

# **SCHOOL / SERVICE PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS: BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

*Innovative Practices from the Charles E. Shannon, Jr.  
Community Safety Initiative Series*

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## INTRODUCTION

Gangs and violence are part of the school experience for a significant number of students in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that during the 2005-06 school year, approximately 38% of public schools reported at least one incident of violence to police and, in 2005, 24% of students reported gangs at their schools (CDC Fact Sheet, 2008). Over the last twenty to thirty years as gangs and violence have increased at school and in the community more broadly, violence prevention programming at schools has become a frequently provided service. Delivery methods include school wide integrated classroom curricula, programs specifically targeting students who are at risk for involvement in violence and gangs or who are already involved, referrals to services in the community, programming mixing school-based and community-based services, and other methods.

Within Shannon Community Safety Initiative<sup>1</sup> (CSI) sites, most communities have developed partnerships to address gang involvement and youth violence in schools. To get a more complete picture of how these partnerships operate, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) and Northeastern University (NU) worked together with Shannon CSI sites to learn more about Shannon CSI partnerships between schools and service providers<sup>2</sup>.

Specifically, we wanted to learn:

- In which school levels partnerships are occurring
- If schools use a formal assessment tool or a case management team to identify youth for Shannon CSI services
- Which service providers partner with schools
- Whether services are provided at school or off school grounds
- What types of services are provided to students
- Who provides services to students
- If all students receive services or if specific students are provided services
- What programmatic challenges, if any, have partnerships encountered

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<sup>1</sup> The Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative encourages Shannon CSI grantees to use the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model. The model includes five components: suppression, social intervention, opportunities provision, community mobilization, and organizational change and development. For more information the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, please visit <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org>. For more information on the Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr. Community Safety Initiative, please visit <http://www.shannoncsi.neu.edu>.

<sup>2</sup> In December 2008, EOPSS and NU co-authored a resource guide entitled *School/Police Partnerships: Best Practices and Lessons Learned* which focuses on law enforcement partnerships with schools. This guide, accompanied by a technical assistance meeting, identified specific programmatic challenges and successes and offered recommendations to Shannon CSI sites looking to form a new partnership or improve upon an existing one.

- What programmatic successes, if any, have partnerships encountered

This resource guide will begin to answer these questions about Shannon CSI school partnerships with Shannon CSI service providers, as well as provide a brief history of school partnerships with community service providers nationally and offer examples and illustrations of national and locally-based partnerships as examples for sites to use when thinking about implementing or expanding a partnership with their school(s). In addition, the guide will share challenges that Shannon CSI sites have encountered developing or refining their partnership and provide recommendations to overcome these challenges.

## METHODOLOGY FOR REPORT

To assist Shannon CSI sites, Northeastern University (NU) and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) periodically develop resource guides on topics of interest to the Shannon CSI communities. Through the Shannon CSI quarterly technical assistance meetings and follow-up with Shannon CSI community partners, school partnerships with service providers was identified as a program element about which communities would like further information. While many Shannon CSI communities forged relationships between schools and service providers prior to the inception of the Shannon CSI grant using various programs to combat gang and youth violence, Shannon CSI grant funds have allowed them to increase or modify their relationships and partnerships. In an effort to further understand these partnerships and how Shannon CSI communities use them to address gang and youth violence, EOPSS and NU researched such programs across the United States, designed and disseminated a survey to all 41 Shannon CSI communities, and conducted follow-up interviews with three Shannon CSI sites<sup>3</sup>.

It is necessary to clarify a few of the terms used frequently in this guide:

- “**Service provider**,” in this context, refers to a broad range of community-based programming, including social, medical, and psychological services, arts-based programming, and recreational activities.
- “**School system**,” in this context, refers broadly to one or more schools in the school district or the district itself.
- “**School-based**,” in this context, refers to programming offered to students by a service provider within the school.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendices B and C for survey results and Appendix D for summaries of the interviews with members of the Brockton, Fitchburg, and Haverhill partnerships.

- “**Community-based**,” in this context, refers to programming offered to students by a service provider outside the school<sup>4</sup>.

## **HISTORY OF SCHOOL/SERVICE PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS**

Schools have a century-old tradition of collaboration with a range of service providers. Partnerships originated in the late 1800s between health providers and schools for the purpose of controlling infectious diseases among the children of immigrants (Balassone et al., 1991). Social workers have also been in the schools since the turn of the twentieth century providing direct intervention with students and their families (Dryfoos, 1994; Tourse and Sulick, 1999). As expected, the nature of these partnerships have experienced a number of changes as a result various reform movements. Until the 1950s, education reformers supported health and social service involvement in the school setting. Subsequently, however, “American public schools adopted corporate management models that created more isolated and bureaucratic school systems and de-emphasized the school as a community agency” (Franklin and Gerlach, 2006: 45) thus moving service providers out from school settings.

Since the late 1970s, the fields of health, social services, and mental health have been experiencing a major shift in orientation back toward a more comprehensive approach, which has also impacted how schools work with students that have been identified as “at-risk” or as being gang-involved. This transition involves a shift away from a deficit or diagnostic model wherein clients are categorized into relatively distinct groupings (e.g., mentally ill, special education students). Funding streams reflecting this model make it difficult to address students that demonstrate multiple challenges simultaneously and hinder coordination of services. When clients are referred to services under this model, the question is whether they appear to be a good fit for a particular service rather than whether those or other available services might benefit clients’ specific needs better (VanDenBerg and Grealish, 1996). The main concern of practitioners using more comprehensive health promotion approaches is identifying services based on clients’ needs, not simply availability.

Comprehensive approaches focus on prevention and early intervention (Phelps and Power, 2008) and resiliency. Increasingly, research shows that building on positive student strengths, using an interests in arts to offer a student a new way to express personal feelings for example, is important to preventing school-based aggression and violence (Greene, 2005). This

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<sup>4</sup> In the survey, “community-based” services were referred to as “school-linked” services.

approach promotes resilience, blunts the impact of risk factors, and re-orientes efforts from violence prevention and punitive strategies toward safety promotion and pro-social behavior. Promoting resiliency involves increasing trust and communication between students and adults in the school setting. Research shows that school bonding can be critical to student success, and that the student-teacher relationship and school environment more generally is associated with students' willingness to report threats of violence and the presence of weapons in school (Brinkley and Saarnio, 2006).

## **FUNCTIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL/SERVICE PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS**

Partnerships between schools and Shannon CSI service providers function most broadly to prevent gang and youth violence. More specifically, they are tasked to:

- **Keep students in school.** Compared to individuals who finish high school, students that dropout or are expelled from school are more likely to suffer negative consequences in practically every arena of life, including increased likelihood of criminal justice involvement and incarceration (McLaughlin et al., 2007). High school dropouts are disproportionately represented in the state prison population, where 75% of inmates are dropouts (Fields, 2008). This makes identifying students at risk for dropping out a critical partnership focus.

There are several elements of the dropout issue that partnerships should be prepared to address. One is the challenge presented by the transition to high school (i.e., from eighth to ninth grade). Failure of ninth grade, even accounting for individual characteristics, is significantly associated with dropping out (Neild et al., 2001). The Brockton Shannon CSI partnership, which developed an early warning system to identify at-risk students, focuses on the eighth and ninth grades in recognition of this time of higher risk.

Another important factor is the racial/ethnic disparity in dropout rates. The dropout rate nationally for 16-24 years olds is considerably higher for foreign-born students and students of color (Planty et al., 2009). In the 2007-08 school year, most Massachusetts students who dropped out were White (47.8%), Hispanic (31.8%), and Black (15.3) (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009). However, the dropout rate *within* race or ethnicity shows that Hispanics were most likely to dropout (8.3%) and 5.8% of Black students also dropped out<sup>5</sup>. By comparison, the White dropout rate was 2.2%. Shannon CSI collaborations and partnerships can work with schools to help identify disciplinary alternatives to reduce school expulsions and measures resulting in arrest. Exhibit 1 describes an evidence-based dropout prevention program designed for Latino students transitioning to high school.

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<sup>5</sup> Native American (7.3%) and Native Hawaiian (6.7%) students also had high dropout rates but represent much smaller numbers (62 and 22 dropout, respectively) than Hispanic (3,171) and Black (1,527) students.

- **Keep students and schools safe.** Schools cannot fulfill their mission of educating youth if students and school staff are not safe or do not feel safe. Gang and violence prevention efforts may focus on the school environment, the broader community, or both. Whatever the specific focus, service providers and schools need to be involved in identifying and referring to services students at risk for or involved in gangs.

Research indicates that reliance on disciplinary actions that remove students from the school (e.g., expulsion, criminal justice response) are counterproductive, leading to negative consequences for the student and community (NAACP, nd). Comprehensive strategies that locate schools within the community context are more successful in providing a safe environment (Shaw, 2001). In Fitchburg, for example, students who have been suspended are referred to restorative justice circles where they are encouraged to discuss their challenges and learn more productive ways of handling frustration. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students who participate have fewer subsequent suspensions.

- **Address risk-factors known to lead to gang-involvement, delinquency, and violence.** The Comprehensive Gang Model expressly addresses the fact that there are many risk factors for gang involvement, with chronic school failure representing a major predictor (Spergel, 1991). Furthermore, research indicates that while no single factor predicts these outcomes, the more risk factors an individual has, the more likely they will experience negative life outcomes (Hill et al., 2001). These observations mean that an initiative that addresses multiple issues and areas of students' lives are more likely to be successful in achieving reductions in gang involvement and violent behavior.

### **Exhibit 1: Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS)**

The Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education (2006) rates the Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success program (or ALAS, which is Spanish for “wings”) as “potentially promising.” ALAS is a middle or junior high school dropout prevention program targeting students identified by their sixth-grade teacher as being at risk using a standardized rating scale. The scale assesses students on need of supervision, level of motivation, academic potential, social interaction skills, difficulty to teach, and need for special education. The program seeks to address multiple important contexts (individual, school, family, and community) for identified students. A counselor assigned to each student is instrumental in facilitating the intervention, which consists of the following activities:

- Monitoring attendance
- Improving student social and task-related problem-solving skills
- Providing feedback from teachers to parents and students
- Teaching parents how to participate in schools and how to manage their child's behavior
- Providing recognition and bonding activities
- Connecting students and families with community services.

### Exhibit 1: Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS) (cont'd)

A randomized controlled trial of Los Angeles junior high students (Larson and Rumberger, 1995), found statistically significant positive effects for ALAS participants compared to a control group of nonparticipants. Participants were more likely to be enrolled in school at the end of the intervention, which was at the completion of ninth grade—an especially risky time for dropping out. Longer term follow-up at two years found positive but not statistically significant differences.

For more information on ALAS:

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/WWC\\_Project\\_ALAS\\_100506.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/WWC_Project_ALAS_100506.pdf)

A major consideration schools and service providers must address is which students to refer to Shannon CSI services (and what kind of services to utilize). The typical hierarchy for prevention service delivery refers to three categories of programming:

- **Primary.** Targets programming and services to all students to prevent behavioral and learning problems.
- **Secondary.** Targets programming and services to students who are not responsive to primary interventions and exhibit risk factors for school failure.
- **Tertiary.** Targets interventions to students who demonstrate persistent behavioral and learning problems leading to school failure.

Factors like grade level will help determine what the focus of programming is and the method of delivery. For example, primary programs are more likely to focus on disruptive and antisocial behavior of younger children whereas in higher grades violence may be the focus. (Figure 1 provides information on each category's strengths and weaknesses.) They may also differentially emphasize the role of various partners (e.g., teachers as opposed to service providers) depending on the age of the students (Hahn et al., 2007). Identifying a specific target population for services may have beneficial effects for a program.

**Figure 1: Strengths and weaknesses of targeting different student populations**

|                | Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Primary</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programs do not have to identify high-risk youth.</li><li>• Recent research has shown that there are effective primary prevention programs for reducing violence at every school level.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programs may not be sufficiently tailored to address the diverse factors leading youth to violence.</li><li>• Programs can be expensive to deliver services to all students regardless of level of risk.</li></ul> |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention programming may be more useful for younger students (i.e., elementary school) because it is more likely to reach youth before they have had opportunities to become involved in gangs and violence.</li> <li>• If implemented during elementary school, programs provide an opportunity for schools to integrate gang and violence prevention programming at an early stage of educational development and maturation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs may not be as effective with older students (i.e., middle and high school) who are already involved or at risk for involvement in gangs and violence.</li> <li>• Often program are one time events with little follow-up</li> <li>• Programs are unlikely to target gang violence specifically.</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| <b>Secondary</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs target resources to students who are at risk for gang involvement and violence.</li> <li>• Programs may be more appropriate for older students (i.e., middle and high school) because they are more likely to have opportunities to become involved in gangs and violence.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining “at-risk” can be challenging.</li> <li>• Schools and service provider partners need to avoid applying labels to students prematurely or stigmatizing students with pejorative labels.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Tertiary</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs focus resources on a relatively small number of students who are responsible for a disproportionate share of school disruption.</li> <li>• Programs may be more appropriate for older students (i.e., middle and high school) because they are more likely to be involved in gangs and violence than younger students.</li> </ul>                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs address an inherently challenging population.</li> <li>• Significant resources may be spent on a relatively small group of students.</li> <li>• Programs are unlikely to show measurable positive outcomes in the short term, which may create difficulties in justifying continued funding.</li> <li>• If focused on an older population, programs may have a limited amount of time to reach students.</li> </ul> |

There are numerous types of partnerships between school systems and service providers that are possible. Terms such as collaboration or partnership can be vague and less helpful without more specific characteristics. Franklin and Streeter (1995) identify a continuum of school-community linked services:

- **Informal relationship.** A loose, limited relationship between schools and service provider agencies.
- **Coordination.** Typically involves a school social worker acting as a home-school-community liaison through the identification of resources and creating linkages.
- **Partnership.** Contractual agreements with a community agency to provide support services at the school.
- **Collaboration.** Joint development of services and shared resources between community agencies and schools to provide a continuum of care.
- **Integration.** A relationship between schools and service providers in which the boundaries are loosened and there is a purposeful redesigning of school-community services.

