

5-2023

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At-risk Youth Community Engagement Valley Health Associates

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Abstract

Valley Health Associates is a non-profit organization specializing in substance abuse and recovery all across Monterey and San Benito County. The community served its youth ranging from ages twelve through seventeen. The Youth Outpatient Treatment program serves transitional youth from eighteen through twenty-four years old. Project implementation will be providing outreach fliers along with information about VHA. The purpose of this project is to spread awareness to get others involved. The problem of substance abuse comes from all ages, and younger lives are being affected without any knowledge. My method of outreach for VHA was professional communication. It was developed by speaking with local at-risk youth programs and alternative education schools. Knowledge in health and human services to create a partnership to gain intake referrals. The most important findings of this project include that not many agencies can connect with local non-profit organizations such as myself. What VHA can do to address the problem of opioid addiction is to continue pursuing awareness and outreach to our local community.

Keywords: *Opioids* a substance with high potency that is prescribed or brought illegally
Harm causes physical or physiological harm fear or distress
Overdose a dangerous consumption of a drug causing fatality
Substance abuse unable to stop using a drug or alcohol
Fentanyl synthetic opioid chemically made

Agency and Communities Served

Valley Health Associates is a non-profit organization located in Salinas, California. The agency's mission is to help support those who struggle with substance or opioid abuse. VHA serves a wide variety of clients ranging from youth to adults within the county of Monterey and San Benito. The community served its youth ranging from ages twelve through seventeen. They also include transitional youth from eighteen through twenty-four years old including adults from any other age group. The VHA services include the following programs; Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT), Adult Outpatient Treatment Program, and Youth Outpatient Treatment program. Each program supports clients with education on substance abuse, and codependent on addiction. Instead VHA, educates on healthy ways and other positive alternatives to cope with their dependence mechanisms. The MAT Program provides services for Valley Health associates clients by offering withdrawal management, opioid dependence medication, physician exams, behavioral health assessments, treatment planning, and drug testing. (Valley Health Associates, 2019) The Youth Outpatient Program offers relapse prevention, support groups, case management services that help access educational, social, prevocational, and rehabilitative referrals to other community services. The reason why the Youth Outpatient Program was established is to prevent any opioid substance abuse along with

any associated hazards that are life threatening for clients served. Also, to help provide awareness to the community on long term effects of opioid substance abuse. Valley Health Associates Youth Outpatient Program offers the option of MAT program with all of the services offered, including self-management strategies and community resources to support life improvement, such as connecting with other community organizations.

Social Problem

The social problem identified is the opioid epidemic crisis with substance abuse being an alarming issue affecting many young adults and their families. Opioids range from oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, heroine, and synthetic fentanyl. The reason opioids are affecting many young adults severely is the consequences are harmful and mortal. To further demonstrate, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) indicated that:

”opioid-related overdose deaths in California's youth ages 10-19 years increased from 2018 (54 total) to 2020 (274 total), marking a 407 percent increase over two years, largely driven by fentanyl. Fentanyl-related overdose deaths in California's youth ages 10-19 years increased from 2018 (36 total) to 2020 (261 total), a 625 percent increase”
(Rainbow Fentanyl alert,2022).

The social problem of opioid chemical dependency is lethal especially among young adults and teenagers. The numbers are on the rise and increasing every year among adolescents it is alarming for parents and guardians.

The social problem also creates a high impact on Monterey County adolescence and their families, causing life-threatening and destructive effects without intervention. The ongoing opioid crisis is a social problem to be well informed about especially with the fatalities it has caused recently. According to Valley Health Associates website , Monterey County opioid

overdoses have drastically increased more than tripled this year compared to 2018. (Valley Health Associates, 2019). Fentanyl is an opioid drug that is 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more than heroin.(United States Drug Enforcement Administration, 2023). It is one of the cheapest drugs on the market according to the DEA and street dealers are able to buy it. Unfortunately, these opioids sold on the streets are laced with Fentanyl causing deadly harm. The social problem of opioid epidemic abuse is ongoing among young adults and adolescents.

