.

### ***Communities of Focus – Participatory Budgeting (TPCHD)***

The Tacoma Pierce County Health Department has identified six communities of focus: Springbrook, Key Peninsula, East Tacoma, South Tacoma, White River, and Parkland. These communities are most impacted by disproportionality in health outcomes. They prioritize these communities in their efforts to improve those outcomes. As part of this work, they are using participatory budgeting to put the decision-making power in the hands of members of those communities.

### ***Birth to 25 Advisory Board (Pierce County)***

This is an advisory board to the Pierce County Council which launched in 2019. It is focused on creating a strategy for the healthy development of children, youth, and young adults ages birth to 25. It has completed a Landscape Map identifying the range of systems serving these youth, and the gaps and challenges facing those systems. It is developing a Developmental Dashboard focused on tracking measures of youth: vocational and civic contributions, learning, social-emotional connection and skills, healthy behavior, physical fitness, and safety and basic needs being met.

### ***Kids Mental Health Pierce County (MultiCare)***

Kids' Mental Health—Pierce County (KMHPC) is a coalition of people and agencies in Pierce County that are joining together to address the growing behavioral health crisis among school age children and youth. Established in 2018, they are focused on developing a one-stop collaborative that serves as a single point of access to child and adolescent mental health services, increasing support and expanding mobile crisis response teams, and promoting and supporting workforce development and continued training in child and adolescent mental health. Their partners include health care providers, crisis services, behavioral health providers, EMS, school districts, law enforcement, justice systems, and child welfare administrations.

### ***Beyond the Bell (Greentrike)***

This is a partnership with Greentrike, Tacoma Public Schools, Metro Parks, and community-based organizations that provide programming to elementary and middle school students. It is a coordination of services model for improving efficiency and access to "beyond school"

opportunities for youth, including field trips, sports, and clubs in order to make these affordable and available broadly.

### ***Multi-Disciplinary Intervention Team (Consejo Counseling & City of Tacoma)***

Multi-Disciplinary Intervention Team (MDIT) is part of OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model. Tacoma began implementing this in 2012. MDIT is a group of service-providers who work with youth and young adults who are gang-involved. They meet regularly in a team model to improve coordination of services and make referrals. Consejo Counseling is the convener. Other organizations participating in the MDIT as providers include Big Homie Program, Communities in Schools of Tacoma, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and Rebuilding Hope.

### ***Other High Quality Positive Youth Development Programs***

There are many providers, especially concentrated in the city of Tacoma, who provide high quality Youth Development Programs. The Peace Point Planning Team identified over 200 organizations in Pierce County that impact youth violence. This includes many small, local organizations with strong ties to youth and young adults most impacted by violence. Many of these organizations collaborate, as noted above, through the Youth Serving Agencies Network (YSAN) convened by the Imagine Justice Project. But there are many other ways these organizations are linked in various partnerships with each other to meet the needs of the different youth populations they are targeting.

## **VII. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION**

### **WHAT WE SHOULD DO**

Based on the Peace Point research, we are **recommending four priority domains for action**. These priority domains for action are areas identified by youth and young adults, then refined by the larger community.

In addition, these priority domains for action have been chosen in order to have impact on priority populations identified through the planning process. These include:

- Young black men – those most likely to be impacted by gun violence;
- Indigenous and Native American youth – those significantly overrepresented in violence and incarceration;
- Currently or formerly justice-involved youth – those frequently missed by positive youth development programs, prosocial opportunities, and employment;
- Women – those more likely to be victims of violence, especially assault and sexual assault;
- LGBTQ+ youth, especially trans youth – those more likely to be victims of violence, especially hate crimes.

In terms of geographic communities, Tacoma has long been a community of focus, due to a

concentration of violence – which was evidence in particular during the planning phases of this project. However, Tacoma is gentrifying, and communities in Pierce County are shifting. As a result, conditions that lead to violence – such as high rates of court referrals, exclusionary disciplinary practices in schools, high rates of poverty and high rates of unemployment are shifting to other communities beyond Tacoma. In particular, attention is needed in communities within the regions served by the Bethel, Franklin Pierce, White River and Clover Park school districts.

