



Conocimiento Evaluation Update

Prepared for Ventura County Behavioral Health by:



Updated Report Submitted March 2022



Introduction

Conocimiento is an innovative project designed to build resilience among youth who have experienced trauma/adverse events with activities that work to strengthen protective factors. The project is funded with Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovation funding. Conocimiento is being carried out at two teen centers within the cities of Santa Paula and Fillmore. Historically, high-risk youth from these two cities have had tensions and conflict with one another based on a long-standing rivalry among the two high schools. In addition to building protective factors within youth, the program also works to foster positive relationships between the teens in both cities.

EVALCORP was contracted by Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) to evaluate the implementation and impact of the Conocimiento Project. Project modifications were made due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the implementation evaluation, EVALCORP worked with the two sites to track program reach and administer an intake assessment, which includes questions related to Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs). The intake assessment was completed by participants upon enrollment. Mid-point surveys and a focus group with the youth leaders were planned for January 2022, but due to the impact of COVID-19, they were delayed until February 2022. This evaluation update includes information about program challenges and successes, program activities, participant reach, the results of the intake and midpoint assessments, as well as the findings from the focus group with the youth leaders. The content includes program information since the program inception (January, 2020) through December 31, 2021.

About the Program

The two afterschool teen programs offer youth positive environments to spend their time. One Step a la Vez was established in 2009 and is located in Fillmore. Ignite teen program, located in Santa Paula, was established in 2017.

In an effort to improve relationships, the two centers partnered to implement Conocimiento, a supportive and supplemental project to the teen centers' activities. Events are chosen and designed by the youth participants through a consensus decision-making process, so all perspectives are considered. Consensus decision-making is a process designed to take additional time and allow each youth's perspective to be valued. The community plays a supportive role through collaborative partnerships. Community members are invited to attend the meals and help facilitate the small group discussions that take place after dinner. A family liaison supports the program by providing outreach and recruitment to the families of youth. Families are invited to participate, but it is not a requirement of the program participants. The program activities are explained in the following section.

Program Activities

Group Meals

One of the goals of the Concomiento project is to foster positive relationships between the youth at One Step and Ignite. The two sites bring the youth together for regularly scheduled dinners and occasional lunches. To date, there has been over 50 dinners and 10 lunches, with dinners having an average of eight youth attending and lunches having an average of 18 youth attending. The youth leaders assist with putting together an agenda for the dinners and identifying guest speakers who join the group meals and present on various topics including

career development. The dinner agendas also engage the youth in discussion on topics such as how things are going at school, issues that the youth may be experiencing at home, wellness activities, as well as practicing proper dinner etiquette while hosting guests.

Youth Leadership Series

The youth leadership series allows opportunities for participants in Conocimiento to develop their leadership skills. While working with program staff during the meetings, youth leaders plan the group meals, dinner agendas, and other Conocimiento events. Youth leaders and staff work together to identify guest speakers, activities, wellness themes, and videos to share during these engaging dinners. During these leadership meetings, the youth work on developing their leadership, planning, facilitation and communication skills. One Step's youth leaders met towards the end of the year to discuss suggestions on future guest speakers, as well as problem solve ways to get more teens to attend the program and increase dinner attendance. Program staff have shared that they have seen a lot of growth in these youth, particularly in their confidence and leadership skills. Conocimiento youth leaders are given commitments and guidelines while maintaining at least a 2.0 GPA. As of the writing of this report, there have been over 60 youth leadership meetings.

Guest Speaker Series

The project's guest speaker series began in Quarter 4 of FY 20-21 in which several guest speakers presented on topics such as leadership training, mental health awareness, personal development, as well as their educational and career experiences. The most recent guest speakers in December 2021 included one from Mother's Against Drunk Driving and another from the Ventura County Fire Department. Conocimiento's guest speaker series plays an important role in motivating and inspiring the youth to think about their careers and ambitions.

Field Trips and Summer Events

The youth leaders helped to plan a summer event that took place on May 28, 2021 at Universal Studios. Twenty-nine youth attended the event. The youth were inspired by two guest speakers that work in Hollywood and the music industry, and none of the youth ever had an opportunity to experience Universal Studios. Due to extra funds being available, the youth were able to plan a second summer event in which they chose to go to the California Science Center in June 2021. Fourteen youth attended the event. Other summer events and field trips included a trip to the beach, a visit to California State University Channel Islands University, a cookie decorating contest via Zoom, and going to the Fillmore Museum. All together, there have been six field trips and summer events in which a total of 96 youth attended with an average attendance of 16 youth per event. Aside from field trips and summer events, the youth have also participated in hikes and wellness walks. One Step was able to provide youth with hiking gear including hiking boots. Several of the youth expressed that they had never had an opportunity to enjoy nature in the past. One Step has continued these hiking activities as they have been popular with the youth. One Step has partnered with a staff person from Los Padres Forest Watch to plan hikes and teach the youth about hiking safety. Los Padres Forest Watch protects wildlife, wilderness, water, and sustainable access throughout the Los Padres National Forest.

Parent Liaison and Programming for Parents

Both sites hired Parent Liaisons who have been working at engaging with parents of the youth who attend Conocimiento. Families willing to enroll can receive in home services designed to offer non-clinical case management, system navigation, parent support meetings, skills development, emergency resources for high-need families, and establish routines such as family dinners. Both sites started holding events for parents in the fall of 2021 including an Open House as well as parent resource events, where parents can learn about accessing resources

in the community. One of the Parent Liaisons has provided emergency support to parents by going out to the home and providing resources and referrals. As both sites continue to evolve the parenting program, it is anticipated that parents will be provided with resource workshops, support services including system navigation, parent support meetings, skills development and resources for basic needs.