Regardless of where partnerships fall on the continuum, Shannon CSI communities clearly stated in their survey responses how important building productive relationships is to developing and maintaining collaborative efforts. Numerous communities noted the need to build trust, improve communication, invite school personnel and Shannon CSI service providers to each other's meetings, or otherwise create buy-in. Trust and communication go hand-in-hand. Observing that even with a longstanding partnership improvements can be made, one respondent stated "it is an ongoing challenge, especially when resources are stretched thin and people are very busy."

The strategy of addressing gangs and violence through highly collaborative partnerships is based on research showing that successful prevention efforts generally account for the varied contexts in which an individual is located. Known as the ecological context, this idea reflects the fact that a student, for example, not only has individual characteristics that increase or reduce the risk of involvement in gangs or violence, but also possesses relative risks based on peer interactions, the school environment, family dynamics, and the community where they live. The more effective evidence-based programs acknowledge the ecological context and strive to engage the youth in as many settings as possible. Shannon CSI communities, through their use of the Comprehensive Gang Model, are familiar with this approach. Representative of this notion is a comment by one survey respondent who reported that community violence affects a large number of students and can result in the development of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) if unaddressed, making it critical for PTSD services to be well-integrated into the school. The Boston Shannon CSI collaborative, for instance, partners with the Boston Public Health Commission to provide trauma intervention. Exhibit 2 describes a program that targets students with trauma, which may be a frequent concern in communities with gangs and higher rates of violence.

## **Exhibit 2. Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) Program**

Exposure to violence, whether observed or experienced, and the resulting trauma “can lead to negative psychological and social outcomes such as depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, aggressive and delinquent behavior, and problems with school performance” (Wong et al., 2007: 17). Youth in communities with gang problems may be more likely to suffer such consequences. Screening for and addressing trauma in the student population may help some communities assist students with serious emotional challenges and improve the school environment.

The Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) program is an evidence-based intervention program designed collaboratively by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), RAND Corporation, and UCLA to relieve psychological symptoms of trauma. Based in the schools, CBITS targets students ages 10-15 and is intended to be delivered by clinical mental health professionals in ten group sessions. From the outset, the program was designed to be a highly collaborative process with the flexibility to be used with students of different cultural and racial groups.

Wong and colleagues (2007: 18) note that CBITS “is one of the few evidence-based mental health programs that specifically address trauma in schools.” Stein et al. (2003) conducted a randomized controlled trial of CBITS during the 2001-2002 academic year in Los Angeles and found statistically significantly and substantially lower scores on PTSD, depression, and psychological dysfunction compared to a group of students who received the program at a later point in the school year. Following completion of the program, the wait-listed group showed similar declines in symptoms.

More information is available at the UCLA Health Services Research Center:

**<http://www.hsrcenter.ucla.edu/research/cbits.shtml>**

RAND Corporation:

**<http://www.rand.org/health/projects/cbits/>**

Los Angeles Unified School District:

**[http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?\\_pageid=33,1049582&\\_dad=ptl&\\_schema=PTL\\_EP](http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,1049582&_dad=ptl&_schema=PTL_EP)**

Attention to a school system or community’s specific needs is critical to designing or choosing the right approach. As Franklin and Gerlach (2006: 51) succinctly observe, “An evidence-based intervention that is not realistic in a particular school or community environment is irrelevant.” There are numerous models used in schools to address gangs and violence. A few of the more comprehensive, community-inclusive partnerships into which gang and violence

prevention and intervention activities fit include the wraparound process and community or full-service schools<sup>6</sup>. These are described briefly below.

## Wraparound

The wraparound process is “system of care” approach, which is community-based, providing comprehensive, integrated services through multiple agencies and professionals. Wraparound is explicitly a process rather than a model. It seeks to integrate different domains of the client’s life and build on the strengths of the people in those domains (e.g., family, friends, teachers, service providers) (Eber and Nelson, 1997). The process is typically applied to populations with chronic school failure and youth who have been involved in the criminal justice system (Eber et al., 2002). Although different entities can serve as the entry point to the wraparound process, schools likely offer significant advantages when serving in this capacity (Epstein et al, 2005). Exhibit 3 briefly describes the principles underlying the wraparound process.

### Exhibit 3: Principles of the Wraparound Process

The National Wraparound Initiative lists ten principles underlying the process. The following is adapted from “Ten Principles of the Wraparound Process” (Bruns et al, 2004).

- **Family voice and choice.** “Family and youth/child perspectives are intentionally elicited and prioritized during all phases of the wraparound process. Planning is grounded in family members’ perspectives, and the team strives to provide options and choices such that the plan reflects family values and preferences” (p.5).
- **Team-based.** “The wraparound team consists of individuals agreed upon by the family and committed to them through informal, formal, and community support and service relationships” (p.6).
- **Natural supports.** “The team actively seeks out and encourages the full participation of team members drawn from family members’ networks of interpersonal and community relationships. The wraparound plan reflects activities and interventions that draw on sources of natural support” (p.7).
- **Collaboration.** “Team members work cooperatively and share responsibility for developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating a single wraparound plan. The plan reflects a blending of team members’ perspectives, mandates, and resources. The plan guides and coordinates each team member’s work towards meeting the team’s goals” (p.8).

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<sup>6</sup> The terms “community school” and “wraparound” may be used inappropriately to describe traditional programs so that they are more palatable to funders and other stakeholders (VanDenBerg and Grealish, 1996). Readers should be cautious when making assumptions about the extent to which such programs actually represent these innovations.

### **Exhibit 3: Principles of the Wraparound Process (cont'd)**

- **Community-based.** “The wraparound team implements service and support strategies that take place in the most inclusive, most responsive, most accessible, and least restrictive settings possible; and that safety promote child and family integration into home and community life” (p.9).
- **Culturally competent.** “The wraparound process demonstrates respect for and builds on the values, preferences, beliefs, culture, and identity of the child/youth and family, and their community” (p.9).
- **Individualized.** “To achieve the goals laid out in the wraparound plan, the team develops and implements a customized set of strategies, supports, and services” (p.9).
- **Strengths-based.** “The wraparound process and the wraparound plan identify, build on, and enhance the capabilities, knowledge, skills, and assets of the child and family, their community, and other team members” (p.10).
- **Persistence.** “Despite challenges, the team persists in working toward the goals included in the wraparound plan until the team reaches agreement that a formal wraparound process is no longer required” (p.10).
- **Outcome-based.** “The team ties the goals and strategies of the wraparound plan to observable or measureable indicators of success, monitors progress in terms of these indicators, and revises the plan accordingly” (p.11).

Document available at the National Wraparound Initiative website:

<http://www.rtc.pdx.edu/PDF/TenPrincWAProcess.pdf>

For a history of wraparound:

<http://www.rtc.pdx.edu/nwi/PDF/fpF0302.pdf>

For information on wraparound research:

<http://www.rtc.pdx.edu/nwi/PDF/wraparound%20evidence%20recognition%20070316.pdf>

### **Full-service/Community schools**

Community Schools or full-service schools are sometimes referred to as “one-stop shopping” for families and children in the community (Dryfoos, 1994: 43). They seek to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement<sup>7</sup>. Schools using this approach function as a kind of “child-focused community center” (Franklin and Gerlach, 2006: 49) where educational and social services are provided to students, their families, and other community members during school hours as well

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<sup>7</sup> For more information, see the Coalition for Community Schools website  
<http://www.communityschools.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=6&Itemid=27>

as after school. Full-service schools are more likely to be located in disadvantaged communities with racially and ethnically diverse populations (Dryfoos, 2002).<sup>8</sup> Community schools were used as part of the city of Boston's youth violence prevention strategy during the 1990s. This initiative brought together residents, schools, community-based organizations, health centers, tenant task forces, city agencies, and law enforcement with the purpose of developing "a community-focused continuum of prevention and intervention services for 9-18 year olds in order to prevent violence and foster a safer community" by offering such services as safe havens, tutoring, and family strengthening services (OJJDP, 1996).

## **SCHOOL/SERVICE PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS IN MASSACHUSETTS**

Northeastern and EOPSS collaboratively developed a questionnaire to survey Shannon CSI communities about the nature and characteristics of partnerships between their school system and Shannon CSI service providers. Questionnaires were emailed to the program directors of each of the 17 grantee sites; the program directors were asked to complete a separate questionnaire for each of the individual communities participating in their collaborative. All 41 communities participating in the third year of funding responded, a response rate of 100%. Survey results are provided in Appendices B and C.

### **Communities where Shannon CSI partners with schools**

All 17 Shannon CSI sites reported service provider partnerships between Shannon CSI service providers and schools in at least one community within their collaboration and 29 of the 41 Shannon CSI communities indicated a Shannon CSI partnership with the schools (71%). Nine communities (22%) did not attempt to involve the school system and three (7%) made an attempt but were unsuccessful.

### **Impetus for partnership**

The factor cited most often as very important to creating partnerships between schools and Shannon CSI service providers was general student behavior issues like fighting and bullying (66%). Fifty-nine percent said the resources provided by the Shannon CSI were very important to the partnership's creation. It appears that broader concerns about violence and bullying, of which gangs may have played a part, was the most common reason schools looked to develop these external partnerships.

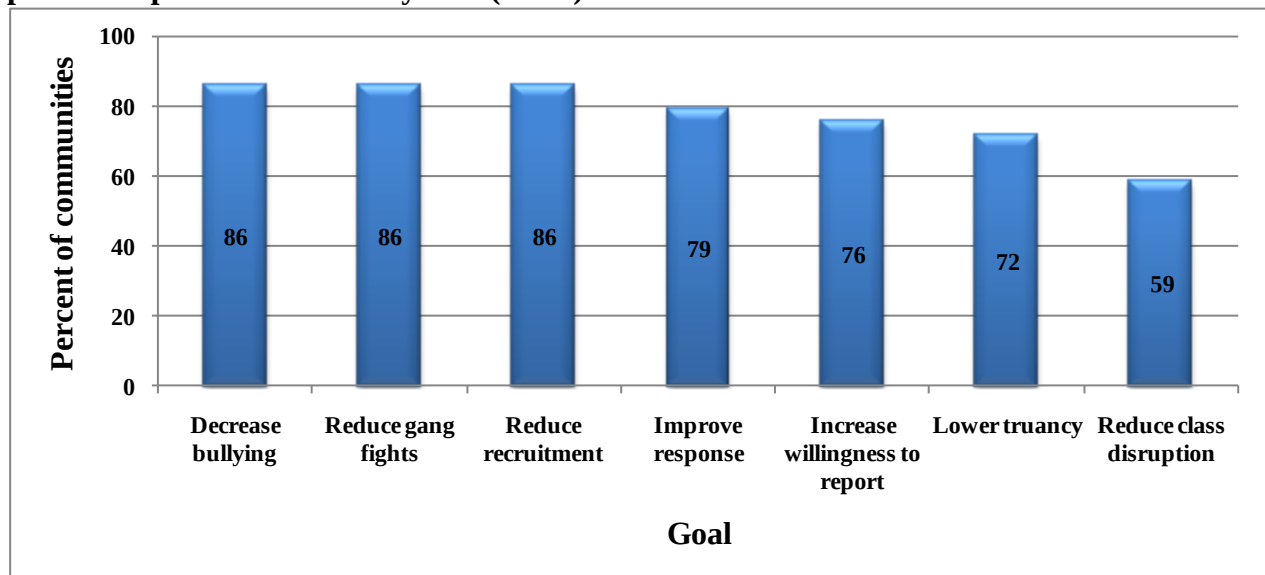
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<sup>8</sup> For more information, see the Coalition for Community Schools: <http://www.communityschools.org/index.php>

## Partnership goals

Communities were asked to indicate the extent to which a series of goals were important to the Shannon CSI partnership with the school system. For each goal, a majority responded that it was “very important.” The goals most frequently reported as very important were reducing gang recruitment in the schools (86%), decreasing bullying by gang members in the schools (86%), and reducing gang-related fights in the schools (86%). Figure 2 displays the results for all goals.