This Strategic Plan calls on stakeholders, especially community-based organizations and public institutions, to incorporate these community-defined priorities in their own strategic plans to build community-wide alignment for youth violence prevention. In this section, we refer to what “we” should do. By “we” in this context, we mean “we” as a collective community in Tacoma and Pierce County, not a specific organization or entity. At the same time, Peace Point recognizes its role in helping to coordinate action and keep pushing the discussion forward to engage appropriate entities or groups to take ownership of specific change efforts as organizing for action continues. Four priority domains for action are identified in this plan.

### **1. Improve communication, coordination, and collaboration across service providers.**

There are many high-quality programs and services available to youth and families across Pierce County. However, the structure of how service providers are funded and operated often leads to gaps, duplication, and an overall failure to ensure the right services are reaching the right people at the right time. In addition, funding systems in particular contribute to a lack of sustainability and stability for the organizations doing the work. This leads to inefficient use of resources and creates barriers for youth and families. There are some existing efforts to improve coordination and collaboration among providers, such as Graduate Tacoma, Beyond the Bell, Multi-Disciplinary Intervention Teams (MDIT), the Youth Serving Agency Network (YSAN), and Kids Mental Health Pierce County. However, more needs to be done in this area. Specific ideas for this domain are:

- Funders incentivize grantee participation in coordination meetings with other grantees through stipends or other mechanisms, especially for small organizations with limited capacity to participate. Meetings should also be open and publicized to non-grantees.
- Create more meaningful opportunities for networking, relationship building, and partnerships. Collaboration requires a foundation of trust.
- Explore developing and sustaining a central database for service providers to track program and service touches for the priority population. Some work has been done on this in the past, but it has not been sustained.
- Hire violence prevention coordinators that are placed at various agencies that also come together regularly as a coalition to share contacts, information, and strategies.

### **2. Improve school environments by ending exclusionary practices, and increasing on-site**

### **supports for students.**

Schools, teachers, parents, and students have been working hard to make schools safe places where youth feel a sense of belonging and are able to build both academic knowledge and social-emotional skills. Yet policies and practices persist in our schools that uphold discrimination and exclusion. One example is schools prohibiting students from wearing head or hair wraps unless they are wearing it for religious reasons. This negatively impacts young Black girls who would normally choose to wear a hair wrap on days when they don't have their hair done. While this may seem small, the effect on many young Black girls is devastating to their sense of belonging and can directly lead to disruptions in attendance. Beyond policies like this, many young people that we spoke with feel there are not enough adults at school that treat them with respect, and caring. A lot of these students acknowledged that teachers, counselors, and other school staff are overwhelmed and underpaid. This contributes to the challenging school climates. Young people are struggling with a lot outside of school. As adults, we need to do better about engaging young people through a trauma-informed and resiliency-focused lens. There is also a need for more on-site support for students, including caring adults and other resources. Specific ideas for this domain are:

- Explore pathways to increase the number of caring adults in schools, especially adults who reflect racial and other identities of students. Potential pathways may include AmeriCorps, Certified Peer Counselors, counselors, or community-based organization staff or volunteers. More standardization in community partnerships across districts may improve service delivery. Ensure that teachers, counselors and other staff have opportunities to participate in design and implementation of bringing in additional supports to the schools.
- Schools allocate staff time and/or hire outside consultants to engage students and their families in a review of existing policies and procedures. In partnership with students and their families, this review process should identify and amend racist, transphobic, homophobic, or exclusionary policies and procedures. Collect feedback on practices and identify opportunities for improvement. It is critical that if feedback is asked for, changes are made based on that feedback. Consider also asking for ideas on how to strengthen students' sense of belonging. We recommend that schools make public reports on student discipline by demographics (while protecting identities) to build accountability.
- Convene a think tank to analyze how the school funding formula may be changing due to low enrollments and other factors. Identify a strategy for improving the school funding policy at the state level, and focus advocacy efforts as appropriate to make changes that are beneficial to school funding and equitable in distribution.
- Organize a coalition of parents to shift the power dynamic in the relationship between schools and parents, build community voice, and strengthen support for parents.