Program Updates

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Program Adaptations

The Conocimiento Project officially launched in January of 2020 and several youth events took place before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the program in March 2020. Both teen centers experienced significant impacts to programming when they were shut down as the youth were no longer able to participate in person for group meals, activities, and other events. Staff from both sites continued to provide meals to youth including offering meals to be picked up or dropped off at the youth's home. Providing meals to youth while they were unable to attend school in person may have helped to alleviate food insecurity for some of the youth. Program staff shared that the youth really looked forward to the meals, and it is possible that some of the youth may not have had access to regular meals. Both sites continued to hold activities with youth online, including checking in with the youth, engaging in structured activities, as well as playing games with the youth. It is likely that many youth experienced social isolation, especially at the beginning of the pandemic when schools shut down and they no longer had access to social activities. Continuing to engage with the youth online may have helped to alleviate some of the social isolation and helped to keep some of the youth engaged in programming. Although there was a small number of youth who participated in online programming, the program staff shared that the small groups allowed for a more intimate group setting and more meaningful interactions as the youth were able to get to know each other better. One Step engaged with youth by inviting them on wellness walks in which they were provided incentives to participate. The wellness walks were successful, and the youth looked forward to these so that they could get out of the house and connect with others. Ignite started meeting with youth outdoors in November 2020. Ignite has a large outdoor space that allowed for the youth to be able to continue to meet safely. One Step also started meeting with youth outdoors and eventually was able to open under limited capacity with safety precautions in place, including limiting the number of youth at the center and not joining the youth from both centers, but this was disrupted more than once due to potential exposures and the center had to revert back to online programming.

With planning and safety precautions in place, in-person group meals between One Step and Ignite youth were able to resume outdoors in March 2021. One Step fully reopened in mid-June 2021, after the restrictions were lifted for the state of California. It should be noted that Ignite closes down for the summer. One Step continued programming in the summer of 2021 but experienced low turnout. Ignite reopened in August 2021 after shutting down for the summer and initially held programming outdoors. Ignite was able to reopen indoors in September 2021. Both sites continue to work on enrolling new youth while navigating disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have remained flexible and found innovative ways to stay engaged with the youth and keep the program running while maintaining safety precautions. Participation has continued to be low due to the impact of the pandemic. Both teen centers experienced another shut down in January 2022 when the fast spreading Omicron COVID-19 variant impacted both sites. The teen centers were already experiencing low participation in December 2021, likely due to the continuing impact of the pandemic. The parent component of the project

has also been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as both sites delayed implementation until deemed safe.

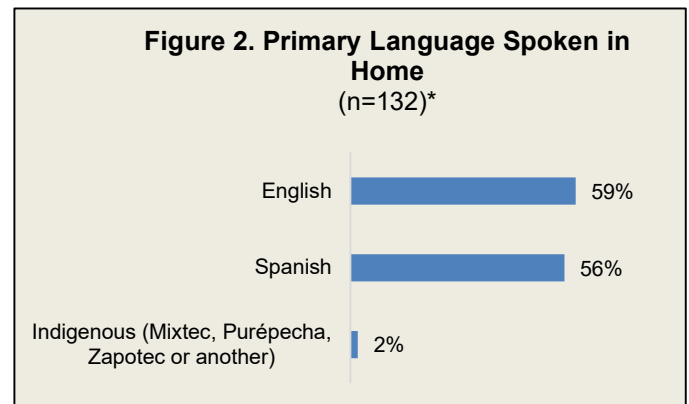
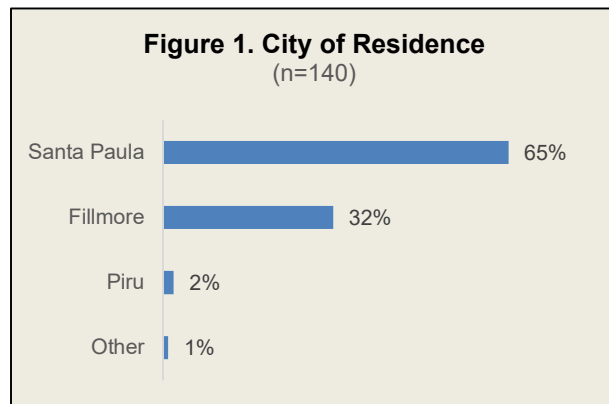
Program Reach

One Step and Ignite use a data tracking tool to track youth who enroll into the Conocimiento project. Between January 2020 and December 31, 2021, a total of 148 youth have enrolled in Conocimiento according to the data tracking tool. Of the 148 who enrolled, 140 opted to complete the intake assessment. The next section includes the intake assessment results. Youth are offered incentives to complete the intake assessment, however they are allowed to refuse to complete it, so therefore not all youth who enrolled in Conocimiento have completed an intake assessment.

Intake Assessment

Between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021, 140 youth in the Conocimiento project completed an intake assessment. The youth were asked questions related to demographics, community connectedness, social relationships, adaptive coping with stress, core competencies, resilience, as well as ACEs. The core competencies that the youth were asked about include emotional self-regulation, optimism, consensus building, planning, problem solving, and community activism. The results of the Intake Assessment are included in Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 through 14.

Participant Demographics



*Total percentages exceed 100% because respondents could select multiple options.

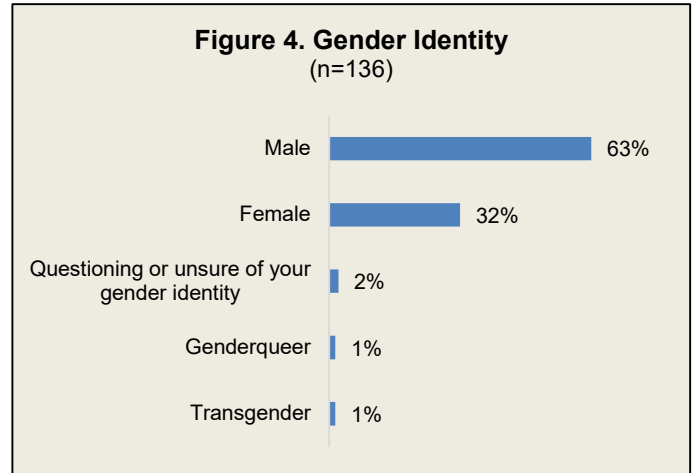
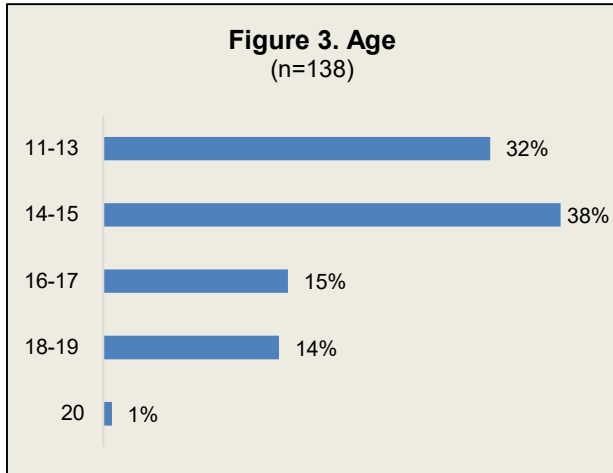