**Figure 2: Percent of communities reporting a goal is “very important” to the Shannon CSI partnership with the school system (N=29)**

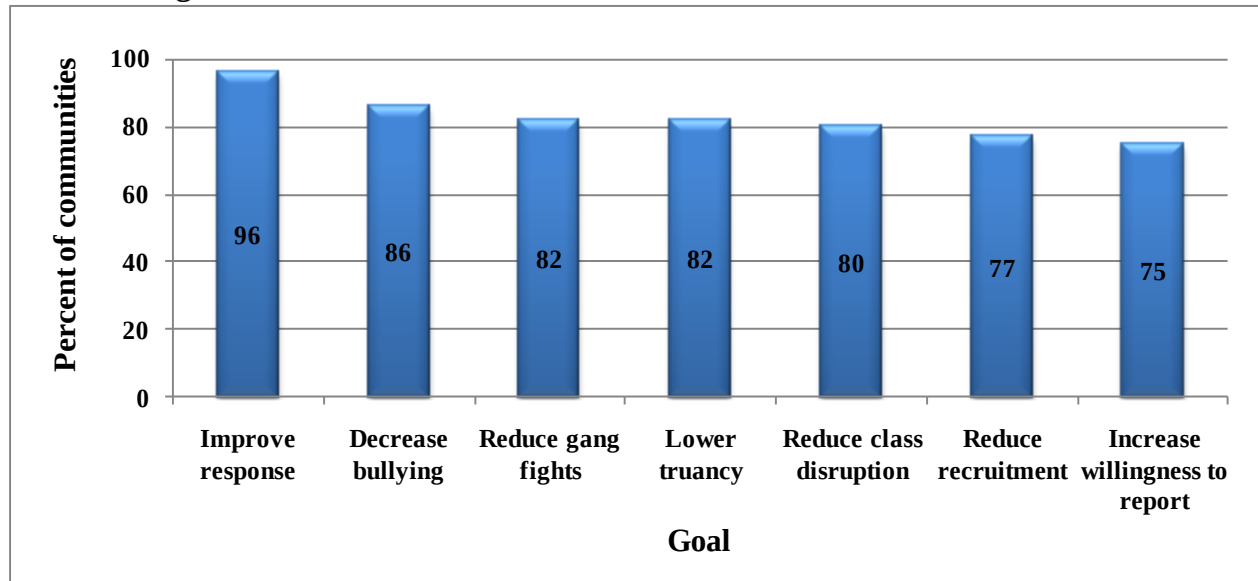


One of the key findings of the survey analysis was that the communities that identified specific goals as most important to address through the Shannon CSI partnerships were also the communities to have the greatest improvement. It is encouraging to find that the goals cited as most important to the Shannon CSI partnerships were also the areas in which positive change was reported. As Figure 3 shows:

- 96% (N=21) of the 22 communities that said improving the response to students who report threats or dangerous situations is very important reported perceiving an improvement.
- 86% (N=19) of the 22 communities that said decreasing bullying by gang members in the schools is very important reported perceiving a decrease.
- 82% (N=18) of the 22 communities that said reducing gang-related fights in the schools is very important reported perceiving reduction.
- 82% (N=14) of the 17 communities that said lowering truancy rates is very important reported perceiving lowered rates.

- 80% (N=12) of the 15 communities that said reducing classroom disruption caused by students who are gang members is very important reported perceiving reductions.
- 77% (N=17) of the 22 communities that said reducing gang recruitment in the schools is very important reported perceiving a reduction.
- 75% (N=15) of the 20 communities that said increasing students' willingness to report threats or dangerous situations is very important reported perceiving increases.

**Figure 3: Percent of communities indicating a goal is “very important” reporting progress toward that goal**

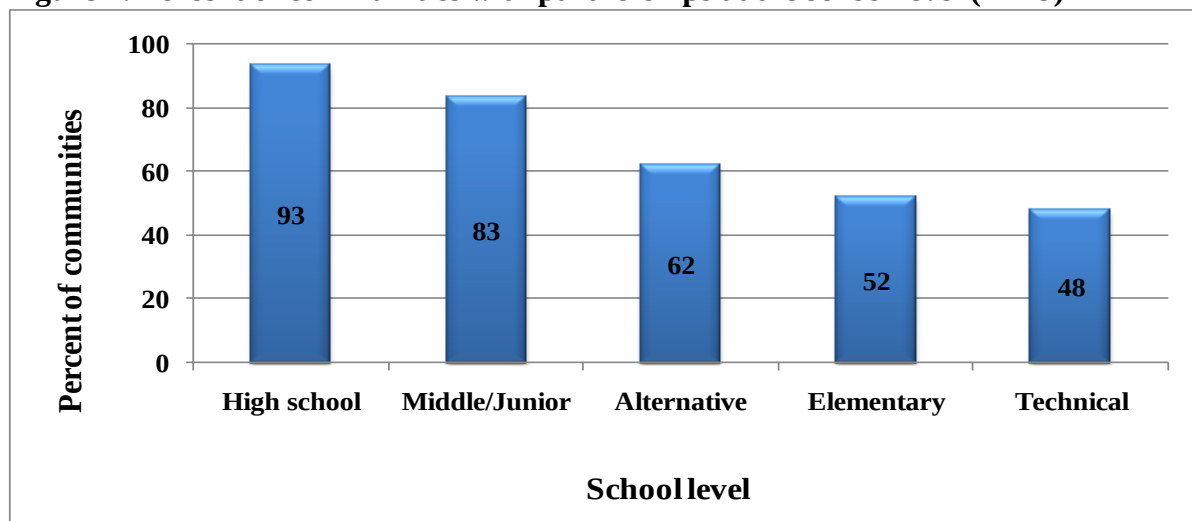


Results were also positive when looking at the raw percentages of communities reporting positive progress since the establishment of a partnership between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers. Twenty-seven out of the 29 communities with a partnership reported positive progress toward at least one of the goals (93%). The three most frequently indicated changes perceived by school officials were an improved response to students reporting threats or dangerous situations (79%), decreased bullying by gang members in the schools (66%), and reduced gang-related fights in the schools (66%). Sixty-two percent of communities also reported reduced gang recruitment in the schools and an increased student willingness to report threats or dangerous situations. These changes closely reflect Shannon CSI goals. The finding that such a high a percentage of the communities with partnerships were noticing improvements in these areas is an important accomplishment of Shannon CSI.

## Level of school

The Shannon CSI is primarily focused on engaging youth most at risk for involvement in gangs and violence. While prevention programming in elementary schools may be part of some collaborations, partnerships reflecting the initiative's focus would more likely occur at the high school and middle/junior high school levels. This is indeed what the survey results indicate. Most partnerships took place at the high school (93%) or middle/junior high school (83%) levels. Seventy-six percent had partnerships at both levels. While substantially fewer partnerships occurred at the elementary (52%) or technical school (48%) levels, it is good to see that partnerships were also addressing young youth and youth outside of traditional public schools. (See Figure 4.)

**Figure 4: Percent of communities with partnerships at the school level (N=29)**



## Formal screening instruments

Use of formal instruments to screen the student population for risk factors can help with the identification and referral of students to appropriate services. While such tools may use clinical, validated scales, non-clinical criteria may also be appropriate. A validated scale is a type of survey that has been administered many times, studied, and found to accurately and reliably (that is, the same general result occurs if done repeatedly) distinguish between individuals at risk for involvement in gangs or violence and those who are not, depending on a pattern of responses. Scales are often used to assist health professionals to make clinical diagnoses and more recently to identify at-risk youth.

Seven communities (24%) reported using a formal risk assessment or other standardized criterion to identify students at risk for involvement or who are actually involved in gang

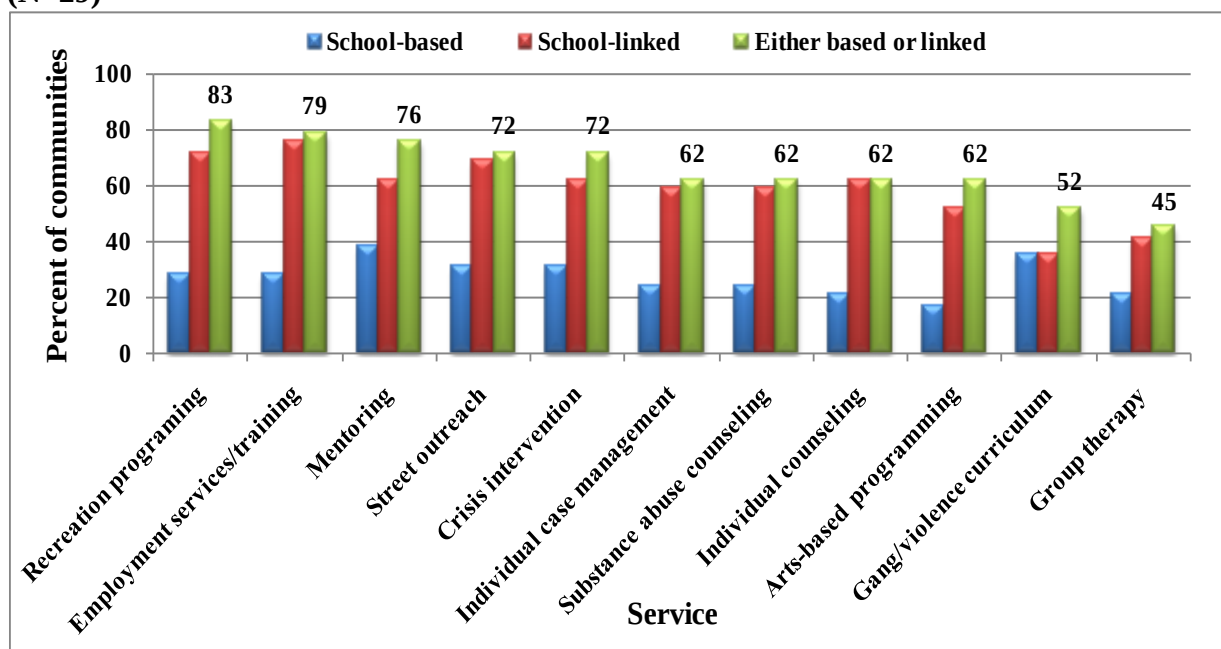
activity. Brockton’s partnership, using a set of non-clinical criteria, developed a software program that queries student records for data on truancy, grades, and disciplinary actions to screen for students who may be in need of services. Once the list is produced, a dropout prevention team reviews the list to determine whether these needs warrant Shannon CSI services or tutoring or mentoring outside of the Shannon CSI. This system uses basic student data to generate a preliminary roster of potentially at-risk students in an unobtrusive manner. (See Appendix D for more details on the Brockton partnership.)

### **Location of service delivery**

It is unclear whether basing certain services on school campus is preferable to offering the service at off-campus community settings. For example, wraparound processes may involve services in numerous locations, while other approaches, such as community schools, may be school-based. However, where services are offered is an important consideration, and it will likely depend on the nature of the specific partnership and the needs of the school and community.

Respondents were asked whether a series of services were delivered by Shannon CSI service providers on school grounds (“school-based”), off school grounds (“school-linked”)—or both if applicable. A majority indicated providing either school-based or school-linked basis recreation programming (83%), employment services or training (79%), mentoring (76%), street outreach (72%), or crisis intervention (72%). Nearly half (62%) provided individual case management, individual counseling, or arts-based programming. (See Figure 5.) Communities were generally at least twice as likely to provide community-based services as they were to delivery school-based services. The one exception is associated with providing a gang or violence prevention curriculum, with equal percentages delivering the curriculum off-site and in the school itself (35%).