3. **Break-down access barriers for youth and families** Barriers to access prevent youth and

families in need from accessing the benefits, programs, and services for which they are eligible. Providers should examine the ways in which they can reduce access barriers by partnering with service recipients to better understand how youth and families access or struggle to access the organizations' resources. The *no wrong door* approach to service delivery is a promising model for reducing access barriers and burdens. With this approach, services are made available through a network of providers, and the enrollment process is centralized. The Centralized Diversion Fund for preventing youth homelessness through A Way Home Washington's Anchor Communities Initiative is an example of this approach to service delivery. For more information about the *no wrong door* model, see [\*No Wrong Door: Designs of Integrated, Client Centered Service Plans for Persons and Families with Multiple Needs \(Washington DSHS, 2001\).\*](#)

Transportation is also a major barrier that prevents access to services and programs. A huge success in our community has been the recent policy to allow all youth to ride Pierce Transit public transportation for free. However, there are insufficient public transportation routes and schedules, especially outside of large urban areas. There are also safety concerns around using public transportation, especially among youth with marginalized identities such as queer and trans youth who are disproportionately victimized by violence.

Beyond public transportation, it is important to consider how to increase access for youth and families for independent transportation such as driving or cycling. Specific ideas for this domain include:

- Reinststate free or sliding-scale driver education courses in high schools. Consider partnerships between Pierce Transit and technical colleges to sponsor and/or incentivize driving schools.
- Explore funding pathways to expand public transportation routes and service schedules.
- Develop a campaign to promote existing transportation resources and benefits available to youth and their families.
- Fund a second set of school buses for after school programs, especially in rural and suburban areas with limited public transportation.
- Expand free public transportation access to young adults ages 18-24.
- Build partnerships to expand use of the "no wrong door" service model.
- Organizations allocate staff time and/or hire outside consultants to analyze and reduce access barriers. Funders provide compensation or other incentives.
- Convene a series of community conversations with queer and trans youth to learn more about when and why they don't feel safe using public transportation, and to identify strategies to improve their sense of safety.
- Hire resource navigator positions for complex public benefit systems.
- Bring more programs and services to neighborhoods to reduce the overall need for transportation.

#### **4. Provide more activities for youth, with a focus on safe and unstructured spaces.**

Young people want more things to do and safe places to hang out with their friends. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an evidence-based approach that leads to improved youth wellbeing. We have a strong network of PYD programs, in Tacoma in particular, but young people have told us that we need to do more. Beyond the Bell and Club Beyond have done a lot to support and expand after-school programming for elementary and middle school students in Tacoma Public Schools. However, more is needed at high schools in Tacoma and at schools outside of Tacoma. Youth are especially asking for spaces to be where they can be safe that are also free, such as movies in the park, youth dances, and public events that are youth and family friendly. This means ensuring that there are plenty of opportunities without registration, requirements, or curriculum. This may also include ensuring that neighborhood environments are safe and clean for youth and their families. It is also important to include options that are open and welcoming to currently and formally justice-involved youth without barriers or stigma attached to their participation, so that they can find a sense of belonging in the larger youth community as they transition away from involvement in the justice system. Specific ideas include:

- Providers focus on meeting young people where they are at—in the digital spaces. Explore how to use Discord, other social media apps, and online communication tools for youth engagement and development.
- Providers include youth in planning and decision-making to ensure offerings of all types align with youth interests.
- Providers build partnerships that bring more programming into neighborhoods closer to where youth live. This is especially important in suburban and rural areas.
- Providers review existing policies, procedures, and program design to identify opportunities to offer more unstructured programming without registration requirements.
- Funders reduce reporting barriers or make exceptions for providers to be able to reduce data requirements.
- Funders, especially public agencies, remove restrictions on using grant or contract dollars to feed youth and families.
- Improve information sharing about existing programs and activities
- Funders, providers, and institutions work together to ensure currently and formerly justice-involved youth and young adults have access to prosocial programs and educational opportunities that interest them and foster a sense of belonging.