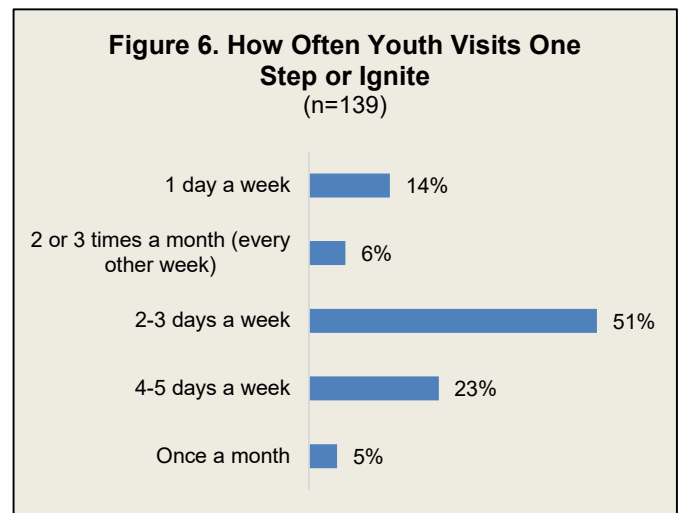
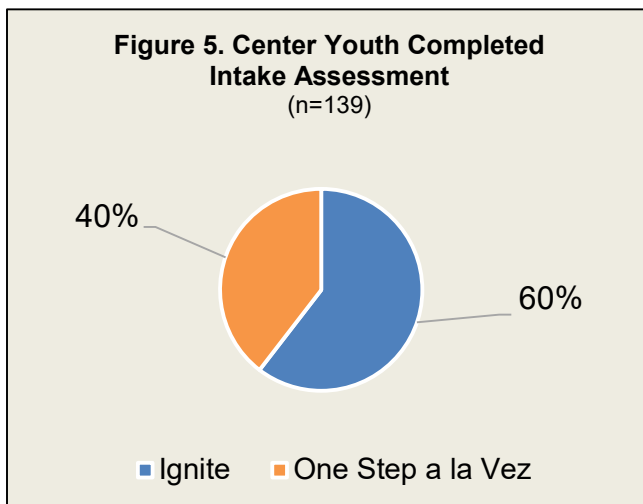
Table 1. Participant Racial/Ethnic Identity
(n=135)*

Hispanic or Latino	86%
White	10%
American Indian or Alaska Native	6%
More than one Race	5%
Asian	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%
Black or African American	2%
Another Race**	1%

*Note: Percentages exceed 100% as respondents were able to select more than one response option.

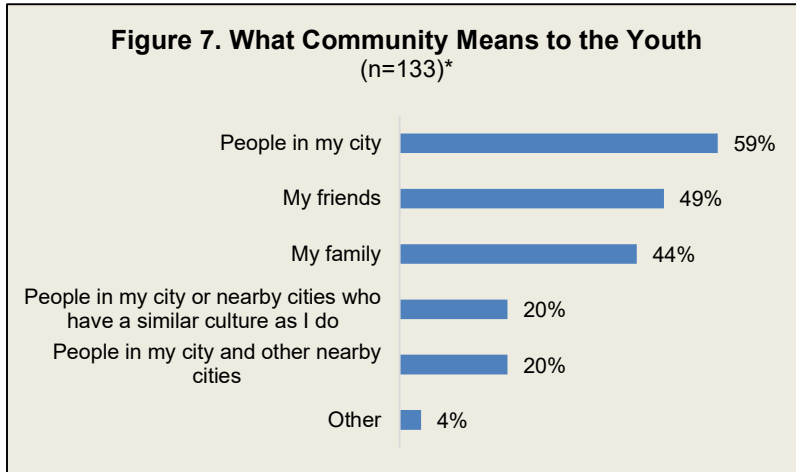
**Another Race response identified as White and Hispanic

Participant Program Attendance



Participant Protective Factors and Core Competency Baseline Data

On the intake assessment survey, youth were asked questions related to the project goals. Questions about social connectedness, stress adaptation skills, core competencies, and resilience were included. Core competencies are defined adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities. For the majority of the youth (59%) community means the people of their city. Twenty-percent view community as people in their city and nearby cities (see Figure 7).