Figure 1: Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Family dynamics	Opioid epidemic abuse has become an ongoing issue affecting many young adults and their families.	Chemical dependency
Peers who are using		Overdose (deadly)
Child abuse		Juvenile Delinquency

Contributing factors

Family dynamics

Promptly human nature and interactions with others including family members, parents, and siblings impact the dynamics of family. The structural components on interactions between Family dynamics create an impact on the social problem of opioid epidemic abuse between youth and adolescence by their upbringings. A recent study showed that opioid overdose deaths and opioid prescription rates predicted more births among unmarried women, but not among their married counterparts, between 2000 and 2016 (Caudillo and Villarreal 2021). To justify family dynamics that create opioid/substance addiction are components such as who is a part of their family and role. By having these unstable environments risks are greater for behaviors that

pressure adolescents into substance abuse and immediate danger for trouble having no stability at home from one parent household. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) examined 1 in 8 children (8.7 million) aged 17 or younger who lived in households with at least one parent who had a past year substance use disorder (SUD). Children who are exposed to a parent with SUDs are more likely to develop SUD symptoms themselves. (Lipari & Van Horn, 2017) Family dynamics is extremely important; it is a contributing factor to the social problem of opioid epidemic abuse.

Peers Using

Another contributing factor to youth/adolescence abusing opioids is having relationships with peers who use drugs. When youth engage in those types of relationships, risky behaviors start occurring along with harsh consequences associated. Unfortunately, peers who use opioids get involved in criminal and violent behaviors. These specific peers do not carry a good influence upon other children or youth. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) illustrates, "risk factors for youth high-risk substance use can include: Association with delinquent or substance using peers." (High Risk Substance Use in Youth, 2022) These types of relationships without any substantial parental supervision, lead to the risks of opioid consumption and trouble with the law. Peers using harmful substances such as opioids is linked to a consequence for abuse. The U.S Department of Justice research between the correlation in juvenile delinquency, juvenile drug abuse, and juvenile gangs has produced various deviant or risk-taking behaviors in adolescence. Author(s) J A Pollard; G Austin. Without a doubt being around this type of environment chances become higher to engage in risky behaviors that can lead to substance abuse. By having peers who use an at-risk category, chances of using are severely high.

Child abuse

Another key factor would be child abuse trauma from the past; it contributes to adolescent/youth making poor choices and using substances. The contributing reason is that it affects their emotional well-being, feeling pressured to engage in risky behaviors. "Childhood maltreatment, including physical abuse and neglect, has been linked to increased risk for adolescent substance use". Yoon, S., Kobulsky, J. M., Yoon, D., & Kim, W. (2017). The cause of the social problem being addressed is child abuse trauma. "One study reporting 29% of children who experienced maltreatment participating in some level of substance use and another reporting 16% of maltreated children abusing substances". Yoon, S., Kobulsky, J. M., Yoon, D., & Kim, W. (2017) Child abuse maltreatment is linked to substance abuse from their parents or guardian and can have severe consequences. When adolescents/youth are experiencing home related issues with their caretaker. Childhood problems are chemical dependency issues that have long term sequential effects.

Consequences

Chemical Dependency

The consequences of opioid usage are becoming chemically dependent on using the specific drug of choice. The term chemical dependency comes from having the urge to use a drug of choice and inability to stop using it despite all the problems caused by usage and consumption. Also, the brain physiologically wants the rush of having drugs of choice and will do what it takes to gain the "high" rush. According to *Stanford Medicine for Children's Health* the use for continuous substance abuse causes a significant problem in daily functioning activities. Stanford Medicine clearly states that, "Signs include an increased tolerance or need for increased amounts of a substance to attain the desired effect, withdrawal symptoms with decreased use,

unsuccessful efforts to decrease use, increased time spent in activities to obtain substances, withdrawal from social and recreational activities, and continued use of a substance even with awareness of physical or psychological problems.” Brains of young adolescence are not fully developed therefore when taking these opioids it is impacting their psychiatric health and wellbeing. The following consequences to chemical dependency are “Approximately 2.9 million Californians (9%) age 12 and older had a substance use disorder in the past year.”(*Substance Use Disorder - California Health Care Foundation*) On average that shows an increase in youth battling with the inability to substance chemical dependency control. It is hard to maintain chemical dependency under controlled conditions that is why many youth are struggling with consequences of substance abuse.