#### **HOW SHOULD WE DO THIS WORK?**

One of the most important lessons we have learned through our conversations with community is how important the way we do our work is. Good intentions or good ideas do not always translate to making the greatest impact on preventing youth violence. It is essential that

providers, funders, and decision-makers hold themselves accountable to the values and approaches that will lead to long term and meaningful change. Below is a framework of ideas that can be used by providers, funders, and decision-makers to uphold this accountability. This list is a synthesis of ideas surfaced in conversation with youth, families, and the larger community through the Peace Point collaboration.

## **1. Root Cause Accountability**

We are seeing a surge of violence in our community. There is an urgency to lift up immediate solutions to prevent even one more young person from dying. This is needed. However, we must also be careful that in our urgency to act today we are not inadvertently exacerbating the underlying root causes that lead to youth violence. For example, we have seen how past strategies of mass incarceration fractured families and communities and created lifelong barriers to housing and employment for members of our community. This disproportionately impacted people of color. We need to ask ourselves how our actions today will also help to break generational cycles of trauma and poverty and unravel systems of racism and oppression. At minimum, we must take steps to ensure that any strategies we use today are not upholding these patterns and systems.

## **2. Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Accountability**

Racism and oppression are some of the root causes of youth violence. Being accountable to anti-racism and anti-oppression approaches is essential. Many individuals, organizations, and public institutions are recognizing the importance of justice, equity, inclusion, access, and diversity. It is critical that our collective work to reduce youth violence stays accountable to these values and practices. Below are some specific opportunities to uplift anti-racism and anti-oppression in how we do our work. This list is intended to inspire and to challenge, not to require specific tactics.

***Examining Who We Are*** – Looking at the demographics and lived experience of both staff and leadership of organizations working with youth and addressing youth violence is a good practice to adopt in all organizations and groups in all communities.

***Consent Culture*** - Consent culture emphasizes the importance of agency, choice, and boundaries. It is typically discussed in broad terms as part of building cultural norms to prevent sexual violence. We have an opportunity to cultivate this culture within our workplaces and programs as well.

***Shared and Distributed Leadership*** – Shared and distributive leadership models decentralize power and decision-making within an organization. In a shared leadership model, a group of individuals share the decision-making power often reserved for the senior executive. In distributed leadership models, decision-making power is allocated to the individuals in the organization with the most direct oversight or engagement in a particular aspect of operations.



***Shifting Power to Youth and Families*** – Similar to shared and distributed leadership models within organizations, it is important to shift decision-making outside organizations and institutions into the communities. Organizations or institutions that serve youth and/or families should explore ways that power and choice can be shifted.

***Transformative Relationships*** – Relationships have the power to change lives. Investing in relationships with listening, authenticity, openness, commitment, and caring can be transformative for everyone involved. The opposite of transformative relationships are transactional relationships. Transactional relationships are oriented around reciprocation and progress. They are sometimes necessary and appropriate. However, we should be mindful about why and how our tendency toward transactional relationships might be undermining our partnerships and programs.

***White Supremacy Culture*** – White supremacy culture within our organizations and institutions is often prevalent but unrecognized. This culture puts high value on characteristics and norms associated with whiteness, while discounting non-white characteristics and norms. For example, a white supremacy culture can be characterized by a sense of urgency, individualism, constant progress and growth, and objectivity. It is important for us to reflect on ways we expect ourselves and others to adhere to this culture, and explore ways to create cultures that better foster diversity and belonging. To learn more visit [whitesupremacyculture.info](http://whitesupremacyculture.info).

***Understanding Our Roles and Limitations*** – Successfully reducing youth violence takes many people, organizations, institutions, ideas, strengths, experiences, and resources. We each have a role. It is important that we reflect on what we are best suited to do in our role, based on our experience, identities, relationships, and expertise. There may be things to let go of and to pass along to someone else who is better suited for that role. This is not a failure or a weakness but a great accomplishment.

### **3. Funder Practices Accountability**

Funders have immense influence over how community-based organizations mobilize to respond to and prevent youth violence. Their priorities and processes shape the programs and services available to youth and families. More focus needs to be on sustaining consistent services rather than prioritizing the development of new offerings. Funders have an opportunity to either facilitate or impede community-based efforts for youth violence prevention. Facilitating these efforts can be supported by funders adopting the following strategies.