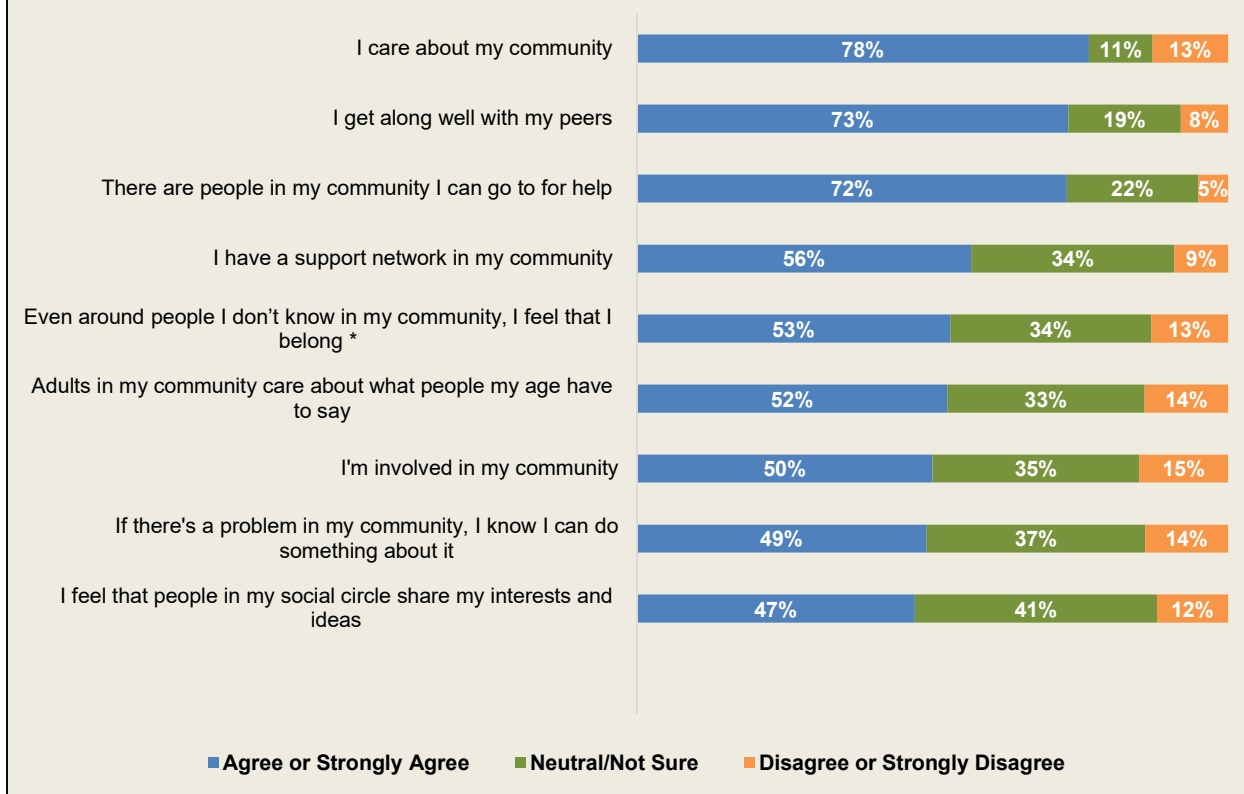


*Note: Percentages exceed 100% as respondents were able to select more than one response option.

About three-quarters of respondents care about their community, get along well with their peers, and know where to go for help in the community. About half of respondents reported positively to the other questions about community connectedness and social relations while about a third were neutral or unsure about the topics. Approximately 10-15% reported negative responses to the series of questions (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Community Connectedness and Social Relationships

(n=135-140)

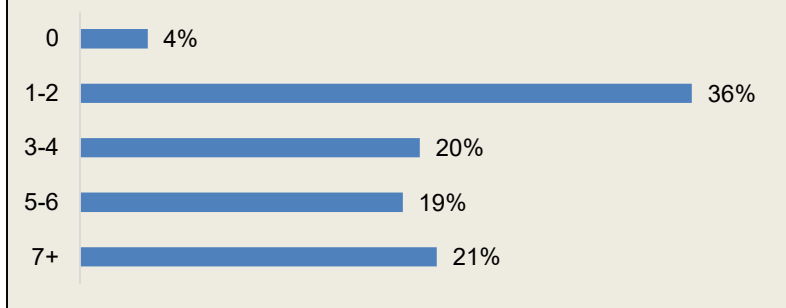


*This question also had the response option of: This doesn't apply to me – I know every single person in my community. Four percent selected this response.

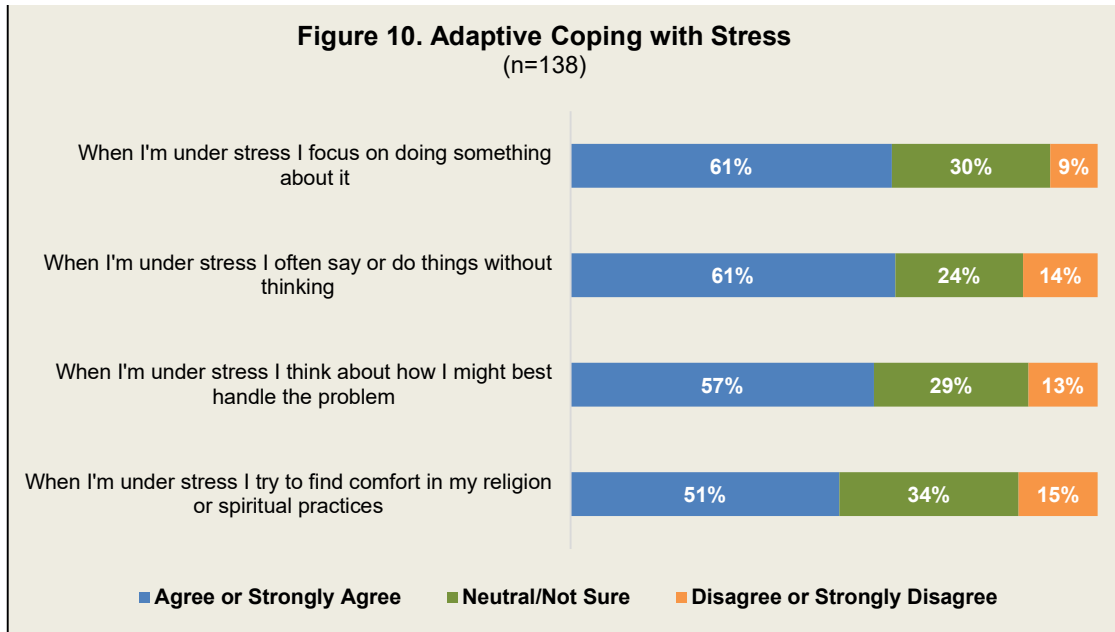
More than one-third (40%) of respondents have between zero and two very important adults in their lives. The other 60% have three or more (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Number of Very Important Adults in Youth's Life

(n=80)



Slightly more than half (51-61%) of respondents report positive stress coping skills. About one-third are neutral or not sure of their stress responses. Nine to 15% have poor adaptive coping skills for stress (see Figure 10).