Overdose

An extremely harmful consequence of opioid substance abuse is overdose which indicates an accidental/unintentional death that only occurs under the influence of substances. Addressing the social problem of the opioid crisis affecting the lives of many youth The California Department of Education noted, California faces a rapidly growing epidemic affecting youth and adults that predates COVID-19 by nearly a decade. “In 2012, California suffered 82 tragic deaths attributed to fentanyl overdoses, and last year that number jumped to more than 6,000. Fentanyl deaths accounted for more than 80 percent of all drug-related deaths among California’s young people in 2021.” (Addressing the fentanyl crisis among California Youth) It is clear what the deadly consequences of consuming opioids has caused especially within the school systems in the tragic death of their students. Not only do they acknowledge the lethal effects of opioids but understand the consequences of overdose. In addition, before teens would purchase other illesic drugs such as Xanax pills, Adderall, OxyContin, and Percocet but now

many of these are fake pills mixed with a synthetic drug Fentanyl. It is more potent than heroin and morphine combined. It is odorless and has no taste. Teens now never know what they are getting themselves into or if it is laced with Fentanyl. It kills instantly from the overdose.

(Addressing the Fentanyl Crisis Among California Youth) The long term consequences are extremely dangerous and result in the death of many young adults in our surrounding communities.

Juvenile Delinquency

Chemical dependency leads to long term negative effects such as engaging in juvenile delinquency and risky behaviors to sustain substance use dependency. Especially for youth under the age of 18 they do not have a job to provide for their drug use. Risky behaviors to provide for such drugs are more likely and committing crimes. As the Child Crime Prevention and Safety Center demonstrates, “Research has shown a correlation between teen and criminality and substance abuse. 44 percent of minors arrested for burglary claimed to commit their crime in order to buy drugs.” *(Juvenile Crime and Substance Abuse)* Based on the information carried by research shows that youth who struggle with substance abuse are exposed to higher crime rate engagement. Summarizing the contributing factors to deviant peer relationships such as local street gangs or criminal organizations that recruit young adolescents to commit crime in exchange for drugs and illegal activity. As exhibited, the Office Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention declares that, “In addition, youth gang members actively engage in drug use, drug trafficking, and violent crime. Most gang members have engaged in illegal activities that generally include violence before they join gangs.” (Author(s) James C. Howell; Scott H. Decker, *Youth Gangs, Drugs, and Violence Connection*) Juvenile delinquency

and crime leads to becoming part of the Juvenile Justice system and becoming incarcerated those are consequences of substance abuse.

Project Description and Justification

The project will be to provide local at-risk youth programs and alternative educational schools with the necessary resources to inform themselves about Valley Health Associates. It will be giving an introductory about the programs offered along with an outreach flier.

The reason why I am doing this is to provide direct outreach to at-risk populations to spread awareness within the community. By reaching out to the local community at risk programs it provides a demographic to help a specific population that will need Valley Health Associates services. The overall project is to help provide outreach and gain client interaction.

Outreach for Youth Outpatient Chemical Dependency Program with Youth At-risk.

The project will provide outreach by collaborating with local community schools such as: Silver Star Alternative Education, El Puente Alternative Education, and MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education). In addition, to be in contact with at-risk youth programs such as Community Partnerships for Youth, Partners for Peace, and Rancho Cielo. Outreach will be done by providing specific information that will be a flier containing a Quick Response (QR) code that will instantly scan youth outpatient treatment program content to engage in services. I will be responsible for conducting professional outreach to our schools and at-risk youth programs by developing a Youth Program flier with a virtual QR code that goes directly to the Valley Health Associates' website Youth Outpatient Treatment portal.

The key component of this project will be to create outreach by providing VHA content for others to engage at their fingertips such as teachers, staff, students, and community members.

For example, the program designed flier will have background information about the program, a

printable bilingual brochure, a referral form to request professional services, and the ability to request an appointment that day, giving the consumer the ability to access information quickly. Not only does the flier give the consumer what they want but it also allows them to gain access confidentiality without any consent. I will be providing direct outreach by scheduling presentations, local events, and community tabling to share our information flier with the agency's scannable code. The contributing factor my capstone project will designate is youth struggling with substance abuse by engaging with at-risk youth in the local community.