**Figure 5: Percent of communities with school-based or school-linked services or either (N=29)**



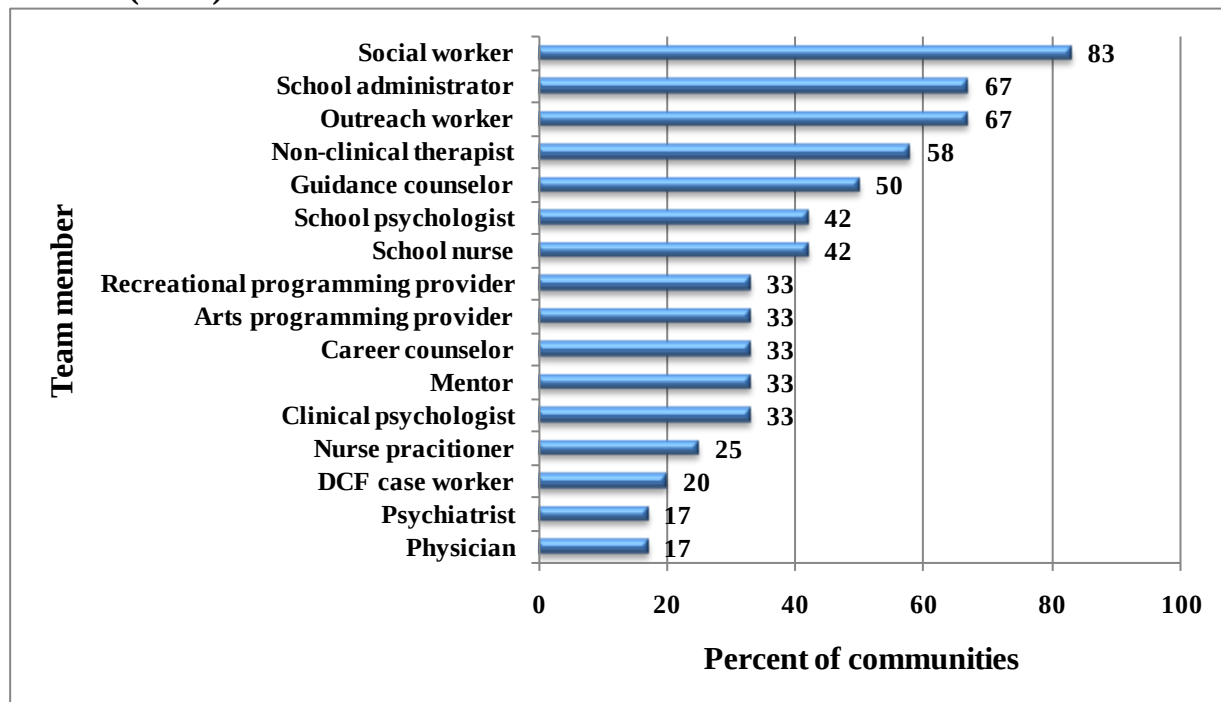
### Case management

Case management generally refers to the coordination of service delivery to an individual across agencies. (See Figure 6.) It may also suggest active discussion of a client's case by the agencies providing services. Having a case management team likely offers several additional benefits, such as being able to apply the experience of a group of service providers to “objective” quantitative data collected on various aspects of students' lives, particularly in school. The Brockton dropout prevention team is a good example of this benefit.

Forty-one percent of the communities indicated that Shannon CSI service providers participated on a case management team of professionals or other individuals who actively coordinate service delivery to students in the school system. Of the 12 respondents using a case management team, most reported having a licensed social worker as a member (83%). Majorities also noted outreach workers (67%), school administrators (67%), non-clinical therapists or counselors (58%), guidance counselors (50%), or DCF case workers (50%) were members. Outreach workers and non-clinical therapists or counselors were typically also direct Shannon CSI partners. Reported leadership of the teams varied widely and included street outreach workers, non-clinical therapists or counselors, guidance counselors, social workers, police, youth court directors, as well as an egalitarian model with no formal leader.

Communities with a case management team were somewhat more likely to perceive reduced classroom disruption by gang members (80% vs. 57%), decreased bullying by gang members in schools (90% vs. 67%), and reduced gang-related fights in the schools (90% vs. 67%). Paradoxically, communities with case management teams were *less* likely to report establishing formalized partnerships between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers (50% vs. 71%). However, this may reflect a situation in which communities with case management teams had already formalized the partnerships prior to the Shannon CSI.

**Figure 6: Percent of communities with case management teams with a type of team member (N=12)**

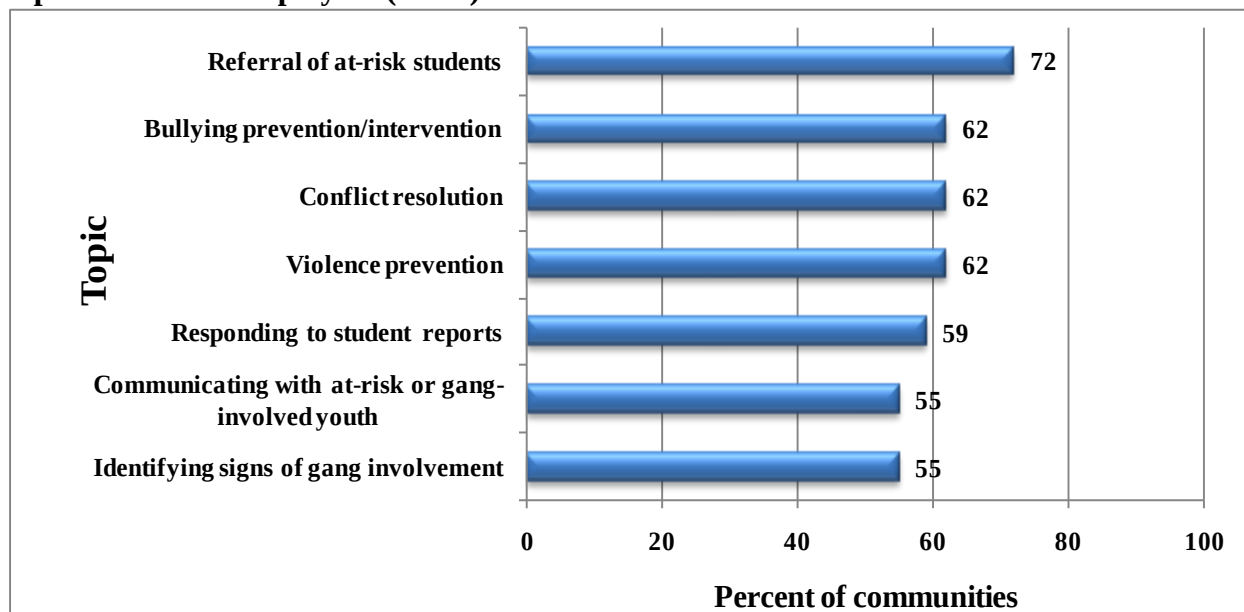


### Training on gang-related topics

Service providers working in violence and gang prevention can help teachers and other school staff to do their jobs more effectively and enhance school safety by providing training on various topics of importance. Twenty-six of the 29 communities with partnerships (90%) reported Shannon CSI service providers administering training on at least one gang or violence-related subject. Most often, training was provided on identifying at-risk students for referral to services (72%). More than half of the communities conducted training on bullying prevention/intervention (62%), conflict resolution (62%), violence prevention generally (62%), responding to students who provide information on a threatening situation (59%), identifying

signs of gang involvement (55%), or communicating with at-risk or gang-involved youth (55%). (See Figure 7.)

**Figure 7: Percent of communities in which Shannon CSI service providers offered training topics for school employees (N=29)**



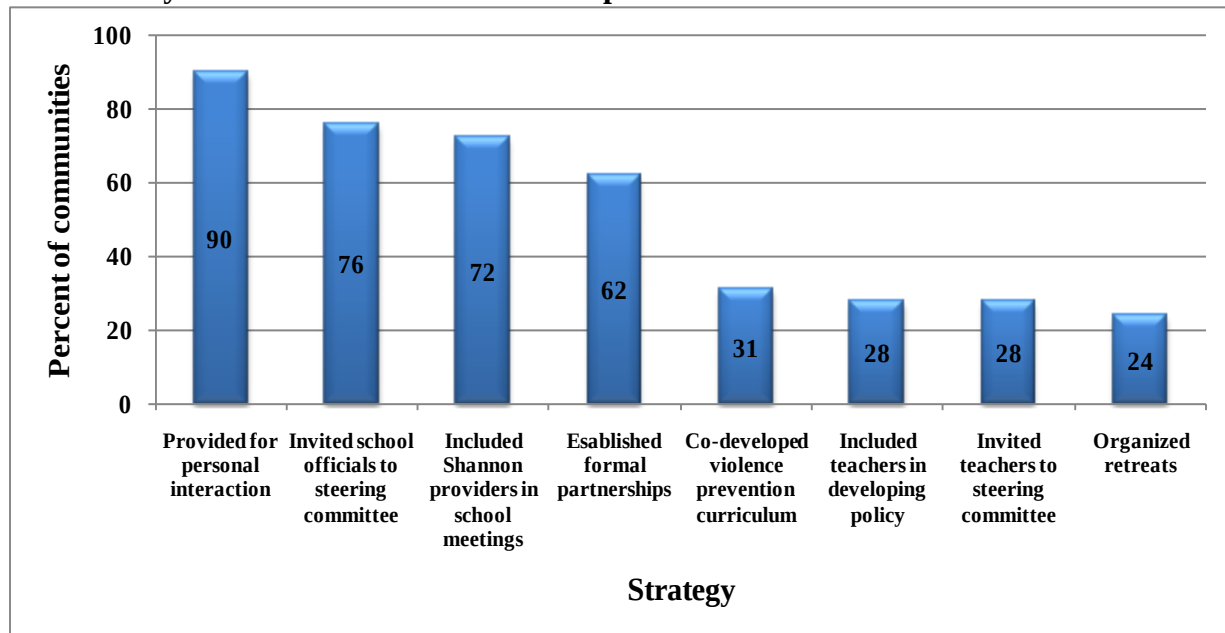
### **Strategies to strengthen partnership**

Proper program implementation can be hindered if project partners do not work together effectively, and fidelity to the implementation process can be critical to program effectiveness (Rosenblatt, 1996). Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether of a series of strategies were used to foster partnerships between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers. (See Figure 8.)

Opportunities for school staff and service providers to build relationships were most often reported as being used to foster partnerships. As one community stated, “Developing relationships and being willing to learn from the school staff [and] their perception of the issues is key.” Almost all communities (90%) indicated providing opportunities for personal interaction, and approximately three-quarters of respondents had invited school officials to Shannon CSI steering committee meetings (76%) or included Shannon CSI service providers in school meetings (72%). A solid majority (62%) established formalized partnerships between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers. During the interviews it also became apparent that having existing relationships with the school can be an enormous advantage for the implementation process and that opportunities to strengthen and expand the occasions for interaction between Shannon CSI and the schools are very useful.

Another way to strengthen relationships may be to make some program components peer-led. Haverhill, for example, structured their VIP program so that youth were instrumental in program operations. While youth in the program are mostly at-risk and gang-involved youth, the program focused on specific issues the youth were facing and allowed them to critically think about how they could serve as an example to others to better the school. Identifying appropriately motivated youth to take a leadership role in a partnership may be a strategy communities want to consider. Partnerships should understand, however, that peer-led programs are most effective when they are highly organized and have a problem-solving focus; when they are more loosely focused, there is the potential for harmful effects if the groups become a path to strengthening delinquent associations.

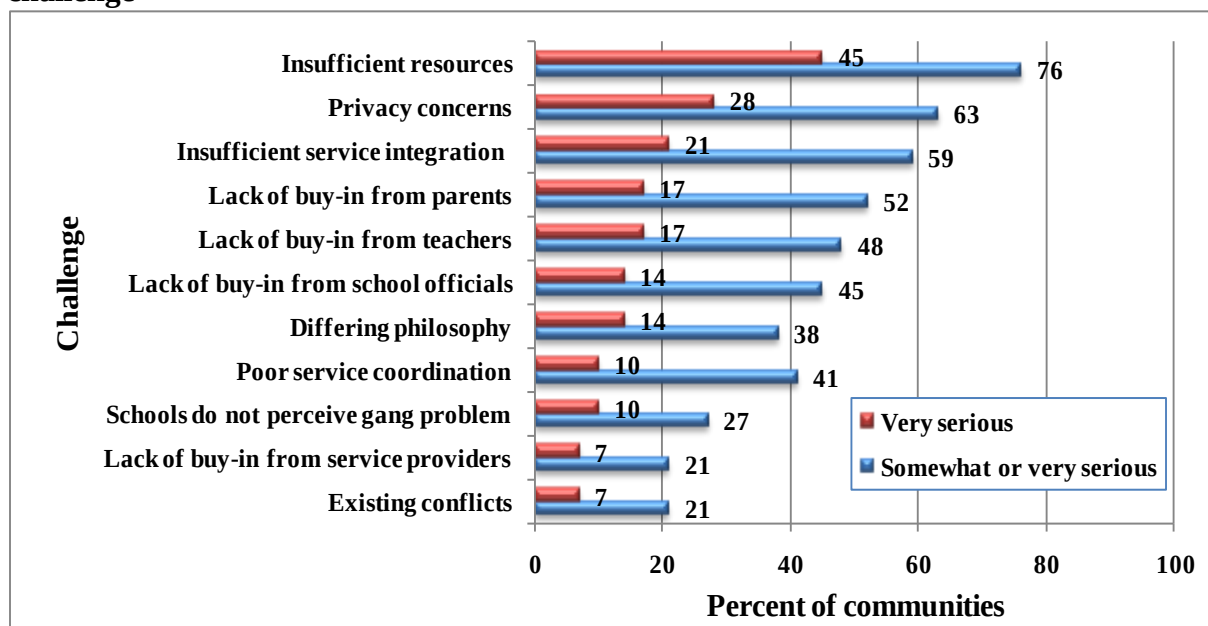
**Figure 8: Percent of communities reporting strategies used to foster partnerships between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers**



### Challenges to maintaining partnerships

Communities were asked to report how serious a series of challenges were to establishing, maintaining, or further developing partnerships with the school system. (See Figure 9.) The challenge most often indicated as being very serious was insufficient resources (45%). If responses of “somewhat serious” and “very serious” are totaled, over three-quarters (76%) reported lacking resources as a challenge. A majority of communities also reported as somewhat or very serious privacy concerns related to student information (63%), insufficient integration of services into schools (59%), and lack of buy-in from parents (52%).