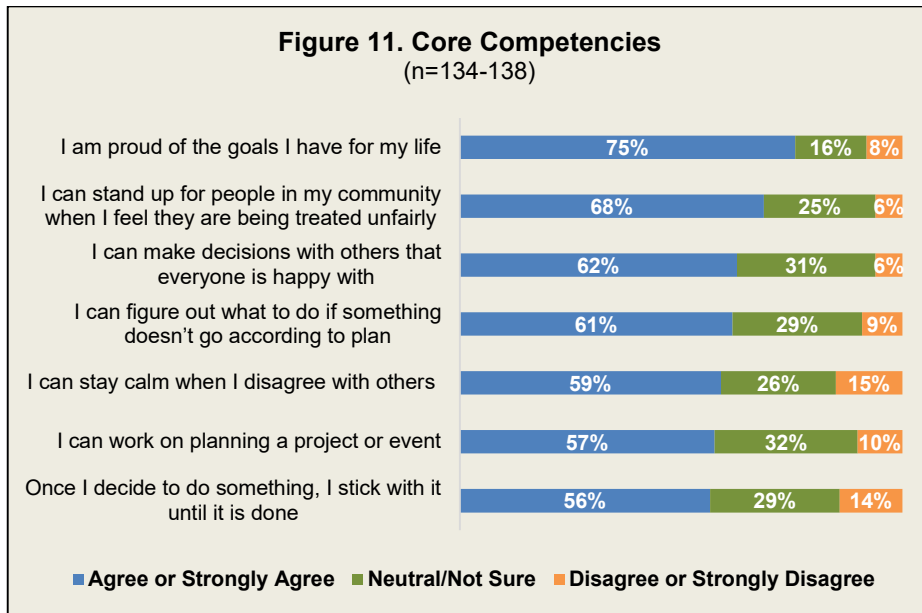


Core Competencies

Youth were asked questions that measured core competencies identified during the planning process of the Conocimiento project. Core competencies include emotional self-control, optimism, consensus building, planning, problem-solving, and community activism. One question about perseverance was added to the core competencies chart. See Table 2 for a list of survey questions as they relate to the core competencies.

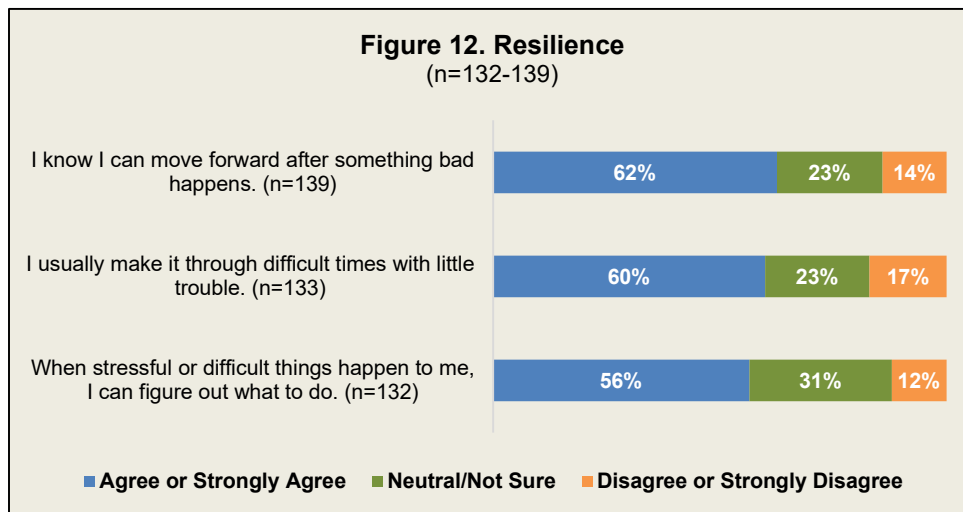
Table 2. Core Competency Questions	
Core Competency	Survey question
Emotional self-control	I can stay calm when I disagree with others
Optimism	I am proud of the goals I have for my life
Consensus building	I can make decisions with others that everyone is happy with
Planning	I can work on planning a project or event
Problem-solving	I can figure out what to do if something doesn't go according to plan
Community activism	I can stand up for people in my community when I feel they are being treated unfairly
Perseverance	Once I decide to do something, I stick with it until it is done

Three-quarters of respondents are proud of their life goals. The area with the highest number of disagree or strongly disagree responses was related to staying calm when disagreeing with others (15%) (see Figure 11).



Resilience

Youth were asked three resiliency questions. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they know they can move forward after something bad happens. The area with the highest number of disagree or strongly disagree responses was related to making it through difficult times with little trouble (17%) (see Figure 12).



Adverse Childhood Experiences

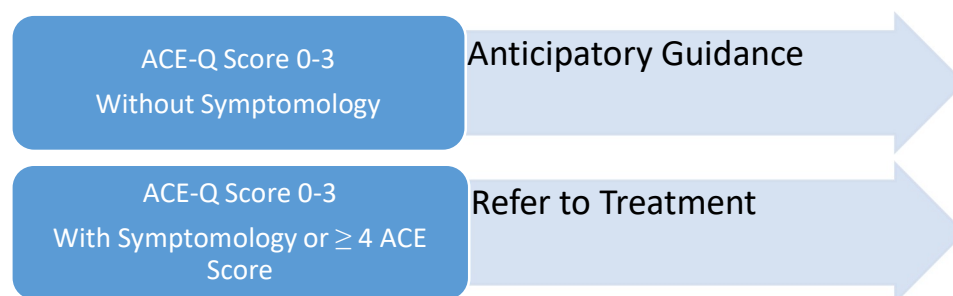
Research has revealed early adversity as a major threat to health and well-being across the life span. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been linked to poor health outcomes in adulthood, and there is growing literature indicating that toxic stress caused by ACEs can

profoundly alter child and adolescent development (¹). ACEs are stressful or traumatic events experienced before age 18. They are grouped into three categories: abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-Q) is a clinical screening tool that calculates cumulative exposure to ACEs. The ACE-Q is a 19-item instrument designed for youth ages 13 to 19. The instrument is comprised of two sections: Section 1 consists of the traditional 10 ACEs. Section 2 includes nine items assessing for exposure to additional early life stressors identified by experts and community stakeholders. They include involvement in the foster care system, bullying, loss of parent or guardian due to death, deportation or migration, medical trauma, exposure to community violence, and discrimination. Respondents are asked to report how many of the experiences listed in each section apply to them; they do not identify the specific experiences that apply to them.