The designed project for Youth Outpatient Chemical Dependency Program will address the social problem of the Opioid Epidemic by providing community outreach to our local alternative education and at-risk youth programs with a flier that is specifically designed with a virtual code for the essential information for the road to recovery. The primary purpose of the project is to provide direct outreach to those who are at-risk for chemical dependency or substance use to have the necessary tools for program engagement and interaction. Valley Health Associates expects by implementing my capstone project it will raise the number of participants by providing the designed flier and informational code to local school outreach and partnered agencies, making it accessible.

Benefits

As a result of my senior capstone project for the Youth Outpatient Treatment Program project, benefits obtained will be an increase in new applicants or youth inquiring about the program. It will also provide youth with more access to resources. Since the targeted population is at-risk youth the chances of risk behaviors are likely. Positive impacts from the project will be gaining youths' attention by captivating easy direct paperless program information as outreach for the community served. It will have youth participating in modern technology by providing

flexibility for new intake appointments causing a positive impact on program expansion. Not only will the program receive positive impacts due to the designed virtual code program flier, but they will service youth and their families immediately without having to struggle for an intake appointment if required.

Expected Outcomes & Assessment Plan

An expected outcome would be for the following three alternative schools to reach back out back to me in reference to my flier presentation for the Valley Health Associates Youth Outpatient Treatment Program. It would also be ideal for at least $\frac{2}{3}$ at-risk youth programs to respond back to my request for an initial collaboration. I would estimate for my outreach efforts for both alternative education and at-risk youth outpatient treatment programs to want a collaboration between my internship cite Valley Health Associates and myself as an undergraduate student trying to incorporate my capstone project by initiating a direct contacts with other programs and schools within the local community that can make a difference to our youth and fight against substance abuse.

The assessment plan for my capstone project will consist of measuring all data given by selective staff members. I will analyze any of the following information by using a notebook to keep track of all progress throughout the entire project. I will also write down anything that has to do with my capstone project including each alternative education school or at-risk youth program. My assessment plan will be evaluated by my mentor La Tonya Glover to ensure I am meeting the standard of Valley Health Associates along with any other partnered agency.

Project Implementation Plan

The following project will contain components of creating a community outreach flier for Youth Treatment Outpatient Program. It will also have a scannable code to provide direct contact with Monterey County Youth struggling with opioid substance use disorder. The QR scan code on flier will give those an opportunity to utilize existing program material for Valley Health Associates Youth Outpatient Program. Those materials/content will consist of a program brochure, request an appointment today, referral form, and background knowledge. By having a scannable QR code in place it will make all of this content accessible at anyone's fingertips. The key components that this will provide for Valley Health Associates would be accessible outreach information to share with local community schools and at-risk-youth programs in the area. I started by providing Program Director La Tonya Glover feedback on the proposed outreach by sending an email with the following information on implementation. In the following email I addressed whom I would like to share the scannable QR code for Youth Outpatient Program as a key component of outreach model. I have disclosed with La Tonya that I will provide outreach to our local community schools and at-risk youth programs in the area. I am responsible for developing professional communication skills by reaching out to the contact person of each individual school or program. I am also liable to send La Tonya a draft of each professional email to ensure my professionalism and grammar. I will also make personal phone calls if needed to provide outreach opportunities. In addition, I am responsible to send Paris De La Rosa Youth Outpatient Program Outreach Coordinator a detailed email of each outreach site provided to maintain workload.

The following partnerships I would like to collaborate with for my outreach implementation flier content materials are Silver Star Alternative Education, El Puente Alternative Education, MCOE (Monterey County Office Of Education) Alternative Ed. which are our local community

