

Youth ALIVE!

Listening Session Highlights



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

March 17, 2021

Who did we listen to?

Youth ALIVE!'s listening session participants either work in violence prevention or have been directly impacted by violence

Lived Experience/Expertise

"what does safety mean to you?"

"what do you need to feel safe?"

clients

youth

staff

Areas of Consensus

Staff Listening Session (02/04)

Areas of Consensus Among 14 YA Staff Members

- Not all calling for abolition, but police should not be only response
- Police should prioritize homicides and violent crime
- Special mental health response teams & ongoing supports
- Alt. approaches to public safety must prioritize community trust
- Clear protocols between community services and OPD that balance establishing credibility and trust with potential clients
- Need community education about available resources & services

“We need to account for the fact that if some people think we are working with OPD they might never trust us.”

“There was a situation where my son was having a mental health crisis - I called police to de-escalate the situation and they pulled up with bean bag guns - my son is going through something - he doesn't need to be shot with a beanbag.”

“Want less police response, but don't want it gone altogether. If I show up alone, a person might be even more threatened. We wouldn't walk up to somebody's door without a relationship with that person.”

“I'd never not want an officer there doing safety checks. I would want an officer there to assess the situation, and then call us up after that.”

Youth Listening Sessions (02/16 & 02/17)

All youth participants are students in Youth ALIVE!'s Teens on Target program where students are taught a violence prevention curriculum
29 youth total with 17 from Castlemont HS & 12 from Fremont HS

- Mental health resources for community and students, specifically having therapists and counselors of color on campus
- More extensive training for police officers
- Different levels of responsibility for police officers depending on experience
- Meaningful community engagement between OPD and youth
- More officers from the community who know the community

“We need to uplift mental health problems & issues to make the stigma around mental health less severe by investing in campaigns for mental health awareness for men.”

“Mental health is absolutely real. We have people who need help getting into trouble. We are not bad people, we just don't have the resources we need.”

“We need more support for people with mental health issues to get them the help they need. When people have been through a lot of harm, they do the same to other people.”

“There should be a bunch of things required to be a police officer, including anger management and therapy.”

“We need to stand up for youth and invest in people, not in police and prisons. Fund schools and programs instead of jail right now.”

“If they’re going to continue to fund police, then at least deploy officers from the community. Deploy officers of color, from our background. If you keep deploying Caucasian officers who didn’t grow up in the hood, they won’t know how to handle certain situations.”

“Police officers need to be put through more training. That can help with that fear police officers have that causes them to hurt people.”

“There should be police specialized for different situations. Some police might be needed to defuse a situation. Other police would be trained to respond to situations where there are weapons. There should be groups trained differently for different situations.”

Client Listening Session (03/10)

Youth ALIVE! clients largely consist of victims of violent crime. For this listening session, we asked 6 mothers who lost their children to violence in Oakland to share their thoughts on community safety.

- Mental health resources for community & trauma training for OPD
- Police accountability and transparency – clear discipline or consequences for misconduct and incompetence
- Meaningful community engagement between OPD and community
- Community building: culture shift towards shared accountability with neighbors looking out for one another
- Resources for developing parenting & communication skills

“You cannot say you support violence prevention if you are part of the problem: gun toting, or not caring about what the community is going through. They need more engaging with the community to build trust and credibility.”

“Community needs to have input on police conduct.”

“The community needs to understand what police accountability looks like when police use force against the community. What do the consequences for officers look like? We need to know if they are having consequences for their actions. Are they required to take special mental health or anger management classes? We need to know how they’re being disciplined.”

“I want to see OPD being responsible for their jobs – like solving crimes. I’m not saying they have to be defunded but if police are responsible for solving crimes, citizens cannot continue feeling unsafe with no crimes being solved.”

“It goes back to mental health, people being traumatized from their childhood and never dealing with it. It leads to a dangerous person who has no value for life, not even their own, and can be influenced into carrying guns.”

“It takes a village to raise the children in the community. When I grew up you couldn't do anything on the block you had no business doing. My kids got sidetracked in the streets. I don't want to lose another child to the streets.”

“We can do this. I want us to get to know our neighbors: ‘can you look out for me? I will look out for you.’ We have to make more of an effort to get to know each other and look out for one another.”

“I do believe it takes the community to make the change in order to make the community safer. ”

“We have to show our youth that they are loved. A generation of not being showed that has resulted in them not caring, and willing to hold a gun and willing to kill.”

“If people learned to communicate and disagree – being able to disagree peacefully is a big thing. Being able to still show love to one another. Communication is a big thing with youth and learning to talk to them.”

“We need to create events for youth in the community. Let youth know they have a voice – they’re intelligent, they’re smart. I want to help youth understand they have a voice for justice and social change. This is my community and this is what I want my community to look like.”

Thank You!