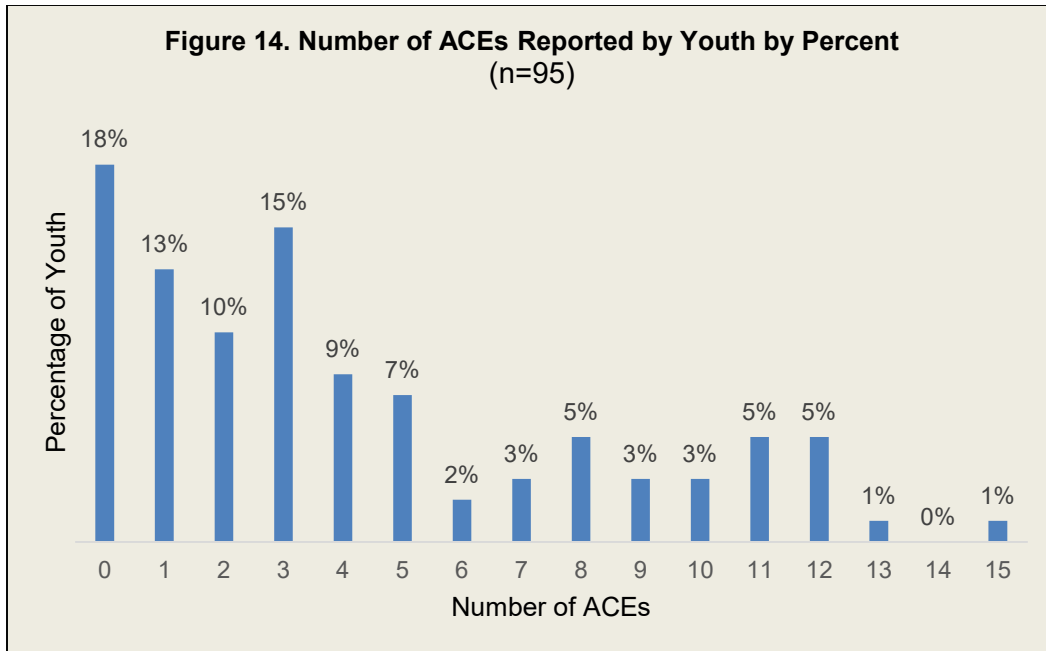
Respondents tally the number for each section and type the total in the space provided. Each completed ACE-Q section generates a two number score, for example, a score of 3+2 (three items endorsed in Section 1 and two endorsed in Section 2) or 4 + 4 (four items endorsed in each section). The tool is used to identify who is at high risk of health and developmental concerns. The scoring is shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: ACE-Q Scoring



A few of the questions were modified from the ACE-Q for this project (see Table 3 in the Appendix). This was done to update the terminology and make the questions more relevant to the population involved. Ninety-five teens (68%) completed the ACEs questions in both sections. The results indicate that 46% (n=43) had a score of four or above, indicating a need for treatment (see Figure 15). The average ACEs score was four. The median ACEs score was three, and the mode ACEs score was zero.

¹ Burke Harris, N. & Renschler, T. (2015, July). Center for Youth Wellness ACE-Questionnaire (CYW ACE-Q Child, Teen, Teen SR). Center for Youth Wellness. San Francisco, CA. <https://centerforyouthwellness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CYW-ACE-Q-USer-Guide-copy.pdf>



**the percentages in the chart above add up to 99% due to rounding*

Midpoint Assessment Results

The mid-point survey was launched in January 2022 and open until the February 25, 2022. The survey included open and close-ended questions. The close-ended questions had the response options of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral/not sure, agree, strongly agree. Twenty-five individuals completed the survey. Attempts were made to increase the response rate including extending the data collection period and reminders and updates on response rates to both One Step and Ignite. In January 2022, the teen centers were closed for a period of time due to the impact of COVID-19, which may have impacted the response rate.

The midpoint assessment data were linked using unique identifiers (the first letter of their first name, the first three letters of their last name, and full date of birth) with the intake assessments. Of the 25 people who completed the mid-point assessment, there was a total of 14 individuals with a matched unique identifier who also completed the intake assessment. Due to the small number of teens who completed both surveys, an analysis of the changes between the intake and midpoint assessments was not conducted.

Regardless of not being able to analyze changes over time, the mid-point survey results did indicate a few important points. There were two statements that all of the respondents answered neutral/not sure, agree, strongly agree. No one answered strongly disagree or disagree. The statements were:

- I get along well with my peers (people my age).
- I can stand up for people in my community when I feel they are being treated unfairly.

The following statements had no strongly disagree statements and one person who disagreed.

- I have a support network in my community.
- I get along well with my peers (people my age).

- There are people in my community I can go to for help.
- When I'm under stress, I think about how I might best handle the problem.
- I am proud of the goals I have for my life.
- Once I decide to do something, I stick with it until it is done.
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Respondents were asked the open-ended question, “What do you like most about Conocimiento?” The most common theme was related to social factors: making new friends, spending time with friends, having fun, the people, sharing thoughts and feelings, activities, guest speakers. Other themes included having help when needed, the food, and learning.

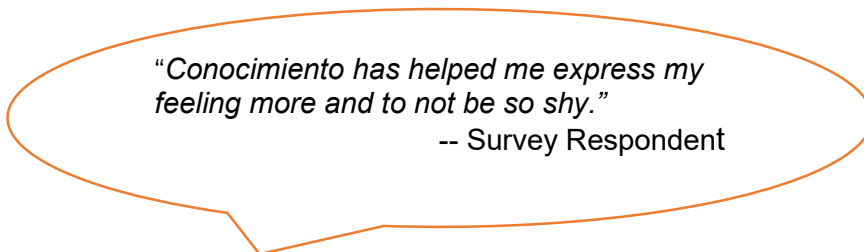


*“I most like is that you can talk to many adults here with your problems.”
“I love it because I got something to do that is fun and I'm getting time to do my homework.”*

“I like that I can just come hang out with friends and the staff members.”
- Survey Respondents

Youth were asked to identify the useful skills that they learned from that Conocimiento project. The most frequent responses were related to communication and social skills. Examples of specific words and phrases include:

- Public speaking
- Expressing feelings
- Speaking to people
- Social skills
- Communication
- Leadership
- Learned how to get along with people more
- Learning to hear people out
- Understanding another person