- Concentrating giving in multi-year general operating grants.
- Learning about and implementing trust-based philanthropy practices.
- Allowing and/or encouraging grantees to use funding awards toward capacity-building, planning, coordination, and learning.
- Prioritizing partnerships in their own operations and encouraging partnerships in funding.

- (See page 18 for more examples of recommended funder practices)

#### **4. Trauma-Informed Accountability**

The populations that we are focused on are, almost without exception, affected by significant levels of trauma. We need to ensure that we are truly providing high-quality and ongoing training and coaching for our teams to support effective trauma-informed approaches. Such approaches understand trauma beyond the individual level to include community, collective, and intergenerational trauma. They illustrate the connections between trauma and oppression. Shaming or punishing people for their survival skills, such as drug use, is contrary to the trauma-informed approach. For more information about trauma-informed approaches, see [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach \(SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014\)](#).

#### **WHO SHOULD DO THIS WORK?**

##### **Critical Institutions as Partners**

Peace Point's recommendations for action cross over multiple domains and systems, and key institutions in our community must be invited to the table to continue this work, to envision how this work can and will affect their systems, and to identify how they will be involved in building healthier communities for our youth, young adults, and families. Without their active involvement, many of the changes recommended simply cannot be implemented. With their partnership, we can transform systems that are currently not working well for youth to environments that are vibrant, supportive, and healing for youth and the community at large. Some of these critical institutions include:

**School Districts:** Many of our recommendations have to do with school environments where youth spend the majority of their time. By building strong partnerships with Tacoma Public Schools and districts in larger Pierce County, we can change those environments for the better, and bring community support and advocacy to bear on more fully funding and supporting our educational systems.

**Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department:** Youth violence is a public health crisis. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department has knowledge, skills, tools, and resources that will benefit our collective efforts for safe youth and communities. They are already working on many intersecting initiatives, and should continue to be a key partner at the table in this work. The Center for Excellence is a research and evaluation entity housed with TPCPD. This group may be a powerful partner in improving how we track trends in youth violence over time, and measure the effectiveness of our collective efforts to reduce youth violence.

**Pierce County Juvenile Court:** PCJC has demonstrated a commitment to transforming the juvenile justice system to realize more equitable outcomes for youth, especially youth of color. Through a partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, PCJC used data to identify

disparities in juvenile justice treatment and outcomes, and to develop a Disproportionate Minority Contact reduction agenda. Through its Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, the PCJC redirected funds to alternative to detention, including community-based positive youth development programs, and changed their approach to probation to incorporate individualized plans and parental involvement. To address the needs of youth already involved or adjacent to the courts, involvement of PCJC is essential.

***City of Tacoma and Pierce County:*** The City of Tacoma and Pierce County are both funders and policy makers for many of the programs that touch youth, young adults, and families in their jurisdictions. Their partnership is critical to changes recommended in funding streams and policies, reporting requirements, and also as potential conveners of coalitions or policy boards to shape advocacy at the state level.

***Metro Parks Tacoma:*** Metro Parks Tacoma is a major resource for community-based programming and moving positive resources for youth into local neighborhoods. Their partnership can help identify the resources available in Tacoma currently, how these can be expanded, and what strategies can be used to help make public spaces safe, positive, and accessible to youth.

***Tacoma Police Department and Pierce County Sheriff's Office:*** It is undeniable that in focus groups conducted during this planning, a lack of trust in police agencies was surfaced by some community members. Relationships between police agencies and community members are clearly fractured. Engaging them in planning for change is essential to healing these fractures. These agencies have significant influence through their funding, how they organize themselves internally and in their community relationships, their training, policies and practices – all areas that should be addressed through collaborative planning. In addition, these entities are also engaged in planning for how to address youth violence, and coordination of these efforts can have the effect of creating a more cohesive approach.

***Pierce County Transit:*** Pierce County Transit provides an important resource for youth lacking private transportation, especially those living in rural communities. Involving Transit in planning has the potential to improve the mobility and sense of opportunities for youth.