schools for at-risk youth. The following programs I would like to implement outreach to is Community Partnership for Youth, Partners for Peace, and Rancho Cielo. Afterwards, I will meet via Zoom with La Tonya VHA Program Director to maintain professional communication and development skills to move forward with sending out an email for each school and at-risk youth program for outreach. By having the email sent no later than Wednesday March 1, 2023 it will ensure time for awaiting response. In the meantime I will begin to start adding all of my content into the scannable QR code. Once I have completed this task of the implementation process I will start to print and distribute equally to each correspondent. I will also be sure to schedule weekly Zoom meetings every Friday with La Tonya to guarantee implementation progress. Also, set any open availability the correspondent has to meet and talk about outreach opportunities to provide at-risk youth program content and information. I can set this meeting for open engagement to community outreach and tabling events. I will utilize the time to directly provide everyone with a scannable QR code and guide them through the presented content in order to create more engagement activity. I will clearly communicate with La Tonya VHA Program Director what the given outcome to outreach is along with Paris Outreach Program Coordinator. Also will refer back to my project implementation plan described in Appendix A. I will have the implementation process completed no later than Friday March 31, 2023 and ensure to have attended at least two different outreach events with a signup sheet on how many attendees to keep track of logs. (Appendix A.)

Task	Timeline	Parties Involved	Materials/ Services Needed	Completed Product
Ex. Attend planning meeting	By February 10, 2023	Mentor, Student, Agency Volunteers	Zoom link setup, Task list, Meeting agenda	Meeting minutes, Task assignments

Send La Tonya implementation plan expectations detailed with task and online work materials that can be done from home.	By February 23,2023	Mentor La Tonya Glover	Detailed task outline, Laptop, Internet access	Implementation project approval and online task approval.
Email Paris express my capstone QR code outreach idea along with collaborating together for best outreach outcomes.	By February 23, 2023	Mentor La Tonya Glover Outreach Coordinator Paris De La Rosa	Laptop, Detailed email with contact information provided, Express clear ideas on expected outcomes,	Email notification on what schools or agencies are currently in the outreach program base.
Engaging with alternative education schools for community outreach for Youth Outpatient Treatment Program opportunities	By February 25, 2023	Mentor La Tonya Glover Outreach Coordinator Paris De La Rosa	Laptop research, cell phone, data, notebook, and pencil.	Contact the schools and at-risk youth programs to know who the point of contact will be for undergraduate projects.
Connect with mentor conduct weekly Zoom check in for project progress	By February 25,2023	Mentor La Tonya Glover	Zoom, Laptop, notebook, and pencil.	Give an update on progress established in connecting with other agencies.

<p>Create a professional email and connect with La Tonya Glover to ensure it meets Valley Health Associates standards for other community agencies.</p>	<p>By March 3, 2023</p>	<p>Mentor La Tonya Glover</p> <p>Alternative Education: Silver Star, El Puente, MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education)</p> <p>At-risk youth programs: Community Partnership for Youth, Partner for Peace, and Rancho Cielo.</p>	<p>Laptop, notebook, pencil, and data.</p>	<p>Provide information about Valley Health Associates, introduce myself and give a program description along with a service overview.</p>
<p>Start to draft final ideas for Youth Outpatient Treatment Program flier</p>	<p>By March 3, 2023</p>	<p>Mentor La Tonya Glover</p>	<p>Laptop, notebook, pencil, database information, and Valley Health Associate public representation.</p>	<p>Finalize outreach flier for Valley Health Associates with permission from La Tonya Glover to meet basic criteria and standards for presentation.</p>
<p>Contact the following alternative education school sites along with at-risk youth programs via email to set up initial contact for outreach collaboration within the community.</p>	<p>By March 3, 2023</p>	<p>Mentor La Tonya Glover</p> <p>Alternative Education: Silver Star, El Puente, MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education)</p> <p>At-risk youth programs: Community Partnership for Youth, Partner for Peace, and Rancho Cielo.</p>	<p>Laptop, notebook, pencil, database information, and Valley Health Associate public representation finished flier.</p>	<p>Provide finalized Valley Health Associates Youth Outpatient Treatment Program flier along with detailed email indicating services.</p>