**Figure 9: Percent of communities indicating the seriousness of a partnership challenge**



## **SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS: LESSONS LEARNED, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESS**

This section draws on the information NU and EOPSS learned from the Shannon CSI survey results and detailed interviews and highlights lessons learned and common challenges communities have encountered attempting to build partnerships between schools and Shannon CSI service providers. Recommendations for each challenge are provided based on the experience of the Shannon CSI communities and research literature on school/service provider partnerships.

### **Lessons learned**

#### *Developing collaborative relationships is vital to obtaining buy-in*

Survey respondents indicated that communities that had previously developed relationships were more successful in achieving programmatic success. Oftentimes, these relationships and trust had been built through prior collaboration on issues identified by the community or because of previous grant initiatives. However, survey analysis also pointed to two key ingredients for communities developing new partnerships. First, communities more likely to achieve positive results provided regular opportunities for personal interaction between Shannon CSI service providers and school administrators. Additionally, communities where service providers and school administrators/staff attended Shannon CSI steering committee or

school planning meetings also indicated greater buy-in and programmatic success. As one community shared, “Communication with each other is most important. Both parties need to trust one another and understand each others limits.” These cross- collaborations allowed both service providers and the schools to feel ownership over the process, thus greatly enhancing implementation fidelity.

#### *Importance of committed leadership*

Several communities made note of the importance of the role a specific member or members of the partnership. In Haverhill, the partnership identified the importance of the superintendent in clearing obstacles to secure classroom space and keep the program moving forward. In Fitchburg, the partnership identified the importance of leadership by the outreach coordinator and a middle school principal in allowing the program to move forward quickly once the Shannon CSI began. The outreach coordinator built relationships with school officials, parents, and students to achieve buy-in while the principal mandated professional development trainings for teachers to inform them about the program elements and goals.

#### *Programmatic focus on specific goals*

Survey analysis pointed to a clear correlation between communities formally acknowledging goals and communities reporting progress towards that goal. In Fitchburg, the collaboration grew from a programmatic focus on reducing dropout rates and identifying alternative responses for students facing suspension. In Brockton, the Shannon CSI partnership made fifty slots available for Shannon CSI service programming to students referred through the school system. To ensure these students are most appropriate for Shannon CSI services, the collaboration partnered with the school system to develop a tool to identify the students most at risk for dropping out, hired a school-based liaison, and worked with the prevention coordinator. By narrowing the partnership focus, the collaboration can refer the most appropriate youth and identify the right programs to address their most immediate needs.

### **Challenges and Recommendations**

Several challenges were reported by Shannon CSI communities through their survey responses and during interviews. Several of the more serious and frequently mentioned ones are discussed below.

### *Privacy concerns*

As in other areas of the Shannon CSI collaborations, sharing sensitive or protected information across partners can be difficult, and privacy concerns was frequently identified in the survey responses and comments as an ongoing challenge. One of the responding communities commented, “The schools have a great deal of privacy issues that need to be worked out.” Another noted, “Schools will only work with individuals and organizations that they trust.” Due to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations, “Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student’s education record”<sup>9</sup>.

### Recommendations

- **Implement a universal information-sharing consent form.** One method of addressing this issue is to implement a universal information sharing consent form for parents to sign on the behalf of their children that allows various service providers permission to share information that would otherwise be off limits. If this is not possible, coordinating the existing consent processes may improve information sharing.
- **Work with project partners to identify students in need of attention without revealing private information.** A useful strategy may be the practice of alerting schools when a particular student may be in distress but without violating privacy protections. For example, the Brockton police participate in the “Trauma Sensitive Schools” initiative<sup>10</sup> through which they review incident reports and notify a school if they see that a student was involved in a traumatic event and may require extra attention. Without providing specifics or violating privacy, the police are able to provide information to the school that may serve to help a troubled student.

### *Funding*

Tough economic times can make a coordinated, multi-agency, holistic approach to addressing gang involvement and youth violence sound unfeasible and unrealistic. In addition, partners have reported that through the typical evolution of programmatic activities, communities have identified new models they wish to develop but do not have the resources for programmatic implementation.

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<sup>9</sup> Sharing dates of attendance, considered “directory” information, does not require parental consent but schools are mandated to inform parents that this information is being shared so that they may request it not be disclosed. See U.S. Department of Education website <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> For information on Trauma Sensitive Schools, see the Massachusetts Department of Education web sites on Trauma Sensitive Schools <http://www.doe.mass.edu/tss/> and <http://www.doe.mass.edu/tss/schools.html>

## Recommendations

- **Identify specific goals for the school/service provider partnership.** In the anticipation of potential funding changes, collaborative meetings like the Shannon CSI steering committee should prioritize specific goals for the school/service provider partnership. To facilitate this process, schools and service providers should collect and analyze appropriate school and student data and have key personnel that interact with students on a daily basis present to identify new challenges schools may be facing. This information allows steering committee members to identify prospective partnership models and to clarify roles and responsibilities that make effective and efficient use of funds. Additionally, by identifying specific goals, collaborations may be able to identify other grant funding sources to support partnerships.
- **Engage in proactive partnership building.** By increasing community collaboration, new partners can be identified that may be able to offer additional services or assistance to accomplish programmatic goals.

### *Obtaining parental buy-in*

Many partnerships find it challenging to gain the active support and involvement of students' parents. Several communities reported that their outreach efforts have not been as successful as initially hoped. Decades of research have demonstrated the importance of parental involvement in student achievement, and federal education policy reflects this through parental involvement mandates within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Comprehensive approaches in particular advocate for collaboration with parents as a critical strategic component. However, there are numerous reasons why parents might not be participating, including language barriers, lack of time, or previous negative experiences with their child's or their own schools.

## Recommendations

- **Identify programs and partners with a history of working with parents.** Certain established programs or service delivery approaches like wraparound explicitly involve parents and families in violence and gang prevention efforts. In addition, local organizations are likely to have existing trusting relationships with parents and may be willing to work with school partnerships. For example, a restorative justice circle facilitator in Fitchburg's partnership had worked previously with many youth and their families and, as a result, has helped improve communication between some parents and their child's school.
- **Provide a variety of opportunities for parents to get involved.** There are many different ways parents might be made more comfortable engaging more collaboratively with their child's school (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Partnerships can provide parents with information through several methods of outreach, including newsletters, parent/teacher training, and home visits. Another strategy might be to encourage parents to be involved in the classroom and to otherwise restructure the classroom setting and parent/teacher

relationship so that it is less hierarchical. Bilingual services may be available to reach foreign-born parents with limited English skills. Wraparound and other comprehensive approaches are designed to provide services and referrals to students' families; partnerships may be able to help parents take advantage of these services.

### *Effectively integrating programming*

Integration of anti-gang, violence prevention, and other programming is often difficult. There are numerous considerations involved, including promoting effective communication between partners, clarifying roles and responsibilities, reducing organizational tendencies toward isolation, and obtaining buy-in from the various stakeholders. Moreover, integration may involve substantial systemic or structural changes, depending on the type of partnership approach.

### Recommendation

- **Implement interagency agreements.** Service providers may be unaccustomed to working together to share decision making power, and their professional goals may differ. Interagency agreements may help partners address important issues that might otherwise create challenges. They can help the school system and partner agencies to
  - Develop a common mission, define roles, and establish work processes
  - Attract agencies willing to commit to a holistic, integrated service model
  - Avoid duplication of efforts
  - Identify areas of confidentiality discrepancies and interagency lines of communication
  - Provide “carefully articulated vision, goals, and accountability systems that may appeal to potential funders” (McInnis-Dittrich, et al., 1999: 26).

### *Identification and follow-up with students who have dropped out or have been expelled*

Students that are gang-involved and or demonstrate risk factors for gang involvement are among the students most likely to drop out or be expelled from school. Although dropout prevention is a high priority for many schools, dropout recovery programs and strategies to track dropouts are less prevalent. Once a student drops out, few schools have a system in place to reengage them, despite the consequences for both the youth and society more generally. Additionally, schools may unknowingly feed the “school-to-prison pipeline” (Miller et al., 2006) through excessive use of “zero-tolerance” policies that remove students from the mainstream school environment to the juvenile justice system as a disciplinary response for disruptive school behavior. Failing to engage dropouts represents a lost opportunity to help youth at increased risk for involvement in gangs and violence. Tracking what happens to youth after dropping out or

expulsion and connecting them to services can help districts devise strategies to help students with behavioral issues return to school or otherwise attain an important educational credential.

### Recommendations

- **Identify dropout recovery programming appropriate to your community's needs.** Educational strategies that work with academically successful students are not likely to be the same as those that will be most effective for students at risk of dropping out or who have dropped out. The American Youth Policy Forum published a report describing dropout recovery programs in twelve cities across the United States, eight of which are school-based (Martin and Halperin, 2006). The report recommends several broad strategies to meet the needs of a diverse learning community:
  - Multiple pathways to a recognized credential, such as GED
  - Programs offering open-entry and open-exit, which allow students to progress through curricula at their own pace
  - Compressed and expanded high school programs combined with dual enrollment in postsecondary institutions
  - Programs to recover or make up missing academic credits
  - Programs offering schedule flexibility, including evening and year-round schools
  - Programs offering career-oriented curricula, with opportunities for students to engage in school-related internships and part-time employment
  - Adult high schools, especially the well-regarded daylight/twilight model, with opportunities for intergenerational learning
- **Implement policies and procedures in the schools to track and collect information on the needs of students who have left school.** It is important not to lose track of youth who have dropped out or been expelled. Maintaining contact provides a link to services and more readily facilitates the return to the educational system. Shannon CSI project partners should work with the schools and their local action research partner to devise a data collection strategy to ensure a youth does not fall through the cracks.

### Additional recommendation offered by a program partner

- **Identify a specific contact person in the school.** As mentioned earlier, facilitating clear communication is an important step toward effective relationship building. To help achieve this goal throughout a community's school system, a site recommended that each individual school should identify a particular staff member to serve as the main contact person for the Shannon CSI. This person might serve as a member of a school/service provider partnership sub-committee or report on a regular basis to the Shannon CSI steering committee on general school trends and events and could assist in referring youth to service provider programs and identify programs that might be useful in that particular school setting.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **MODEL PROGRAMS**

Whether implementing existing gang or violence prevention programming or developing a strategy organically, communities and schools should determine whether data and evaluation studies appear to support the efficacy of their strategy. Funding agencies typically want proposals to include programs that are evidence-based and shown to be effective or promising. Basing new initiatives on the lessons of successful programs may bolster an applicant's case for funding. It is also important to address the specific needs of the particular school system and community. Implementing a program of service delivery that is inappropriate to these needs, is not based on good research, or, worse, is based on assumptions research has demonstrated to be incorrect may at least reduce the effectiveness of the program and in some cases may actually cause harm to the program's service recipients.

The following websites, maintained by respected governmental, educational, and non-profit institutions, provide ratings and descriptions of evidence-based programs:

- What Works Clearinghouse, Institute of Education Services, U.S. Department of Education  
**<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>**
- Model Programs Guide, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
**<http://www2.dsgonline.com/mpg/Default.aspx>**
- Blueprints for Violence Prevention Model Programs Guide, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado  
**<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/>**
- Social Programs that Work, Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy  
**<http://www.evidencebasedprograms.org/static/index.htm>**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SCHOOL/SERVICE PROVIDER PARTNERSHIP RESULTS**

## START HERE



1. What school district does this survey cover? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In this survey, “**school system**” is used to refer broadly to one or more schools in the school district or the school district itself. Is this school system involved in the Shannon CSI? Please indicate the **one** option that best reflects the school system’s involvement.

