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# SACRAMENTO YOUTH CENTER

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## PROMISING STRATEGY: STUDENT PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Advocating for Student Healing & Health  
2023 SCHOOL HEALTH CONFERENCE

April 17, 2023

# Agenda

- I n t r o d u c t i o n s
- 10 - Y e a r Y o u t h M e n t a l H e a l t h T r e n d s
- A d d r e s s i n g G a p s i n M e n t a l H e a l t h W o r k f o r c e
- V a l u e o f P e e r - t o - P e e r S u p p o r t s
- O v e r v i e w o f T w o P e e r - t o - P e e r P r o g r a m s
- L e s s o n s L e a r n e d & S t r a t e g i e s f o r S u c c e s s

# Presenters

**Rachel Minnick, MAEE**  
Chief Collaboration Officer  
PRO Youth and Families

**Raquel Shipp**  
Co-Founder/Executive Director  
Sacramento Youth Center

**Jacqueline Garner , MSW, LCSW**  
Director, Student Support Services  
Sacramento City Unified School District

# About Sacramento Youth Center

- Established 2019 in North Sacramento aiming to serve the underserved youth with quality space & programs for youth development and enrichment. Providing trained Peer Specialist mental/behavioral health support.
- Serving diverse youth 14-24 years avg. attendance 30 – 40 youth per day
- Community School Site via CDE Planning Grant in partnership with Community Collaborative Charter School
- Average of 30 youth on-site daily both students and youth community members
- **Youth Peer Mentor programs are foundational to our center culture and success**
- Based on SAMSHA's 8-Dimensions of Wellness framework
- Incorporates 21st skill building and workforce readiness

# About PRO Youth

## Fostering Hope

- **Founded as People Reaching Out in 1981**
  - Uplift community voice & youth advocacy skills
  - Prevent youth substance use
  - Mentoring
- **Rebranded as PRO Youth in 2017**
  - Added Youth & Family Collective

### Three major areas of work :

- Youth Voice
- Wellness
- Collective Impact



# About SCUSD



© LIFE AT SCUSD | Above: Students at Edward Kemble

## Sacramento City Unified School District

- 11<sup>th</sup> Largest School District
- 73 Schools K- 12
- Student Enrollment: over 38,000\*
  - Over 67% identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged
  - 19% English Language learners
  - 36.9% students chronically absent

\* 2022 data from CDE [Data Dashboard](#)

# Why School -Based Peer-to-Peer Programs?

1. Meet the demand for culturally competent services
2. Improve campus wellness & school climate
3. Expand future mental health workforce

# Youth Mental Health: 10-Year Trends

"... experiences of violence, mental health, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors worsened significantly."

*Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2011 – 2021 Data Summary and Trends Report*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



# Youth Mental Health: 10-Year Trends

" School connectedness, defined as feeling close to people at school, has a long-lasting, protective impact for adolescents well into adulthood..."

*Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2011 – 2021 Data Summary and Trends Report* , Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## **CDC Recommendation:**

**"Increase access to needed services  
by improving school-based services..."**

*Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2011 – 2021 Data Summary and Trends Report* , Centers for  
Disease Control and Prevention

# Increasing Capacity in a Landscape of Vast Discrepancies in Mental Health Support

## California's Ratio of Students to School - Based Mental Health Professionals

	Recommended	Actual
<b>Social Workers</b>	1 to 250	1 to 6,132
<b>School Counselor</b>	1 to 250	1 to 612
<b>School Psychologist</b>	1 to 500	1 to 998

# High Quality Peer - to - Peer Programs:

- Increase student access to mental wellness supports
- Are a scalable, non-clinical, Tier 1 strategy

**Peer-to - Peer Programs are  
one of the five essential strategies\*  
for effective school - based mental  
health.**

*\*therapy, non - traditional wellness programs, LGBTQIA support, parent/caregiver support, stigma reduction*

# CONTINUUM OF PREVENTION & CARE

TIER 1:  
PREVENTION & EDUCATION

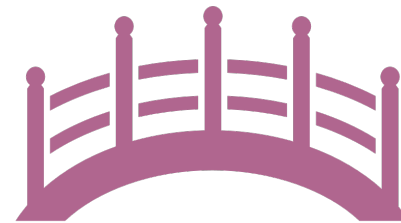
TIER 2:  
INTERVENTION

TIER 3:  
INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

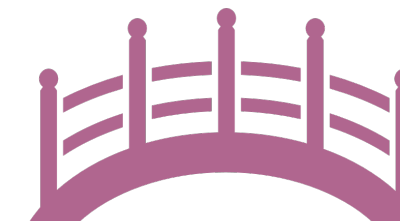
NON -CLINICAL

CLINICAL

PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT  
PROGRAMS



Peer  
Specialists  
18+



LICENSED  
PROFESSIONALS

Peer-to - Peer programs support behavioral health career pathways.