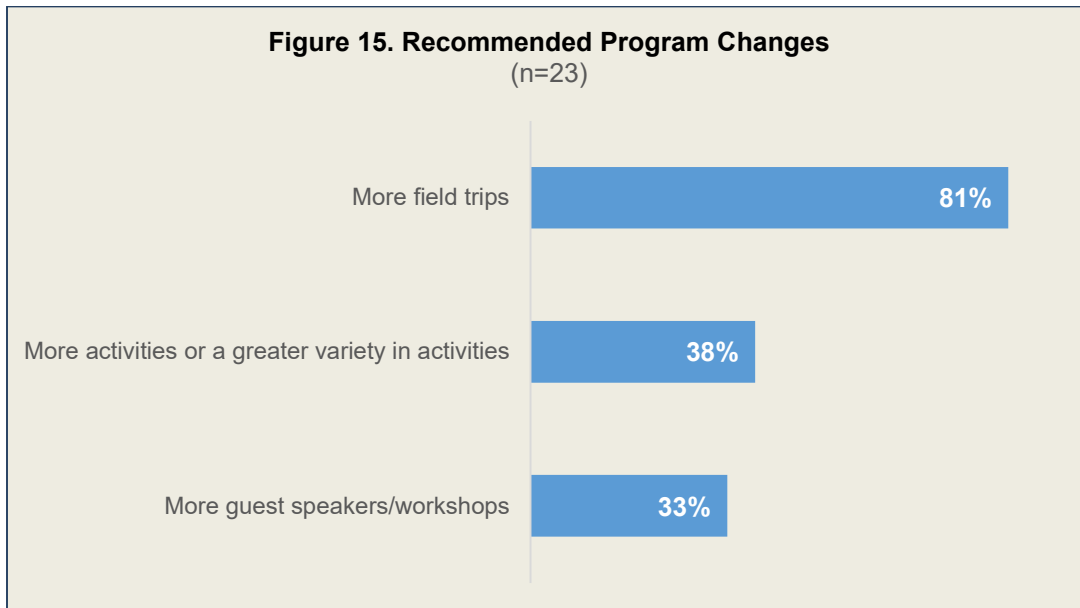


“Conocimiento has helped me express my feeling more and to not be so shy.”
-- Survey Respondent

Additional skills included time management, looking for a job, staying calm, patience, basketball, and being able to stay on track with grades.

When asked about what changes they would like made to the program, the most common response was more field trips (see Figure 15). The open-ended responses included many youth

stating they there is nothing they would change about the program. One did not like the music that is played.



The youth are reporting positive relationships, resilience, and goal setting abilities. The skills learned are related primarily to social and communication abilities. The respondents are enjoying the time with people their age, the staff, and the program activities. Specific program changes needed were not identified, yet respondents did note that more field trips and variety in activities would be positive program enhancements.

Focus Group Findings

On February 8, 2022 a focus group with youth leaders from Ignite and One Step was conducted. The youth were at the teen centers; the evaluators joined remotely. Two members from EVALCORP participated; one was a facilitator and the other took notes. The focus group was scheduled for 60 minutes. Staff from Ignite and One Step were not present during the focus group so that youth could speak more freely. Nine youth participated; seven males and two females. The time that they were youth leaders ranged from three months to three years. The purpose of the focus group was to learn about their experiences as youth leaders and their ideas about the program strengths, and how the program impacted them as well as community relations, and ways that the program can be improved.

Experiences of Being a Youth Leader

Participants shared that what they like about being a youth leader is the social component. They enjoy talking to people, meeting new people, making new friends, and being able to help others. They like the games and being treated as an adult. It was stated they the program gives them the opportunity to engage in activities and responsibilities that adults do.

When asked what is the most difficult part of being a youth leader the participants reported that there was nothing that was very challenging. It was shared that sometimes it is hard to get other teenagers to listen but it is 'nothing out of hand'. One youth also shared that the kitchen does get crowded at times, and they need to ask people to leave.

Program Strengths

The program makes everyone feel welcome and comfortable. The staff introduce the new members to the other youth leaders, staff, and other teens. The ice breakers help them feel more comfortable as well.

When the youth leaders were asked about what keeps them going back to Conocimiento, the reasons include that it is fun and provides valuable social interactions. They get to talk to people and meet new friends. The participants reported positive relationships with the staff and that the staff and other teens make them “feel like family”. Someone also mentioned the good food.

It was reported that the youth leaders get out of the house and have fun with other people their age. That opportunity would not exist with the program. One youth reported that he would stay home and sleep before he joined the program. Conocimiento gives him a reason to leave the house and be active. The youth shared that they play games, do their homework, and have a place and do something new like go to the park and play flag football. They also build new relationships, expand their horizons, and have a place to go to where they feel that they have less stress about school.

How the Program Impacted the Youth Leaders

Public speaking and social skills were two common lessons learned by being a youth leader. They have the opportunity to speak in front of each other. One participant shared that when speaking publicly she was very nervous as first but now it feels like she is having a nice conversation. Another youth shared that they used to stutter when speaking publicly, which has since decreased. In addition to gaining confidence in speaking, one person shared that it gave her more confidence in herself. One noted that her social anxiety has decreased. Another youth stated that he did not know how to make new friends; the program helped him with overcoming that issue.

A person reported that he previously was “a couch potato” and is now more active. Several youth agreed they are more physically active due to the Conocimiento program. The participants noted that they learned to manage time between school, activities, and meetings and about being more patient with others.

Additional benefits is that the program had helped them in school and with life goals. One participant was accepted to college and will be attending in the Fall. The staff encourage the youth leaders to follow their dreams, do what they love, and go to college. Emotionally, it gives them a place to go. The staff are there if they need to talk to someone. One shared that sometimes at his house, his parents would argue, and this gives him a place to go. During COVID-19, the program was helpful with coping. It gave them something to do, and they no longer were isolated.



“Conocimiento people are like my family”.

-Focus Group Participant

How the Program Impacted the Two Community Relationships

One of the program goals is to improve the relationships between the two communities. When youth leaders were asked about the impact of the program on encouraging connections

between One Step and Ignite youth the answers were a definitive yes. Games, such as basketball and dodgeball, as well as activities, such as giving out cookies to the homeless, introduced the youth to people that they would not normally talk to otherwise. They are able to bond during these activities. The youth leaders from the two programs did not know each other before the program and stated that they would not know about each other without the program.

The program also has positively impacted the relationship between the youth in Fillmore and Santa Paula. The youth leaders mentioned there has been a rivalry between the towns. The program has helped to break down the stigma between Fillmore and Santa Paula. It shows them that they are the same people; they just live in a different town from one another.

How the Program can be Improved

The participants mentioned that the program is good the way it is now. The only improvement that they identified was that more guest speakers would be beneficial.