**N=29 (71%) Yes (SKIP TO QUESTION 4)**

**N=9 (22%) No attempt was made to involve the school system**

**N=3 (7%) An attempt was made to involve the school system but was unsuccessful**

3. If a relationship between your school system and the Shannon CSI does not exist, please indicate how serious the following challenges were in preventing the involvement of the school system in the Shannon CSI. **After responding to this question, SKIP TO QUESTION 25.**

### PERCENTS BASED ON N=12 COMMUNITIES WITH NO PARTNERSHIP

|                                                                      | Not at all serious | Somewhat serious | Very serious | Unsure      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Privacy concerns                                                     | N=2<br>17%         | --               | N=2<br>17%   | N=8<br>67%  |
| Existing conflicts between schools and Shannon CSI service providers | N=5<br>42%         | --               | N=1<br>8%    | N=6<br>50%  |
| Schools do not think they have a gang problem                        | N=2<br>17%         | --               | N=2<br>17%   | N=8<br>67%  |
| Differences in goals or philosophy concerning working with youth     | N=3<br>25%         | N=1<br>8%        | --           | N=8<br>67%  |
| Insufficient resources                                               | --                 | N=2<br>17%       | --           | N=10<br>83% |
| Lack of buy-in from school officials                                 | N=3<br>25%         | N=1<br>8%        | N=2<br>17%   | N=6<br>50%  |
| Lack of buy-in from teachers                                         | N=2<br>17%         | --               | --           | N=10<br>83% |
| Lack of buy-in from Shannon CSI service providers                    | N=2<br>17%         | N=3<br>25%       | --           | N=7<br>58%  |
| Lack of buy-in from parents                                          | N=4<br>33%         | --               | --           | N=8<br>67%  |

## SECTION 1

### SERVICES, PROVIDERS, AND RECIPIENTS

This section asks you about the types of services offered in partnership with the schools in your jurisdiction and the individuals or organizations providing these services. For this section and subsequent sections, we would like to clarify a few of the terms used frequently on this questionnaire:

“**Service**,” in this context, refers to a broad range of programming provided to students **by Shannon CSI partners** (whether funded or unfunded). Such services may include social, medical, and psychological services, arts-based programming, or recreational activities. Please further note that a Shannon CSI service specifically addresses gang involvement or violence either through the nature of the service itself or because the service is provided to youth identified as at-risk for involvement in gangs or violence or actually involved. For example, while employment services or a basketball league may be available in the schools, we are only interested in the service if it is provided by a Shannon CSI partner for the benefit of students at-risk for involvement in gangs or violence.

“**Shannon CSI service provider**,” in this context, refers to an individual who is not a school employee or an organization other than the school delivering services of the type described above and is involved in a Shannon CSI collaborative.

To reiterate, we are interested specifically in **services provided by Shannon CSI partners**.

**UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED ALL PERCENTS ARE BASED ON N=29 COMMUNITIES WITH PARTNERSHIPS**

4. For each level of school, please indicate whether a partnership with any Shannon CSI services exists, has been attempted but does not currently exist, or has not been attempted. *Check “N/A” if there are no schools at a particular level in the school system.*

|                        | Partnership exists | Partnership has been attempted but does not currently exist | No partnership has been attempted | N/A (no schools at this level) |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| High school            | N=27<br>93%        | --                                                          | N=2<br>7%                         | --                             |
| Middle/Jr. high school | N=24<br>83%        | N=4<br>14%                                                  | --                                | N=1<br>3%                      |
| Elementary school      | N=15<br>52%        | N=1<br>3%                                                   | N=9<br>31%                        | N=1<br>3%                      |
| Technical high school  | N=14<br>48%        | N=2<br>7%                                                   | N=5<br>17%                        | N=6<br>21%                     |
| Alternative school     | N=18<br>62%        | N=3<br>10%                                                  | N=2<br>7%                         | N=3<br>10%                     |

5. Schools may use a formal risk assessment or other standardized criterion to identify students of being at-risk for involvement in gang activity, or actually involved in gang activity. Does your school use a formal risk assessment or other standardized criterion to identify students of being at-risk of involvement in gang activity or actually involved in gang activity?

N=7 (24%) Yes **(Please return a copy of the assessment instrument with this survey)**  
N=22 (76%) No **(Skip to question 7)**

6. Does your school target Shannon CSI services to students who have been formally identified as at-risk for gang involvement or actually gang involved?

**PERCENTS BASED ON N=7 COMMUNITIES WITH FORMAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

N=4 (57%) Yes  
N=3 (43%) No

7. Service providers may deliver services on or off school property. “School-based” refers to services delivered on school grounds. “School-linked” refers to services delivered elsewhere in the community (e.g., student’s home, service provider’s facility) but are still delivered in direct partnership with the school system. Please indicate whether each of the following services delivered by a Shannon CSI service provider is school-based or school-linked **or both**. Check “N/A” if the service is not provided by Shannon CSI service providers.

|                                                                                                                             | <b>School-based</b> | <b>School-linked</b> | <b>N/A</b>  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Gang or violence curricula ( <b>but NOT those delivered by SROs or other law enforcement officers, such as G.R.E.A.T.</b> ) | N=10<br>35%         | N=10<br>35%          | N=12<br>41% |
| Street outreach                                                                                                             | N=9<br>31%          | N=20<br>69%          | N=6<br>21%  |
| Employment services or training                                                                                             | N=8<br>28%          | N=22<br>76%          | N=5<br>17%  |
| Individual case management                                                                                                  | N=7<br>24%          | N=17<br>59%          | N=9<br>31%  |
| Group therapy/sessions                                                                                                      | N=6<br>21%          | N=12<br>41%          | N=13<br>45% |
| Substance abuse counseling                                                                                                  | N=7<br>24%          | N=17<br>59%          | N=10<br>35% |
| Individual counseling                                                                                                       | N=6<br>21%          | N=18<br>62%          | N=9<br>31%  |
| Mentoring                                                                                                                   | N=11<br>38%         | N=18<br>62%          | N=5<br>17%  |
| Crisis intervention                                                                                                         | N=9<br>31%          | N=18<br>62%          | N=7<br>24%  |

|                        |            |             |             |
|------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Recreation programming | N=8<br>28% | N=21<br>72% | N=3<br>10%  |
| Arts-based programming | N=5<br>17% | N=15<br>52% | N=10<br>35% |

8. For each of the following Shannon CSI services, please indicate the **one** response that best approximates how often that service is delivered **on school grounds**. Check “N/A” if the school system does not provide that particular service.

|                                                                                                                                | Daily      | Weekly     | Monthly    | Quarterly | N/A         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Gang or violence curricula<br>(but NOT those delivered<br>by SROs or other law<br>enforcement officers,<br>such as G.R.E.A.T.) | N=3<br>10% | N=6<br>21% | N=1<br>3%  | --        | N=14<br>48% |
| Street outreach                                                                                                                | N=7<br>24% | N=6<br>21% | N=1<br>3%  | --        | N=13<br>45% |
| Employment services or<br>training                                                                                             | N=4<br>14% | N=2<br>7%  | N=5<br>17% | N=2<br>7% | N=13<br>45% |
| Individual case<br>management                                                                                                  | N=4<br>14% | N=4<br>14% | N=2<br>7%  | --        | N=17<br>59% |
| Group therapy/sessions                                                                                                         | --         | N=7<br>24% | N=1<br>3%  | --        | N=19<br>66% |
| Substance abuse<br>counseling                                                                                                  | N=2<br>7%  | N=7<br>24% | N=4<br>14% | N=1<br>3% | N=14<br>48% |
| Individual counseling                                                                                                          | N=5<br>17% | N=7<br>24% | --         | N=1<br>3% | N=15<br>52% |
| Mentoring                                                                                                                      | N=8<br>28% | N=8<br>28% | N=1<br>3%  | --        | N=11<br>38% |
| Crisis intervention                                                                                                            | N=7<br>24% | N=5<br>17% | N=1<br>3%  | N=1<br>3% | N=13<br>45% |
| Recreation programming                                                                                                         | N=6<br>21% | N=8<br>28% | N=2<br>7%  | N=1<br>3% | N=10<br>35% |
| Arts-based programming                                                                                                         | N=2<br>7%  | N=6<br>21% | N=1<br>3%  | N=1<br>3% | N=17<br>59% |

9. For each of the following Shannon CSI services, please indicate the **one** response that best approximates how often that service is delivered **off school grounds** (e.g., student's home, service provider's facility). Check "N/A" if the school system does not provide that particular service.

|                                                                                                                                | Daily       | Weekly      | Monthly    | Quarterly  | N/A         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Gang or violence curricula<br>(but NOT those delivered<br>by SROs or other law<br>enforcement officers,<br>such as G.R.E.A.T.) | N=2<br>7%   | N=6<br>21%  | N=2<br>7%  | N=1<br>3%  | N=15<br>52% |
| Street outreach                                                                                                                | N=9<br>31%  | N=10<br>35% | N=1<br>3%  | --         | N=9<br>31%  |
| Employment services or<br>training                                                                                             | N=5<br>17%  | N=9<br>31%  | N=5<br>17% | N=1<br>3%  | N=8<br>28%  |
| Individual case<br>management                                                                                                  | N=8<br>28%  | N=4<br>14%  | N=3<br>10% | --         | N=13<br>45% |
| Group therapy/sessions                                                                                                         | N=3<br>10%  | N=7<br>24%  | N=2<br>7%  | --         | N=14<br>48% |
| Substance abuse<br>counseling                                                                                                  | N=3<br>10%  | N=10<br>35% | N=3<br>10% | --         | N=11<br>38% |
| Individual counseling                                                                                                          | N=6<br>21%  | N=10<br>35% | --         | --         | N=9<br>31%  |
| Mentoring                                                                                                                      | N=10<br>35% | N=10<br>35% | N=1<br>3%  | --         | N=7<br>24%  |
| Crisis intervention                                                                                                            | N=8<br>28%  | N=5<br>17%  | N=3<br>10% | N=1<br>3%  | N=10<br>35% |
| Recreation programming                                                                                                         | N=9<br>31%  | N=9<br>31%  | N=2<br>7%  | N=1<br>3%  | N=7<br>24%  |
| Arts-based programming                                                                                                         | N=5<br>17%  | N=6<br>21%  | N=1<br>3%  | N=3<br>10% | N=12<br>41% |

10. In this survey, "case management" refers to a team of professionals and/or other individuals who actively coordinate service delivery to students in a school system. Please note that a case management team **is different from** Criminal Justice Roundtables or other groups that focus on prosecution or more suppression-related issues.

Do Shannon CSI school-based or school-linked service providers participate on a case management team that coordinates service delivery to students?

N=17 (59%) No (If no, SKIP TO QUESTION 13)

N=12 (41%) Yes

11. If your school uses individual case management services, please indicate whether each of the following individuals is currently a member of your case management team coordinating service delivery to students. If the individual is a member of the team, also indicate whether that person is a Shannon CSI service provider.

**PERCENTS BASED ON N=12 COMMUNITIES WITH CASE MANAGEMENT TEAMS**

|                                   | <b>Member of team</b> | <b>Shannon CSI service provider</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Licensed social worker            | N=10<br>83%           | N=7<br>58%                          |
| Physician                         | N=2<br>17%            | --                                  |
| Nurse practitioner                | N=3<br>25%            | --                                  |
| Clinical psychologist             | N=4<br>33%            | N=1<br>8%                           |
| Psychiatrist                      | N=2<br>17%            | N=1<br>8%                           |
| Non-clinical therapist/counselor  | N=7<br>58%            | N=6<br>50%                          |
| Mentor                            | N=4<br>33%            | N=4<br>33%                          |
| DCF case worker                   | N=6<br>50%            | N=2<br>17%                          |
| Outreach worker                   | N=8<br>67%            | N=7<br>58%                          |
| Career counselor                  | N=4<br>33%            | N=4<br>33%                          |
| Arts programming provider         | N=4<br>33%            | N=2<br>17%                          |
| Recreational programming provider | N=4<br>33%            | N=2<br>17%                          |
| School administrator              | N=8<br>67%            | <b>SCHOOL<br/>EMPLOYEES</b>         |
| School nurse                      | N=5<br>42%            |                                     |
| Guidance counselor                | N=6<br>50%            |                                     |
| School psychologist               | N=5<br>42%            |                                     |

12. Which member of the case management team is considered the leader?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Does the school system have at least one law enforcement officer based in the schools (e.g., a school resource officer)?

**N=2 (7%) No (If no, SKIP TO QUESTION 15)**

**N=24 (83%) Yes**

14. Please indicate whether each of the following types of interactions take place between Shannon CSI service providers and school-based law enforcement officers (e.g., school resource officers).