<p>Follow up with alternative education schools along with at-risk youth programs in reference to senior capstone project outreach.</p>	<p>By March 10, 2023</p>	<p>Mentor: La Tonya Glover Alternative Education: Silver Star, El Puente, MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education) At-risk youth programs: Community Partnership for Youth, Partner for Peace, and Rancho Cielo.</p>	<p>Laptop, notebook, pencil, database information.</p>	<p>Initiate professional communication and follow up in reference to proposed outreach for Valley Health Associates Youth Outpatient Treatment Program.</p>
<p>Ensure communication is established from agencies and Valley Health Associates to promote outreach for Youth Outpatient Treatment programs to at-risk youth in the community.</p>	<p>By March 13, 2023</p>	<p>Mentor La Tonya Glover Alternative Education: Silver Star, El Puente, MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education) At-risk youth programs: Community Partnership for Youth, Partner for Peace, and Rancho Cielo.</p>	<p>Laptop, notebook, pencil, data base information, and Valley Health Associate public representation</p>	<p>Elaborate information for all targeted agencies in reference to the senior capstone project. Ensure they are in direct contact with me or have provided a response.</p>
<p>Finalize senior capstone projects and provide all necessary information and material for all targeted agencies.</p>	<p>By March 23, 2023</p>	<p>Mentor La Tonya Glover Alternative Education: Silver Star, El Puente, MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education) At-risk youth programs:</p>	<p>Laptop, notebook, pencil, database information, and Valley Health Associate public representation finalized flier.</p>	<p>Provide all the necessary material to make sure my capstone project was met regardless of the potential outcome.</p>

		Community Partnership for Youth, Partner for Peace, and Rancho Cielo.		
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Project Results

The outcomes of my capstone project resulted in completing an outreach flier for Valley Health Associates Youth Outpatient Treatment Program contributing to at-risk youth in the community. I was able to accomplish this by communicating with my mentor La Tonya Glover for the vision and mission of the VHA program. My mentor was able to guide me through the process of captivating the attention of at-risk youth seeking services. After, carefully reviewing my flier with constructive feedback from my mentor on alignment and captivity to the targeted population. I was able to professionally communicate with Alternative Education programs such as Silver Star, El Puente, and MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education) and at-risk youth programs: Community Partnership for Youth, Partner for Peace, and Rancho Cielo. My expected outcome was to establish professional communication, collaboration, professional development, and knowledge of Human Health and Services by providing outreach resources to the at-risk youth population suffering from the social problem of substance abuse with opioids. The measures used for project success were keeping track of all agencies' contact via spreadsheet and providing them with finalized outreach fliers for Youth Outpatient Treatment Program.

Finalizing the project results were I was able to establish contact with the Principal of Monterey County Office of Education Alternative Education Nubia Padilla. I connected with her via email and did not initially hear back from her but received follow up to present information April 10, 2023. Due to the timeframe I was only able to share outreach flier information. Also, upon

completion of the project I was able to connect with Gabriella Manzo Lead Case Manager for Rancho Cielo Youth Campus via written communication. I was able to establish a conversation over the phone and share my contact information along with a finalized flier to present. She informed me that it would have to be overseen by Rancho Cielo Principal Garry Vincent. Unfortunately, I did not hear back from both Garry and Gabiella to coordinate time and date for outreach. I did send a follow up email on March 27, 2023 but my expected outcome was not met. I believe my expected outcome of being able to present my information in person along with passing out fliers for outreach coordination between other agencies was not met because they have an extensive workload that does not allow prompt communication for other outside agencies that want to collaborate. My overall success in my capstone project was fair. I was able to establish some contact with outside agencies but was not able to reach my intended target of direct in person outreach for at-risk youth in our community. I was able to measure all necessary contact needed and provided an extensive time frame for a response.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To further conclude my research and work at Valley Health Associates as an undergraduate intern it aligned with all my contributing factors. The social problem of substance abuse opioid pandemic correlates with social environments, deviant peer relationships, and court management system. Based on my project results, substance abuse is uncontrollable if the social environment conflicts with other triggers for deviant peer relationships that lead to being involved in the court management system. Upon my findings while implementing this project is to recommend having a follow up session for all alternative schools listed to show their dedication to our community. It will also provide flexibility to reserve space for Valley Health Associates within their school curriculum. Another recommendation would be to host an event

that specifically targets individuals that are already at-risk for substance and categorized as court mandated by other community programs. By having these recommendations in place it will give the opportunity to reciprocate the information.

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**Youth 12-17 years old
and Transitional
Youth 18-24 years
old will develop
leadership, advocacy,
& community
organizing skills.**