Challenges and Successes

Challenges

The Conocimiento project has experienced significant challenges to implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project started to enroll youth in January 2020 and then was shut down for in-person programming in March 2020. Although both sites are currently open for in-person programming, participation has remained low and there continues to be disruptions to the program due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Both sites have experienced closures due to COVID-19 exposures, including a recent closure of both sites in January 2022. Program staff have had challenges with recruiting new youth and have had difficulty accessing the local high schools in order to conduct outreach to recruit new youth. Despite the low participation, program staff have shared that a core group of youth continue to attend consistently. The pandemic has also impacted the parent component of the program as implementation was delayed due to the pandemic. Program staff at One Step shared that they have experienced low interest with parents participating in the program as many parents are hesitant to come inside the center and just want to drop their teens off at the sites. One Step continues to strategize how to better engage parents in the program. Ignite had a successful Open House with parents and were able to provide \$50 grocery gift cards to parents who attended. Ignite also has provided home visits.

The pandemic also impacted the implementation of the follow-up assessments that were originally planned to be implemented with the youth every six months. With multiple disruptions to the program, it was decided to delay implementing the follow-up assessments until the youth are able to attend in-person programming consistently for a period of time. This allowed an opportunity for the evaluation team to revisit the evaluation methodology and tools. The evaluation team collaborated with program staff to inform revisions to the evaluation methodology and tools. This was done to enhance the ability to capture the outcomes of the youth that were not being measured in the original evaluation tools. This is an example of where a challenge presents an opportunity to pivot an evaluation.

The evaluation pivoted by planning to implement two follow-up assessments in 2022, with the first planned in January. Both sites had to shut down temporarily in January 2022 due to the highly virulent Omicron COVID-19 variant impacting the sites. This unfortunately impacted the implementation of the midpoint assessment as well as the scheduled focus group with the youth

leaders. Both the mid-point assessment and focus group were able to be conducted in February 2022.

Successes

Despite all of the challenges to implementation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conocimiento project has experienced some successes. The Conocimiento group meals have been very popular with the youth, and they look forward to the opportunity to come together in a positive social setting and have the opportunity to try a variety of cuisines that they have never tried before. The guest speaker series has been a huge success with the youth, and they have been very engaged with learning about topics such as mental health awareness, personal development, overcoming adversity, as well as educational and career development topics. The youth are very motivated to participate in these group meals and have approached staff and thanked them for helping them to find their voice. These group meals help to develop their individual skills and bring together youth from two rival high schools in a safe space where they are able to develop friendships and therefore, diminish rivalries. One Step has maintained a core group of 12 to 16 youth, some of whom have remained in the program since April of 2020 throughout all of the disruptions caused by the pandemic. When Ignite opened in September, they went from having 15 youth to around 30-40 youth attending programming at a time, many of them being new youth to Ignite.

Just prior to Ignite closing for the summer in 2021, One Step staff invited the youth from Ignite to attend programming at One Step while their teen center was closed so that they could continue to participate in group activities. One Step had up to four Ignite youth join them for Conocimiento Dinners during the summer. This success is significant as the Conocimiento project has really helped to foster positive relationships and break down barriers between these teens who are from two rival cities.

The youth continue to develop meaningful relationships with not just each other but also with the program staff. For example, while Ignite was closed for the summer, a particular youth who did not care about their grades in the past reached out to program staff asking for help with his or her homework. Ignite also shared that a few of their youth made the football team and were excited to share with the news with the staff and asked them to come out and watch them play. These youth previously were getting into trouble but found a positive outlet in sports.

The youth leaders have been successful at working with the program staff to facilitate the group meals and have grown their planning and leadership skills. Program staff have shared that they have seen a positive change in several of the youth leader's skills including punctuality, professionalism, note taking, as well as their ability to feel comfortable speaking in front of others and sharing their opinions. The focus group that was conducted with the youth leaders found that the program has helped to increase their social skills, public speaking skills, and has encouraged them to be more active. The youth leaders also shared that it has improved the relationship between the youth in Fillmore and Santa Paula.

Youth were asked on the mid-point assessment to share what three skills Conocimiento has helped them with learning. Overall, the responses were quite positive. The most frequent responses were related to communication and social skills. Specific skills that the youth identified include public speaking, social skills, expressing feelings, leadership, communication, and learning to get along with people more.

Looking Ahead

In order to ensure that the evaluation of the Conocimiento project is responsive to program changes and new information learned, the evaluation team collaborated extensively with program staff in order to refine the evaluation tools and methodologies to ensure that the outcomes of the program and its participants are captured. The initial evaluation plan included a follow-up assessment to be implemented with all youth every six months that they were enrolled in the program. Due to multiple disruptions with programming caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the follow-up assessments was delayed until Conocimiento was able to return to in-person programming consistently. The evaluation team collaborated with program staff and the project administrator in order to refine the assessment tool. The follow-up assessments were modified to collect more qualitative feedback from the youth and an exit survey was developed to capture the impact of the program on the youth after they exit the program. The first follow-up assessment, referred to as the mid-point assessment, was due to be implemented in January 2022. Due to the impact of the rapidly spreading Omicron COVID-19 variant, both teen centers experienced temporary closures in January 2022. The survey remained open into late February in order to increase the response rate.

A follow-up assessment that includes the same survey questions will be implemented towards the end of the school year in order to collect feedback and information about the impact of the program on the youth. The program staff will also be implementing an exit survey with youth when they stop attending the program.

The evaluation team worked with program staff to refine the evaluation tools to measure the impact of the parent component of the Conocimiento project. The implementation of the parent component has experienced significant impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic and low interest in participation at one of the sites. The evaluation team has been collaborating with program staff to better capture parent program activities and has developed a parent workshop survey to measure the impact of parent workshops and resource events. Findings from the assessments, parent workshop surveys, and all other evaluation activities will be included in the final evaluation report, which will be completed after the project ends in FY 22/23.

Appendix

Original Question	Modified Question Used in This Project
You lived with a household member who served time in jail or prison	You lived with a household member who was arrested, incarcerated or deported.
You often felt unsupported, unloved and/or unprotected.	You often felt unsupported, unloved and/or unprotected or you feel that your family doesn't look out for each other or feel close to each other.
You have been separated from your primary caregiver through deportation or immigration.	You or a member of your family feared deportation.
You have been in foster care.	You have lived in a foster or group home.
You have been detained, arrested or incarcerated.	You have been detained, arrested, incarcerated, or deported.
You have experienced verbal or physical abuse or threats from a romantic partner (i.e. boyfriend or girlfriend).	You have experienced verbal or physical abuse or threats from a romantic partner.