## **COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

As described earlier in section VI of this plan, a wide variety of community-based organizations are involved in existing efforts to coordinate services, which is called for in a number of our recommendations. It is critical that community-based organizations be involved in shaping the responses and strategies recommended – in particular when it comes to collaborating across programming, sharing information and resources, and increasing presence in schools and community settings. These are all arenas which will have substantial impact on community-based organizations, which are typically already under-resourced. We should make funding

support available for the work of community-based organizations in redesigning how services are delivered and developing new services and programs.

### **PEACE POINT COLLABORATIVE**

The community research and planning conducted through Peace Point could not have been possible without the engagement of the planning team members. To continue forward, Peace Point will rely on those who care deeply about this work to serve in a steering and advisory role. The Peace Point planning team will be reconvened as the Peace Point Collaborative upon the publication of this plan. The Collaborative will be an open forum for youth and young adults, community members, and organization and institutional representatives to come together to address youth violence. The focus of the group will be to stay informed, build connection, and direct the work of Peace Point. Sign-up to stay informed about the Peace Point Collaborative at [peacepointpc.org](http://peacepointpc.org).

### **YOUTH & FAMILIES**

Partnership with youth and families on an ongoing basis in shaping the work to bring the recommendations of this plan to life is critical. The authentic voices of youth and families – especially those in communities most impacted by violence – has been the driver in identifying the needs of youth and establishing the priority areas for action. Their continued input and guidance is what will make the action plan effective in meeting community needs. We should make funding available to support their contribution of time and knowledge across all the planning processes that will be involved in making the community-wide changes recommended here.

## **VII. RECOGNIZING SUCCESS**

Peace Point’s short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes for its work fall into three categories: **impacts**, **influence**, and **leverage**. Since this work will primarily impact youth indirectly, our emphasis is on measuring influence and leverage.

**Impacts** are changes in youth, families, neighborhoods, and other entities from direct services provided by programs and agencies engaging with them or from changes in the overall conditions in the community (physical, economic, social, and other). Peace Point partners are already influencing these outcomes and, in some cases, measuring them. These potential outcomes include things like: reduced numbers of victims in different categories of offences; reduced numbers of youth arrested, convicted, or incarcerated; reduced disparities in victimization by race; reduced numbers of hate crimes; reduced unjustified police shootings and other uses of force; improved anger management by youth receiving training in skills designed to help them cope with stress and conflict; and improved parenting skills among parents receiving parenting training. Peace Point will encourage partners to do and measure

more.

**Influence outcomes** are changes in institutions, organizations, relationships, or service systems that impact youth, families, neighborhoods, and organizations. They include things like: changes in the visibility of issues, community norms, partnerships, regulations; the will of the public or governments to act; and the way services or businesses operate. Examples might include: organizing or expanding new neighborhood groups to address crime or improve their community; generating real and effective dialogue and collaborative problem solving between law enforcement and BIPOC community leaders; changes in the juvenile justice system to allow incarcerated youth to serve their time without aging out to adult prison or to receive more community support upon release; encouraging businesses and nonprofits to fully support equal rights and policies for members of the LGBTQ+ community; capping rent late fees; expanding youth employment opportunities; funding youth mentors and counselors in the public schools and other venues; or enhancing the abilities of nonprofits to self-assess and monitor their work and results so they can keep improving and document their impacts (e.g., using [Elements of Successful Programs Self-Assessment Process](#) or using appreciative inquiry methodologies to help organizations identify what is working well and why and ways to enhance outcomes and improve their results).

**Leverage outcomes** are changes in investments by governments, foundations, individuals working in cooperative alliances, or others to support the work that leads to impact and influence changes. Examples might include: changes in budgeting to fund non-police responses to crisis calls; increased funding for out-of-school activities; more funders providing administrative support to nonprofits to reduce their need for continuous fundraising and applying for grants; or dedicating local funding to address critical concerns such as missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Once priorities are established in the Strategic Plan and coalition work has begun, Peace Point will work with its partners across the community to hone the focus of planned activities by constructing consensus statements on the outcomes being sought. These will help the coalitions established find common purpose and direction and set a foundation for evaluation. Some examples of possible statements are provided below for several common outcome areas.