**PERCENTS BASED ON N=24 COMMUNITIES WITH AT LEAST ONE OFFICER BASED IN THE SCHOOLS**

| <b>Interaction</b>                                        | <b>YES</b>  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Membership on case management team                        | N=7<br>29%  |
| Regular meetings outside of case management team meetings | N=15<br>63% |
| Informal discussion of students                           | N=23<br>96% |
| Participation on home visits                              | N=16<br>67% |
| Other (please describe): _____                            | N=6<br>25%  |

## SECTION 2

### PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

15. Please indicate the importance of each of the following factors in contributing to the creation of a partnership between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers.

|                                                                                                | Not at all<br>important | Somewhat<br>important | Very<br>important | Unsure     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Shannon CSI service providers were already working with the schools when the Shannon CSI began | N=2<br>7%               | N=7<br>24%            | N=13<br>45%       | N=5<br>17% |
| The Shannon CSI provided needed resources (e.g., funding, service providers in schools)        | N=1<br>3%               | N=8<br>28%            | N=17<br>59%       | N=1<br>3%  |
| Occurrence of a specific gang or violence-related incident sparked interest                    | N=6<br>21%              | N=6<br>21%            | N=11<br>38%       | N=4<br>14% |
| Community activism                                                                             | N=2<br>7%               | N=9<br>31%            | N=15<br>52%       | N=1<br>3%  |
| General behavior issues demonstrated by students (e.g., fights, bullying)                      | N=2<br>7%               | N=5<br>17%            | N=19<br>66%       | N=1<br>3%  |

16. Please indicate whether each of the following strategies was used to foster partnerships between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers.

| Strategy                                                                                                            | YES         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Established formalized partnerships through (e.g., MOU) between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers | N=18<br>62% |
| Included teachers in developing school policy concerning student involvement in gangs or violence                   | N=8<br>28%  |
| Organized retreats for school and Shannon CSI service providers                                                     | N=7<br>24%  |
| Provided opportunities for personal interaction between school employees and Shannon CSI service providers          | N=26<br>90% |
| Invited school officials to Shannon CSI steering committee meetings                                                 | N=22<br>76% |
| Invited teachers to Shannon CSI steering committee meetings                                                         | N=8<br>28%  |
| Co-developed violence prevention lessons in classroom curricula                                                     | N=9<br>31%  |
| Included Shannon CSI service providers in school meetings                                                           | N=21<br>72% |

17. How do you think Shannon CSI service providers and services could be better integrated into the schools?
18. For each of the following topics, please indicate whether training is offered by Shannon CSI service providers for school employees.

| Topic                                                                     | YES         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Identifying signs of gang involvement                                     | N=16<br>55% |
| Violence prevention                                                       | N=18<br>62% |
| Referral of at-risk students                                              | N=21<br>72% |
| Conflict resolution                                                       | N=18<br>62% |
| Responding to students who provide information on a threatening situation | N=17<br>59% |
| Communicating with at-risk or gang-involved students                      | N=16<br>55% |
| Bullying prevention/intervention                                          | N=18<br>62% |

19. For each level of school, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: **“The partnership between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers has been effective in reducing gang activity in the school system.”** Check “N/A” if there are no schools at a particular level in the school system.

|                        | Strongly agree | Agree       | Disagree   | Strongly disagree | Unsure     | N/A         |
|------------------------|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| High school            | N=9<br>31%     | N=14<br>48% | N=1<br>3%  | --                | N=5<br>17% | --          |
| Middle/Jr. high school | N=9<br>31%     | N=12<br>41% | N=3<br>10% | --                | N=4<br>14% | N=1<br>3%   |
| Elementary school      | N=5<br>17%     | N=12<br>41% | N=1<br>3%  | --                | N=4<br>14% | N=6<br>21%  |
| Technical school       | N=3<br>10%     | N=11<br>38% | N=2<br>7%  | --                | N=2<br>7%  | N=11<br>38% |
| Alternative school     | N=8<br>28%     | N=10<br>35% | N=1<br>3%  | --                | N=3<br>10% | N=6<br>21%  |

20. Please indicate the importance each of the following goals is to the Shannon CSI partnership with the school system.

|                                                                               | Not at all<br>important | Somewhat<br>important | Very<br>important | Unsure    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Reducing gang recruitment in the schools                                      | --                      | N=2<br>7%             | N=25<br>86%       | N=1<br>3% |
| Reducing classroom disruption caused by students who are gang members         | N=1<br>3%               | N=8<br>28%            | N=17<br>59%       | N=2<br>7% |
| Decreasing bullying by gang members in the schools                            | --                      | N=3<br>10%            | N=25<br>86%       | --        |
| Lowering truancy rates                                                        | N=1<br>3%               | N=5<br>17%            | N=21<br>72%       | N=1<br>3% |
| Increasing students' willingness to report threats or dangerous situations    | --                      | N=6<br>21%            | N=22<br>76%       | --        |
| Improving the response to students who report threats or dangerous situations | N=1<br>3%               | N=4<br>14%            | N=23<br>79%       | --        |
| Reducing gang-related fights in the schools                                   | N=1<br>3%               | N=2<br>7%             | N=25<br>86%       | --        |

21. In your opinion, which of the following changes has taken place since the school system and Shannon CSI service providers established their partnership?

| Change                                                                       | YES         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Reduced gang recruitment in the schools                                      | N=18<br>62% |
| Reduced classroom disruption caused by students who are gang members         | N=16<br>55% |
| Decreased bullying by gang members in the schools                            | N=19<br>66% |
| Lowered truancy rates                                                        | N=14<br>48% |
| Increased student willingness to report threats or dangerous situations      | N=18<br>62% |
| Improved the response to students who report threats or dangerous situations | N=23<br>79% |
| Reduced gang-related fights in the schools                                   | N=19<br>66% |

22. Please indicate how serious each of the following challenges has been to establishing, maintaining, or further developing partnerships between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers.

|                                                                      | <b>Not at all serious</b> | <b>Somewhat serious</b> | <b>Very serious</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Privacy concerns related to student information                      | N=7<br>24%                | N=10<br>35%             | N=8<br>28%          | N=4<br>14%    |
| Existing conflicts between schools and Shannon CSI service providers | N=20<br>69%               | N=4<br>14%              | N=2<br>7%           | N=3<br>10%    |
| Schools do not think they have a gang problem                        | N=19<br>66%               | N=5<br>17%              | N=3<br>10%          | N=2<br>7%     |
| Poor coordination of services                                        | N=15<br>52%               | N=9<br>31%              | N=3<br>10%          | N=2<br>7%     |
| Differences in goals or philosophy concerning working with youth     | N=15<br>52%               | N=7<br>24%              | N=4<br>14%          | N=2<br>7%     |
| Insufficient integration of services into schools                    | N=7<br>24%                | N=11<br>38%             | N=6<br>21%          | N=3<br>10%    |
| Insufficient resources                                               | N=5<br>17%                | N=9<br>31%              | N=13<br>45%         | N=1<br>3%     |
| Lack of buy-in from school officials                                 | N=16<br>55%               | N=9<br>31%              | N=4<br>14%          | --            |
| Lack of buy-in from teachers                                         | N=14<br>48%               | N=9<br>31%              | N=5<br>17%          | N=1<br>3%     |
| Lack of buy-in from Shannon CSI service providers                    | N=23<br>79%               | N=4<br>14%              | N=2<br>7%           | --            |
| Lack of buy-in from parents                                          | N=8<br>28%                | N=10<br>35%             | N=5<br>17%          | N=5<br>17%    |

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SELECTED COMMENTS TO SURVEY QUESTIONS.**

**Q. How do you think Shannon CSI service providers could be better integrated into the schools?**

- A. By being invited to the table to discuss together how both sides can effectively work together—what services should be provided in the schools, in the community, how do we identify gaps, how do we meet gaps, what each side can do to support the other.
- A. Clear and defined lines of proposed services need to be agreed upon. Each party needs to be aware of the obligations, regulations, supports and services of each other. Each party needs to be held accountable to track the success or lack of success and follow-up. Just as important, the identified youth need to be properly assessed first to receive appropriate services; i.e., remedial support, MCAS prep, tutoring, counseling, anger management, etc. Communication needs to open and clear. More participation from the school counselors, crisis counselors, housemasters and teachers would impact the success that identified programs have on the youth receiving services. It would also strengthen relationships between students and school personnel.
- A. Shannon partners who are currently integrated into the schools continue to expand the integration of services by other service providers when there is an identified need.
- A. More frequent proactive planning meetings with a formal schedule.
- A. We would like to see service providers facilitate more workshops and have a stronger relationship with school disciplinary staff.
- A. School officials have recently included Shannon program coordinator with city-wide public forums addressing violence in schools. These are evening sessions held in middle schools with parents attending.

**Q. Thinking about the challenges experienced when establishing or developing partnerships between the school system and Shannon CSI service providers, what steps did you take to overcome these challenges?**

- A. At the inception of the program a partnership was not in place, however, as the number of youth violence incidents/gang incidents in school(s) was documented it became increasingly clear that a partnership was needed.
- A. Challenges continue to be addressed by meeting with the school leadership. We are working on building the relationship between service providers and the schools slowly to build trust and buy-in.
- A. Reached out to school staff and asked one from each school (middle + high school) to serve on our Board of Directors.
- A. The steering committee and members of the partnership continue to build communication systems and use meetings to coordinate services and inform one another of initiatives to support the collective efforts of the partnership. Continued education of youth and the community through quarterly community forums built upon the service providers support

networks and effectiveness of community-based initiatives. Parental outreach is a part of the initiative activities but need further attention to build a broader base of interaction.

**Q. Other comments.**

- A. Developing relationships and being willing to learn from the school staff their perception of their issues is key. Schools are often caught in a political web and even top administrators don't have authority to begin new initiatives on their own.
- A. It's hard work. There are so many different agendas and personalities notwithstanding the politics. But, I think a well thought out business plan of action speaks volumes to the success of said programs. A meeting of minds on what is best and the best course to get there is also fundamental. Being visible and creating new relationships also impacts success. Promoting education as a fundamental achievement to success has to be the common, consistent message heard from all. What can you suggest? How can I strengthen my relationship with the schools? Where do you see gaps? How do we encourage the youth to pursue their educational goals? What do we address first: economics, homelessness, mental health, drugs, and violence/safety?
- A. The role of service providers working with school staff in addressing certain issues such as gang involvement is critical in providing a safe environment for the education of the students. The ability of school staff to utilize the resources of service providers enhances their capability to focus on teaching their students and not be consumed by the extraneous problems posed by students which limits the opportunity to receive appropriate time for their education.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL/SHANNON CSI SERVICE PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS**

Following analysis of the survey, Northeastern and EOPSS conducted in-depth interviews to examine school/service provider partnerships within three sites in more detail. The sites—Brockton, Fitchburg, and Haverhill—were selected based on information provided in quarterly progress reports to EOPSS as well as their survey responses. The insights gathered from these interviews helped inform this resource guide. In this appendix, a brief case study for each of the three communities is provided.

## **BROCKTON PARTNERSHIP (FORMAL ASSESSMENT TOOL)**

### **Origins of school partnerships with service providers**

In the late 1990s, leaders in Brockton from a variety of youth-serving organizations saw the need for a collaborative approach to youth services. They started a coalition called the Blueprints Coalition, which convenes on a regular basis to this day. It includes the Brockton Public Schools, leading state social service agencies (e.g., Dept. of Children and Families, and Dept. of Youth Services, and others), Massasoit Community College, the Police Department, the District Attorney's office, and the Mayor's Office.

One of coalition's major recent initiatives has been a dropout prevention project. Brockton received a two-year U.S. Department of Labor "Multiple Educational Pathways Blueprints" planning grant in FY08 for that work. The purpose of the grant was to create a community plan (through a community task force) for tackling all aspects of dropout prevention, from the creation of new pathways for older teens to the development of an early warning system for identifying students at risk of dropping out later in their school career. This early warning system has shed light on the connection between dropping out and gang involvement and offers a powerful new tool for diverting youth toward positive behaviors and away from gangs.

### **Development of Shannon CSI partnership with schools**

Prior to the inception of the Shannon CSI grant initiative, Brockton had identified as one of its goals interventions for middle and high school students to provide dropout prevention programming. For the Shannon CSI, Brockton focused primarily on eighth and ninth grade students, the grade levels Brockton identified as key to keeping students in school and out of gangs. Shannon CSI resources, in combination with the Department of Labor funds, were used to fund a school-based liaison to refer students to Shannon CSI programming.

Concurrently, the Brockton dropout prevention task force continued to develop new dropout prevention services, such as mentoring programs, additional academic supports, and improved record systems to alert key staff of the status of youth at risk. Using the Department of Labor grant and local resources, Brockton Public Schools developed a research-based early identification software system that could objectively identify students who were struggling academically or behaviorally. It hired teams of guidance counselors and school staff (one for middle and one for high school) to analyze these lists and to develop and improve this new system.

The software system, referred to as the Warning and Intervention Student List (WISL), was first piloted in the spring of 2008. It is an objective assessment system and uses indicators stored in student records concerning truancy, poor grades, and behavioral problems to identify students in need of services. After further study during FY09, it is now planned that twice a year, at the end of each semester, WISL will be applied to student records in various grades, including eighth and ninth grade students. Those who have attendance lower than 85%, two or more grades of "D+" or worse in core subjects, and/or two or more suspensions will be flagged by the system. An alert is created if one or more of these criteria is met<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Out of the 1,200 eighth grade students screened in the spring of 2008, about 400 students were identified as at-risk, with about half of that group showing poor academic performance alone. The remaining 200 showed various combinations of indicators. Twenty-two students had all three characteristics (the so-called "triple hitters").