# **Leveraging Department of Health Care Services funding to:**

- Increase opportunities for peer specialists
- Increase mental health supports on campus/community settings

# Peer-to-Peer programs increase equity and diversity by:

- Supporting youth from different backgrounds on path to mental health careers
- Diversifying the pool of trusted campus messengers who can reduce cultural stigmas
- Increasing the sense of belonging on campus
- Increasing knowledge of mental health resources





# Overview of Two Peer-to-Peer Strategies

- Peer Mentors
- MindOneSix

# Peer Mentors – Sacramento Youth Center

**Supporting youth be campus resources to peers and making schools centers of wellness.**

**Peer Mentor Training - 80hrs (40hrs per semester)**

- 24 lessons
- Including hands - on applications/awareness for on - campus, community & online
- Youth can support other campus programs
- Youth can serve as in-house resource for Community Schools

# Peer Mentors: Workforce Development

## Story of Sahar

- Peer mentor>intern>peer specialist trained – representing newcomer populations
- Now works for Sacramento - area behavioral health clinic

## CTE pathway

- SYC partnering with a charter school to increase on - campus support

## Post Peer Mentor training - onsite internships or in the community to support workforce development pathway

- Summer School
- On- site peer support groups

# MindOneSix – PRO Youth

- Created in 2020 as a COVID- relief response to youth mental health crisis
- 10 Lessons (16 hours) for HS students
  - Topics Include:
    - Defining mental health terms
    - Dimensions of wellness
    - Stigma reduction
    - Stress and the brain
    - Resiliency and self- care
    - Trusted adults
    - Impact of social media
    - Resources
- Delivered virtually by PRO youth development staff

# MindOneSix – PRO Youth

**2021 - 23 partnership with Sacramento City Unified School District**

- Serving 5- 7 schools
- Delivered on campus to middle and high school students

**Delivered by community partners**

- More diversity in trusted messengers
- Increase the capacity for PRO to offer the program

# Impact of MindOneSix on Youth

- **87% learned new things about mental health and wellness.**
- **70% felt more confident to talk with peers about mental health.**
- **67% felt more confident to talk to family about mental health.**
- **88% were interested in mental health and wellness careers.**

Data from 2021 pilot cohort

# Lessons Learned & Strategies for Success

## Relationships & Communication

- Bureaucratic systems can make partnerships complex; new systems may need to be created
- Establish trust and relationships early
- Community partners need support to establish school relationships
- Clearly describe the resources a peer - to - peer program brings to a school
- Be proactive about communication and relationship development – it feels time consuming, but prevents mistrust and miscommunication

# Lessons Learned & Strategies for Success

## Relationships & Communication, cont'd

- MindOneSix project charter process increased success
  - Develops relationships among key partners
  - Specifies methods of communication
  - Determines decision - making expectations
  - Defines each partner's role/responsibility/expectations



# Lessons Learned & Strategies for Success

## Program Content

- Schools were fearful of launching programs that might trigger youth
- Provide district/admin a clear picture of what a program looks like in practice
- Explain how staff are trained
- Peer programs should not look or feel like an extension of the school day
- Community partners needed extra support with youth facilitation skills
- How students are recruited matters
- Curriculum needed to be adapted for younger students (MS versus HS students)

# School - Based Peer-to - Peer Programs

Support the increasing demand for culturally competent mental health supports.

Improve campus wellness & school climate.

Provides students with workforce opportunities and expands future mental health workforce.

# The Time is Now

"California schools have a historic opportunity to ensure equity and well-being for students across the state by investing in, establishing or expanding their own school-based mental health systems."

THANK YOU

## Contacts

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"I learned how to communicate to someone who is not doing well and how to communicate to someone when I am not feeling well."

- Mind One Six  
Participant