## Influence and Leverage: Outcome Areas and Sample Outcome Statements<sup>1</sup>

Broad Outcome Areas	Sample Outcome Statements
<b>INFLUENCE OUTCOMES</b>	
Changes in the visibility of the issue of youth violence	<p>Public or community raises youth violence to a higher priority.</p> <p>Government and public agencies frequently comment on the issue of youth violence.</p> <p>Media increase accuracy and completeness in their coverage of the youth violence.</p>
Changes in community norms	<p>Community decreases tolerance for certain behaviors or attitudes.</p> <p>Community increases belief in its own power to create change.</p> <p>Community increases acceptance of culturally diverse community members.</p>
Changes in partnerships	<p>Partnerships become more strategic.</p> <p>Strategic partners jointly implement actions toward agreed-upon goals.</p> <p>Partners increase referrals to one another. Partners increase sharing of resources.</p> <p>Partners increase sharing of data.</p>
Changes in public will	<p>Community is motivated to act on the issue of youth violence.</p> <p>Community (e.g., neighborhood, city) has decreased tolerance for a specific problem or condition.</p> <p>People increase their willingness to demonstrate around youth violence.</p> <p>Consumers of public services increase demand for improved services.</p> <p>Community members change attitudes and/or beliefs toward youth violence.</p> <p>Community members increase their awareness of youth violence in the community.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Organizational Research Services (2004). *A Practical Guide to Documenting Influence and Leverage in Making Connections Communities.*

Broad Outcome Areas	Sample Outcome Statements
Changes in political will	<p>Political leaders and/or public administrators increase awareness of youth violence.</p> <p>Political leaders and/or public administrators increase willingness to act on the issue of youth violence.</p> <p>Legislators co-sponsor bills that support community priorities.</p>
Change in policies	<p>Increase in policy statements that support community goals.</p> <p>Policymakers adopt common language in policies and regulations.</p> <p>Policymakers write legislation that reflects community priorities.</p> <p>Policymakers adopt and fund new legislation that reflects community priorities.</p> <p>Policymakers implement and support legislation that reflects community priorities.</p>
Changes in regulations	<p>Increase in regulations that support a specific community goal.</p> <p>Language of regulations change to reflect a focus on the root causes of youth violence.</p>
Changes in service practices	<p>All staff that directly interact with service clients increase their knowledge of the cultural background and experiences of their consumer populations.</p> <p>Service providers change the hours and locations of service delivery to better match the availability of clients.</p>
Change in business practices	<p>Key services (e.g., grocery store, drug store, bank) are newly available in the community.</p> <p>Businesses/service employees in community improve day to day interactions with diverse clientele.</p> <p>Businesses change practices (e.g., hours, advertising, product selection) to meet community needs and desires.</p> <p>Businesses change their recruiting practices to create a more diverse pool of qualified applicants.</p>

Broad Outcome Areas	Sample Outcome Statements
<b>LEVERAGE OUTCOMES</b>	
Changes in public funding	<p>More money allocated/re-distributed toward program priorities.</p> <p>New arrangements (e.g., pooled, matched, blended) in funding increase availability of funding for community priorities.</p> <p>Public funding practices (e.g., RFP process, reporting) change to increase availability of funds for community priorities and to under-funded promising programs.</p> <p>Public agencies provide detailed or loaned staff for work on a particular program or strategy.</p>
Changes in philanthropy	<p>Increased funding available for community priorities. New arrangements (e.g., pooled, matched, blended) in funding increase availability of funding for community priorities.</p> <p>Foundations previously uninvolved in the community begin to provide funding in the community.</p> <p>Foundation funding practices (e.g., RFP process, reporting) change to increase availability of funds for community priorities.</p> <p>Foundations make new types of funding available.</p> <p>Funders pool resources dedicated to a priority area.</p>
Changes in resources available to the community	<p>New physical resources (e.g., computer rooms, meeting rooms) are available to the community. New transportation resources (e.g., buses, taxis) are available to the community.</p> <p>New service resources (e.g., community-based policing, convenient access to public offices) are available to the community.</p>
Changes in private investment	<p>Investments in commercial development increase.</p> <p>Private investments in housing development increase.</p>



Ultimately, measuring success will depend on the specific strategies adopted by the community, and the consensus built on desired outcomes. Effective measurement will require development of detailed evaluation plans, methodologies, tools, and data collection, management, and analysis systems for PPI. The data collection strategies will likely include ongoing data collection on PPI activities and summaries of results analyzed at key intervals to allow for continuous quality improvement.