## Role of the school partnership with Shannon CSI service providers

Once the WISL reports are generated, the dropout prevention teams, consisting of the Shannon CSI prevention coordinator, guidance counselors, and other staff members, review the lists to select students for whom appropriate services are available. If an alert for poor grades is the only indicator, a student is likely referred to non-Shannon CSI mentoring or tutoring services. If there are behavioral or attendance issues plus additional evidence of gang involvement or the risk of gang involvement, the student may be referred to MY TURN<sup>12</sup>, the primary Shannon CSI partner and sole point of intake for Shannon CSI services. At MY TURN or other Shannon CSI service agencies, youth are offered case management services with a “wraparound” approach, including involvement of parents and other family members.

As would be expected of any computer-generated list, the WISL does not capture all students that might be students at risk for dropping out or becoming gang-involved, so school staff and the prevention teams can also make referrals based on their daily interactions with students. When a student is referred for Shannon CSI services, parents receive a letter that provides them with information about the program and asks for their consent. If the consent form is signed, the referred youth meets with MY TURN staff to start the intake process, leading to the identification of appropriate services for the youth and family and referrals to appropriate services.

## Challenges

- **Privacy concerns.** Maintaining privacy protections is a significant challenge with federal law protecting student information. The partnership is addressing this through the use of universal release forms parents can sign to allow student information to be shared among partner agencies.
- **Limited resources.** There are insufficient resources to immediately assist all students identified for Shannon CSI services. Some of the youth referred must go on a waiting list. Additional resources would also allow the partners to enhance their efforts by introducing more tutoring and home visits as well as hiring paid dedicated staff.
- **Negative perceptions of disruptive students.** Project partners have observed that some teachers are less patient with disruptive students and less eager to be involved in providing assistance. Community members have also been slow to find resources for these youth.
- **Narrow view of dropout prevention.** Some people perceive dropout prevention narrowly as a school problem rather than a challenge for the whole community, a myth that the partners are seeking to dispel.

## Outcomes/Successes

The Brockton partnership sees the dropout prevention teams and WISL as a promising<sup>13</sup> formal assessment process for identifying students, who are at risk for dropping out or becoming gang-involved. By using the early identification system and dropout prevention teams, these

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<sup>12</sup> Approximately 100 youth are referred from Shannon CSI partners to MyTurn for case management and wraparound services – 50 from Brockton public schools and 50 from other Shannon CSI partners.

<sup>13</sup> Because the WISL referral process began at the end of 2008, no outcome data have been analyzed to date. The Brockton local action research partner will be working with the incoming information.

high-risk students can be referred and connected to community dropout prevention programs, where they can receive case management and wraparound services. Brockton hopes to expand amount of services that can be offered and the number of partnering service agencies, to be able to serve all the youth identified, and to further connect these students to their school and their community.

## **FITCHBURG PARTNERSHIP (SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM)**

### **Origins of school partnership with service providers**

The partnership between the Fitchburg schools and service providers began in 2005 after a systems-thinking training coordinated for all drug and gang task force members identified race and poverty as key drivers of youth gang formation. Initiated by the former police chief and staff from the Partnership for Latino Success, a group was formed to articulate an active community policing strategy, focus on youth violence prevention, improve academic performance, and identify alternatives to out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Both sides were instrumental in getting service provider programs into the schools through the implementation of restorative justice pilots. Initially, it was challenging to build relationships with the schools and the main goal was simply to see eye-to-eye on the big picture. Partnership for Latino Success staff also had met many of the students during their work on gang prevention and other related activities.

### **Development of Shannon CSI partnership in schools: restorative justice circles**

The implementation of the Shannon CSI provided additional structure and funding to the existing partnership. Shannon CSI service providers focused on working with the schools to engage young people in positive ways and adopt different strategies for dealing with student behavioral problems than suspension or expulsion. Early in the process, a speaker series on organizational systems was offered to a wide variety of stakeholders, including school staff, police, service providers, and community members. These stakeholders identified restorative justice as an important issue and led to the development of restorative justice circles in the Fitchburg middle schools to which students with behavioral problems are referred.

Restorative justice circles are conducted in two middle schools in Fitchburg. In one school, an outreach coordinator who has developed relationships with the school staff, community organizations, and youth, refers students to the restorative justice circle. In the other school, guidance counselors identify students that have had behavior challenges and assign the students to the circle. Neither school uses an objective formal assessment tool to identify students.

The restorative justice circles provide a way for students to discuss their problems and develop more productive strategies for dealing with them. They are voluntary for students and are offered during the “X” block time period usually occupied by a study hall or gym class. Restorative justice circle facilitators are at the schools several days a week and work to build relationships with students as well as conduct the circles. Through consistent contact with the schools, facilitators often are able to spend time building relationships with students prior to getting students to attend circles to which they have been referred. By doing so and demystifying the restorative justice circles, students are more likely to participate.

### **Challenges**

- **Negative perceptions.** It is the perception of some students of color that a small number of their instructors hold negative stereotypes of youth of color. Students with this perception maintain that those teachers treat them as if they are not interested in obtaining an education. These perceptions have largely been addressed as a result of facilitators continuing to speak with teachers and talk about cultural differences. Additionally, teachers have noticed that the behavior of students that regularly attend the circle program improving over time.

- **Integrating restorative justice.** Integrating restorative justice into the operation of the schools and classroom curriculum has been challenging because restorative justice practices require a large investment of time, as well as staff capacity. However, school officials, including some principals, have been very supportive of program efforts. One principal made professional development training provided by project partners mandatory for teachers.
- **Establishing a relationship with the high school.** Initial efforts to involve the high school were unsuccessful. Future efforts are likely to be more successful, as one of the middle school guidance counselors supportive of the initiative is moving to the high school. Currently, although the Shannon CSI has contact with high school-age youth through out-of-school activities, the progress students made in middle school fades as students begin to disconnect again at the high school level.
- **Assessing individual students' progress.** There are no individual student assessments while the students are in the circle program as circle facilitators and school administrators review larger picture issues and goals. However, outreach workers do complete individual assessments, referred to as Youth Leadership Plans (YLP). The YLPs help track each student's thinking about their personal growth and educational goals. The conversations that outreach workers have with student while in circle also help with making ongoing assessments.

### **Outcomes/Successes**

The outcome mentioned most frequently is how the partnership benefited from the speaker series with community stakeholders and built lasting and trusting relationships. By including members from all walks of life, partnerships were more quickly and easily formed.

Anecdotally, the facilitators report reductions in suspensions for circle participants. Following home visits, some parents have taken to contacting the facilitators first when they have a need to contact their child's school. Parents are using the trusting relationship with the facilitators to get answers to questions they may have for school administrators. Project partners attributed this partly to the cultural and language barriers parents may face.

The local action research partner evaluated the circles and found that participants build a positive connection to their peers and to the school. However, they found the program can benefit by bringing teachers and other school staff into the program, which might help students feel closer to school personnel.

## **HAVERHILL PARTNERSHIP (SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM)**

### **Origins of school partnerships with service providers**

The Haverhill Community Violence Prevention Coalition (HCVC, Inc.) began its collaboration with the Haverhill Public Schools ten years ago as a result of grant funding to address teen pregnancy, battering during pregnancy, and domestic violence. Building a community-wide coalition to address violence evolved out of a federally-funded five-year project on abuse during pregnancy. After two years of work in a small coalition partnering the visiting nurse association, police department, and two universities, this core group widened the circle to include agencies and institutions concerned with violence in the larger community. This larger community coalition now involves thirty different agencies and institutions across Haverhill. Through the years, this coalition has evolved through community input and needs and grant funding resources.

### **Development of Shannon CSI partnerships with schools**

When Shannon CSI resources became available, the Haverhill Shannon CSI leadership team thought that the Haverhill school partnership with HCVC would be a natural fit to address youth violence and gang involvement. The coalition wanted to use the partnership to focus on the issues of fighting, teen violence, bullying, and dropout prevention. A key component of the initiatives was to ensure the programs were youth-driven so students would assume ownership and direction for their own actions and those of their peers. This initiative, called the Violence Intervention Prevention (VIP) Team, is open to all students but strives to recruit the most at-risk or gang-involved students in and outside of school. During the first year of the Shannon CSI, the HCVC and Haverhill Public Schools placed a VIP team in the high school. During year two, a Jr. VIP team was established in one middle school. Now, in the third year of Shannon CSI funding, the program has expanded to all four middle schools and the high school and has assisted their community partner in Methuen to develop a youth-driven violence prevention team known as Methuen Violence Prevention. The hope is to expand to younger students.

### **Role of school partnership with Shannon CSI service providers**

Students are referred to the VIP teams through a variety of sources. These include the in-school suspension program, self-referral, DYS input, and referrals by other students, SROs, teachers, and school administrators. The typical risk factors that the coalition and school personnel use to determine whether a student may be gang involved or in need of services are academic failure, bonding issues with the school, family, or community, disruptive or isolated behavior, and disruptive friends and associations. The coalition has developed a formal referral form that was to be used during the 2008-2009 school year, but final changes and implementation of the form was not completed. The coalition continues to work on this form and hopes to implement it in the 2009-2010 school year. The partnership teams at each level are:

- **High school level.** Involves an outreach specialist, VIP advisors, fifty students in the VIP Program, communication with school nurses about the coalition's activity, and violence prevention programming in the health class curriculum.
- **Middle school level.** Involves an outreach specialist, high school VIP Team leaders, eighty students in the Jr. VIP Program (up from sixty in the previous year), and behavioral issues and violence prevention included as part of the health class curriculum.

- **Alternative school level.** Youth leaders deliver a health presentation on violence and healthy relationships about once a quarter.
- **Out-of-school.** HCVC and the VIP Team partner with the YMCA and their teen center to offer mentoring services, community service, and teen nights.

The VIP program requires students to adhere to academic, attendance, and behavior guidelines and to be peer leaders by sharing their experiences and conflict resolution training in the VIP program with their peers. Core requirements are provided to the students during the initial orientation into the program using ice breakers as a tool to get students comfortable with each other and with the program's expectations. Subsequent meetings consist of interactive and cooperative activities, violence prevention trainings, and leadership development. The Jr. VIP meetings are very topic specific throughout each of the four schools. All of the schools work from the same list of topics but allow students the flexibility to create their own activities to deliver the topic content to the rest of the school. Previous topics have included: leadership skills, bullying, conflict resolution, healthy relationships and dating violence, and gang affiliation and gang violence.

### Challenges

- **Identification of student needs.** As there is no formal referral process, identification of specific students needs is limited. The formal assessment referral form continues to be edited and is hoped to be in place for the 2009-2010 school year.
- **Data collection.** At the inception of the program, there was some concern by faculty about the need for this program because of a lack of data collection about gang activity in Haverhill. Through student surveys in school, increased sharing of information, and programmatic success, faculty and staff have bought in to the programmatic model.
- **Parental involvement.** Increasing parental involvement has been a challenge thus far. Efforts have been made to increase one-on-one family contact with the outreach specialist, but the main connection continues via student initiative. To address this problem, the partnership is calling parents, inviting parents to meetings, and providing services for parents in need.
- **Reaching dropouts.** There is currently no formal mechanism to identify and reach someone after dropping out. The coalition would like to implement more outreach to youth who have dropped out or are on the verge of doing so.
- **Building new relationships.** HCVC has had difficulties getting VIP programs into Methuen as they do not have persons already connected with the school. The coalition is working to train staff with the goals of getting VIP programs in Methuen in the near future.
- **Limited resources.** With additional funding, the partnership would like to increase attention to community-based outreach, especially during the summer, and provide more slots for the alternative school program.

### Outcomes/Successes

The coalition reports the most successful element of the program is the youth-led efforts. Topics are targeted to situations as they occur in school and often strike a nerve with students wishing to address them school-wide. The trained and motivated youth leaders typically feel an

ownership of the VIP programs, and their ability to provide positive peer pressure has led to the program increasing in popularity with students.

There are anecdotal reports of several positive outcomes: fewer fights in the high school, improved school behavior, parental reports of improved behavior at home, student self-reports that they are using skills taught in the program, demonstrated positive peer pressure, fewer classroom disturbances, and more instances of students helping to deescalate potentially disruptive situations. The Haverhill local action research partner is also conducting ongoing quantitative and qualitative studies and has reported several successful comparison results between VIP students and the entire student population.

The coalition adds that Shannon CSI funding has been very helpful by bringing more visibility to the effectiveness of violence prevention efforts in Haverhill and Methuen, specifically through the ability to hire an outreach specialist. The outreach specialist builds mentoring relationships with at-risk youth, serves as a positive role model, and makes appropriate referrals as needed. Besides the outreach specialist, the ability and continued commitment of the HCVC leadership team to adapt to current issues has been integral to programmatic success. Lastly, the coalition noted the importance of buy-in from the school superintendent to clear the obstacles of securing a room in the schools for the VIP Team and after-school center and keeping the process moving forward. The support of the school administration has provided the opportunity for students to earn school credit for mentoring and violence prevention work after their second year in the program. The school received commendation by the visiting New England Association of Schools and Colleges assessment team during last year's accreditation for the positive impact of the VIP Team on school culture.