



UW Medicine

Community Passageways – Family Integrated Transitions: Increasing Behavioral Health Support through Community Credible Messengers

Youth of color are more likely to be disciplined in school, arrested in the community, and adjudicated in juvenile and adult criminal courts when engaging in the same behaviors as white youth. Additionally, about 70% of youth in the juvenile justice system have a mental health diagnosis in addition to conduct disorders, and approximately 20% have a serious mental health disorder. Brain science indicates that addressing behavioral health disorders at critical transition points, such as during early childhood and adolescence/early adulthood, promotes healthy development and a successful life trajectory, as well as reduces the likelihood of involvement in the justice system. Evidence-based and community operated culturally aligned behavioral interventions that reduce disparities in the school-to-prison pipeline are essential to derail this pernicious pathway.

Community-based mentors of color from Community Passageways, a youth mentorship and advocacy non-profit organization, are available to support youth 24/7. They build strong relationships with youth and support them as they develop strong, positive relationships with their family, peers, and community. Mentors work with youth to set and accomplish goals; from finding a job to staying in school to engaging with the community. They also leverage their acceptance in the community as "credible messengers" and foster an empowering sense of personal and cultural identity within each youth, which is essential to overcoming personal and race-based trauma. Through peacekeeping circles, formal diversion, one-on-one mentoring and advocacy in schools, criminal courts and detention centers, mentors guide and support youth to avoid justice involvement in every stage of the legal justice system. They have demonstrated significant success in disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, in the benefit of steering youth towards healthy and successful trajectories full of meaningful opportunities.

After receiving training from the University of Washington in an adapted version of Family Integrated Transitions (Community Passageways-Family Integrated Transitions), CP-FIT Coaches are able to deliver a culturally relevant version of an approach which combines three evidence-based interventions to youth of color who are "at risk," have been involved, or are currently involved with the juvenile justice system. **Annually a minimum of 45 youth and their families based in South King County will receive weekly support in community and home settings for up to 6 months each.** Youth in institutional placements will start receiving services two months prior to release.

CP-FIT Coaches incorporate components of FIT (Multisystemic Therapy, Motivational Interviewing and Dialectical Behavior Therapy) in their case management and mentorship services to address behaviors that reduce functioning in the community (e.g., school avoidance, running away, law-breaking, poor family and peer interactions). By addressing factors related to delinquency, CP-FIT coaches will work on skills-building with youth and their families to reduce substance use and aggression, and to promote emotional regulation, mindfulness, distress tolerance and interpersonal effectiveness.

Youth participation in FIT has been associated with a 30% reduction in felony recidivism for all youth, but the completion rate of the program is lower for youth of color than for white youth. **CP-FIT enhances the skillset of community-based mentors at Community Passageways so that they can provide services to youth of color in a culturally appropriate manner, thereby eliminating engagement and retention challenges in treatment completion.**

Email referrals to: cpfit@communitypassageways.org