Some likely indicators of success might be: the numbers, types, locations, and communities served by partners in Peace Point's work; the numbers and demographics of youth engaged and their roles in Peace Point's work; the numbers of public, business, faith-based, and philanthropic organizations/departments engaged in Peace Point-supported initiatives; and ways that partners engage with Peace Point on issues of common interest.

## **VIII. NEXT STEPS**

Point is committed to ensuring that this Strategic Plan is not a document which sits on a shelf and gathers dust. Many community member have participated in developing this plan, providing input, often surfacing traumatic experiences that have left painful marks. They deserve to know that their investment in the planning process is being valued, and is being acted upon.

### **Identifying Strategies for Highest-Risk Intervention**

Because the charge to Peace Point was so broad from the outset: "convene and facilitate a multidisciplinary Planning Team to develop a comprehensive Strategic Action Plan grounded in evidence, leading to the community's readiness to respond to youth violence", Peace Point made a tough decision to focus in on prevention and systems change based on feedback from focus groups and interviews. In addition to continuing and deepening engagement in change efforts focused on prevention of youth violence, we must also extend research and planning to address strategies for intervention with youth who are at highest-risk of being impacted by violence – those already involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, and those adjacent to juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Our vision for ongoing work is that Peace Point or another group will lead another iteration of this or a similar process that focuses on intervention for those at highest risk of being impacted by violence.

### **Extending and Deepening Community Outreach**

Peace Point intends to implement an outreach campaign that uses a hub-and-spoke model which leverages existing community connections through the engagement of trusted messenger organizations and young adult outreach specialists. Communities disproportionately impacted by violence have elevated levels of distrust with existing institutions and systems. Given this historic lack of trust of communities most impacted by violence, Peace Point's

outreach plan leverages a large number of community-based organizations with existing relationships in these communities to be trusted messengers. Peace Point will develop agreements with up to 30 culturally-specific community organizations, with a focus on organizations who serve subsets of the community that are disproportionately impacted by violence. This includes but is not limited to organizations who have strong relationships with the Black, Indigenous, LGBTQIA+, low-income, and immigrant communities. Community messenger organizations will receive a small stipend to prepare a plan for conducting outreach to their specific demographic, implement the plan with technical support from Peace Point, and finally share results, reflections, and community feedback with Peace Point.

In addition to these organizations the Imagine Justice Project, a lead partner in Peace Point, will leverage two AmeriCorps positions to serve as youth and young adult outreach specialists. Imagine Justice Project oversees a 20-person AmeriCorps team. These AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance, benefits, education award, and intensive personal and professional development training/coaching. They serve in positive youth development programs across Pierce County, with a focus on serving youth and young adults who are connected or at risk of becoming connected to the juvenile justice system. AmeriCorps member recruitment prioritizes individuals who have lived experience and identities that reflect youth who are connected to the justice system. This will help us ensure that these strategies are effective, and result in authentic youth and young adult engagement and feedback. They will complete the same process as community messenger organizations but will focus instead on connecting to youth and young adults across Pierce County.

### **Engaging in Continued Conversations**

This hub-and-spoke outreach will be the primary outreach strategy. To complement this, Peace Point will host monthly community conversations, publish a mid-point and a final report, and produce digital outreach tools for general distribution. The community conversations will serve as a venue for anyone in the community to listen and/or be heard about youth violence and the Peace Point plan. They will alternate between virtual and in-person. The in-person meetings will be held in different geographical areas of Pierce County, with a focus on areas most impacted by violence. As part of Peace Point's commitment to transparency and accountability, a project report will be produced at the midpoint and again at the project's end. This report will be for partners and the general public to highlight activities, learnings, successes, and challenges. Peace Point will also maintain an updated website, create one-pagers highlighting different areas of the plan, and produce a plan highlights video to be shared to the general community.

Through this process, we will build increased community capacity for reducing and preventing youth violence through increased alignment of efforts and improved quality of a community-driven plan.